

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

**A STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF
USING GROUP WORK IN EFL CLASSES WITH REFERENCE
TO GRADE 9: DIRE DAWA COMPREHENSIVE SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN FOCUS**

ADEM MOHAMMED

JULY, 2007

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**A Study On The Challenges And Opportunities Of Using Group
Work In EFL Classes With Reference To Grade 9: Dire Dawa
Comprehensive Secondary School In Focus**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledge.

Adem Mohammed

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ABSTRACT

The underlying objective of this study was to investigate how EFL teachers handle selected key problems of group and plan activities in stages in order to maximize learning outcomes with reference to grade 9 students of Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School.

To this end, three tools i.e. questionnaire, interview and classroom observation were used to collect data from 200 participants: 196 students and 4 English teachers. That is, 196 grade 9 students who were present in 4 randomly selected sections, during data collection, filled in and returned the questionnaire. Out of them, six students who were selected by the English department head and 4 English teachers of the selected sections were interviewed. The students were selected on the basis of academic ability (using their first semester English results as index), sex, social class and ethnic identity to achieve heterogeneity in line with the goal of group work where as the teachers were chosen because their classes were selected for the study. Four group lessons presented by the four teachers were observed twice and video recorded at last in an effort to search for evidence on how teachers handle problems and plan group activities in stages..

The findings of the study indicate status difference among students mainly academic status, learners' English language inadequacy, low task quality, non participation and domination as major challenges in using group work at the secondary school level and teachers are less sensitive to them.

From the results, it was also found out that most teachers do not plan group work in stages contrary to its principles. Simply putting students in groups by seats, they give topics and request them to discuss without providing content knowledge of task and other resources such as clear task instructions, roles and discussion skills. Besides, they inefficiently monitor performance progress and at the end disregard giving principled feedback in whole-class context. Consequently, discussions were dominated by few high academic status members and as a result interest as well as learning out comes were low. Thus, efforts should be made, by the concerned bodies, to have competent motivated professional teachers who can better implement group work at the secondary level through special training.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

English is one of the few world languages that are widely used for communication across nations for purposes such as diplomatic and business. Thus, the main goal of learning English as a foreign language for the wider public is to use it for communication (Ellis, 1994). In Ethiopia, since English is the medium of instruction for secondary and tertiary levels, the primary goal is to use it for academic purpose. As success in academic studies, among other things, largely depends on the learners' English language ability, it appears to be very important to Ethiopian secondary and tertiary level students.

In the pre-communicative era, foreign language performance of many students was low as they had little chance to practice the language (Widdowson, 1978; Littlewood, 1981) contrary to the language learning goal. In line with the stated language learning goal, it was necessary to address the question what method could serve to teach English for fluency. Thus, the communicative approach was developed to necessitate a shift of focus in the goals of language programs from accuracy to fluency (Riggenach and Lazaraton, 1991).

Over the last few decades, everywhere including Ethiopia, there have been efforts to switch both language teaching materials and methods in line with the communicative approach for the purpose of improving foreign language performance. However, as local studies by Alamirew (1992) and Berhanu (2000) reveal, the English language ability of many Ethiopian secondary school students is so much below the threshold level that they cannot use it for meaningful communication in the various academic and social contexts. Zeleke (2006) argues that this, in part, holds true even for those who could join colleges and universities. Taking in to account that group work has proved its worth of promoting learners' communication ability in many other contexts (Antonellis, 1980; Davies, 1980), in our case, however, it seems that students were not effectively involved in English via group work techniques of language teaching.

It has been suggested that there are both challenges and opportunities in using group work. The writer of this research believes that achieving opportunities of group work depends on how successfully teachers and students overcome the challenges. One key challenge is that to yield desired effects, group work essentially requires the use of the target language throughout (Davies, 1980). However, the language base of our students is poor. So to speak, simply an overuse may devastate all the advantages associated with group work because it leads to boredom (Celce-Murcia, 1980). Celce-Murcia further argues that there are always a few students who do not like group work for social and cultural reasons and some who do not show much progress in spite of wide practice they do because group work hides slow learners. On top of this teachers rarely use group work (Brumfit, 1984; Ur, 1981) perhaps because it is not easy to break away from the 'norm' and communicative teaching demands much effort. According to Zeleke (2006), this also is true in Ethiopia.

The principle of group work assumes interaction as a base for learning. Hence, to win their responses group activities must always be adapted to the age, the level of ability and cultural backgrounds of particular learners (Davies, 1980). According to Jacobs and Ball (1996), to be defined as cooperative, an activity should meet two widely accepted criteria: positive interdependence and individual accountability. As they explain it; however, activities which satisfy these criteria may fail to work with certain group of learners while those which do not meet them may work very well. Thus, since whether an activity functions as co-operative or not entirely depends on learners' perception "*even a highly skilled teacher using the best materials can not guarantee beneficial interaction between students who, for example, dislike each other for reasons deriving from beyond the school walls (Ibid., p. 101).*

This view seems to be congruent with Ellis' (1994) position that the SLA process is so complex that it is not predictable. Hence, there is no single way to it and a method that works out in one context may fail in another (Spolsky, 1989). This in turn would imply the need to consider social and affective factors in foreign language learning situations. According to Ellis (1994), both social factors which affect learners as a group and psychological factors that affect them individually are to be considered. Since Ethiopia is a multicultural country, we have students with different cultural backgrounds and varied personality variables gathered in

one class. From his experience as an English teacher, the researcher has come to note that both teachers and the centrally prepared course books seem to view the impacts of social and affective factors with less regard in their efforts to use group work for language teaching

Based on the assumption that learning takes place when the learners are actively involved in the process (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Littlewood, 1981), many SLA researchers are in support of the use of group work for foreign language learning. However, it has to be noted that group work does not provide opportunities under any condition without effort. To equally benefit from group work, all group members should have equal chance to talk, interact, and contribute. Since group work owes its merits to interaction, any factor that affects this normal pattern of interaction is seen as a challenge that counters the efficiency of group work (Cohen, 1972; Jacobs and Ratmandia, 1996). This is because it results in unequal participation to consequently impair the learning of certain students or favor the learning of others in a group setting. In this light, there may be a number of challenges in using group work. However, this study aims to probe selected key challenges which are prominent in the literature specifically those related to status, social, affective variables, language proficiency, task elements and planning activities.

Scholars in the field believe that if teachers were able to successfully involve learners in English through group work by overcoming these challenges, their language proficiency would be better. Many researchers report that the group work method of involving students in the process is more effective than any other mode of instruction where oral fluency is the goal (Davis, 1993). As a way of involving many students in a language at once in a situation that approximates real life, group work benefits students language skills (Davies, 1980; Brumfit, 1984). Besides, according to Celce-Murcia (1980), group work gives learners tools to go on improving their English after completion of courses in that it makes them responsible for their own learning.

The main concern of this research is to see how teachers attempt to overcome the challenges facing group work in order to involve learners in English language use in a manner closer to real life. Its scope encompasses surveying major potential problems, how sensitive teachers

are to them and what strategies teachers use to overcome these in an effort to give students better chance to practice English. It appears that the low English proficiency of our secondary school students that needs addressing and the fact that the use of group work in language teaching is a growing trend (Jacobs and Ball, 1996), hence a room for further investigation, would justify the significance of this study.

In fact there are a few local studies that center their focuses on group work. Alamirew (1992), in his study on the “ Application of Group work in Learning English” with reference to grade 9 attempts to experimentally test the advantage of group work over the structural approach. Berhanu’s (2000) research which deals with the practice of cooperative learning in grade 11 concludes that many teachers and students lack the trend of working in cooperation to learn English. Another research in the area is that of Zeleke (2006). He seems to direct his focus mainly on the strategies teachers use in handling group work. Although his research attempts to consider problems relating to group work, it doesn’t touch those resulting from social, status and personality factors. None of them attempt to directly address the role of social and affective factors for effective use of group work in the EFL classes.

Since in places like Dire Dawa English as a medium of instruction starts at grade 9 and hence it is at this level that students are expected to achieve language base necessary for further studies, this research selects secondary level as its setting. As Willis (1977) in Jacobs and Ball (1996) puts it, students may resist the good efforts of education system even to their own disadvantages. And the researcher maintains that this may be due to cultural and personality factors. It is, thus, worth considering classroom realities when using innovations such as group work. It is on the basis of this assumption that the researcher is inspired to explore the challenges and opportunities of using group work at Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School with reference to grade 9.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The underlying objective of this study is to examine how EFL teachers overcome the challenges of classroom realities to use group work effectively at grade 9 level in Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School. On the assumption that exploiting opportunities of group

work involves overcoming its potential challenges, typically socio-cultural, the paper would attempt to address the following research questions:

1. What major challenges do EFL teachers and the learners have in using group work?
2. What strategies do the teachers and students use to tackle the problems of group work to maximize opportunities?
3. How do EFL teachers organize and conduct group work?

1.3 Significance of the Study

In the teaching of English in a foreign context, it would be necessary to devise a strategy that facilitates language learning. By breathing life and relevance in to it, group work would allow the learning process to sound natural and dynamic. Thus, this study in an effort to see how managing potential challenges of group work would enhance opportunities seems to be significant. In brief, the writer of this paper believes that the findings of this study will benefit teachers, course designers, trainers and researchers in the following ways:

1. It may inspire teachers to develop understanding of their own settings to the effect of showing concern to adapt group activities and procedures to classroom realities.
2. It would help course designers to produce language learning materials that may function in the various socio- culturally diverse educational settings of the country.
3. It is also hoped to alert trainers to conduct training in this light.
4. It could serve as a source of direction for researchers who wish to conduct further wider scope studies in the area.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study

This study in an effort to probe how EFL teachers address key challenges of group work to maximize its opportunities was conducted using grade 9 students at Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School and their English teachers as research participants. Of three government secondary schools in Dire Dawa, the study restricted its scope to one because of financial and time constraints. Likewise, out of 12 grade 9 sections, the study was limited only to 4 as the inclusion of other sections was difficult for the same reason. All 196 students who were present in the 4 sections during data collection took part in the study. Again, from 196

students in 4 sections, 6 cases were chosen for interview and only English teachers of the 4 sections were observed and interviewed.

1.5 Abbreviations Used

CL:	Cooperative learning
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
L1:	Native language
L2:	Foreign language
SLA:	Second Language Acquisition
ENE:	English for New Ethiopia
CR:	Classroom
T:	Teacher
S:	Student
C:	Class
B:	Boy
G:	Girl
Q:	Question
A:	Answer

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 The Challenges in Using Group Work

On the assumption that language learning takes place when the learners are involved in the process, several studies are in favor of the use of group work. It promotes language learning and is also helpful for achieving other social and intellectual goals (Cohen, 1972).

However, it has to be noted that group work doesn't offer opportunities by magic without effort. For one thing, owing to the complexity of the skill and the individual learner, the development of communicative ability, the main goal of group work, is very difficult to achieve (Littlewood, 1981; Ur, 1981). Secondly, while group work owes all its merits to the interaction and atmosphere of interest it provides, there are potential factors that influence group interaction and the resulting affective climate. Unless these challenges are carefully handled, group work may turn out to be a new kind of teacher dominated class. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate how EFL teachers handle selected key challenges mainly those relating to status, social factors, task nature, language proficiency, personality variables and lack of planning tasks and then suggest possible solutions in an effort to maximize opportunities for all..

2.1.1 Status Problems

Research shows that small groups naturally tend to develop hierarchies in such a way that some members become more influential than others even when they are equal in every respect. According to Cohen (1972), a status is an agreed-up on social ranking in which everybody prefers to have a high rank than a low rank within a given status order. While in order to equally benefit from group work, group members need to have equal chance to talk, interact and contribute, status difference inhibits this normal pattern of interaction and meaning negotiation (Stern, 1983). Ellis (1994: 261) puts it as:

Interaction involving participants of equal status ensures that learners and their interlocutors share a need and desire to understand each other.' Conversely, unequal status makes it difficult and even unnecessary for participants to structure interaction.

As to how preexisting status orders function to influence group interaction, it has been suggested that high status is often associated with competence. For example, there is general agreement that the whites are more knowledgeable than the blacks. Likewise, men are seen as more competent than women in many societies. Then, motivated by some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, high status students tend to participate more actively than low status members. In relation to this Cohen (1972: 28) states:

Attached to these status characteristics are general expectations for competence. High status individuals are expected to be more competent than low status individuals across a wide range of tasks that are viewed as important. If a teacher assigns a task to a group of students, some of whom are higher and some lower on any of the status characteristics..., these general expectations come into play.

Proceeding with, many writers suggest that key factors of status include socioeconomic background, social class, race, age, sex and intellectual ability. Taking these in to account, Cohen (1972) who regards status problems as major challenges which counter the efficiency of group work because they lead to unequal participation identifies four kinds of statuses:

2.1.1.1 Expert Status

As Cohen (1972) explains it, mainly from teacher's evaluation, classmates may know each others' relative competence in important subject areas to consequently put each other in a rank order of competence. This creates an academic status order among group members. Then, if a task is given from areas where some feel expert, those who feel expert tend to dominate others who feel less expert. According to Cohen, this becomes a problem when a person who is expert in one area is seen as expert in all aspects and in effect motivated to dominate the entire group process.

