

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND
LITERATURE
(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ORAL GROUP LESSONS IN
"ENGLISH FOR ETHIOPIA GRADE SEVEN" IN
PROMOTING COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the oral group lessons in the newly (2007/2008) implemented student's English textbook of grade seven. The assessment mainly focused on whether or not the oral group lessons in the textbook promote cooperative learning.

The study involved the textbook, four English language teachers who have been teaching the language in Muke Turi and Gebreguracha Primary and Junior Secondary Schools, and five hundred and twenty-five students who have been learning at the same schools in Northern Shoa.

The data for the study were gathered through text analysis . In order to see the actual happening and to triangulate the findings of the text analysis, interviews were conducted and classrooms were observed.

The results of the study showed as follows:

- The oral group lessons in the textbook of grade seven fulfill almost all the criteria of cooperative learning.
- The teachers and the students who were interviewed understood the benefits of sharing ideas through cooperative learning in spite of the fact that the number of the students in each class was large, and the students had poor background knowledge of English.
- The classroom observations proved that the number of students in each class was large; the desks were fixed; some teachers followed up and monitored their learners while working the activities in groups; the students frequently used their mother tongue rather than English during group discussions; the teachers did not set a time limit for the discussions, and there was little practice of evaluating the oral group lessons after cooperative learning.

The summary of the findings indicated that the oral group lessons in the textbook help to promote cooperative learning though there are some problems that have been mentioned above to practice them in the classrooms.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Some writers like Long and Porter (1985), as quoted in Berhanu (2000: 26), argue that one of the main reasons for low achievement by many language learners is simply that they are not given the opportunity to practice the new language. Instead, their teacher sets the same instructional pace and content for everyone by lecturing, explaining a grammatical point, leading drill work, or asking questions of the whole class. Since teacher-fronted lessons favour a highly conventionalized variety of conversation, one rarely found them outside classrooms and they may also limit the quality of talk students engage in.

It has been suggested that knowledge is constructed, discovered, transformed, and extended by students. If so, the main role of teachers is not to be dominant like what has been mentioned above but create conditions within which the students can construct meaning from what they are learning. This may, in turn, enable them to practice and refine their negotiation, organize and communicate skills, define issues and problems, and develop ways of solving them. (Johnson and Johnson, 1994; Hopkins, 2002).

The conditions created by teachers will be realized if, among other things, students are put in groups. That is to say, group activities like role play, discussion, problem-solving, etc could be used as means to make the learners actively involve in the learning process and internalize the language communicatively. In this regard, Chekering and Gamson (1987), as cited in an on line source of Bonewell's (2000) article, state:

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class, listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

Moreover, Murphy (1993: 18) reported in her research findings as, “Students liked working in groups because of the opportunity for discussion of the task with their friends.”

Similarly, Alamirew (1992: 84) stated that not only did students like group work but also wanted to learn other subjects through group work. He further noted that most of the students (Over 80%) were interested in using group work. As a result, their participation in the class was increased.

Thus, through the application of group work, CL seems to be acceptable and helpful for students who are at elementary, secondary and tertiary levels. As cited in Berhanu (2000: 1), group work is stated with the purpose of:

1. helping students succeed in their academic work, and
2. enabling them to develop their communicative competence.

Furthermore, different researches conducted in different parts of the world have shown that group work that promotes CL is a useful technique to learn language and to cultivate learners’ personality (Slavin, 1994; Freeman, 2000; Brown, 2001; Ur, 1994).

However, in contrast to the above explanation, that is, the participatory nature of group activities, the students whom the researcher was observing while his colleagues were teaching English did not have proper participation in their respective groups. Rather, some students did some

activities unrelated to the topic or the objective of the lesson and others usually sat idle. As the researcher sensed, the students seemed to be confused probably for not knowing what to do with the oral group lessons in the textbook.

Having experienced these problems, the researcher tries to assess the nature of the oral group lessons whether or not they promote CL in the newly used English textbook of grade seven, which has been implemented since 2007/2008, and has not been assessed yet.

In fact, in the Ethiopian context, some researches have been conducted to check the overall contribution of ELT materials in relation to group activities at secondary and university levels. For example, Berhanu Haile (1999) studied the implementation of the current ELT syllabus for grade nine in terms of communicative language teaching; Berhanu G/Michael (2000) tried to see CL focusing on group organization in grade eleven; Seifu W/yohannes (2005) conducted a study to assess the implementation of group activities in ninth grade English textbook, and Berhanu Bogale (2000) studied the verbal participation of first year students in group work.

Since the researches mentioned above have been studies on the overall contribution of ELT materials in connection with group activities at secondary and university levels, this researcher believes the relevance of assessing the oral group lessons whether or not they promote CL in the lower grade, i.e. in grade seven English textbook.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess whether or not the oral group lessons in the textbook help to promote CL among students. Specifically, it attempts to answer the following questions:

- i. For what purposes are the oral group lessons in the textbook used?
- ii. To what extent are English teachers and students aware of the oral group lessons in promoting CL?
- iii. How are the oral group lessons used in the text book implemented in the actual classrooms?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are significant as they may help:

- i. teachers get more insights about the purposes of using the oral group lessons,
- ii. syllabus designers incorporate significant facts and procedures of the oral group lessons in promoting CL, and
- iii. interested researchers get some ideas in studying further the same or related topics.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to assessing whether or not the oral group lessons promote CL in “English for Ethiopia Grade Seven” taught at Muke Turi and Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Northern Shoa. The reasons why the seventh grade English textbook is chosen is that it was published in 2006 and has been implemented since 2007/2008, but the oral group lessons in this newly applied English textbook have not been assessed yet. Thus, this researcher believes the necessity of assessing whether or not the oral group lessons in the newly used textbook promote CL among learners.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The researcher believes that an assessment of the oral group lessons in grade seven English textbook and their actual classrooms require longer study time to see through the overall CL processes from the beginning to the end. However, the time, human and financial resource limitations do not allow him to conduct the study in a comprehensive manner.

1.6 Abbreviations Used

CL = Cooperative Learning
EFL = English as a Foreign Language
ELT = English Language Teaching
ESL = English as a Second Language
Fig = Figure
MoE = Ministry of Education

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

In this part of the paper, a brief review of the literature related to the major topic of the thesis has been made. The concepts of CL in the classroom element of CL, uses of an ELT textbook, reasons for evaluating an ELT textbook, and general survey of an “English for Ethiopia Grade Seven” are discussed.

2.2 The Concepts of Cooperative Learning

As to the meaning of CL, researchers have suggested the following definitions:

Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals and CL is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and one another's learning. Within CL groups, students are given two responsibilities: to learn the assigned material and to make sure that all other members of their group do likewise. Thus, a student seeks an outcome that is beneficial to himself/herself and beneficial to all other group members (Deutsch, 1962) in (Brubacher, et. al, 1990: 69).

The other definition given by Reynolds, et. al (1995: online) is that CL is a teaching strategy designed to promote mutual learning and understanding of a subject amongst students at different levels. The idea is that students, in small groups, cooperate to help one another, understand and learn the material together.

The definitions given above are similar to each other. This is to mean that CL is a successful strategy in which small teams, each with

students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, i.e. within CL, students benefit from sharing ideas rather than working alone. In other words, students perceive that they can reach their learning goals only if the other students in the learning group also do so. In this perspective, Argyle (1991), as quoted in McConnel (1994: 12), says, “CL is rather acting together in a coordinated way at work or in social relationships, in the pursuit of shared goals, the enjoyment of joint activity, or simply furthering the relationships.”

Thus, CL shows the role of members in groups and the social dimension of cooperation as well. In the classroom where CL is implemented, students perceive much more peer encouragement and support for academic effort and actual facilitation of other students’ learning goals.

According to Ames and Ames (1985) and Williams and Burden (1997), students’ learning goals may be structured to promote cooperative, competitive or individualistic efforts. Competitive learning situations are ones in which students work against one another to achieve a goal that only one or a few can attain, whereas in individualistic learning situations, the students work alone to accomplish goals unrelated to those of classmates, i.e. the students’ goal achievements are independent. The result is to focus on self-interest and personal success, and ignore as irrelevant the success and failures of others.

In contrast to individualistic and competitive learning situations which are supposed to be traditional, Johnson and Johnson (1987) explain that cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning situations are important and should be used, but the dominant goal structure in any class should be cooperative. Because, competitive and individualistic learning are effective primarily when they are used within a context of cooperation.

Thus, cooperation which can be created by structuring positive interdependence among learners leads to outcomes. In this regard, Brubacher, et. al (1990: 72) state, “Higher achievement, more positive relationship among individuals involved, greater social support, and higher self-esteem are the outcomes that seem more important than the many outcomes that are affected by cooperative efforts.” They illustrate the outcomes using the figure given below.