2.1.1.2 Academic Status

Academic status stems from students' ranking each other on the basis of academic skills such as reading or writing ability. A study by Rosenholtz and Wilson (1980) in Cohen shows that students' ranking each other on reading, for instance, was congruent with that of the teacher. Pertinent to this, they will develop academic status order in the classroom. According to Cohen, academic status creates a problem when it spreads to a wide range of new activities which do not require the skill that has made up the status. For example, taking reading as an index for general ability, competent readers may dominate the group while actually reading is irrelevant to the activity in focus.

2.1.1.3 Peer Status

As they play with each other at school and outside of school, learners often establish their own peer status order mainly on the basis of athletic competence, attractiveness and popularity. Rosenholtz (1980) in Cohen observes that, like those with high academic status, persons with high peer status have similar negative effect on classroom groups. That is, since peer status is closely associated with academic ability, informal social leaders, regardless of their competence, dominate social isolates or low peer status members while the task is purely academic and has nothing to do with play.

2.1.1.4. Societal Status

This is status distinction among members of a society on the basis of social class, race, ethnic group and sex (Ellis, 1994; Cohen, 1972). In many societies, particularly western, people generally feel that it is better to be of higher social class, white and male than to be of lower social class, black, or female (Cohen, 1972). Research shows that societal status has capacity to influence group participation even when members do not know each other and are equal in academic performance. Hence, within interracial groups, for example, the whites were seen to be more influential than the blacks (Cohen, 1972) and in mixed-sex groups men are usually more active and dominant than women (Rosenholtz and Cohen, 1985).

We have made a point that owing to the operation of expectations linked to status, high status members are generally more active than low status members. Nevertheless, it has to be noted

that this may not be always the case in all groups. As Cohen (1972) explains it, sometimes in certain particular groups, some low status persons can be more influential depending on the nature of the task and who starts talking right a way at the beginning of the session.

On the whole, research indicates that high status members generally dominate group discussions. Now, let us turn to the educational disadvantages of unequal patterns of interaction in a group setting. According to Cohen (1972), this leads to three disadvantages. To begin with, as learning stems from interaction, high status persons learn more than low status members. The same writer states that children who work together actively talking score more than those who work together talking less. Secondly, in a situation where some members hesitate to contribute though they may have superb ideas, the intellectual quality of the group product will suffer. Thirdly, the educational goal to provide all children equal chance to succeed and to get group interaction attack stereotypical and prejudicial beliefs of the society will also suffer.

Once again I would like to emphasize that there is nothing wrong if a child who is more knowledgeable in a given area does more explanation to be viewed as more competent in a group situation. After all children have varied abilities and the child is just serving the group as a resource in line with the goal of group work. However, such inequalities become a problem when a child is assumed to be better at every thing pertinent to a status order that has no connection with the new activity and thus dominates all aspects of group work. Therefore, status along with the accompanying expectation needs treating when it appears to be a problem as stated.

2.1.2 Treating Status and Expectations for Competence

2.1.2.1 Status Treatment

We have said that status difference between group members leads to unequal participation to counter the efficiency of group work which, as a learning technique, owes its merit to the atmosphere of interaction it allows. Hence, it requires treatment. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), Jacobs and Ball (1996) and Cohen (1972) below are two strategies that may help to equalize interaction between members of unequal statuses:

- **Positive interdependence:** This exists when group members feel that what helps one helps all or what hurts one hurts all and that they should coordinate their efforts to succeed. It can be achieved through the structure of CL tasks and by establishing cooperative norms among group members (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).
- **Individual accountability:** This strategy holds every member responsible to contribute his fair share for the group success by assigning every one a role to play where his performance on his part of a group project will be assessed (Jacobs and Ball, 1996).

By encouraging low status learners to participate and by preventing the high status members from dominating, the above strategies will help us balance the interaction between group members.

2.1.2.2 Treating Expectations for Competence

Cohen (1972) proposes two strategies that may help low status students feel that their contributions are as important as those of high status members in a way that would transfer to new tasks and be acknowledged by all classmates.

2.1.2.2.1 Making a Low Status Student Group Expert

On the assumption that every student in a class is an expert in a certain area of knowledge, this involves having a list of all students in their areas of expertise and then designing tasks so that low academic or social status students will act as a teacher in their groups. Cohen (1972) who calls this strategy “Expectation Training” argues that it has a proven worth of increasing the participation and influence of low status students. To describe its efficiency of attacking unfavorable expectations for competence, she writes:

Expectation training is an extraordinarily powerful treatment. The low status student not only displays an impressive competence but is in a position to direct the behavior of the high status student as does every teacher- a rare opportunity for someone on the bottom of the classroom status order (Cohen, 1972: 107).

Cohen advises teachers to use this method only when they have time to effectively train the low status student to the leadership role of the teacher of course in presence of students who would volunteer to spend time with him. She stresses that if the student fails as a teacher, that would mean deliberately exposing him to a more severe peer evaluation. The strategy seems less practical due to time factor and requirement of volunteers.

2.1.2.2.2 The Multiple Ability Strategy

First, developed by Tammivara (1982) cited by Cohen, this strategy is a safer and more practical way of attacking unfavorable expectations for competence in classrooms (Cohen, 1972). Based on the modern view of human intelligence as multiple rather than unidimensional (Gardner, 1983), the multiple ability strategy involves convincing the students that quality group product essentially requires different abilities so that they will feel every member is unlikely to be good at all these abilities but one. According to Tammivara (1982) and Rosenholtz (1985) in Cohen who experimentally tested its efficiency, given that it provides every member something to contribute, the approach has a dual effect of changing perceived expectations in a manner it will transfer to new and challenging tasks and that of increasing the interaction of low status learners.

Thus, to use this strategy effectively, the teacher should first create or select a rich activity that requires multiple media and a wide range of skills instead of one right answer task. After finding a rich task, then he has to describe particular abilities required so that the students assume that many abilities are required. To mention an example from language teaching, a teacher of English literature may assign a task of interpreting the motives of the main character. Here, relevant abilities might include understanding why people behave the way they do, going over the text carefully to glean additional clues, and finding a good way to phrase the group's answer. Similarly, in natural science it is possible to find a manipulative science task that demands multiple abilities such as observation, precise manipulation, and careful data recording, hypothesizing causes and effects, and writing up the report.

According to Cohen (1972), it is very difficult to convince the low status students to develop confidence about their markedly improving competence. In an effort to help the low status

learners developed favorable expectations about their performance, the teacher has to, first, make sure that the activity really requires multiple abilities. Next he has to describe the abilities to the students and also orient them that no one is good at all the abilities. Then, during group process he has to observe their performance with special focus on those with low self expectations and give them public recognition as one performance well on one of the relevant abilities and also allow them chance to demonstrate their expertise at the feedback stage.

2.1.3 The Role of Social Factors in L2 Learning

In the previous section, we have seen that statuses affect group interaction to impair the learning of some members. Research indicates that there is indirect relationship between social factors, which underpin status, and L2 learning (Ellis, 1994). Here I shall present specific social factors that are prominent in SLA research: age, sex, social class and ethnic identity in relation to conditions necessary for L2 learning such as stimulation for new experience, attitude, motivation, suitability for group interaction and so on based on the objective of the study.

2.1.3.1 Age

Owing to certain factors related to it, age is believed to affect L2 learning. It is particularly useful in determining the appropriateness of learning topics and activities for group work or role play (McDonough and Shaw, 2003). That is, tasks which involve intensive negotiation of meaning are more suitable to adults than children.

In general, younger learners are more successful in learning a foreign language than older ones (Ellis, 1994). As studies of immigrant families and their children reveals it, children can acquire native speaker proficiency whereas adults always exhibit traces of foreignness (Littlewood, 19984). According to Littlewood (1984) and Ellis (1994), three age related factors may account for this. Firstly, younger children have more favorable learning conditions such as more attention and time for exposure as well as more communicative need and high opportunity to use the target language (Littlewood, 1984). Secondly, unlike older learners who by using conscious thoughts inhibit natural acquisition of the new language, children let acquisition take its natural course (ibid). Thirdly, because they haven't yet formed

stereotypes of their own identity, children usually have more positive attitude towards foreign language, culture and the community (Littlewood, 1984; Ellis, 1994). What is more, related to matters of identity, children are free from fear of rejection and also are more ready to share external norms. This suggests that children can readily cooperate to learn in groups while adolescents and adults may be resistant.

2.1.3.2 Sex

Research evidence indicates that sex leads to differences in foreign language learning and that women are generally better at L2 learning than men. One good justification for females greater success is that they generally have more positive attitudes towards an L2 than males (Ellis, 1994). Related to attitude, girls may also consider a foreign language as a means to get job whereas boys do not. Since attitude has power to influence motivation and proficiency, positive attitude toward the language, the community and foreign culture it self, would mean that there is no internal barriers and hence possibility for high level achievement. In support of this Littlewood (1984:55) comments that:

When we try to develop new speech patterns, we are to some extent giving up markers of our own identity in order to adopt those of another cultural group. In some respects, too, we are accepting another culture's ways of perceiving the world. If we are agreeable to this process, it can enrich us and liberate us.

The second reason for females greater success attributes to the fact they may be more active strategy users in that strategy and language learning outcomes reinforce each other (Ellis, 1994). In his self-report study of learner strategy, Bacon (1992) in Ellis, found that men reported using translation strategy more than women whereas women reported monitoring their comprehension more. Similarly, Gass and Varonis' (1986) research on sex difference concerning interactions concludes that men use opportunities to produce language while women use it to exploit more input using their superior listening skills. If we compare the two in terms of knowledge and language use, women are generally more knowledgeable whereas men sometimes prove to be better at using what they know (Ellis, 1994).

The fact female learners are more active strategy users seems to indicate that girls are more ready to try instructional innovations such as group work than boys. Here, most important are the general differences associated with male and female cultures. According to Hofstede (1980, 1986) in Jacobs and Ball (1996), ‘materialism’, ‘assertiveness’ and ‘self-centeredness’ constitute masculine culture whereas ‘quality of life’, ‘interdependence’ and ‘service to others’ form feminine culture. From this we can see that girls value relationships and like to learn in cooperation while men emphasize maintaining hierarchical relations and asserting their identity (Maltz and Borker 1982 cited by Ellis). Clearly, feminine culture benefits girls in two ways. On the one hand, it enables them to function in groups appropriately in the interest of all members. Secondly, it helps them to readily cope with the inevitable threats L2 learning poses to one’s identity. With reference to the appropriacy of male and female cultures to group work, Jacobs and Ratmandia declare that:

...in masculine cultures, students may be prone to dislike working in groups because a group ethic would run counter to the ideal of self-assertiveness for personal gain. In contrast, feminine cultures seem largely well-suited to group activities which place value on social solidarity, stress depending on one another, and emphasize that what helps one helps all (1996: 107).

2.1.3.3. Social Class

According to Ellis (1994), social class is a status distinction among individual members of a society on account of income, level of education and occupation. Hence, a society can be classified into four groups: lower class, working class, lower middle class, and upper middle class. Results of several studies on the correlation between social class and foreign language achievement depict that children from higher socio-economic groups are more successful than those from lower social-economic backgrounds (Ellis, 1994; Littlewood, 1984). To mention some, Burstall (1975), cited by Ellis, in his study of primary and secondary school learners of L2 French found that children from middle-class families regularly outperformed those from lower- and working-class homes regardless of sex. Skehan (1990) in Ellis, also reports moderate correlation between social class and language learning aptitude as well as foreign language proficiency, with middle-class children again doing better than lower-class.

However as Ellis (1994) clarifies it, the social class of the learners has no effect on L2 achievement when the programme emphasizes communicative language skills. It is rather when the programme stresses formal language learning that high social-class children outperform the lower-class children not actually due to social class per se but due to factors related to it. For one thing, high social-class children have more positive attitude towards foreign language learning. In addition, the experience members of different social-classes may have matters a lot. For example, unlike white children, there is greater variance between the types of language working class and black children use at homes and the language used at school (Health, 1983). What is more, that children from middle-class families may be more oriented than those from working class families towards contacts outside their own community motivates them to high level L2 proficiency (Littlewood, 1984).

2.1.3.4 Ethnic Identity

Many researchers agree that there is a strong relationship between ethnic identity and L2 learning. According to Ellis (1994), the impact ethnic identity exerts on L2 learning can be considered from three perspectives corresponding to normative, socio-psychological and socio-structural views of the relationship.

To begin with, the normative view underlines the influences of cultural or social distance on L2 proficiency. The central assumption here is that the closer the cultural distance between two cultures, the better the language learning situation, and conversely, the greater the cultural distance, the greater the adversity of language learning situation (Brown, 1994). That is, learners who are nearer to the target language culture are likely to achieve a higher level of L2 proficiency than those who are more distant. To provide evidence from research, Svanes (1988) quoted in Ellis (1994) investigated the level of acquisition of L2 Norwegian by three ethnic groups by an examination that tested a wide range of knowledge and skills. The first group, which is 'closer', consists of learners from Europe and America who share western culture. The second group (the intermediate' group) comprises learners from Middle East and Africa who had contact with Western culture while the third and the 'distant' group contains those from Asian countries. The finding shows a definite correlation between cultural distance

and L2 achievement in that the first group got the best grades, the second the next best and the third the lowest. However, here, it is worth noting that there is no way to know if the difference in grades was due to cultural distance or linguistic difference.

Proceeding with, the socio-psychological model emphasizes the role of attitudes in learning which is no doubt central because it is likely to reinforce motivation (Ellis, 1994). Of course, the relationship between attitudes and success in L2 learning depends on the setting and is bi-directional in that it combines the learners' views of their own ethnic identity and of the target language culture. On the whole, pertinent to a strong motivation, learners with positive attitudes towards their own ethnic identity and the target culture are likely to achieve high levels of L2 proficiency with the possibility of preserving their own L1 (ibid.). However, it should be recognized that successful L2 achievement is also possible for learners with non-integrative attitudes towards the target culture.

Thirdly, a socio-structural view of the relationship between attitudes and L2 learning seems to do with the impacts ethnic identity bears on the interactions between members of different ethnic groups. In other words, attitudes based on learners' sense of ethnic identity can also influence the nature of interaction in which learners from various ethnic backgrounds participate. Accordingly, learners who are status and person centered are more likely to converge on L2 norms and therefore are more likely to be successful learners than those whose solidarity with their own in-group seem to encourage divergence.

2.1.4 Language Proficiency Level

Apparently, language proficiency is one of the main resources groups need to accomplish their tasks via talking. Thus, it is a key factor that affects student participation in small groups. According to Ellis (1994), since what actually causes participation is foreign language proficiency, highly proficient students are likely to participate more actively than less proficient ones. Jacobs and Ratmandia (1996) also cite lack of language proficiency as a reason for students' failure to function well in groups. Most important, high student motivation and high self-confidence which are vehicles for any learning on the one hand and

low-motivation and low self-confidence that make any learning difficult on the other are related to foreign language proficiency (Jacobs and Ratmandia, 1996).

Taking this into account, specially when the gap is significant and the atmosphere is a competitive one, the impact of language proficiency is very harmful, resulting in a two fold disadvantages. Firstly, dominated by few fluent speakers, less proficient learners will give up the task, hence less chance to learn. Secondly, they may revert to their L1 as an alternative to succeed. This is a major challenge often mentioned in using group work (Davies, 1980; Harmer, 1991). The temptation to use L1 which according to Ur (1981) is always before our students, when they don't have a threshold of L2 proficiency, requires treatment for it counters the goal of group work. Harmer (1991) who believes that this could be due to inability or unwillingness proposes convincing the students to use English or doing controlled activities until they are ready for communicative activities. Besides, keeping activities to the learners current level of proficiency and providing necessary language may help to solve his problem (Jacobs and Ratmandia, 1996).

2.1.5 Nature of the Task

Successful foreign language learning, among other things, depends on the quality of materials provided to the learners. This is because effective materials not only motivate and involve the learners but also provide them opportunity to make self-discovery and there by produce the language (McDonough and Shaw, 2003). To this effect, any material should consider the needs and beliefs of the learners (Tomlinson, 1998). Accordingly, the point I want to make is that the task element makes a vital difference to group interaction. Cohen (1972) who shares this view states that some of the patterns of interaction always depends on the peculiarities of the activity itself.

To be specific, let us assume that a teacher assigns a science task which requires groups to do some observations of a live meal worm. Definitely, some members will be fascinated with touching the worm while others will be shocked. Purely owing to the nature of the task, not status, those who are fascinated are likely to be more active. Needless to say that the nature of the task can also affect the total amount of group interaction. Depending on students'

perception about them, some activities are intrinsically interesting and provoke a high level of interaction whereas others are boring and yield only desultory talk (Jacobs and Ball, 1996; Cohen, 1972). On the other hand, tasks to be done by manipulating materials and by communicating through writing allow a low level of verbal interaction (Cohen, 1972).

For tasks to be done through verbal interaction, point and purpose seem to be necessary so that they will have power to force interaction (Ur, 1981). Since it is difficult to find a task that essentially encourages group interaction, usually those which can be done easily by each member are set to groups (Jacobs and Ball, 1996; Ur, 1981). For example, problem-solving activities sometimes allow low opportunity for language use in that they involve contemplation and may be accompanied by long pauses. Similarly, one-way tasks are less effective than open-ended problems because the interaction ends the moment one member lights on the right answer (Ur, 1981).

Although the choice of activity depends on the learning goal and nature of the subject matter, researchers offer some general guidelines to determine their suitability for group work. Where the goal of group work is oral fluency, Cohen (1972: 57-8) suggests to choose an activity that:

- Has more than one answer or more than one way to solve the problem
- Is intrinsically interesting and rewarding
- Allows different students to make different contributions
- Uses multimedia
- Involves sight, sound and touch
- Requires a variety of skills and behaviors
- Also requires reading and writing
- Is challenging

Regarding how to overcome problems of low interaction resulting from task nature, in addition to the above guidelines, Ur (1981) recommends selecting activities which are simple, interesting, challenging and that encourages interaction. Adapting activities always, to the level, age, interest and background of the particular learners will help a lot (Davies, 1980). When a task fails to work with certain groups regardless of its quality, the teacher has to set another from his reserve occupations (Cohen, 1972).

2.1.6 Affective Variables

SLA research shows that learners' affective states affect both L1 and L2 learning because they have to do with the fundamental notions of learning such feeling, receiving, responding and valuing (Brown, 1994). The point here is that in order to concentrate on learning tasks learners need first to be free from stress (Ellis, 1994). However, knowledge about the complex ways in which personality factors interact with each other and influence L2 learning is very limited and indefinite (Littlewood, 1984). With this caution in mind, this paper will now consider certain personality variables along with characteristics associated with them as they relate to group work.

According to Brown (1994), Self-esteem, a sense of confidence which people acquire from self and external evaluations is essential for L2 achievement in that no cognitive or affective activity can successfully take place without some degree of confidence and belief in one's own abilities for the task in question. As Brown points it out, self-esteem can be categorized into three levels: first, global self-esteem which is considered to be relatively stable in mature adults is often resistant to change; second, situational self-esteem refers to one's appraisals of self in specific situations such as social interaction, and the third is task self-esteem which relates to particular tasks. Adelaide Heyde (1979) in Brown found that all three levels of high self-esteem positively correlate with L2 achievement on oral production. Besides, risk-taking, readiness to make intelligent guesses, a characteristic that has gained prominence in communicative language teaching is closely related to high self-esteem (Brown, 1994). It then, goes that learners with high self-esteem are more active and suitable for group work than those with low self-esteem. Nevertheless, whether high self-esteem causes language success or language success causes high self-esteem is not clear to the date (Brown, 1994).

As regards extroversion versus introversion results of some studies into the relationship between extroversion and L2 achievement for example that of Naiman et al. 1978, were negative. Even Busch's (1982) study, in Brown, which is the most comprehensive to the date and has hypothesized a positive correlation with extroversion in adult Japanese learners of L2 English was not supported. However, unlike in pronunciation, listening, reading and writing,

extroversion seems to be accepted as a variable in the general development of oral communication (Brown, 1994). Littlewood describes this as:

We might note here that irrespective of actual learning ability, people with an outgoing personality may enjoy certain advantages. For example, they may become involved in social interaction, attract more attention from their teachers, and be less inhibited when asked to display their proficiency They may perform more confidently in communicative situation, whichever language they are using (1984:64).

Most important, since characteristics considered as favorable in communicative language teaching such as assertiveness, adventuresomeness, tolerance for ambiguity and resistance to threats are associated with extroversion (ibid), one can suggest that extroverts are likely to be more suitable than introverts to group work which assumes interaction as a base for learning.

Anxiety which Scovel (1978) in Brown, defines as a state of apprehension or a vague fear also plays an important affective role in foreign language acquisition. It is important because it is associated with typical characteristics of bad language learners such as low self-esteem, low motivation, low risk-taking and high inhibition (Brown, 1994). According to Brown, anxiety can be viewed from two perspectives: global anxiety which offers a more permanent and deeper fear where people are predictably anxious about a lot of things and situational anxiety which stems from a specific act or event. As to its cause, Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991 C) in Brown, mention three factors namely, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test apprehension.

Another important perspective of anxiety is the distinction between debilitating and facilitative anxiety (Alpert and Haber 1960, cited by Brown 1994). As Littlewood (1984) explains it, the former refers to too much anxiety that inhibits learning and hence should be avoided by all costs. The idea of facilitative anxiety is that certain amount of it is useful to encourage the learner to invest more energy and effort into the task of learning. Relating anxiety with participation, the soul of group work, Ellis (1994) argues that learners with high level of anxiety are less likely to take risks and be active participants.

The other key personality factor is empathy. Brown (1994) describes it as the process of putting oneself into someone else's shoes or as the projection of one's personality into the personality of another in order to understand him well for better communication. He emphasizes the need to organize foreign language classes that would function on a high basis of empathy because successful communication requires a sophisticated degree of it. To this end, he stresses that one should attempt to understand how different cultures express empathy. Littlewood (1984) suggests that learners with a high capacity for empathy may do better at least in pronunciation because it allows them learners to step out of their present identity in order to adopt new patterns of behavior. Thus, the suitability of learners with high empathy capacity for group work seems to be self evident.

Jacobs and Ball (1996) seem to have readily responded to the learners' emotional side. They maintain that while we discuss how to design activities that encourage cooperative interaction, the decision whether a task is cooperative or not fully depends on the learners' perception about it. Thus, it may well be that activities which are best by all standards may fail to work with certain groups while those which do not meet these criteria may function very well. Ellis (1994) emphasizes the role of learners' emotional climate as:

Whereas learners' beliefs about language learning are likely to be fairly stable, their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only over all progress but responses to particular learning activities on a day-to-day and even moment-by-moment basis (p.483).

2.2 The Opportunities of Group work

If EFL teachers, by checking on factors causing unequal participation, manage to ensure somewhat balanced interaction between classroom groups, then group work has a number of opportunities that will benefit students in various ways. Brown (1991) explains that over the last few years, a number of pedagogical and psychological arguments have been forwarded in favor of group work for language teaching. Now I will present some of the prominent opportunities carefully planned group work offers in contrast with the teacher-fronted whole class instruction.

2.2.1 Increasing Language use Opportunity

According to Long and Porter (1985) and Harmer (1991), because it allows many students to talk at the same time, instead of one as in lock-step, group work increases student talking time and hence more opportunity to practice the target language. Supporting this view, Davies (1980:262) also says that “in the classroom the only practical way to allow several pupils to talk at once is through group work....” Since learning a foreign language primarily means developing oral communication skills (Littlewood, 1984; Ur, 1981), this can only be achieved by actually and frequently using the language for communication in a natural and meaningful way (Littlewood, 1981; Brumfit, 1984). As Davies (1980: 264) describes it, merit number one of group work takes its root here:

We have been using buzz groups in our department with considerable success for some time. They can be equally successful in a schoolroom context, because they present a situation that closely approximates real life and they activate pupils in a way few other techniques can do.

When students work together in groups to complete a joint task, they interact and communicate about it by explaining, listening, making suggestions, criticizing, agreeing, disagreeing, asking questions, seeking clarifications, paraphrasing, asking for repeats, followed also by nonverbal interactions such as nodding and smiling. According to Brown (1991), it is through this interaction that the opportunity to get sufficient comprehensible inputs and as well as the chance to produce language which are necessary for a foreign language acquisition becomes possible for the students. Brumfit (1984: 75) who shares this view also says that “any use of group work will massively increase the likelihood, in large classes, of students both producing and receiving language.” That being its key feature, group work requires groups to struggle on their tasks using the target language freely on their own, talking and making mistakes, without immediate supervision of the teachers (Cohen, 1972). Hence, in line with Richards and Rodgers (2001) assertion that language learning is something that results from the learners’ direct involvement, group work allows more language learning than lockstep which “involves too much teaching and little learning” (Harmer, 1991: 244).

In spite of its multiple merits, recent observation shows that group work is rarely used by teachers (Brumfit, 1984). This may also be true in the Ethiopian context. As studies by Zeleke (2006) and Alamirew (1992) indicate, sticking to the familiar structural approach, teachers haven't involved students in English via group work. Again Abdulkadir (1983) in his research on Student-Teacher Interaction in English Classes concludes that students are denied opportunities to practice English. Hence, lack of opportunity for meaningful practice accounts for our students low English proficiency. As a response to this, therefore, examining how to overcome factors affecting interaction in order to maximize the opportunities of group work is the objective of this study.

2.2.2 Enhancing Quality of Language Use

Here the term quality does not imply the correct inhibiting language teacher may expect from students who respond, in turns, to his questions in whole class setting. Rather, it refers to a more natural setting which group work provides for normal conversation via release from the demand for accuracy at all costs (Brumfit, 1984). Thus, students discussing in small groups can use language meaningfully for communication purposes (Ur, 1981). This is what Long and Porter (1985) refer to as quality of student talk and this is not possible in the much inhibiting teacher fronted classes. Held together by group cooperative norms, group members assume different roles and use language to ask, explain, apologize, promise, suggest, agree, or disagree and there by internalize a wide range of language functions as a result of role differentiations in a manner closer to real life (Cohen, 1972; McDonough and Shaw, 2003). In favor of this rich experience Davis (1993 online) writes:

*Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process....
Regardless of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend
to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same
content is presented in other instructional formats.*

2.2.3 Individualizing Instruction and Creating Affective Climate

In most cases students in a class seem to differ from each other in terms of language proficiency, general knowledge, sex, experience, age, aptitude, attitude, motivation, interest and personality. Though they influence language learning, in conventional classes, these

variations are neglected to the dismay of the learners. Individualization in language teaching, according to McDonough and Shaw (2003), is a response to learner and learner needs on the assumption that direct teaching may not result in learning because learning is something that can only be done by the learner himself. That is, group work not only lends itself for more learning but can also help individualization given that various groups can focus on different tasks depending on interest and pace. In connection to this, Brumfit (1984:77) argues that:

Experience also suggests that placing students in small groups assists individualization, for each group, being limited by its own capacities, determines its own appropriate level of working more precisely than can a class working in lock-step, with its larger members.