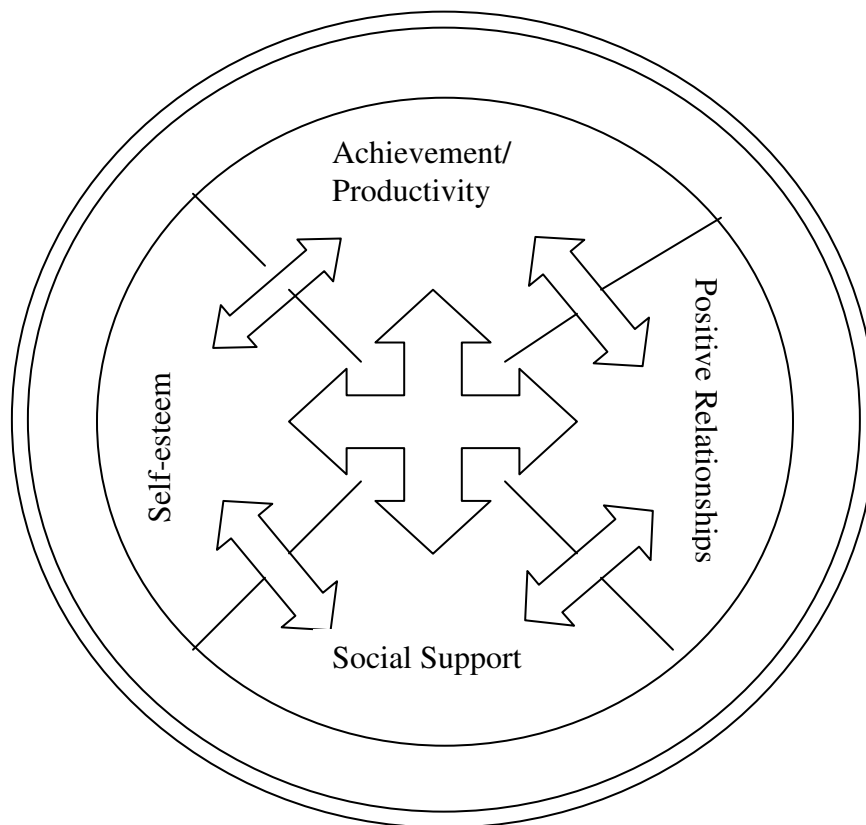


Fig 1. Outcomes of CL (adapted from Brubacher,et.al 1990:72)

Brubacher, et. al (1990) further describe the outcomes of CL that they have indicated in the figure given above as follows:

- a. The more individual care about one another, the harder they will work to promote one another's success and well being;
- b. The more support and encouragement students receive from each

other, the greater their persistence in striving to achieve, especially on challenging tasks even under frustrating conditions, and

- c. The higher students' self-esteem, the more confident they are in their abilities and the more challenging the academic goals they will set for themselves.

Achievement, therefore, can be expected to be higher in cooperative than in competitive or individualistic learning methods. In addition, researchers like Woodward (1985), and Britton (1990) report that regardless of the subject matter, students working cooperatively in groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional modes, i.e. in competitive or individualistic learning method.

In sum, CL has a powerful effect in raising pupil's achievement since it combines the dynamics of democratic processes with the process of academic enquiry. It also encourages active participation in learning and collaborative behavior by developing social as well as academic skills (Hopkins, 2005; Slavin, 1994).

2.3 Benefits of Using CL in the Classroom

In addition to what has been said in the concepts of CL, many potential benefits arise when CL is used in the classroom instruction at different levels of grades. Some of the benefits of using CL that have been suggested by different scholars are presented as follows:

2.3.1 Students Can Enhance Their Social Skills

In real life, people need to collaborate with others. In their families, on their jobs, and in their social lives, they need to be able to work with others to everyone's mutual benefits. Ironically, schools have not done

enough to prepare students to this purpose. Often times, the students are conditioned to compete with others and view others as enemies who obstruct their own success. Other pupils' failure increases one's own chances of success. In CL groups, the students can exercise their collective skills and practice working with others to achieve mutual benefits for everyone rather than thinking competitively and individualistically (Freeman, 2000; Scot, 1997).

2.3.2 Students Have More Chance to Appreciate Differences

Students from a pluralistic society should work harder to overcome their prejudices against others from different backgrounds, such as age, sex, culture, learning style, religion, etc (Slavin, 1994). Thus, CL provides the students with opportunities to enhance inter-ethnic relations and learn to appreciate differences as their focus of attention is getting immersed with the group activities conducted in the classroom (Moffet, 1996; Creemers, 1994).

2.3.3 There Can Be More Individualization of Instruction

In a traditional classroom with a heavy emphasis on a lecturing method and a whole class discussion, teachers have to cater their instruction to the average. If a few students can't keep up with the class, the teacher can't always stop the class to help them. On the other hand, with CL groups, there is the potential for the students to receive individual's assistance from teacher and from their peers (Long and Porter, 1985). Help from peers increases both for the students being helped as well as for those giving the help. In other words, for the students being helped, the assistance from their peers enables them to move away from dependence on teachers and gain more opportunities to enhance their learning. For the students giving help, the CL groups serve as opportunities to increase their own performance (Farivar and Webb,

1994). Moreover, Brumfit (1984), as quoted in Berhanu (2000: 29), argues, “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 lockstep, with its larger numbers.”

2.3.4 Students’ Participation Can Increase

In a teacher-centered class, the teacher speaks about 80% of the time. However, the students are not empty vessels that need to be filled in. Instead; they are active learner who need to construct knowledge by activating their own schemata (Long and Porter, 1985; Brown, 2001).

When groups are used, the students receive much more chance to speak. First, there is an increase in the percentage of time when the students are talking instead of the teacher. Second, during the time for the students to talk, many of them are speaking at any one time (Ibid).

2.3.5 Anxiety Can Decrease

Students often feel anxious to speak in front of the whole class. In contrast, there is less anxiety connected with speaking in the smaller group. When a student represents the group and reports to the whole class, he/she feels more support because the answer is not just from one student alone, but from the whole group (Long and Porter, 1985). Therefore, Brown (2001: 178) says, “In group activities, the security of the student will be improved and each individual is not entirely on public display.”

2.3.6 Motivation and Positive Attitude Towards Class Can Increase

As CL groups are interactive, the pace of communication becomes more student-centered than in traditional classroom. In a traditional classrooms , a teacher is bound to proceed too slowly for some students and too fast for others. In contrast, students adjust the pace of their communications in CL groups to the understanding level of their peers. They know if they go too fast, the team will suffer. Over time there develops considerable attention among team members to the understanding level of others (McKernan, 1996).

Thus, in CL groups, the students can encourage and help one another. That is, the cooperative atmosphere of working in a small group may help them develop affective bonds among themselves. This, in turn, greatly increases motivation and positive attitude towards their class.

2.3.7 Self-Esteem and Self-Direction Can Increase

One purpose in education is to enable students to become life-long learners, i.e. pupils who can think and learn without teacher telling them what to do every minute. By shifting from dependence on teachers, cooperative group activities help the students become independent learners and form a community of learners among themselves (Wenden, 1991; Christson, 1994).

In spite of the various benefits of CL listed above, it possesses immense problems if it is not carefully managed. Johnson and Johnson (1990), in Brubacher et.al (1990:77), indicate that many teachers believe that they are implementing CL when in fact they are missing the point and the scholars also added that cooperation is not:

- having students sit side by side at the same table and talk each other as they do their individual assignment,
- having students do a task individually with instructions that the ones who finish first are to help the slower students (When this happens, group work will cultivate dependent learners rather than confidential learners), and
- assigning a report to a group where one student does all the work and others put their names on it.

Therefore, cooperation is much more than being physically near other students, discussing material with other students, although each of these is important in CL.

2.4 Basic Elements of CL

In order for a lesson to be cooperative in the classroom, the following five basic elements are included for long-term success:

2.4.1 Positive Interdependence

Positive interdependence is successfully structured when group members perceive that they are linked with each other in a way that one can't succeed unless everyone succeeds. Group goals and tasks, therefore, must be designed and communicated to students in ways that make them believe they sink or swim together. When positive interdependence is solidly structured, it highlights that (a) each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success and (b) each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his/her resources and/or role and task responsibilities. Doing so creates a commitment to the success of group members as well as one's own, and is the heart of CL. If there is no positive interdependence, there is no cooperation (Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, 1993; Ames and Ames, 1985).

2.4.2 Face-To-Face Interaction

Students need to do real work together in which they promote each other's success by sharing resources and helping, encouraging, and applauding each other's efforts to achieve. There are important cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics that can only occur when students promote each other's learning. This includes orally explaining how to solve problems, teaching one's knowledge to others, checking for understanding, discussing concepts being learned, and connecting present with past learning. Each of these activities can be structured into group task directions and procedures. Doing so enables to ensure that CL groups are both an academic support system (every student has someone who is committed to helping him or her learn) and a personal support system (every student has someone who is committed to helping him or her as a person). Thus, it is through promoting each other's learning face-to-face that members become personally committed to each other as well as to their mutual goals (Ames and Ames, 1985).