Viewed from the perspective of learners autonomy, again, group work is a way of keeping learners responsible for planning and directing their own learning.

Equally important, argue Long and Porter (1985), is that group work creates a conducive atmosphere or a positive affective climate for learning. Unlike lockstep which is more public and potentially threatening, group work allows shy and less able learners to participate actively in groups learning from peers until they can work on their own (Antonellis, 1980). Learners also feel comfortable in accepting explanations and corrections from peers (Celce-Murcia, 1980). Most important, there is evidence that students enjoy working in small groups to learn (Cohen, 1972; McDonough and Shaw, 2003). Jolly and Early cited by Brumfit (1984) summarize this psychological argument:

Psychologically, group work increases the intellectual and emotional participation or involvement of the individual pupil in the task of learning a foreign language. Some pupils are more intelligent than others, while (some not necessarily the same ones) are more gifted in learning languages, some pupils are outgoing, communicative, extrovert personalities, while others are shy, withdrawn introverts. In small groups, all these types of learners can meet and mix, compensating for one another's strong points and deficiencies as language learners (Jolly and early, 1974:2).

2.2.4 A Tool for Conceptual Learning

Cohen (1972) explains that people learn more about new ideas and concepts when they talk, explain and argue about them through tasks requiring intellectual thinking skills than when they listen or read about them. She maintains that the traditional methods of following explanations and illustrations of how new abstract concepts will apply cannot be the same experience as doing it for oneself. According to Johnson and Johnson (1979), intellectual conflicts that emerge during discussions allow group members to see the idea from different angles and thereby achieve a high level understanding that will transfer to new settings. What is more, less advanced learners who may not grasp abstract ideas at once also have a chance to understand them from the peer process.

2.2.5 A Tool for Socializing Students for Adult Roles

On account of the cooperative atmosphere it allows, group work has been suggested as a valuable preparation for working life (Davies, 1980). Group experience teaches students to be friendly with other people, to trust and have good feelings about them. As Cohen (1972) explains it, the fact students have been practicing making decisions as to how the tasks should proceed by themselves has a special socializing effect given that this builds a collective sense in them. According to the same writer, the other way group work can socialize students for adult roles is by teaching them a set of group cooperative skills that would apply to adult job life, which even many adults lack. Most important, helping students to develop insights into their comparative strengths and weaknesses and this in turn enabling them to understand others, the group cooperative experience eventually leads students to become active citizens in a collaborative sense.

2.3 Organizing Group Work

As noted earlier, in order to maximize the efficiency of group work, EFL teachers need to treat problems that affect group interaction specifically those pertaining to status, quality of task and the learners' current level of language proficiency. Organization which, according to Ur (1981), is the teachers' act of planning activities in stages for better administration is no less important. Effective planning is a ready-made formula for success in that it is a central

factor which makes the difference between smooth student cooperation and inefficient confusion (Nation, 1994; Cohen, 1972; Ur, 1981). The underlying objective of this research is to investigate how EFL teachers manage selected factors that influence interaction in an effort to increase the opportunities of group work. I will, now, present the steps and procedures for successful group work organization, based on models given by Ur, (1981) and Cohen (1972), in line with the objective of the study.

2.3.1 General Orientation Programme

Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Harmer (1991) emphasize that language teachers need training in order to use group work properly. Similarly, learners should understand the goal of group work so that they will be ready for the regular use of group work. Cohen (1972) who maintains that students learn better when they talk together and experience learning suggests that it is unfair to expect that learners naturally know how to cooperate with each other in small groups. Hence, teachers need to orient their students to the goal, principles and procedures of group work and teach skills for cooperation through simple activities at the beginning of academic year in a week or two time. This will help not only to overcome barriers against the goals of education, such as socio-cultural ones, but also to get the learners assist the teacher by informing each other what to do and by keeping every member on the learning tasks.

2.3.2 Presentation

In this phase of group work organization mainly teachers' manner of introducing activities and basic decisions to be made by teachers regarding size of the group, group formation, time limit, setting work stations and materials, role identification and description of particular abilities are dealt with.

2.3.2.1 Introducing the Activity

At this stage, the teacher explains what the activity is, the challenges and new ideas involved in the material for the students to attempt, and what they are going to do in each phase in clear and brief terms right at the beginning indeed before they plunge into the activity. Because lack of clarity with instructions will lead to a serious misfiring of his goals, the teacher has to make

sure those procedures, routines and norms are clear to all just at the beginning. Cohen (1972) suggests that a real test of clarity of instructions is that every one understands them without tendencies of seeking outside help. She, too, advises that one prepares his instructions imagining himself as a group member who wants to know what he is going to do through out the task and that he pretests them on a fellow teacher, or a parent volunteer to avoid confusions. According to Jacobs and Ratmandia (1996) and Harmer (1991), it would be sensible to provide instructions in the learners' mother tongue for lower classes who may not understand instructions in English. To stress the advantage of this, Ur (1981:18) writes that "time saved by giving the preliminary explanation in the vernacular is time gained for the discussion it self." Thus, clear instructions is one factor that fosters active student interaction and the overall group product.

2.3.2.2 Warm-up Session

Although steps have been made, in the general orientation session, to prepare the students for successive use of group work, depending on the level of the learners, their experience of working in groups and nature of the particular activity one may wish to have a brief warm-up session. Clearly its purpose is to help the students acquaint themselves with relevant language, new information, cooperative norms and particular multiple abilities they need to carry out the activity in focus. Ur (1981) states that the best way to make sure that the procedures are clear to all is by having one good group do a 'trial run' or provide a model demonstration.

2.3.3 Basic Decisions

2.3.3.1 Group Size

One aspect of group work organization that requires careful decision is to determine the number of students to work together in each group. Many writers agree that groups should be small enough so that every one can participate actively. Despite the quality of the task, if groups are large, obviously the amount of student participation falls and the group cohesion may tend to disintegrate (Harmer, 1991). Besides, large groups may result in significantly unequal participation because it is difficult for groups to keep each other on task.

There seems to be no consensus as to what the optimal group size is. For instance, Harmer (1991) suggests 7, Cohen (1972) 4 or 5 and Brumfit (1984) 3-15. However, they share with each other that the decision of group size largely depends on the nature and objective of the group activity, class size, nature of furniture, students' background, workspace and time allowed. Accordingly, if the task requires multiple abilities and negotiation of ideas, a group of four or five is usually an optimal size for effective discussion (Cohen, 1972; Jacobs and Ratmandia, 1996). For some kinds of activities that have definite scope of, say, practicing with each other spelling words on flash cards, a pair of students may be an ideal group size (Cohen, 1972). Likewise, if there are materials, for groups, to manipulate, the teacher has to note that the size of the group should match the amount of materials and workspace available. What is more, where the task goal is to reach decision, it is advisable to have an odd number in each group in order to avoid a split decision (Harmer, 1991). Similarly, a group of three is not good as there may be a tendency for two members to form coalition, leaving the third isolated (Cohen, 1972).

For teachers in large class contexts, like ours, where 80+ or 90+ is the norm, it seems appropriate to make some modifications to group size to manage problems relating to large classes. Class size is often seen as a major challenge in using group work. With reference to this Jacobs and Ratmandia (1996:113) point out that:

One of the problems of large classes is that if teachers break students into groups of four or less, as much of the literature on groups recommends, there are many groups to supervise. However, if teachers use groups larger than four, many of the benefits in terms of increased involvement are lost.

2.3.3.2 Group Formation

Group formation is a procedural decision teachers follow when handling the selection of group membership. It has to be done very carefully because it influences the patterns of interaction between group members (McDonough and Shaw, 2003). According to Harmer (1991) and McDonough and Shaw (2003), some teachers ask the students to divide themselves according to their interests while others nominate them into groups based on

academic abilities, mixing high achievers with low achievers, or putting them into groups separately.

Cohen (1972) who believes that neither of these procedures can yield a good mix particularly objects the idea of allowing friends to choose each other for some reasons. One is that friends may tend to play and social isolates or unpopular students may not be selected for group membership. The second and most important reason is that this procedure leads status characteristics to operate. In line with the goal of group work that, through the collaborative working atmosphere, it is meant to serve the students as a resource, our concern is how to ensure natural grouping which according to Wright (1987) requires four stages to evolve:

Forming

Storming (Conflict behavior in the group)

Norming (group cohesion starts to develop)

Performing (the group solves the task)

Thus, Cohen (1972) who maintains that a good mix can be achieved by mixing students in terms of performance, sex, age, ethnicity, status and so on writes:

For a given task select out those who are resources and put at least one in each group. Then select the problematic students and pair them up with a suitable resource. The other students can be sorted into groups, making sure that the end result is a mix with respect to sex, language, and academic ability (1972: 63).

Given that the students are oriented to the goal of group work, the resources will not see themselves as natural leaders. Besides, as they gain experience for working in groups many students will join the category of resources in that they have specialized expertise (Cohen, 1972).

2.3.3.3 Role Identification and Description of Particular Abilities

One way teachers can encourage equal participation between group members is to structure each activity so that it will have various parts and sections to be done by different group members (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). That is, every rich task requires specific multiple abilities such as observation, manipulation, speculation, data recording, hypothesizing and

writing up the report (Cohen, 1972). Based on this teachers need to assign particular role to each group member and make that clear to all. The other way teachers can encourage student cooperation is by assigning functionary roles such as chairman, secretary, supervisor, motivator and reporter (Ur, 1981). In brief, by assigning roles to group members and reminding them skills for cooperation, teachers can encourage balanced group interaction. According to Jacobs and Ball (1996), need for such structuring depends on learners' group experience because after gaining enough group experience students will be able to work together without the teacher structuring tasks for them.

2.3.3.4 Setting Work Stations and Materials

The physical setting of the classroom in which group activities are carried out is also viewed as a factor that can positively or negatively influence group interaction (Jacobs and Ratmandia, 1996). In order for group members to successfully cooperate and interact with each other, they need to be seated close enough to one another in a way every one can see and hear each other preferably in a circle. To this effect, classroom setting requires rearrangement of chairs and tables based on nature of furniture, group size, task type and space available (Gower and Walters, 1983; Cohen, 1972).

If the class furniture is flexible and there is enough space, this would allow the teacher to make classroom arrangement that suits the task purpose. A good arrangement of this type has three main advantages. To begin with, it encourages high cooperation and interaction. Secondly, it allows stationing groups far apart from each other so that they will not be disturbed by each other's noise, of course, with additional possibility of leaving space for the teacher and the traffic to move about (Cohen, 1972). Third and most important, such an informal classroom layout, according to Littlewood (1981:47), has the effect of "reinforcing the learners' equality as co-communicators" and that of reducing the teacher's authority to a facilitator because it doesn't allow him to face whole class. Moreover, setting all materials, tools and reference books necessary for each group activity near the work station is part of setting up the classroom for group work. This helps the teacher to form a strategy which Ur (1981) refers to as reserve occupations. In relation to the merit of this strategy (Cohen, 1972:66) comments that:

...if one group has finished its work before the other groups, the materials for obvious extension of the activity are all prepared. The teacher can with a few minutes of discussion and questioning help the group to push the investigation further with the materials at hand.

Regarding problems resulting from inflexible furniture, Zeleke (2006) by quoting Nolasco and Arthur (1986) suggests requesting front benchers to twist to face back benchers as a sound solution. However, Cohen (1972) who opposes this types of irregular arrangement because it leads to very little interaction advises borrowing the media centre for group work instead.

2.3.3.5 The Actual Process

Now that, after preparing necessary conditions, the teacher has set tasks and materials for respective groups, this is a stage where groups are actually engaged in work to solve their tasks in an effort to achieve high quality group products. To this effect, group members are expected to collaborate with each other and coordinate their efforts using their target language English. Although the activities may be intrinsically interesting enough and fairly challenging to encourage verbal interaction in line with the goal of group work (Nation, 1994), and the students have necessary resources to complete their assignments such as relevant information, language, particular abilities and skills for cooperation, these alone would not guarantee successful discussion.

In addition, to the elements of preliminary preparation mentioned above, smooth, independent student discussion greatly depends on how teachers and students exercise their roles in the communicative classroom (Nunan, 1989). According to Breen and Candlin (1980) in Nunan, the teacher has three main roles: acting as facilitator, participant and observer or learner and parallel to this the role of the learners' is taking greater initiative. The point is that, since learning is something only the learners can do for themselves (McDonough and Shaw, 2003), especially at this stage, teachers should allow groups to make mistakes and struggle on tasks so as to learn. That is, they should not hover around closely with the intent to help or correct any mistakes right a way. Such un requested interventions will affect the quality and naturalness of the discussion. Nor should the learners, expecting explicit instruction and

modeling from him, bring any sign of confusion to the teachers attention for help. As to how the teacher should exercise his role and encourage the learners to play theirs, Cohen (1972:59) forwards:

By refusing to give a quick answer to requests for help from the group and by encouraging them to solve some of the problems, you can help students learn that they have the capacity to deal with uncertainty for themselves.

The crux of the argument so far is not to undermine the importance of the teacher's role as a discussion leader but to emphasize the need to allow the learners more time and opportunity to practice English with each other for effect.