2.4.3 Individual Accountability

A level of accountability must be structured into cooperative lessons. Each member must be accountable for contributing his/her share of the work. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual in order to ascertain who needs more assistance, and encouragement in learning. The purpose of CL groups is to make each member a stronger individual in his/her right. Students learn together so that they subsequently can gain greater individual competency (Ames and Ames, 1985; Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 1983).

2.4.4 Interpersonal and Small Group Skills

CL is inherently more complex than competitive or individualistic learning because the students have to engage simultaneously in task work (learning academic subject matter) and teamwork (functioning effectively as a group). Social skills for effective cooperative work do not magically appear when cooperative lessons are employed. Instead, social skills must be taught to students as purposefully and precisely as academic skills. Leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict management skills empower the students to manage both teamwork and task work successfully (Christson, 1994).

2.4.5 Group Processing

Group processing exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Groups need to describe what member actions are helpful and unhelpful and make decisions about what behaviors to continue or change. Continuous improvement of the process of learning results from the careful analysis of how members are working together and determining how group effectiveness can be enhanced. This may take five minutes or a whole lesson; it can happen immediately after the classroom interaction or on their next meeting. Thus, during the group processing, both teacher and students should be equally involved; students must identify how well they have achieved their goals and maintained effective relationships among members (Williams and Burden, 1997; Johnson and Johnson, 1985).

In general, the success of implementing the elements of CL in EFL classrooms depends on the overall relationships among a teacher, learners and a textbook. To maximize this success, teachers should comprehend the various roles of a textbook and make their learners

study it together and take something out of it on their own. Next to this, let's see the roles of a textbook that are stated below.

2.5 The Roles of a Textbook

In some contexts, teachers are free to choose their own textbooks. The vast majority of teachers, however, have textbooks assigned to them (Garinger, 2001).

In this regard, grade seven English teachers, who teach at primary and junior secondary schools, have a textbook assigned by the MoE in 2006. This textbook incorporates the four skills and the subskills as well. Before assessing whether or not the oral group lessons in this textbook promote CL, it is relevant to discuss the roles of textbooks to language teaching and learning.

In this perspective, Riazi (2003: 52) says, "Textbooks play a very crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning, and are considered the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom after the teacher."

Being the base material used in teaching and learning process, Sheldon (1988: 237) also says, "Textbooks represent not only the visible heart of any ELT program but also play considerable roles for both the student and the teacher when they are being used in ESL/EFL classroom."

Some of the roles of the textbook suggested by different writers are summarized as follows:

- It is psychologically essential for students since many students working with a textbook feel secure and have a sense of progress and achievement. They always have a book to relate to; they feel that they are not in the dark. Consequently, they become more confident

and satisfied as they tackle the target language with the opportunity to go back and revise (Hutchins and Torres, 1994; Haycroft, 1998).

- It often helps the students harbor expectations about using a textbook in their particular language classroom, and believe that published materials have more credibility than teacher generated or “in-house” materials (Sheldon, 1988).
- It serves as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. It may provide the basis for the content of the lessons, the balance of skills taught, and the kinds of language tasks students actively use. Thus, textbook provides ready-made text and learning tasks which are likely to be of an appropriate level for most of the class. In fact, this saves time for the teacher who would otherwise have to prepare his/her own (Ur, 1996; O’Neill, 1982).
- It provides the cheapest way of learning materials for each learner as compared to photocopied paper or computer software (O’Neill, 1982; Sheldon, 1988; Ur, 1996).
- It is viewed by Allwright (1999: 25) as it is a resource book for ideas and activities rather than as instructional material. This perspective is supported by Cunningsworth (1984: 65) as he believes that published material provides the initial framework, which must be adapted by each individual teacher to match the needs of their students.
- It is an effective resource for self-directed learning and presentation material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect predetermined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who want to get ideas on how to plan and teach lesson as well as formats that teachers can use (St. John, 2001; Tyson, 1997).
- It provides learners with convenient package, i.e. its components stick together and stay in order; it is light and small enough to carry

around easily; its shape is easily packed and stacked, and it doesn't depend on hardware or a supply of electricity (Ur, 1996).

- It may play a pivotal role in innovation, i.e. it can support teachers through potentially disturbing and threatening change process, demonstrate new and/or untried methodologies, introduce change gradually, and create scaffolding upon which teachers can build a more creative of their own (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994).

In general, much of the language teaching that occurs through out the world today could not take place without the extensive use of commercial textbooks (Richards, 2001). In relation to which, Hutchinson and Torres (1994: 315) suggest, "Textbook is an almost universal element of ELT material. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been setup to produce them in various countries ... No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbooks". In addition, a good textbook which is properly employed can bring about effective and long lasting changes for the learners.

In this regard, English for Ethiopia is a textbook prepared by the MoE to help the teaching and learning process of the students in the English language. And let us consider the reasons why the roles of the textbook in the teaching and learning process are to be evaluated in the next part.

2.6 Why Textbook Evaluation

ELT materials can be evaluated as they stand, without their roles in the classroom. However, this sort of evaluation doesn't help very much due to the fact that it gives us no piece of information as to how the material works in the classroom (Breen, 1989).

His ideas pave the ground for an evaluation of different aspects of the materials in process to get information about the ways in which students

and teachers react to them, which indicate the strength or weakness of the materials being used.

Textbook evaluation can be very useful in teacher professional growth. It helps teachers acquire useful, accurate, systematic and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

The evaluation of both individual textbook and a complete instructional program is a key to the success of any instructional activity (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997).

Thus, documentary study is one of the technique to be carried out for the purpose of textbook evaluation. It deals with records that already exists (Sidhu, 1984 cited in Seifu, 2005: 8).

In documentary study, the major emphasis is not with the general importance of the documents but with certain characteristics that can be identified and counted (Ibid).

Vocabulary analysis, textbook analysis, curriculum analysis, error analysis, report and job analysis are some examples of documentary study (Ibid).

Among the examples of documentary study mentioned above, textbook analysis is one of the common types of documentary study in the area of education in general and in language instruction in particular.

As Sheldon (1987), in Seifu (2005: 9), states that textbook analysis serves teachers to improve their skills and the instruction. According to him, textbook analysis:

- Obliges teachers to analyze their own presupposition as to the nature of language and learning. In carrying out an in-depth analysis, teachers must question the assumption behind their

normal practices and observe their own and their learner's behaviors in the classrooms more closely.

- Can help teachers to see materials as an integral part of the whole teaching and learning situation.

In general, in any kind of evaluation, the decision finally made is likely to be a better one if based on a systemic check of all the important variables (Hutchinson and water, 1996) quoted in (Seifu, 2005: 9).

In this regard, all the oral group lessons in the student's English textbook of grade seven will be assessed on the basis of the elements of CL suggested by scholars like Johnson and Johnson (1985); Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993); Ames and Ames (1985); Christson (1994), and Williams and Burden (1997). Before we see this in chapter four, let's have a look at over a general overview of student's English textbook of grade seven.

2.7 General Survey of “English for Ethiopia Grade Seven”

Generally, at the end of learning the current (2006) textbook, the students should be able to:

- read various types of ELT materials written in English for information and entertainment,
- listen and respond to specific information,
- use English to ask questions and discuss different issues, and
- use English in pairs and groups for social interactions.

Moreover, the text contains one booklet prepared for two semesters in line with the time set by the MoE. The booklet is divided into sixteen units, and each unit has ten to eleven lessons in which the four skills and sub-skills are included, i.e. the lessons in each unit are intended to

make use of an integrated approach to language teaching (MoE, 2006).

In sum, in this chapter, we have seen the concepts of CL, some of the benefits of using CL, basic elements of CL, the roles and evaluation of textbook, and the general survey of “English for Ethiopia Grade Seven”. The purpose of this study is to assess the oral group lessons whether or not they promote CL in the recently applied student’s English textbook of grade seven.

From the literature, it has been noted that local studies that center their focus on group activities haven’t assessed the oral group lessons at lower grades. With the intention to fill this gap, this paper will research the oral group lessons whether or not they promote CL at lower grade, i.e. in grade seven English textbook. In so doing, it uses key issues raised in the literature about CL, the roles and evaluation of textbook as a guide to direct each phase of the research. Accordingly, the chapter that follows takes up research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

This study assessed whether or not the oral group lessons promote CL in the current student's English textbook of grade seven, which was published in 2006 and has been implemented since 2007/2008. Thus, the data for the study were collected as follows.

3.1 Subjects

The subjects of this study included "English for Ethiopia Grade Seven", four teachers of English, and five hundred and twenty-five students in the non-randomly selected schools in Northern Shoa, i.e. Muke Turi and Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary Schools.

The two schools were selected in order to see if there were differences in the implementation of the oral group lessons whether or not they promote CL in the newly used student's English textbook of grade seven, and if the awareness of the teachers and the students on the issue raised was similar or not. In addition, these schools were chosen on the basis of convenience to the researcher as there might not be significant differences among government primary and junior secondary schools concerning materials and methods they were using.

3.2 Sampling

In Muke Turi Primary and Junior Secondary School, there were two teachers teaching grade seven English textbook. Both of them were selected for the study. These two teachers were teaching five sections. One of them covered four sections in which Oromo speaking students were found, and the other covered the remaining one section in which

Amharic speaking students were being taught. Thus, from the three hundred and twenty-five students who were being taught in five sections, the researcher randomly selected two of the four sections of Oromo speaking classes which contained one hundred and forty students and also used the only Amharic speaking section which consisted of sixty-five students for classroom observations.

In addition, among the two hundred and five students found in the three sections, six of them were selected for interview, i.e. randomly taking two students from each section as Sidhu (1984) explains that students are similar in many aspects and therefore, a study on some of them will throw significant light upon the whole students.

Similarly, in Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School, there were also two teachers teaching grade seven English textbook. Both of them were selected for the study and they were teaching five sections. One of them covered three sections, and the other was teaching two sections. All the students in the five sections were Oromo speakers.

Thus, from the four hundred students who were being taught in the five sections, the researcher randomly selected two sections from the one who was teaching three sections, and the rest two sections taught by the other teacher were used as they were. The number of students found in the four sections was three hundred and twenty, and all of them were employed for classroom observation. Besides, among these students, eight of them were selected for the interview, randomly taking two students from each of the four sections.

All the English teachers of grade seven found in Muke Turi and Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary Schools became the subjects for the interview.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The data for the study were gathered through text analysis, interview and classroom observation.

3.3.1 Text Analysis

In order to collect the data for the study, the researcher used text analysis. As aforementioned in the review of the literature, text analysis is one of the types of documentary study in which the researcher selects some significant characteristics and observes the extent to which they happen.

Accordingly, this method enabled the researcher to assess whether or not the oral group lessons in the student's textbook of grade seven promote CL. To conduct this, the researcher made use of some of the criteria suggested by Johnson and Johnson (1985); Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993); Ames and Ames (1985); Christson (1994), and Williams and Burden(1997). See the criteria in Appendix D.

3.3.2 Classroom Observation

To triangulate the information gathered through text analysis and interview, the researcher used classroom observation, which helped him check what the English teachers and the students thought and did by observing them in actions.

3.3.3 Interview

To get further information on the current ELT textbook which could corroborate the responses revealed through text analysis and classroom observation, the researcher employed semi-structured interview.

The questions asked in the interview were based on the background of

the text analysis designed. To obtain more accurate and genuine responses, the interviewer explained and clarified both the purpose of the research and individual questions.

In addition, the researcher followed upon incomplete or unclear responses by asking additional probing questions. In order to avoid lack of information because of English language difficulties, the students were interviewed in Amharic.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Interpretations

In this part of the paper, the data gathered about the oral group lessons in “English for Ethiopia Grade Seven” have been analyzed and interpreted, grade seven English language teachers and their students have been interviewed, and also classroom observations have been conducted. The results of all these are presented below.

4.1 Results of Grade Seven English Textbook Analysis and Interpretation

The oral group lessons in grade seven English textbook were analyzed and interpreted using the criteria suggested by Johnson and Johnson (1985); Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993); Ames and Ames (1985); Christson (1994), and Williams and Burden (1997). These scholars’ criteria were used to check whether or not the oral group lessons in grade seven English textbook promote CL. Having studied the textbook and its syllabus, the following results were obtained and interpreted.

The student’s English textbook has sixteen units in which twenty-eight oral group lessons are found to be conducted in groups of four although almost all the oral group lessons in the whole units are done in pairs.

Even though it is possible to use different size of groups, as Johnson and Johnson (1990), in Brubacher (1990: 123), say, “Cooperative groups tend to range in size from two to six”, the researcher preferred to analyze the textbook with the oral group lessons done in groups of four to the oral group lessons done in pairs. This is because, the researcher believes that when students are in groups of four members, their CL situations during the oral group activities may be observed better than when they are in

pairs. Moreover, as the number of students who were observed in each classroom of the two primary and junior secondary schools was more than sixty-five, the students faced the scarcity of textbooks to conduct the oral group lessons in pairs. Instead, each group of four or five or six students used one text book during the oral group activities in the classroom.

In order to assess whether the oral group lessons in each unit promote CL or not, five criteria are taken from those set by the scholars mentioned earlier and are listed as follows:

- positive interdependence
- face-to-face interaction
- individual accountability
- social skills
- group processing

‘Positive interdependence’ criterion is about a structured lesson (task) that demands the teachers to divide the class into groups and require each group to complete the lesson with all members’ participation for mutual benefits. This is to say that students must believe that they are linked with others in a way that one can’t succeed unless the other members of the group succeed (and vice versa). In other words, students must perceive that they sink or swim together.

In this regard, from the twenty-eight oral group lessons, seventeen of them meet this criterion. For instance, in the ninth lesson of unit two, a passage entitled as ‘The Farmer and the Dishonest Person’ is given. Before reading the passage, each member of the group discusses the difference between the work of a farmer and the work of a dishonest person using his/her experiences (see Appendix E – 1). Here, in order to make the group successful, the participation of each member is decisive.

Having identified the possible differences that exist between them, each student reads the passage and then discusses the following five questions in pairs:

1. Why did the dishonest person say he lost two thousand birr?
2. Why did the farmer return home happily?
3. How do you think the dishonest person felt?
4. Do you think the farmer was honest? Why?
5. What have you learnt from this story?

After discussing the questions given above in pairs, students form small groups of four and look into their answers. In order to learn something from the answers, learners need to work together, i.e. each learner ought to have his/her own role while discussing the activity given above in groups.

In the sixth lesson of unit ten, learners are asked to sort out the main idea of the story entitled as 'My Uncle, Yohannes: Champion for Others'. In order to get more information, learners should be able to summarize the story and discuss what they have done with one another (see Appendix E-2). Here, each learner's contribution in the group is inevitable to challenge the given activity.

In the seventh lesson of unit eleven (see Appendix E-3), learners are asked to talk about some of the ways that their parents can use to prevent bullying. The table in which learners fill their ideas through discussion is presented in the next page.

Table 4.1: Ways To Prevent Bullying

Parents	Teachers	Students

On the basis of table 4.1, member of each group forwards suggestions that are going to be filled in the table under the headings of each column. Then each group reports its agreement to the class and listen to others as they report to the class. Students need to work together, and each learner should take his/her part during the discussions for the success of the group.

In lesson three of the fourteenth unit (see Appendix E-4), the students are ordered in groups of four to list four of their school rules that are functional and non-functional. Then answer the questions given below through discussion:

1. Do you follow the rules in your school?
2. Do you think that the rules are good rules?
3. Why are some of the rules rejected?

Having discussed the questions, students list some other school rules from their experiences and add them to the rules that have already been listed in their exercise books. Then sort them out whether or not they should be the school rules and put them in order according to their degree of significance. Then discuss the reasons that make the school rule the most or the least important in their small groups. Here, students ought to work together and each student is expected to share his/her

part to other members for the success of the groups.

In general, the oral group lessons given above meet the positive interdependence criterion, and therefore, out of the twenty-eight oral group lessons in the textbook, seventeen of them fulfill this criterion.

On the other hand, among the twenty-eight oral group lessons, which are in the sixteen units, eleven of them partially fulfill this criterion. When it is said 'partially', it means there are oral group lessons and the instructions say work in groups; however, some of the oral group lessons are supposed to be repeated as they are and some others need to be answered individually.

In short, the notion of working together in groups is not totally absent, but the lessons do not make learners establish strong relationship among themselves to carry out the oral group lessons and learn something out of them. For example, the oral group lesson, in lesson eight of the sixth unit (see Appendix E-5), needs to be answered individually on the basis of each learner's background knowledge, and the questions included in the oral group lesson are presented as follows:

1. What do you like about school?
2. What are your favorite foods, games and school subjects?
3. What have you learned from the unit?
4. How will you learned help you?

Even though the questions given above can be done in groups, the contribution of each member is not totally significant; one or the other member of the group can do them by himself or herself.

In addition, in lesson seven of the third unit (see Appendix E-6), the oral group lesson is about comparison. Students can compare themselves to others in the following ways:

- 1 Alemu is not sleepy nor am I sleepy.
- 2 Neither Getachew nor Berhanu has completed their assignments.
- 3 Hawi is ten years old. So am I.

In accordance with the example given above, each student is ordered to write eight complete sentences using the comparison words like ‘so am I’, ‘nor am I’, and ‘neither ...nor’. Then discuss what they have written in their respective groups.

In this oral group lesson, learners first memorize ‘so am I’, ‘nor am I’ and ‘neither...nor’, and practice constructing statements that show comparisons. Though students work together to accomplish the oral group lesson, the content of the lesson and the way it is presented in the textbook does not depict strong interdependence among the group members.