According to Ur (1981), Widdowson (1990) and Nunan (1989), during the process of group work the teacher has two key roles: acting as a facilitator of communication and as an observer in an effort to monitor and guide performance. While gently moving around, through his role as a facilitator, the teacher attempts to help group discussion go well by following and treating some aspects of the process. According to Ur (1981) and Cohen (1972) beneath are some ways in which the teacher oils the discussion:

- Providing nods of approval for successful performances
- Preventing deviations from topic specially when they are pointless
- Responding rapidly to requests for clarifications relating to procedures.
- Encouraging a call to mind of forgotten rich ideas when topics are superficially treated.
- Preventing use of L1 by supplying language depending on level or via effects of his presence.
- Checking and encouraging balanced interaction.
- Helping groups to get resolved controversies over language use. It is in this area that the teacher is believed to be more knowledgeable than the learners (Nunan, 1989).

In general, while groups are focusing on activities, the teacher as an observer moves around in an effort to check clarity of instructions, to monitor the group dynamic or the overall performance progress, and to record persistent errors requiring remediation at the feedback

session (Littlewood, 1981; Moore, 1995; Harmer, 1991). Finally, needless to state that without the teacher's role of facilitating and that of monitoring and guiding progress, it is difficult to envisage smooth group discussion and group product of high quality.

2.3.3.6 Closure

This is the teacher's style of drawing group discussions to an end. Given that some groups may finish long before others, or all may finish early or may still wish to continue, it may be difficult for teachers to decide at what point they should stop discussions. Ur (1981) suggests that though it may sometimes sound inappropriate, a previously announced time-limit can solve this problem. If so, the teacher can be flexible using his common sense. That is, by giving additional activities from the reserve occupations, he may allow groups to proceed discussions (Cohen, 1972; Ur, 1981). Nevertheless, Ur (1996) advises that the teacher brings the discussion to a close while everyone is enjoying it for it will tend to flag otherwise.

2.3.3.7 Planning Feedback

The feedback session which, according to Ur (1981) usually holds in whole-class context at the end of an activity is a session in which the performances of respective groups displayed, in turns, to be evaluated, criticized and appreciated by the teacher and the students themselves. The purpose of feedback is to help groups have a picture of how successful their performances have been so that they could have insights into their relative strengths and what they could have done to improve weaknesses. In this, feedback also is a way to create a setting for some valuable learning (Ur, 1981).

As Cohen (1972) and Ur (1981) point out, feedback mainly focuses on three aspects of group work: the final product, the group process and language use. The feedback on product allows groups to know how successful they have been in achieving final results. That is, it enables them to measure the relative quality of their products. Ur (1981) comments that if two groups have been working on the same problem, one is eager to see how the other dealt with it. Thus, it is a good idea to give learners time and scope for exploring differences and conflicts stemming from comparing results. Feedback on product can be given by the teacher as well as the students. The teacher may post or distribute the results for contrast. Likewise, the students

can also tell whether or not they have been successful. As regards feedback on product, content of the work seems to be of central consideration (Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

Following, feedback on process concerns how successful groups have been in using skills for cooperation to organize and get the discussion run well (Cohen, 1972). According to Littlewood (1981), this is called communicative feedback and it applies when the goal of the activity is the teaching of discussion skills. Ur (1981) argues that although students' comments may help, assessing and criticizing how groups organize discussions and cooperate with each other needs to be teacher centered and it has to be done immediately after the activity. Most important, according to same author, the students appreciate being exactly told their strengths and how weaknesses could have been helped.

Third is feedback on language use. This may correspond with what Littlewood (1981) calls structural feedback. Observation of discussions informs the teacher as to what language is properly or poorly used and what needs remediation (Ur, 1981). According to same writer and Nunan (1989), given that this is the area where the teacher is better than the students, this should be done by the teacher and it helps him to plan future lessons.

Finally, feedback should not be linked with the issue of grading the students. Feedback, simply is a strategy that enables the students to see their comparative strengths and weaknesses. Where there is need to grade group work, Cohen (1972) recommends assigning grades to a group project not to individual members on the basis of individual contribution. She argues that even though it is true that a student contributed less, there is no way to be sure whether or not the student was at fault or something about the task instruction or the group process was at fault.

In sum, in this chapter, we have seen that group work benefits students if challenges are handled and tasks are carefully planned. The purpose of this study is to investigate how EFL teachers deal with selected challenges and plan activities in an effort to involve students in language use effectively.

From the literature, it has also been noted that local studies that centre their focuses on group work haven't approached the problem in this light. With the intention to fill this gap, this paper will research in to how managing challenges and planning activities in stages maximize opportunities. In so doing, it uses key issues raised in the literature about the problem as a guide to direct each phase of the research. Accordingly, the chapter that follows takes up research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling

This study was conducted by using grade 9 students of Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School who were enrolled in the academic year 2006/07 and their English teachers as research participants.

There were six secondary schools in Dire Dawa, three government and three private schools. As Zeleke (1987) explains it, mainly due to class size, the problem of using new strategies like group work seems to be more felt with government schools as compared to private schools. Thus the study was interested in government schools and of the three Dire Dawa comprehensive Secondary School has been selected for the research work for ease of administrative matters as well as its public reputation due to its long years of teaching services.

Grade 9 students were selected because of their first time shifting from the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction to English and for the reason that their text is relatively suitable for group work. Of the 12 grade 9 sections, with a total of 1087 students, 4 sections were randomly selected. According to Gall, etal (1996) and Leedey (1980), in descriptive research, it is common to sample 10 to 20% of the population of interest. Hence, 196 students who were in the 4 sections during data collection were all selected for the research.

After identifying 4 sections for the study, six students were selected for in depth interview based on criterion sampling which, according to Gray and Airsian (1996), is a procedure in which the researcher selects resourceful participants who can meet certain key criteria. Thus, the criteria the researcher set to achieve heterogeneity were: language performance, sex, ethnic identity, and status. Having discussed with them, the researcher had the English department head and the English teachers selected six students for him who differ in terms of the above criteria. As shown in table 3.1 below, however the number of female respondents exceeds that

of male by one because one male student who was unwilling to give an interview was replaced by a girl of equal academic rank. They selected and classified them as high, average and low achievers by using their first semester English results obtained from the school records as index. Similarly, the classification of interviewees in terms of social class and ethnic identity were according to their teachers perception of them. As Gray and Airsian (1996) explain it, where qualitative data is required what matters is ability to give desired information. Hence, it is hoped that the six students could represent the population of interest. And four English teachers of the selected sections were chosen for interview because their classes were selected for the study.

The six students were randomly taken from the four chosen sections. That is, four of them were picked from two sections, two from each and two of them from the other two sections, one from each. In a word, students and 4 teachers were selected for interview to obtain insightful data on how teachers and students handle problems of group work and to see how teachers organize it in stages. The following tables provide background information about student and teacher cases.

Table 3.1: Information about Student Cases

Criteria	Interviewee's English Ability			Interviewee's Sex		Interviewee's Ethnic Identity			Interviewee's Social Class	
	High	Average	Low	Male	Female	Oromo	Somali	Amhara	Middle	Lower
Number of Cases	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	3	3

Table 3.2: Information about Teacher Cases

Observed and Interviewed Teachers					
Number	Number of students		Sex	Working Experience	Qualification
	Total Registered	Present in a section			
T1	93	44	M	1 Year	B.A in English
T2	-	51	M	2 Years	B.A in English
T3	84	51	M	1 Year	B.A in English
T4	91	50	F	2 Years	B.A in English

Present in a section: Number of students present in classes during observations.

3.2. Data Gathering Instruments

Three instruments were used to elicit data for this study: questionnaire, interview and classroom observation.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire, according to Nunan (1992), is a relatively popular data elicitation technique that allows quantification. In this paper, by way of obtaining data for the research, the questionnaire was meant to sample 10 to 20% of the population to account for the generalizability of its findings. To this end, a 20-item questionnaire was developed by translating the research objective, the research questions and pertinent key issues raised in the literature in to yes or no item questions. The questionnaire was set based on Nunan’s guidelines for questionnaire construction. That is, it was carefully developed in a way each question would be clear and wouldn’t reveal the researcher’s attitude nor ask two things at once. Since interviews which are similar to open ended items were used for insightful data, only closed items were included in the questionnaire.

The items were constructed and handed over first to some two fellow prospective post graduates and one TEFL graduate for comments and then to the research advisor for his suggestions and final consent to use them. Based on their suggestions, some items were improved, some were deleted, some were added and the whole items were fairly distributed to key issues of the research purpose. In order to avoid communication problems and there by obtain valid data, the Amharic version was distributed to the research participants after it had been piloted with 40 grade 9 students of Dire Dawa New Secondary School. From the result of the pilot study, the researcher came to know that the questionnaire could achieve its purpose. During questionnaire administration, the researcher along the English department head explained to the students that their genuine responses were of great help to this research that was meant to contribute its part to the goal of education. On the whole, the questionnaire was designed to extract data from the students on the following main points:

- Key challenges secondary school students and English teachers face in using group work.
- Strategies teachers and students use to manage the problems
- Whether or not teachers plan group work according to its principles
- As to what extent group work helps secondary school students to communicate in English (see Appendix 1)

3.2.2. Interviews

As Patton (1990) points out, an oral interview allows a researcher to extract inner thoughts and behaviors of research participants that he may not be able to directly observe. According to Nunan (1992), there are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Depending on the nature of the study and the degree of control the researcher wants to exercise over the course of the interview, the semi-structured interview, which is highly favored for its flexibility, has been selected for this study. Owing to its flexibility, the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to encourage the interviewees to suggest more and to follow on and probe on unclear points.

To this end, interview schedules for teachers and individual students were developed by translating the research objective and the research questions in to interview questions (Nunan,

1992). To handle inherent problems of interviewer effects and language use, the interview questions were piloted with a small sample of participants, at Dire Dawa New Secondary School both teachers and students, before actual use. Then, the interview was conducted in Afan Oromo and Amharic to get valid data from respondents of the main study. An eight – item interview guide was prepared to elicit data from the English teachers of the selected sections and a seven – item interview guide to get data from individual students (see Appendix 2 and 3 respectively).

The interview sessions were held with the four observed teachers and six individual students after the questionnaire had been filled in but before class observations. The CR observations were delayed to see if what the teachers say come true. The interview guides were given to all respondents two days in advance so that they would prepare and give detailed information. The researcher also explained to them that they should freely forward their genuine responses as the research was meant to benefit the educational goal, not to harm any one.

The teachers' and individual students' interview questions were the same in terms of theme. Apart from validating data obtained through the questionnaire and classroom observations, they were meant to find out information on:

- Teachers' and students' attention and attitude towards group work
- Potential challenges faced in using group work
- How to manage the challenges
- How teachers put students in groups
- How teachers lead students in to group activity
- How teachers monitor students' performance
- How teachers provide feedback.

All teachers' and individual students' interview responses were tape recorded, carefully transcribed by the researcher and analyzed by categorizing segments and texts of the scripts according to their relationships and differences and by quoting them to evidence the point under discussion by way of triangulating them with data from the questionnaire and CR observations.

3.2.3 Classroom Observations

According to Wallace (1991) and All Wright (1988), observation allows a researcher to have a true picture of classroom realities the depth of which a questionnaire or interview may not reach. To emphasize its power, Wajnryb (1992:1) states that “the experience of observing comprises more than the time actually spent in the classroom.” The purpose of the observation was to have practical data on how EFL teachers manage problems of group work and organize and conduct it to involve students in language use. Thus, it was intended to validate data obtained through questionnaire and interview through contrastive analysis.

To this effect, the researcher with head of the English department discussed with concerned teachers and students about the objective and nature of the study and arranged time schedule for lesson observation with them. In fact, the teachers were informed to have one group lesson each and practice with their students twice for later recordings. This was to help them familiarize themselves with the video recordings so that they would naturally act. They too were requested to form two heterogeneous groups for recording focus for convenience of data collection. In a word, four group lessons presented by the four teachers were video recorded after observed twice and were described and used for triangulation purpose. Based on the purpose of the study, nature of data required and area of focus, ethnographic approach to observation was chosen for this study. This, according to Wallace (1991), is a more open-ended procedure in which the observer identifies areas of concern in advance and determines the suitable data gathering method.

Since the intention was to describe how teachers conduct group work and how the students perform in groups from the video recorded lessons, the co-observer was oriented to skillfully do the recordings of acts, behaviors and performances observed focusing on the teacher and two groups in each section. The co observer was a video man who was hired to help the researcher with recordings for he couldn't do the observing and recording at the same time. However, to capture certain CR experiences which the co observer who is an outsider might fail to follow on, the researcher devised a frame of observation. The observation procedure contained 21 items that deal with the challenges and administration of group work (see Appendix 7). The items were basically the same with those of the questionnaire and

interviews because they were all derived from the research questions. In short the purpose of the observation was to collect practical data on:

- How EFL teachers address potential challenges
- How teachers form groups and encourage group cooperation
- Whether or not teachers plan group work in stages
- How far group work has helped the students to express themselves in English.

The actual classroom practices described from the video recorded lessons and also enriched by the researcher's notes were discussed and interpreted and were quoted and used to evidence the findings at different stages of the data analysis as appropriate (see Appendix 6).

3.3 Development of the Instruments

The three instruments i.e. the questionnaire, the interview schedules and the classroom observation procedures were developed by translating the research objective and the research questions in to a system that lends for data elicitation. Of course, in the development of each, particular guidelines for construction and administration were followed. To account for the validity of instruments, items were set and given to some fellow post graduate students and one TEFL graduate for comments. Having revised the tools to the suggestions of fellow friends and eventually with the approval of his research advisor, the writer applied the tools to field work.