Thus, from the twenty-eight oral group lessons presented in the textbook, seventeen of them need learners’ positive interdependence while working in groups. However, among the twenty-eight oral group lessons, in eleven of them, even though learners work in groups to accomplish the tasks, the contents of the oral group lessons and the methods they are presented do not need a strong interdependence among the group members. So, they partially meet the ‘positive interdependence’ criterion. The following table shows the above result.

**Table 4.2: Oral Group Lessons That Create Positive Interdependence
In Grade 7 English Textbook**

No.	Criterion	Total number of oral group lessons in the textbook	Degree of occurrence	Number of oral group lessons	Per cent
1	Create positive interdependence	28	Occur	17	60.7
			Partially occur	11	39.3
			Absent	-	-

A 'Face-to-face interaction' criterion exists when students orally interact with one another in doing the given oral group lessons, discussing the ways and procedures of the oral group lessons with one another, and sharing ideas to learn from one another. Such face-to-face interaction is promotive in the sense that students assist, encourage and support one another's efforts to learn the lessons. In this perspective, the oral group lessons in the student's textbook were assessed in line with the criterion given above.

The findings indicate that all the oral group lessons in one way or the other need face-to-face interaction to accomplish them. The oral group lessons in the textbook demand learners to work together. For instance, look at some of the following points raised in the textbook:

- Practice asking and answering personal information,
- Discuss the concept of hardworking and lazy student,
- Explain the responsibilities of each member's family using 'should',
- Talk about things that are seen in the environment,
- Express things using 'would' or 'wouldn't like',
- Talk with one another about their daily schedule of activities,

- Explain plans for the weekend to the partner and share their conversation with a small group,
- Discuss how it could be learnt from mistake,
- Discuss the main idea of the story entitled as 'The School Bully',
- Discuss some of the ways that bullying can be prevented by parents, teachers, and students,
- Select one task that seventh graders frequently do not want to do and discuss the reasons why this task is hard for them to do, and
- Draw a route to school from home and discuss this map with another group to make adjustment.

The issues raised above indicate that the face-to-face interaction is important to carryout the oral group lessons and to learn something out of them. Thus, the findings point out that all the oral group lessons promote the face-to-face interactions. The summary of the oral group lessons in accordance with the criterion of the face-to-face interaction is shown in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Oral Group Lessons That Promote Face-To-Face Interactions In Grade 7 English Textbook

No.	Criterion	Total number of oral group lessons in the textbook	Degree of occurrence	Number of oral group lessons	Per cent
2	Promote face-to-face interaction	28	Occur	28	100
			Partially occur	-	-
			Absent	-	-

An ‘Individual accountability’ criterion refers to each member of the group who is accountable for contributing his/her share of the work to the group. Accordingly, the oral group lessons in the sixteen units were analyzed to see whether they foster individual accountability or not.

In line with this, among the twenty-eight oral group lessons provided in the textbook, twenty-one of them meet this criterion. For example, in lesson one of the sixth unit (see Appendix E-7), while working through the dialogue in groups to express their future wishes, needs and ambitions, each student practices expressing what he/she thinks.

In lesson six of unit ten (see Appendix E-2), while working in groups, each learner discusses the most important part of the story entitled as ‘My Uncle Yohannes: Champion for Others’. In here, the issue raised is about HIV/AIDS and each student forwards his/her suggestion in relation to the issue under discussion. While doing this, each individual learns how to read and analyze stories and give opinions on current issues.

In lesson five of the eleventh unit (see Appendix E-3), learners practice solving problems. They are first ordered to discuss some of the possible ways employed by parents, teachers, and students to prevent bullying with their partners and then fill the agreement of the groups in table4.4.

Table 4.4:Ways To Prevent Bullying

Parent	Teachers	Students

In here, each individual shares his/her notion to members of his/her respective group. In general, the examples given above show each student's contribution during group discussions.

Alongside with these, seven of the twenty-eight oral group lessons partially fulfill this criterion, i.e. the nature of the oral group lessons demands to be memorized, repeated and answered alone. For example, in lesson seven of the third unit (see Appendix E-6), the oral group lessons given below are to be solved in groups:

- Alemu is not sleepy nor am I sleepy.
- Neither Getachew nor Berhanu has completed their assignments.
- Hawi is ten years old. So am I.

On the basis of the example given above, each learner writes eight complete sentences using 'So am I', 'nor am I', and 'neither nor' to compare him/her to other students in the class. Then discuss what learners have written in small groups.

Even though each individual student exercises how to use comparisons, the content is inadequate and except makes him/her simply repeat what is given in the example, it doesn't help him/her create new ideas that may be contributed to his/her respective group.

In lesson five of the fifteenth unit (see Appendix E-8), the oral group lesson is about synonyms which are indicated in table 4.5.

Table 4.5:Synonyms

pretty	beautiful
sick	ill
hard	difficult
hot	warm

Having studied the above synonyms, learners use them to replace the underlined words in the following sentences:

1. The girl was very sick so her father took her to the clinic.
2. It was difficult to climb the mountain.
3. The day was very warm because the sun was shining.

After using the words listed in table 4.5 in place of the underlined words, learners discuss what they have done in their groups.

Though students are ordered to talk about synonyms in small groups, the task could rather be solved individually, and does not demand each individual to share his/her idea(s) to members of the group. Thus, the oral group lessons mentioned above partially meet the criterion of ‘individual accountability’.

Therefore, from the twenty-eight oral groups lessons presented in the textbook, twenty-one of them fulfill the individual accountability’ criterion and seven of them partially fulfill it. Look at table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Oral Group Lessons That Create Individual Accountability
In Grade 7 English Textbook**

No	Criterion	Total number of oral group lessons in the textbook	Degree of occurrence	Number of oral group lessons	Per cent
3	Create individual accountability	28	Occur	21	75
			Partially occur	7	25
			Absent	-	-

The contents of the oral group lessons are also assessed to see whether or not they can make learners practice some of the social skills like leadership, decision-making, trust-building, conflict management, etc.

According to the study conducted on the twenty-eight oral group lessons in the student's textbook, fifteen of them meet a 'social skill' criterion. For instance, lesson four of unit six (see Appendix E-9) is about how learners can make use of 'would' to express their thoughts and wishes in conversation. This gives opportunities for learners to exercise how they are able to express their thoughts and wishes politely to others.

In lesson four of unit eleven (see Appendix E-10), the picture shows that Abebe (the bullying student) is dragging Tsige's hair violently. Below the picture, the passage entitled as 'The School Bully' is given. Learners are asked to read this passage and solve the following questions that follow it:

1. What is the main idea of the story?
2. Why was Tsige afraid of going to school?
3. Why do you think Abebe might have become a bully?
4. Name at least three things Abebe did to frighten Tsige.
5. What do you think will happen when Tsige's mother goes to school?

By looking at the picture and discussing the comprehension questions, learners get lessons that would enable them to solve the conflict that happened between Tsige and Abebe. This, in turn, helps them manage similar problems or others that may occur in their real lives. Moreover, in lesson seven of the same unit (see Appendix E-3), learners practice some of the possible measures taken by parents, teachers and students to prevent bullying by filling the table presented as follows:

Table 4.7: Ways To Prevent Bullying

Parents	Teachers	Students

When learners fill the possible measures taken by parents, teachers and students to prevent bullying in table 4.7, they practice managing conflict, making decision and the like in groups.

Lesson two of the first unit (see Appendix E-11) is about asking and giving personal information. Having practiced this, learners may be aware of the importance of listening to others' opinions and express theirs to others.

In general, the oral group lessons mentioned above enable learners practice some of the social skills that are essential inside and outside classroom.

On the other hand, thirteen of the oral group lessons in the textbook do not fulfill this criterion. For instance, in lesson eight of the second unit (see Appendix E-12), students sit in groups and arrange words under the columns of noun, verb, adjective and adverb. Furthermore, in the seventh lesson of unit five (see Appendix E-13), learners are ordered to notice the underlined adjectives given below.

1. I am as tall as you.
2. I am not as tall as you.
3. Shege is as beautiful as Bontu.
4. Shege is not as beautiful as Bontu.
5. My father is as strong as yours.
6. My father is not as strong as yours.

Having understood the new language pattern, i.e. as adjective as, and not as adjective as, learners are ordered to combine the following four pairs of sentences given in the table in the same way as the example found at the top of table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Special Language Patterns That Includes Adjectives

I am tall.	You are tall.	I am as tall as you.
1. My father is not strong.	1. Your father is strong.	1.
2. I am fast.	2. You are fast.	2.
3. My mother is not small.	3. Your mother is small.	3.
4. I am a hardworking student.	4. You are a hardworking student.	4.

After combining the given pairs of sentences on the space provided, students talk about the sentences that they have made in their small groups.

The contents of the two oral group lessons mentioned above show that there are no ways to see the students' contributions that make them practice social skills.

To sum up, fifteen of the oral group lessons make learners exercise some of the social skills but the remaining thirteen oral group lessons lack this nature. Table 4.9 indicates the summary of this.

**Table 4.9: Oral Group Lessons That Cultivate Social Skills In Grade 7
English Textbook**

No	Criterion	Total number of oral group lessons in the textbook	Degree of occurrence	Number of oral group lessons	Per cent
4	Cultivate social skill	28	Occur	15	53.6
			Partially occur	-	-
			Absent	13	46.4

One nature of cooperative group lessons in a textbook is having group processing which is used to explore the nature of the interaction processes that occurs within groups of learners. It may take five minutes or a whole lesson; it can happen immediately after the classroom interaction or on the next meeting. During the group processing, a teacher and students should be equally involved. Students must identify how well they have achieved their goals and maintained effective working relationships among members during the CL situations.

In this regard, among the twenty-eight oral group lessons in the textbook, one of them fulfill ‘group processing’ criterion. For instance, in lesson nine of the second unit (see Appendix E-1), learners are ordered to talk about the difference between the ‘work of a farmer’ and the ‘work of a dishonest person’ in pairs. Having discussed the differences using their past experiences, they read the passage individually. Then each student with his/her partner answers the following questions orally:

1. Why did the dishonest person say he lost two thousand birr?
2. Why did the farmer return home happily?
3. How do you think the dishonest person felt happily?

4. Do you think the farmer was honest? Why?
5. What have you learned from this story?

After they have answered the comprehension questions mentioned above in pairs, they form groups of four and take time to look into what they have done so far with their teacher. By doing so, learners may identify how well they have achieved their goals and maintained effective working relationship among themselves.

Alongside with this, twelve of the twenty-eight oral group lessons partially fulfill this criterion. In these oral group lessons, the major concern is discussing the oral group lessons and reporting what learners have come up with in groups to the class.

The instructions of the oral group lessons do not allow students to make use of some time to examine their working relationships and how well they have done so far towards the end of their works. For example, lesson one of unit five (see Appendix E-14) is about identifying certain things in the pictures given the textbook. And with a partner, each learner talks about what he/she sees in each of the pictures. Then in groups of four, they discuss what they have seen in the pictures and report this to the class.

Except report what they have identified to the class, the instructions do not make them take some time and evaluate the causes of the success or failure of their works as a group with a teacher. Thus, it is difficult for members of each group to make decisions about what behaviors to continue or change.

In general, from the twenty-eight oral group lessons, one of them meets the 'group processing' criterion. Besides, twelve of them partially fulfill this criterion. This is because, learners work in groups and report the

results of their work to the class even though the instructions of the oral group lessons do not permit them to take some time towards the end of their discussion, and assess the strong and weak sides of their activities. On the other hand, fifteen of the twenty-eight oral group lessons do not totally fulfill this criterion. The following table indicates the above result.

Table 4.10 : Oral Group Lessons That Enhance Group Processing In Grade 7 English Textbook

	Criterion	Total number of oral group lessons in the textbook	Degree of occurrence	Number of oral group lessons	Per cent
5	Enhance group processing	28	Occur	1	3.6
			Partially occur	12	42.9
			Absent	15	53.5

To sum up, the oral group lessons in the student's English textbook of grade seven have been analyzed and interpreted on the basis of the five criteria suggested by the scholars mentioned earlier. And the summary of the criteria and the findings of the oral group lessons are presented in table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Summary Of the Criteria And The Findings Of Grade 7 English Textbook

No	Criteria	Total number of oral group lessons in the textbook	Degree of occurrence	Number of oral group lessons	Per cent
1	Create positive interdependence	28	Occur	17	60.7
			Partially occur	11	39.3
			Absent	-	-
2	Promote face-to-face interaction	28	Occur	28	100
			Partially occur	-	-
			Absent	-	-
3	Create individual accountability	28	Occur	21	75
			Partially occur	7	25
			Absent	-	-
4	Cultivate social skills	28	Occur	15	53.6
			Partially occur	-	-
			Absent	13	46.4
5	Enhance group processing	28	Occur	1	3.6
			Partially occur	12	42.9
			Absent	15	53.5

4.2 Results of the Interviewees' Responses

In this section of the paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the data gathered through interviewing four English language teachers of grade seven who have been currently teaching in the two government primary and junior secondary schools, and fourteen students who have been attending grade seven at the same schools.

The responses from the teachers and the students were used to triangulate the data gathered through other tools. The results of the interview which were conducted with the teachers and the students are summarized as follows.

4.2.1 Results of Teachers' Interview

The teachers were asked how often they made their learners work in oral group activities. In response to this question, three of the four interviewees said that they made their learners participate in oral group activities in accordance with the instructions given in the English textbook. However, one of the interviewees said that she/he made the students work in groups once a week.

The second question that the teachers were asked if the sitting arrangement, fixed desks, number of students, etc in each classroom were conducive for conducting the oral group lessons. As to this question, two of the four interviewees replied that the classroom was not favorable to carry out the oral group lessons because of the large number of students and fixed desks. Nevertheless, they ordered their students to participate in oral group lessons as they were in their seats. Moreover, the other teacher said that he/she tried to arrange the desks for group activities for a month or two. However, students of another shift disordered what had been arranged. Because of this, he/she gave up

arranging the desks for oral group activities any longer. Instead, he/she made the students exercise oral group lessons as they were in their seats. On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees replied that the large number of students and their poor background knowledge of English did not allow him/her to make the students involve in oral group activities. As a result, he/she forced to conduct the oral group lessons once a week.

The next question was about the appropriateness of the tasks for group activities. Regarding this question, all the teachers answered that the tasks were, of course, appropriate for group activities. But the problem was that most of the learners couldn't cope with the oral group lessons as they were beyond the students' ability.

The other questions raised were about the oral group lessons if they made the students learn from one another, and as to how they made the learners learn from one another. As a response to these questions, all the interviewees agreed that the nature of the oral group lessons, in deed, made their learners learn from one another through discussions. However, they stressed that most of their students were not competent enough to deal with the oral group lessons given in the textbook.

The researcher interviewed the teachers whether their students learned something out of the oral group lessons when they worked in groups. They were also asked what they gained from their learning. The responses of all the teachers to these questions were similar. They totally agreed that when the students worked in groups, they learned something like affection, cooperation, freedom to express thought, etc. In fact, the activities that they dealt with were challenging because of their being deficient in their English language knowledge.

The informants were asked whether the oral group lessons help the

learners practice social skills, and how they helped them to learn these skills. Though they described in different ways, they had nearly the same responses. They said that the oral group lessons enabled them to practice social skills by assigning roles like chairperson, secretary, etc when they put themselves in groups.

This was, in deed, the begining of exercising the activities that would happen outside the school compound. The learners also practiced self-confidence since they were not afraid of their partners to talk out what they had felt during the discussion. The interviewees, for example, listed some of the social skills that the students could practice while working in groups as follows:

- Polite request
- Problems solving through discussions
- Decision making
- Leadership
- Trust building
- Conflict management

Finally, the interviewees were asked whether they participated with their students who evaluated how well they had achieved their goals and maintained effective working relationships immediately after the classroom interaction or on the next meeting. In response to this question, two of the teachers said that they were sometimes involved when the students evaluated what they had accomplished in groups. Nevertheless, one of the interviewees said that he/she didn't let the students evaluate what they had achieved due to the fact that the students' knowledge of English didn't motivate him/her to do so. In addition, the rest interviewee answered that he/she rarely made the students evaluate what they had achieved in groups. And he/she asked

the passive students as to why they didn't participate actively while evaluating in groups.

In general, the researcher endeavored to share the experiences and awareness of the teachers in connection with the oral group lessons presented in the textbook.

4.2.2 Results of Students' Interview

In order to consolidate the results obtained from the teachers' interview, the students were selected for interview. As stated earlier, the selection of the students was similar. From the two hundred and five students found in the three sections and selected for classroom observation at Muki Turi Primary and Junior Secondary School, six of them were randomly taken. Similarly, from Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School, out of the three hundred and twenty students who were in the four sections and selected for classroom observation, eight of them were randomly taken for the interview (see 3.2).

As mentioned above (see 3.3.3), the researcher interviewed the students in Amharic in order to avoid the shortage of information because of English language difficulties, and their responses were grouped accordingly. The results are summarized as follows.

"How often do you work in groups in the English language classes? How much emphasis do teachers and students give to it?" were the first questions raised. As to these questions, six of the interviewees replied that they worked in groups of four or five once a week. The rest respondents said that they frequently exercised oral group lessons. And to the question how much emphasis the teachers and the students gave to the oral group lessons, all the interviewees agreed that almost all their teachers gave due attention to the oral group activities as they helped and monitored the learners while working in groups. However, five of

the students said that there were some problems on the part of the students during the oral group activities. For instance, only a few members of the groups listened to what the teachers said in connection with the lessons being discussed. There were also some other students who sat idle because of their inabilities of making use of the language. In fact, this might emanate from their poor background knowledge of English.