Next, the tools were piloted with a small sample of participants, both teachers and students, at Dire Dawa New Secondary School in order to test the validity and reliability if items well before actual use. Since the three tools are basically the same in terms of theme except minor variations due to specific manner of administration, they allow to cross check the validity of one another. The questionnaire was meant to sample 20% of the population to ensure the generalizability of the research findings. The interviews were used for insightful data and the observation to probe in to the classroom realities in much more depth and also to see the truth of interview and questionnaire data .

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used for the reason that quantitative as well as qualitative data were gathered. The quantitative data were treated by counting and converting the tallies in to percentages and explaining that in line with teachers' problem managing and task organizing skills. The analysis of qualitative data was dealt with by organizing and sorting the data texts at different stages of the analysis (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). To this end, the researcher established categories and applied them to all the research data. That is, by looking for commonalities, regularities, patterns, differences and variations among the data texts, the qualitative data were organized and refined based on an organizing scheme derived from the research questions.

On the whole, in order to see how teachers address challenges and plan group work in stages, the interview data were presented and analyzed while the CR observation data were tabulated and interpreted focusing on commonalities and variations. Main issues considered within this frame of data analysis, thus, were how teachers form groups, assign roles, give content knowledge of the task, discussion skills, how they monitor and give feedback with the intention to handle problems.

In this study, since theme based data presentation and analysis was preferred for convenience of brevity and sound comparative analysis, data obtained from questionnaire teachers' and individual students' interviews and those from the descriptions of classroom practices were integratively presented and analyzed by way of probing in to :

- Potential challenges of group work
- How teachers manage challenges
- How teachers plan group work
- The benefits of group work

Accordingly, the above themes were sub-divided in to major and sub- themes and data gathered through the three tools were presented under each in any order as relevant. Moreover,

in order to evidence and substantiate the findings, data obtained by all procedures or some were used as appropriate. In general, data gathered through the three tools were presented, discussed and interpreted at length as explained so that the analysis would allow development of inferences and generalizations.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

The primary goal of this study was to explore how EFL teachers tackle key challenges of group work to increase its efficiency with reference to Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School. The study is based on research data gathered between may 22 to June 2, 2007 by three procedures. Accordingly, data obtained from the questionnaire, teachers' and individual students' interviews and descriptions of group lesson presentations were integratively presented and analyzed in the following organizational scheme derived from the research questions.

- Identification of key challenges
- Strategies for tackling the challenges
- Teachers' way of planning group work
- Practical effects of using group work

4.1. Challenges in Using Group Work

On the assumption that maximizing opportunities of group work involves overcoming its potential challenges, efforts have been made to probe challenges English teachers and students of the sample school face when using group work. Thus, key challenges the data show are as follows:

4.1.1 Status Problems

Table 1: Whether or not students who are good in academic skills such as reading or speaking talk more

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	136	69
No	60	31
Total	196	100

Responses of the majority (69%) show that academic or expert status operates in the classroom groups. Some teachers' interview responses also indicate the same result (T₃ and T₄). In relation to this T₃ forwards:

The learners differ in statuses. For example, there are high, average and low achievers in the same class. They do not all participate equally (T₃).

As noted in the literature review (see 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2), academic status becomes a problem when a learner who is knowledgeable in one area is seen as expert in all areas and thus motivated to dominate all aspects of the group process.

Table 2: Whether or not physical attractiveness matters in speaking more

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	34	17
No	162	83
Total	196	100

The majority of them (83%) said that peer status which is established on the basis of attractiveness, athletic competence and popularity does not prevail associated with academic ability while 17% of them believe that it operates. However, data from some students' and teachers' interview responses seem to yield results which contradict with this. For example, the extract below shows what S₄ said:

Yes, students who are physically attractive, socially active and those from rich families are influential in group discussions. However, when they participate, they do not often forward good ideas and comments (S₄)

Table 3: Whether or not economic status matters in group interaction

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	67	34
No	129	66
Total	196	100

According to 66% of the respondents societal status due to social class does not strongly operate. But the responses of 34% of them seem to imply that it operates to some extent. However, data from some teachers' and students' interview show opposite result. Asked why some learners participate more than others, almost all teachers stressed condition of upbringing, family background, experience and school they were... as a root cause. In response to this, T₄ comments:

Definitely, status is reflected in my classrooms. So to speak, students coming from private and government schools have varied abilities. Those from private schools are very active at communicative English and dominate groups (T₄).

Table 4: Whether or not gender matters in group discussions

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	80	41
No	116	59
Total	196	100

The responses of 59% of them show that social status order due to sex operates among school children. Consequently, boys talk more than girls regardless of academic ability. During CR observations, the group leaders and other boys were seen to dominate the girls (see Appendix 6)

Table 5: Whether or not students who talk more see themselves as more knowledgeable

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	107	55
No	89	45
Total	196	100

55% of the respondents affirmed that there is a general expectation linked to statuses. In addition, all students and teachers interviewed emphasized that high status learners are

motivated to dominate owing to expectations for competence. To the question how do the active and passive participants see themselves and how do others view them, T₂ responded as follows:

The active students who consider that they could win the teachers' and the classmate's recognition see themselves as more knowledgeable whereas those who do not participate have low self-esteem because they know that they are weak. Other students in the class also see the active students as strong and the passive ones as weak (T₂).

The response of S₅ to the same question goes:

Learners who actively participate over estimate themselves as knowledgeable whereas those who are passive regard themselves as weak in terms of knowledge in contrast to the active ones. Likewise, other students see the active students as competent and the passive ones as incompetent (S₅).

4.1.2 English Language Inadequacy

Table 6: Whether or not many students do group activities discussing in English

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	38	19
No	158	81
Total	196	100

The above was asked to know if the students have a threshold of English to do group work talking in English. Most of them (81%) are unable to do group activities by discussing in English except very few (19%). This implies the fact the learners' inability to talk in English is a key problem in using group work. Similarly, results of the students' and teachers' interview responses also indicate the same finding. Asked what problems the students have in doing group work, S₄ and S₃ respectively responded as follows:

The greatest problem the students have when doing group work is poor ability to communicate in the target language. During group discussions, to understand others and to get our thoughts across we do not know enough words and expressions in English (S₄).

To the same question, S₃ responded that:

Basically, the students have a problem of understanding lessons in English and are hence unable to do group work discussing in English except few (S₃).

One of the interviewed teachers response to the same question goes:

The first problem I have in using group work is that the students are not used to speaking in English. Let alone speaking themselves, they wish and even insist teachers to speak in their native languages (T₁).

As noted in the literature review (see 2.1.4), learners who lack a threshold of English cannot work in groups well and also lose interest in it. As denoted in the classroom group discussions (See Appendix 6), in all observed sections most groups but very few were witnessed to discuss in Afan Oromo and Amharic. For example during lesson observation of T₂, two members of one group, one boy and the other girl, were discussing gender issues in Afan Oromo like this:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| B: Dhalaan dhiiraan qixaan sumarraa dhugaa? | * Are really women equal with men? |
| G: If –hin shakku! | * Sure! |
| B: Dhiira biyya bulchituun moo? | * With men who rule a country? |
| G: Dhalaan daran bulchuu hin oolu. | *Women may better rule. |

4.1.3 Low Task Quality

Table 7: Whether or not teachers prepare group activities so that they will have different parts to be done by different members

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	92	47
No	104	53
Total	196	100

More respondents (53%) confirmed that the activities they do in groups do not force group cooperation by allowing different members something to do. Likewise, results of the students' and teachers' interview responses indicate the same finding. Asked whether or not the activities they do in groups essentially require the contribution of each member, one of the interviewed students responded that:

No, they do not necessarily require multiple abilities. The group activities in the English text could be done in group as well as individually. That means, we do in group what we could also do by ourselves (S₅).

Moreover, as can be seen from the descriptions of lesson presentations, the activities all teachers set to groups but that of T₄ do not provide them purpose to talk together in English. According to Bygate (1987), speaking skills materials should facilitate the production of speech within the students' language ability level. Besides, Michaelsen et al (1997) who maintain that the effectiveness of group activities depends on the extent to which they build group cohesiveness through role provision argue that the learners will tend to take group work less seriously and their ability to tackle learning tasks will also fall otherwise. Thus as the data from the three tools indicate, certain proportion of the students' low group interaction and low interest in group work seem to stem from poor quality of the task.

4.1.4 Characteristics of Group Members

Table 8: Whether or not there are students who know English but do not participate in group discussions because they are shy

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	151	77
No	45	23
Total	196	100

Most of them (77%) felt that some students do not participate in group discussions because they are shy. Again, in their interview responses some teachers suggested that many students refuse to participate out of fear of making mistakes before their friends. With reference to this, T₁ forwards:

... since many students lack experience for talking in groups, they do not have confidence to talk in groups to the point one feels shy to speak even a word thinking that classmates may laugh at him/her (T₁)

As Michaelsen et al (1997) explain it, some characteristics of group members can be a serious problem unless recognized and dealt with by the instructor. According to them, a high percentage of group members would prefer to sit at the back and let some one else to work on their behalf. For example, shy members naturally resist participation and let more assertive members to dominate discussions.

4.1.5 Other Problems

According to the teachers' and students' interview responses, other problems they face when doing group work include tendencies to play or disturb and hence not listening to each other when they are in groups as well as lack of group experience and lack of confidence on the students side. High class size and shortage of time as the plasma teacher does not often allow enough time were also mentioned as problems. As to my observation, the inflexible class furniture also has its own impacts.

Most serious, teachers do not give due attention to group work and hence rarely use it. In reply to how often teachers use group work, T₁ responded “I use it like any other method when it is appropriate.” T₂ and T₃ said that their use of group work depends on the course schedule through plasma. T₄ responded to this as follows:

No, most of the time it is difficult for us to teach English through group work. You know, this is because the students usually go in to personal affairs when they form groups. So, we use it sometimes, not frequently
(T₄)

Owing to this, during lesson observations groups manifested lack of discussions skills. There was no turn taking and members were talking loudly in mass with all teachers observed (see Appendix 6).

In brief, from the above findings we can deduce that:

- Discussions are dominated by few high status students.
- Most students do group activities talking in their native tongues.
- Because activities set to them are those which can be done individually, there is low student cooperation and in effect little learning.
- There are students who withdraw from participation due to shyness and lack of group experience.

4.2. Managing the Challenges

4.2.1 Treating Status and Low Task Quality

Table 9: Whether or not English teachers build team spirit among students

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	126	64
No	70	36
Total	196	100

More of them (64%) hold that teachers attempt to treat status problems. But mere encouragement is pointless unless they also try to encourage balanced interaction through the structure of cooperative activities.

As indicated in the discussion under table 7, the activities the learners do in groups do not force cooperation. This means that teachers do not treat problems resulting from statuses and poor task quality. Owing to this, during lesson observations discussions were seen to be dominated by few bright students and the group leaders (see Appendix 6)

4.2.2 Treating Language Inadequacy

Problem of target language proficiency requires treatment because leading to L₁ use it reduces the efficiency of group work. Asked how teachers help them manage this problem, some of the interviewed students suggested that:

*Our teachers help us by telling meanings of difficult words
and expressions in native languages (S₁ and S₂).*

As noted in chapter two (2.1.4), English teachers are expected to address this problem by providing necessary language, keeping activities to the learners' level and by doing pre-communicative activities. However, the observed teachers did not try to help their students in any one of these ways. Also, data from observations show that this is a serious problem in that with all observed teachers most groups were discussing in Afan Oromo and Amharic. During lesson observation of T4, a member of one group said in Afan Oromo 'walumaan seenanii bar.' (they collocate...) and two members of the other group were heard discussing in Amharic as:

Q: Relativ kloz mindinew?

*What is a relative clause ?

A: Arefte neger be 'who' mayayaz.....

*Linking sentences by 'who'...

Q: yehuletu liyunetis?

* How are the two differ?

A: Difayining sihon oomit madreġ anichilim.....

* In case of defining ...we can't omit..

(see Appendix 6.4)

4.2.3 Treating Expectations and Characteristics of Members

Table 10: Whether or not teachers often nominate stronger students as group leaders

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	128	65
No	68	35
Total	196	100

Responses of the majority (65%) indicate that the observed teachers do not treat expectations for competence in that they deny low status students chance to display their abilities. Asked whether or not teachers assign roles and who they usually appoint as group leaders to this end, all the interviewed students and teachers responded that teachers do not assign roles to all members of groups and they tend to elect academically better students as group leaders. This implies that they do not treat the expectations for competence. To this question S2 responded as follows:

Our English teacher does not assign roles to group members. The group members divide roles among themselves and elect the strongest student as a group leader... and a bottom rank student has never been nominated a group chairman so far (S₂).

To my observation, much concerned about being seen as incompetent and that their ideas might not be welcomed, the passive members were silent while few active students were motivated to dominate groups.

4.3. Planning Group work in Stages

As pinpointed in the literature review (see 2.3), the teachers way of planning group work activities in stages is one of the key factors that account for the success or failure of group work. Therefore, in an effort to answer the third research question ‘whether or not EFL teachers at the secondary school level follow procedures of organizing group work, the researcher used the questions here under to extract information from the participants.