The other question the students were asked was if the oral group lessons in the textbook made them learn from one another while working together in groups. They were also asked how these oral group activities enabled them to learn from one another. The responses of all the students were similar. They totally agreed that the oral group lessons in their textbook helped them learn from one another by sharing their thoughts.

The researcher asked the interviewees whether the oral group lessons in the text helped them practice social skills, and the kind of social skills that could be practiced through CL. In response to these questions, thirteen of the interviewees confirmed that the oral group lessons in the text made them practice social skills like what is listed below.

- Offering help one another.
- Persuading one another while discussing the activities
- Expressing thoughts freely without fear during CL
- Exercising leadership
- Solving problems through discussions
- Practice trust building
- Exercising decision making

In contrast to what has been said above, one of the respondents suggested that the oral group lessons in the textbook were not that much helpful for clever students to practice social skills. Because, they could answer most of the questions from the passage very well. If so, they had nothing to talk to other clever students, or it might be monotonous for them to repeat what they had already understood to each member while discussing in groups, nor did it make them create new thoughts that could be used for the discussion.

“After you have done the oral group lessons in the student’s textbook, do you identify the causes of your failure or success, and discuss which behaviors continue or change? Why?” were the next questions raised. As a response to these questions, eight of the fourteen respondents said that they sometimes evaluated what they had done so far in groups towards the end of their classes. By doing so, they were to practice being cooperative and correcting their mistake(s) which might cause them not to be effective in their oral group activities. However, two of the interviewees said that they were rarely ordered to evaluate what they had done towards the end of their classes, and they did not pay much attention to it. On the other hand, four of the interviewees answered that they did oral group activities in groups of four or five once a week but their teachers didn’t make them evaluate what they had exercised.

The other question the researcher raised was if the students had encountered with any problems while working together in groups, and if their answer is ‘yes’, they were asked to suggest some solutions that they thought in relation to the problems. In response to these questions, twelve of the interviewees said that there were some problems while working in groups. Some of the problems that they raised are listed as follows:

- During the oral group lessons, all members of each group didn’t

- participate equally;
- Some students were demotivated to participate actively when they learned in groups because of their poor background knowledge of English;
 - There was time in which all members of the group could not arrive at an agreement while discussing in groups. And this might, in turn, bring about conflict among themselves;
 - Some members of the groups became dependent on clever student(s) for their success. As a result, they might ignore to participate actively in their respective groups, and
 - Some students who consider themselves the most knowledgeable disturbed other learners not to focus properly on what they were working in groups.

As solutions to the problems mentioned above, the interviewees suggested that their teachers should:

- monitor each member of the groups during discussion,
- arrange tutorial classes and teach them in order to improve their English language,
- express clearly what the students will do with the oral group lessons,
- advise them to try to do their own rather than become dependent on others during oral group activities, and
- advise pompous students to stop disturbing others while working oral group lessons together and follow up whether or not they bring behavioral changes.

Finally, the researcher asked the students if they had additional remarks concerning the oral group lessons that may promote CL. As to this question, thirteen of the interviewees suggested that they wanted to keep on learning in the oral group lessons because of the reasons given as

follows:

- They shared experiences while working together;
- Help from partners increased both for the learners being helped as well as for those giving the help, i.e. for the students being helped, the assistance from their partners enabled them to move away from dependence on teachers and gain more chances to enhance their learning. For the students offering help, the oral group lessons used as opportunities to increase their own performance, and
- They were afraid of raising hands and expressed their thoughts before the class. However, when they were in groups, they were free to talk out what they had felt before their partners.

Despite the fact that what have been suggested above, one of the respondents commented that the oral group lessons that they worked together should not be practiced any longer. This is because, clever and lazy students worked together and scored the same results. This, in turn, made the clever ones demoralize in their learning. In addition, though lazy students were dependent on clever students to get pass mark without knowing something for the time being, they might face troubles in their future learning conditions.

4.3 Results of Classroom Observation

Having informed the purpose of the research to the principals of the two primary and junior secondary schools, the researcher arranged the dates and the sections with the English teachers for the classroom observations.

After preparing the checklist (see Appendix D), the researcher observed grade seven classroom while they were conducting the oral group

lessons. In this observation, four sections from Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School and three sections from Muki Turi Primary and Junior Secondary School were observed. Each section in both schools was observed once. This is because, the researcher believed that each teacher might have similar consistency in teaching different sections. The oral group lessons observed were:

- Discussing the main idea of the story
- Tenses (Simple past and present perfect tenses)

When the teacher and the researcher entered the classroom at Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School, all the students stood up and their teacher ordered them politely to sit down. The teacher, after revising what he taught yesterday for five minutes, he began the lesson by writing the example found on page 90 of the textbook on the chalkboard as follows:

V1: I go to school everyday

V2: I went to school yesterday.

V3: I have gone to school for seven years.

Then he asked the class to identify the type of tenses in each sentence given in the example. Most of the students raised their hands and he randomly called the students by names and asked them to answer. They responded that the first one is simple present, the second is simple past and the last is present perfect tense. After this, he ordered them to write some other sentences of their own in groups of four or five or six as they were in their seats.

While he was trying to show as to how members of groups were writing sentences in relation to the tenses mentioned in the example, some other students in the other groups were sitting idle or discussing the activity in

using their native languages.

In fact, he was in a hurry to see what each group had tried to write. Nevertheless, a considerable number of groups was left without being offered help. As the number of the students was large, it was hard for him to work with each member of the groups.

After using up twenty-five minutes, he went in front and randomly called two students from different groups. He gave them two pieces of chalk and ordered them to write what their groups had agreed on the chalkboard. After discussing the students' answers with the class, he corrected their answers on the chalkboard.

Without giving the chance to others to come in front, the period was over. Before he left the class, he ordered the students to do the second lessons of unit nine as homework.

The role of the teacher was a facilitator in the students' effort to practice the group activities. In fact, as the number of students was large, he couldn't control the students when they frequently used their mother tongues. The researcher also observed that the oral group lessons done in the class based on the textbook showed the teacher's effort to go in line with the objectives indicated in the syllabus.

Having finished observing the first teacher, the researcher went together with the second teacher to observe the other section.

She cleaned the chalkboard and wrote 'English' towards the top of it. Then she asked the students to let her remember what they learned the previous day. The students put up their hands and responded that their yesterday's lesson was about simple past and present perfect tenses. She called some students from each row by names and asked them to read out the sentences that they had written about these tenses from their

exercise books.

While the students were reading what they had written about the tenses, she was listening to them without telling the correct answers. When the student's answer was wrong, she immediately made him/her sit down and gave the chance to others.

Having done this for twenty minutes, she ordered the students to close their textbooks and write what she was dictating for them. She dictated three lines of the second paragraph of lesson two in unit nine, which is entitled as 'My Injury'.

Having finished dictating to the learners, one of the students stood up and asked her, "What is meant by dictation?" In response to his question, she said, "When I read, you write. This is called dictation'." Indeed, the student was not satisfied with her answer.

However, the instructions of the lesson that she was trying to teach say that each student tells his/her partner what he/she thinks the story, "My Injury", is about and then with a partner practice using simple past and present perfect tenses, verbs to talk about things that he/she did in the past (simple past tense) or has done in school in the past (Present perfect tense). Then say each sentence using simple past tense and again using present perfect tense. After doing this, the students, form groups of four and they listen to each person say his/her sentences.

In contrast to the instructions mentioned above, she asked them to read out the three lines that she had dictated from the book and made them discuss her dictations in groups of four or five or six as they were in their seats. Without giving them feedback, the period was over. Before she left the class, she gave them lesson five, found on page 93, as homework.

All in all, her teaching style was quite different from the first teacher

whom the researcher had observed. In addition, the students' activity was not as lively as it was observed in the first class.

Having accomplished the classroom observation at Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School, the researcher went to Muki Turi Primary and Junior Secondary School. What was observed here is that the way the two teachers approached the English textbook was almost similar to the first teacher who had been observed at Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School. However, the ways the students answered the oral group lessons were different.

After revising the previous lesson briefly for five minutes, she started the lesson by clarifying what they were going to do next. Then she ordered the students to be in groups before they started to read the passage entitled as "The First Day of School", found on page 87. Then, as an example, she told them a sentence that had to be written at the first position of the jumbled sentences and she also asked a sentence that came to the second position. During this time, almost all the students raised their hands and one of them gave her the correct answer. Then she ordered them to write the correct positions of the rest sentences in the same way she did.

Though the students in different groups had a heated discussion, some of them used their native languages while discussing in groups to create mutual understanding among themselves. Of course, she offered them her help if need be.

Finally, she let some students from different groups come in front and write the correct orders of the jumbled sentences on the chalkboard. Then she discussed the answers whether or not they were correct together with her students. In the end, she gave them homework: to work on lesson nine on page 88.

Having observed the first teacher, the researcher went to the other section to observe the second teacher.