Table 11: Whether or not the students have been oriented to the regular use of group work at the beginning of academic year

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	46	23
No	150	77
Total	196	100

Most of the students (77%) confirmed that teachers do not orient them to the regular use of group work at the beginning of academic years while this is the first step in planning group work. Again, interview responses of some teachers (T₁ and T₄) seem to produce the same result. The extract below reveals the response of T₄:

As I told you earlier, I was not here at the beginning of the academic year. However, at any school there is no trend of preparing students to the use of group work at the beginning of school year. Rather, teachers including me brief about group work the very day they want their students to do it or at most one day earlier (T₄).

Table 12: Whether or not teachers usually adapt group activities to their own contexts

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	74	38
No	122	62
Total	196	100

The majority of the participants (62%) affirm that English teachers do not adapt group activities to the level, interest, age and background of the particular learners contrary to the principles of planning group work to which this is central. However, it has to be noted that the responses of some (38%) imply that there are attempts on the part of teachers to adapt activities. Here, data from the teachers' interviews seem to contradict with that of students' responses to questionnaire. Except T₄, all others said that they always adapt group activities to claim that they observe the principles of group work. Response of T₄ to this question follows:

Yes, I sometimes adapt group activities in order to make the topics of discussions suitable to the students' context...For example, if it is story telling, I get them to discuss about their own childhood stories in groups... Certain group activities in the textbook are those one cannot expect... I think those group activities whose theme are project or project proposal, for instance, are not to the learners' level.

Yet, results of the classroom practice seem to be incongruent with the teachers' interview responses in that none of them adapted activities so that they would have sections to be done by different members. As a result, during classroom observations discussions were dominated by few active students (see Appendix 6).

Taking into account that organizing group work involves considering teachers' multiple roles in stages, the researcher likes to more specifically address EFL teachers' way of planning group work under three broad themes: stepping into group work, monitoring group work and stepping out of group work. Of course, other points within the focus of data analysis based on the research objective and questions would be considered alongside where pertinent.

4.3.1. Stepping into Group Activity

When administering group lessons, EFL teachers' manner of leading students into a group work activity involves roles such as introducing the task, providing relevant language, composing groups, checking clarity of instructions, briefing cooperative norms, describing particular abilities, or assigning roles, setting work stations and fixing time limit.

In order to see the teachers' way of planning this phase of group work, the researcher wishes to analyze the above roles by grouping them under two main headings- preparing the students and treating the activity. To this effect, results of the data obtained from video recorded group lessons, students' responses to the questionnaire as well as those from the teachers' and students' interviews are integratively used where relevant. The table underneath records the summary of teachers' ways of leading students in to group activity as described from the video recorded lessons.

Table 4.3.1: How Teachers Stepped into Group Activity

Teacher Roles	Sub-skills	Observed Teachers			
		T ₁	T ₂	T ₃	T ₄
Stepping in to Group Activity	Introducing the activity	+	+	+	+
	Providing relevant language	-	-	-	-
	Composing groups	+	+	+	+
	Checking clarity of instructions	-	-	-	-
	Briefing norms for cooperation	+	-	-	-
	Describing particular abilities	-	-	-	-
	Assigning functionary roles	-	+	-	-
	Naming group leaders	+	+	-	+
	Setting work stations	-	-	-	-
	Setting time limit	-	-	-	-

Key: + = Performed, - = Not performed, T₁= Teacher one, T₂= Teacher two, T₃= Teacher three, and T₄ = Teacher four (see Appendix 7).

4.3.1.1. Preparing the Students

In their act of leading the students into group work activity, as can be seen from table 4.3.1 above, all observed teachers tried to introduce the activity on hand and also put the students into groups. But the crux lies in the care with which they preformed the said roles not in mere execution. During the interview, asked how they organize and present a group lesson, all teachers said that they explain the activity, give clues, and check their understanding of instructions and so on. For example, T₁ responded to this question as:

In setting a group activity, I first explain the activity and check whether or not they have understood it. I do not directly open the book and say to the students: “this is group work, start.” If it is a speaking lesson, for example, I provide them a model, perhaps a dialogue, and then ask them to do the task in a similar way (T₁).

However, the actual classroom practice seems to be much contrary to the teachers' interview responses. As can be seen from the descriptions of group discussions, most observed teachers didn't assign clear tasks. For example, T₁ introduced his lesson as follows:

To day, we are going to practice how to introduce ourselves to other people, how to give information about ourselves and how to get information about others in groups. Therefore, assume that you don't know each other----- Now, get in to groups of three and have a group leader each. And when you discuss in groups you should take turns, be polite and you should not interrupt the other speaker.

Because he did not explain what introduction is, when do people introduce themselves and information to be given at introduction, the students were confused. As Michaelsen et al (1997) explain it, students become reluctant to speak when they lack content knowledge of the task. In addition, he led the students in to the activity without assigning roles, providing relevant language, setting time limit and checking whether or not they understood his instructions well. As indicated in Appendix 6-3, T₃ also moved groups in to the activity without clarifying task concept and providing resources they need to carry out the task.

As he did not assign a clear lesson, the students couldn't start discussion. Thus, contrary to his above response, T₁ himself was witnessed to run across groups trying to correct confusions his lack of planning has caused, by saying... *start, just start, do not do another thing, 'algebachihum hasabe'...* (see Appendix 6.3).

As regards teachers' grouping of students data gathered through three tools indicate that teachers put the students together randomly based on role number, friendship, seats and so on. In support of this, interview response of S₅ to this question follows:

We are allowed to group ourselves in 3's or 4's and so on as we like. Our teacher asks us to divide ourselves in to groups as we find it convenient, more specifically according to closeness of areas of residence (S₅).

Table 13: Whether or not teachers request students to seat in groups

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	148	76
No	48	24
Total	196	100

Most respondents (75%) of them confirmed that teachers get the students group themselves as they like. This implies that they do not mix the students in terms of status, ability, sex, age... so that they will be resources to one another. According to Millis et al (1998), teachers should form groups themselves aiming at heterogeneity based on all relevant factors for it is the basis for group learning and should also consider group size.

As their responses to interview questions demonstrate, teachers present class size, lack of time and inflexible furniture as reasons for their manner of grouping students. On top of this, as table 4.3.1 shows, they do not attempt to establish norms for working in groups. As the descriptions of video recorded lessons can evidence it, the students couldn't even keep their voices down while they were in groups. All were talking loudly at once as if they were put to groups for the first time during the days of observations.

Table 14. Whether or not teachers directly lead groups in to group activity

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	103	53
No	93	47
Total	196	100

More respondents (53%) confirm that teachers simply give topics and request the students to discuss in groups. This implies that they do not plan the stepping in phase well.

Preparing the students for cooperation, during group work, also involves setting work stations. Setting the classroom in which group work is conducted essentially requires rearrangement of seats depending on the task purpose in that it leads to high or low student cooperation.

But according to table 4.3.1. and teachers' interview responses, teachers do not seem to have paid due attention to it.

4.3.1.2. Treating the Task

The guiding principle of group work assumes interaction as a base for learning. In line with this, teachers always need to treat communicative activities so that they would allow each member something to contribute and there by force group cooperation.

However, as table 4.3.1 above reveals it, all observed teachers did not assign a particular role to each group member. Again, data from the students' interview responses seem to reinforce this finding. All interviewed students except S₅ and S₆ said that their English teachers do not assign roles during group work. According to S₁, S₂ and S₄, teachers usually leave the responsibility to share roles among themselves to members of respective groups. To this question S₄ responded like this:

Our English teacher does not assign roles and nor does he nominate group leaders. Instead, members of each group share roles among them selves and also elect a group leader. Of course, we select a student who has better knowledge as a group chairman (S₄)

On the whole, according to the students' interview responses, EFL teachers do not assign roles to all group members except the group leaders. Owing to the teachers failure to assign roles, during class observations, lesson times were dominated by the talk of teachers and the few bright students who always act as group leaders.

Table 15: Whether or not most activities the students do in groups can also be done individually

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	147	75
No	49	25
Total	196	100

Most of them (75%) assured that the activities the students usually do in groups are those which they could individually do. This indicates that teachers do not treat group activities to force group cooperation, attack domination and manage status problems and expectations for competence associated.

During the interview, however, asked whether they adapt group activities for the purpose of assigning roles, except T₄ who said she does sometimes others' responded they do always. But as can be seen from the descriptions of lesson observations (See appendix 6), all the teachers observed did not adapt the activity they set and nor did they assign roles as a result. As shown in table 4.3.1, all observed teachers but T₃ got the students to have group leaders. This implies that they wanted to encourage cooperation through functionary roles. But, as can be seen from the descriptions of lesson presentations (See appendix 6), except T₂ and T₄ who requested groups to have secretaries as well all of them didn't assign roles such as secretary, supervisor, motivator and reporter to other group members. The group leaders were allowed to represent groups in every way to sheer domination.

Alongside, describing a wide range of skills and abilities a particular activity requires, setting a clear task involves providing groups resources they need to carry out the task. One of these is providing them relevant language. In their interview responses, asked to explain whether they have problems in using group work for teaching English, all teachers emphasized the learners' poor English ability as the most serious problem. However, as table 4.3.1 indicates, none of them provided relevant language during lesson presentations. They did not give necessary words and expressions, relevant new information, discussion skills and properly prepared task instructions which could serve them as resources. Moreover, while the amount of time groups are allowed to concentrate on a task on their own without the teacher's immediate supervision is very important, all observed teachers did not announce the time limit during lesson presentations (see table 4.3.1). On the whole, the following points are evident at the phase of leading groups into a group task consequent to teachers' failure to observe the principles of group work:

- The students are not well aware of the goal, principles and procedures of group work.
- By getting the students to group themselves as they like with less regard to group size and seating arrangement, teachers let status characteristics to operate unchecked.

- EFL teachers do not force students group cooperation by treating activities to this end or by assigning functionary roles to all group members.
- Teachers do not provide the students resources they need to do group activities such as well prepared task instructions, roles, relevant language and discussion skills.

4.3.2. Monitoring Group Work

In addition to assigning a clear task, the efficiency of group work largely depends on how teachers and students exercise their respective roles in the communicative classroom. While groups are focusing on activities, the teacher's role is to gently move around in order to monitor and guide the groups' performance progress. In line with the objective of the paper and mainly to answer the third research question, how EFL teachers plan and carry out the monitoring stage will be dealt with under two main headings: facilitating discussions and allowing groups to struggle on tasks. Thus, the following table provides a summary of observed teachers' monitoring skills as described from the video recorded lessons.

Table 4.3.2: How Teachers Monitored Group Activity

Teacher Roles	Sub-skills	Observed Teachers			
		T ₁	T ₂	T ₃	T ₄
Monitoring Group work	Movement	+	+	-	+
	Encouraging interaction	-	-	-	-
	Discouraging L1 use	-	-	-	-
	Interventions	+	+	+	+
	Offering helps on request	+	+	+	+
	Letting groups struggle with the task	-	-	-	-
	Noting persistent mistakes	-	-	-	-
	Keeping groups to topic	-	-	-	-

Key: + = performed, - = Not performed, T₁ = Teacher one, T₂ = Teacher two, T₃ = Teacher three and T₄ = Teacher four (see Appendix 7).

4.3.2.1. Facilitating the Discussion

According to Nunan (1989), the teacher's key role in the communicative classroom is to facilitate communication. To this end, as can be seen from table 4.3.2 above, except T₃ others were moving in classes while groups were engaged in tasks. Again according to results of the teachers' and students' interview responses, while the students are working in groups, teachers move around to follow what each group does to encourage participation, to keep groups to topic and target language and to offer helps where necessary. Asked as to how does she observe and monitor groups during group discussions, T₄ responded as follows:

I focus on language during observation. Since there is mother tongue intervention, I check if they are using English or not. I would also check whether or not they are on the topic for there are times they go off. I observe to see how well they have understood the instructions, they are participating and to check that there is no domination (T₄).

However, as the descriptions of group lesson presentations show, T₂ and T₃ were witnessed to focus on a few good groups neglecting others specially the back benchers. Of course, T₃ was not constantly observing groups. He was seen to move at times and to situate himself at the centre at another.

Table 16: Whether or not teachers follow their work while the students are discussing in groups

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	120	61
No	76	39
Total	196	100

Most of them (61%) confirm that teachers observe the performance of the students during group discussions. However, the responses of considerable number (39%) imply that some teachers do not follow the learners' performance.

What are relative clauses? Can't you define?

What are their features?

What is the difference between-----?

Can you give examples ?

Discuss ----- Discuss (see Appendix 6.4)

T₁ was also observed interrupting groups by way of straightening the confusions his unclear instructions have caused. At the monitoring phase, to my observation, T₃ was also interrupting groups saying “*read the passage, guess discuss*” un requested. The findings from the students responses to questionnaire and interview responses seem to show the same result.

Table 17: Whether or not teachers offer much help while they are working in groups by correcting language mistakes

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	111	57
No	85	43
Total	196	100

More of them (57%) felt that teachers do not allow them to struggle on tasks during group discussions. During the interview, in response to what does their teacher do while the students are discussing in groups, S₄ explained that the teachers observe groups by moving around, listens to their talks and corrects them if they make mistakes instead of recording persistent mistakes for later remediation at the feedback stage. According to S₂, the teacher helps the students with anything difficult to them while S₃ said that the teacher moves around to respond to strong students who ask questions. To this question, S₅ responded as:

When we discuss in groups, our teacher sits down and checks if there are different assignments he has given to other sections (S₅).