Like the first teacher, she revised the previous lesson briefly for five minutes and wrote the topic being discussed on the chalkboard. Then she explained the simple past and present perfect tenses by giving her own examples. She also asked some more examples from the learners.

Having made the learners get some insights about these tenses, she made them form groups of four or five and ordered them to write six sentences in which three of them were simple past and the rest were present perfect tense. While they were discussing in groups, she was monitoring them closely and offering her assistance to the groups.

After twenty-five minutes of their heated discussion, she asked some students from different groups to come in front and write the agreement of their respective groups on the chalkboard. And she discussed the answers together with her students.

Finally, before she left the class, she told them to do the second lesson of unit nine as homework for the next discussion.

The role of the teachers in the two sections was more of a facilitator. They used group discussion as a strategy to enable the learners to practice the oral group lessons, which may, in turn, promote CL. In fact, the number of the students in each class was not as large as the number of students at Gerbeguracha Primary and Junior Secondary School.

In general, the researcher paid two visits to the two schools. And he attempted to see the actual situations in which the oral group lessons in the student's English textbook were implemented.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions have been made.

5.1.1 Even though the oral group lessons in the English textbook of grade seven promote teachers and students for CL, they are not uniformly practiced in the EFL classroom. This is because, some teachers believe that their learners' poor background knowledge of English, the unmanageable number of students in each class, the scarcity of the textbooks, and the presence of fixed desks in each classroom prevent them from implementing the oral group activities as properly as possible. As a result, they do not pay due attention as to how their students form groups and conduct the oral group activities. They order the students to form groups and discuss the oral group lessons for the sake of simply conveying order.

5.1.2 All the teachers complain about the large number of students in each class which is inconvenient for them to make their learners participate in the oral group activities and monitor them closely.

5.1.3 According to the observation of the classroom, some of the teachers have not communicated with their learners in English in the way that they should have done during the teaching and learning process. If so, it is difficult to expect them to enable their learners to participate actively in the oral group lessons that promote CL.

5.1.4 Though all the learners are equally beneficial from a CL, it was found that low achievers who are dependent on high achievers for their success benefit more from it without exertion.

5.1.5 The students frequently use their native languages while discussing the oral group lessons and then translate their thoughts into English for presenting what they have prepared for the class.

5.1.6 After CL, some teachers give their learners feedback and some others do not.

5.1.7 After conducting CL, the teachers and the students could not make use of an effective way of evaluating the oral group activities to ameliorate future CL situations.

5.1.8 The student's English textbook doesn't have rules, techniques and procedures which could be used along with the oral group lessons.

5.2 Recommendations

From the discussions given above and the conclusions reached, the researcher forwards the following recommendations:

5.2.1 If CL is to be successful, teachers need to be properly in-serviced on CL theories and methods. They also need practical knowledge with examples. It is not enough to simply give teachers a textbook. Teachers should know that CL works in similar situations to their own. Otherwise, they will continue to use what they see as reasonably successful in their own classroom without understanding what CL can do for their students.

- 5.2.2 MoE and other concerned bodies should prepare workshops in which teachers are trained to make use of English language for communicative purposes. And this may, in turn, create capacity for them to teach their learners English properly.
- 5.2.3 Teachers should give grades (marks) on the basis of the individual learning of all group members; that is, the average scores on quizzes which the student shares without teammates help. In order for the team to succeed, all the team members must have learned so that one or two students do not do all the work.
- 5.2.4 As English is the medium of instructions, teachers should urge their students to discuss the oral group lessons in English rather than in other languages during CL. Teachers should serve as facilitators and encourage their students to be interdependent during CL. They should also observe and monitor what is going on, and if necessary, intervene during discussions.
- 5.2.5 After CL, teachers should motivate group members on the basis of the fact that group incentives induce students to encourage goal-directed behaviors within the group. Furthermore, teachers and students had better use an effective way of evaluating the oral group lessons to ameliorate future CL situations.
- 5.2.6 Textbook writers should put rules, techniques and procedures along with those oral group lessons to promote CL.
- 5.2.7 Further research should be done on the impact of large class size in using CL in the Ethiopian context.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Classroom Observation Checklist

I. Personal Information

1. Name of the School: _____
2. Sex (Tick one): Male Female
3. Teaching experience in years: _____
4. Qualification(s): _____
5. Number of students in the class: _____

II. Evaluation Checklist

6. Teaching the lesson with the objectives mentioned in the syllabus _____

7. Assigning Students to group _____

8. Arranging the room _____

9. Assigning roles _____

10. Explaining the academic task _____

11. Monitoring the group discussion _____

12. Providing task assistance _____

13. The extent to which teachers make use of Amharic _____

14. Giving feedback on cooperative group activities _____

15. Having groups process the causes of their effectiveness or failure of
the oral group lessons that they have discussed _____

16. Other remarks _____

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Teachers

I. Personal Information

1. Sex: _____
2. Qualification(s): _____
3. Field of study: _____
4. Teaching experience in years _____

II. Questions

5. How often do you make your learners work in oral group activities?

6. Is the classroom, i.e. sitting arrangement, fixed desks, number of students, etc conducive for conducting oral group lessons?

7. Are the oral group lessons in the textbook appropriate for group work? How ? _____

8. Do the oral group lessons in the textbook make students learn from one another? How? _____

9. Do students learn something out of the oral group lessons when they work in groups? What do they learn? _____

10. Do you think that the oral group lessons in the textbook help learners practice social skills like leadership, conflict management, decision-making, etc? How? _____

11. Do you participate with your students when they evaluate how well they have achieved their goals and maintained effective working relationships immediately after the classroom interaction or on their next meeting? Why? _____

Appendix C-1

The Students' Interview Questions in Amharic

የተማሪዎች ቃለ መጠይቅ

1. ፆታ: _____
2. ክፍል: _____
3. ትምህርት ተጋግዞ በእንግሊዝኛ ክፍለ ጊዜ ምን ያህል የተለመደ ነው? አስተማሪውና ተማሪዎች ምን ያህል ትኩረት ይሰጡታል? _____

4. በእንግሊዝኛ መማሪያ መጽሐፍ ውስጥ የቀረቡት የቃል የትምህርት ተጋግዞ መልመጃዎች ተማሪዎች እርስ በርሳቸው በመረዳዳት እንዲማማሩ እገዛ ያደርጋሉን? እንዴት? _____

5. የትምህርት ተጋግዞ መልመጃዎች ተማሪዎች ማህበራዊ ክህሎች እንዲያገለግሉ ይረዳሉን? ምን አይነት ማህበራዊ ክህሎችን ለማግኘት ይረዳሉ ብለው ያስባሉ? _____

6. የትምህርት ተጋግዞ መልመጃዎችን ከሰራችሁ በኋላ ውጤታማ እንድትሆኑ ወይም እንዳትሆኑ ምክንያት የሆኑትን ሀሳቦች የመለየትና ለወደፊቱ ምን ዓይነት ባህሪ መቀጠል ወይም መስተካከል እንዳለበት ትወያያላችሁ? ለምን _____

7. በትምህርት ተጋግዞ ወቅት ያጋጠሙ ችግሮችን ካሉና መፍትሔ ይሆናሉ የሚሉትን ቢጠቅሱልኝ? _____

8. ተጨማሪ አስተያየት በትምህርት ተጋግዞ ዙሪያ ካለዎት ቢገልጹልኝ? _____

Appendix C-2

Interview Questions for Students

(Translation of the Amharic Version)

1. Sex: _____
2. Grade: _____
3. How often do you work in groups in the English language classes?
How much emphasis do a teacher and students give to it?

4. Do you think that the oral group lessons in the students' textbook
make the students learn from each other when they work together in
groups? How? _____

5. Do you think that the contents in the oral group lessons help the
students practice social skills? What kind of social skills do you think
the students practice? _____

6. After you have finished treating the group activities in the speaking
sections, do you discuss what member actions are helpful or not
helpful, and which behaviors continue or change? Why? _____

7. Have you come across with any problem in relation to the oral group lessons? If your answer is yes, what would be the solutions?

8. Do you have additional remarks in connection with the oral group lessons? _____

Appendix D

Checklist for Text Analysis

		Rating		
		Occur	Partially Occur	Absent
1	Positive interdependence (if each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for the success of the group).			
2	Face-to-Face interaction (if each group member works together within the group).			
3	Individual accountability (it refers to the necessity of each group member being accountable for a fair share of work).			
4	Interpersonal and small-group skills (if social skills like leadership, decision-making, trust-building, conflict-management, etc are cultivated).			
5	Group processing (if it provides the students with opportunities to evaluate how the group is working, what they are doing right and what needs to be improved).			

NB:

Occur

- When the instructions and the contents of the oral group lessons which are in the students' textbook witness the oral group lessons are in line with the criteria, i.e. the elements of CL.

Partially Occur

- If the instructions say work in groups and when the content is not treated strongly, i.e. the elements of CL mentioned in the table are partially observed.

Absent

- When the elements of CL mentioned above are totally missing.