However, as seen in chapter two (see 2.3.3.5), at this stage, teachers are to encourage the learners to struggle on the task by not rapidly responding to requests for help unless they relate to instructions. In sum, from results of the above data, we can conclude that:

- Because teachers do not facilitate discussions, group discussions are often dominated by few competent students.
- As a result, some students seem to take little interest in group work and tend to talk about private issues in native languages.
- Some teachers do not observe group performance of the students while others move in classes without purpose.
- By offering much un requested help to correct language mistakes, solve any difficulty and for no apparent reason, teachers do not let the students struggle on tasks to inhibit their learning from the group experience.

4.3.3. Stepping out of Group Activity

Apparently, this is the stage where teachers bring group discussions to a close by summoning every one's attention for feedback. To deal with how EFL teachers treat this phase, table 4.3.3 below provides a summary of observed teachers' ways of managing feedback.

Table 4.3.3: How Teachers Stepped out of Group Activity

Teacher Roles	Sub-skills	Observed Teachers				
		T ₁	T ₂	T ₃	T ₄	
Stepping out of Group Activity	Winding groups down	+	+	+	+	
	Getting every one's attention	+	+	-	+	
	Feedback on	Product	-	+	-	-
		Process	-	-	-	-
Language use		-	-	-	-	

Key: + = performed, - = Not performed, T₁ = Teacher one, T₂ = Teacher two, T₃ = Teacher three and T₄ = Teacher four (see Appendix 7)

4.3.3.1. Planning Feedback

When the time allowed for a group activity in focus is over, teachers should stop groups by summoning their attention for feedback. According to Ur (1981), feedback is a session where the performances of all groups are presented to whole class in turns to be evaluated by the

teacher and the students themselves. However, as table 4.3.3 evidences it, during group lesson presentations, all observed teachers except T₂ did not give feedback accordingly. They simply got discussions to a close at the pace of fast students and allowed some two group leaders to display the products of their groups in a manner of providing feedback. To give feedback, T₁, T₃ and T₄ got some three students respond to them one by one. For example, one female student gave information about the person she met to T₁ as follows:

His name is Abdullahi.

He is from Jijiga..... (see Appendix 6:1)

Having three group leaders responded to him as above, T₁ finalized the group lesson by saying “*today, we have learned how to introduce ourselves in groups ... for more practice we shall do another task next time.*”

However, the students’ and teachers’ interview data give contradictory results. Asked whether teachers give feedback, all interviewed students replied that they give feedback on the performance of groups. They said that the teachers tell the strengths and weaknesses of each group, inform whether or not the students participated well, whether or not they understood instructions and also announce the right answer to the class.

In response to the same question, T₁ suggested that he provides feedback by creating a situation where by the students can see their success by comparing each others’ relative strengths and weaknesses while T₃ stated that he gives feedback by writing the answers of each group on the board and telling whether or not they got it right. The following extract shows how T₂ provides feedback.

When the group task is over, if I have 6 groups, I would give 2 the chance to present their work to the class. Then, I would provide groups a general conclusion by way of informing how they had to do, what their strengths and weaknesses were and how they could improve for future (T₂).

As pointed out in the literature review (see 2.3.3.7), feedback has to be given in whole-class context so that both the students and the teacher would assess and appreciate each group’s performance. Besides, a well planned feedback involves three aspects of group work:

feedback on the final product, the group process and language use. Data obtained from the students' responses to questionnaire also seem to yield the same result.

Table 18: whether or not teachers give feedback

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	76	39
No	120	61
Total	196	100

The majority of them (61%) confirmed that teachers do not provide feedback at the end of group activity.

4.4 Practical Benefits of Group Work

To benefit from a learning process, learners need to have a positive attitude and interest towards the process itself, the materials and strategies it uses (Tomilison, 1998). Hence, the students' attitude and interest towards group work was examined.

Table 19: Whether or not the students like to learn English more by practicing in groups than by listening to the teacher

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	149	76
No	47	24
Total	196	100

The majority of them (76%) like to learn English through group work. Results of the teachers' and students' interview data and the classroom observation data also did not show attitude problems. But T4 said that the students hate group work.

Table 20: Whether or not group work helped the students to use English for communication

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	83	42
No	113	58
Total	196	100

Most of them (58%) did not get benefit from group work where as 42% of the respondents said it enabled them to talk in English. However, data from the teachers' and students' interviews showed a contradictory result. All teacher respondents assured that the learners' English ability level is too low. Asked whether they have done many group activities and benefited from them, S₂, S₅ and S₆ said that they have done lots of activities in groups and some could talk in English as a result while S₁, S₃ and S₄ responded that they did a few activities in groups and that helped certain students to talk in English not the majority. Response of S₃ to this goes:

...we were not assigned many group activities... We did a few activities in groups and we did not get much benefit from that. That is, the activities we did in groups helped some learners to talk in English, not all (S₃)

Most important, as the descriptions of video recorded group lessons depict, group work did not benefit all students. To my observation, most students but few were seen and heard discussing in Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Somali languages. Again, in response to the question whether many students do group activities in English (81%) indicate that most students cannot express themselves in English (see table 6). That was a cross question to question to see if group work really helped the students.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this paper, attempts have been made to explore how EFL teachers handle selected problems of group work and plan it in stages in order to materialize for the students the possibility to get practical benefits from doing group activities. The findings of the study which the data indicate within its limited scope are summarized as follows.

5.1 Summaries

5.1.1. Challenges and Managing Strategies

1. Status Problems: Results of data from the questionnaire as well as teachers' and students' interviews imply the fact academic, expert and peer status orders operate among school children. Again, all teachers' and some students' interviews show that there is economic status matters. The research data also indicate that gender affects group interaction. Results of the classroom observations also produced the same finding. With reference to status treatment, data obtained from the three tools prove that teachers do not treat the operation of status characteristics through role assignment except through verbal encouragement which is of no use alone. Rather, by letting few fast students to display always their expertise, they encourage status characteristics to operate unchecked.

2. English Language Inadequacy; The data from the questionnaire, teachers' and students' interviews as well as those from video recorded lessons indicate the learners' poor English base the most serious challenge in using group work. According, to most students' and some teachers' interviews and the lesson observation data, the teachers usually attempt to help the students cope with this problem by translating concepts and meanings of difficult words in to their native tongues and by getting them discuss first in their languages and then in the target language. But in their interview responses some teachers said that they handle language inability problem by keeping activities to the learners' level and by mixing strong students with weak ones.

3. *Low Task Quality of Activities:* Proceeding with, the findings from the three tools prove low task quality of group activities set to the students as one of the major problems in that they lack energy to force cooperation. As the data from the questionnaire and classroom group discussions suggest, teachers see this problem with less regard.

4. *Attitude Towards Group Work:* Likewise, data obtained from the questionnaire and from the teachers and the students' interviews present characteristics of group members mainly shyness due to lack of group experience as a cause for low group cooperation. As the students' and teachers' interview data evidence it, the teachers and students attitude and interest and the attention they give to group work would also make part of the problem.

Based on student's and teachers' interview data other likely problems in using group work for teaching English include lack of experience for working in groups, lack of self confidence, class size, inflexible furniture, shortage of time and tendencies to play or disturb.

5.2 Planning Group Work in Stages

5.2.1 Stepping into Group Activity

The results of data form the three instruments indicate that teachers assign students in to groups randomly based on seats. Then, they provide topic and instructions and step in to the activity before checking if the instructions are well understood and assigning roles to members of each group except the group leaders. Besides, they generally leave roll assigning roles to the group leaders. As to the data of lesson presentation, at the leading phase, they do not describe multiple abilities the activity requires. In their, interview responses, teachers mentioned learners' poor language ability as big problem number one. As video recorded lessons evidence it, however, they were seen to lead groups in to an activity without preparing them by providing resources they need to do the activity such as relevant language, important information, discussion skills and properly set task instructions.

5.2.2 Monitoring Group Activity

The research data reveal that some teachers, engaged themselves in other things, do not observe the students performances while some others move in classes with out purpose. As

noted from the video lessons, owing to teachers' failure to facilitate discussions by encouraging equal participation, group discussions were dominated few by few participants. Again, due to their inability or negligence to keep groups to topic and to discourage L1 use, many groups were witnessed discussing their own personal issues in their native languages. What is more, during the group process observed teachers were seen to visit groups many times offering un requested helps. Consequently, they did not allow groups to struggle with the task within a specified time talking in English.

5.2.3 Stepping out of Group Activity

From the result of video recorded group lessons data, it has been found out that teachers suddenly draw discussions to an end at the pace of bright learners due to their not setting a time limit. As to how they provide feed back, some get about two group leaders to present products of their groups while others totally ignore it contrary to their responses in the interview data. They do not conduct feed back in whole – class context so that all groups can judge each other's strengths and weaknesses in terms of quality of the result, group cooperation skills and language use with possibility for the students to comment on each others' work cooperation skills to and language use. Of course, some tried to correct certain students grammatical mistakes but no one attempted to provide a principled feedback on language use.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the above findings, the study concludes:

1. Status difference among students is noted as one of the factors that account for student's low group cooperation in that it leads to unequal participation and impair the leaning of certain students. Academic ability, sex and economic background were found as key factors of status. As the data evidence it, teachers are less sensitive to status problems. Thus, they show little concern to treat statuses and expectations for competence attached to them. Instead, by letting few bright students i.e. the group leaders to display their expertise always, teachers encourage status characteristics to operate unchecked.

2. The study shows Learners' lack of a threshold of English as a notable challenge in using group work at the secondary school level. As a result, their interest in group work is low. Consequent to this, the students do group work by discussing in their native languages and get little benefit.
3. The study finds out that most activities the students do in groups are those which can be done individually. That is, they do not encourage interaction in that they do not essentially require multiple abilities. On top of this, group activities are rare in the student's text. This implies that a certain proportion of student low group cooperation and low interest in group work comes from poor task quality.
4. The fact teachers do not aim to achieve heterogeneity during group formation and their inability to provide them resources they need to carry out tasks imply lack of know how.
5. The study concludes that EFL teachers at the secondary level do not plan group activities in stages contrary to the principles of group work. Randomly getting the students in to groups, they step into group activities before giving clear task instructions and resources they need to complete the task such as relevant language, norms for cooperation and roles. Again, at the monitoring stage, rather than observing to facilitate discussions, they repeatedly interrupt groups not to let them struggle on the task. And finally they omit providing feedback.
6. Owing to their not observing the principles of group work, teachers do not orient the students and nor do they discourage the use of L1. Most serious, they do not treat activities to attack domination and force cooperation in an effort to actively involve the learners in language use.
7. Because teachers do not manage potential problems of group work and properly plan it in stages, the learners' English language ability is low.

5.4. Recommendations

Taking in to account the generalizations and implications of the findings, this paper recommends:

1. Where students tend to do group activities talking in their native languages actually due to lack of a threshold level of English, secondary school English teachers should encourage the students by providing necessary language and by keeping activities within the learners' language ability. If these do not work out well, they need to turn back to pre-communication activities in an effort to prepare them for fluency activities.
2. Teachers should orient the students to the goal and principles of group work and also teach them discussion skill via simple activities at the beginning of academic years and while learning is in process to overcome status problems as well as attitudinal and socio-cultural barriers. Most important, they should commit themselves to attack domination and provoke cooperation through task treatment.
3. Course designers should aim to build the students' language base from elementary level. Thus, they should consider revising the ENE series by way of incorporating group activities in terms of both quantity and quality.
4. Teacher developers need to plan and do the task of training secondary school teachers in the light of raising their professional capacity and motivation so that they could by adapting learning tasks to particular contexts better implement group work at the level.
5. This study concludes that teachers work against the principles of group work. But whether their sheer deviation is due to lack of know how or negligence and tendency to teach in the way one was taught calls for further investigation. Thus, the study recommends that additional vigorous researches that could come up with a full account EFL teachers' management of group work should be conducted.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDENTS

1. Do you think students who are good in academic skills like reading or speaking talk more than others in group discussions? Yes/No
2. Do you believe physically attractive students talk more? Yes/No
3. Are learners from higher economic families more active in group discussions than those from lower economic homes? Yes/ No
4. Do female learners talk more than males in group discussions? Yes/ No
5. Do students who talk more see themselves as more knowledgeable? Yes/ No
6. Do many students do group activities discussing in English? Yes/No
7. Does your teacher prepare group activities in a way they will have different parts to be done by different members? Yes /No
8. Are there students who know English but do not participate in group discussions because they are shy? Yes/ No
9. Does your teacher try to build team spirit among group members? Yes/ No
10. Does the teacher often name stronger students as group leaders? Yes/No
11. Did you have general orientation to the use of group work at the beginning of the academic year? Yes/No
12. Does your teacher usually adapt group activities to the level, interest, age and background of the students? Yes/No
13. Does your English teacher form groups by requesting you to seat in groups? Yes/ No
14. Does your teacher directly lead you in to group work by saying “do this activity in groups?” Yes/No
15. Do you believe most of the activities you do in groups can also be done individually? Yes/No

16. Does your teacher follow your work while you are discussing in groups? Yes/ No
17. While you are working in groups, does your teacher offer much help, for instance by correcting several language mistakes? Yes/ No
18. Does the teacher give you feedback at the end of activities? Yes/ No
19. Do you like to learn English more by practicing in groups than by listening to the teacher? Yes /No
20. Has group work helped you to explain, to ask, to answer and to invite in English?
Yes/No

APPENDIX 2

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How often do you use group work compared to other strategies? Are teachers interested in using group work for language teaching?
2. Do you often adapt group activities in the text book to the learners' level, interest, age and background?
3. Do most activities the text book and you suggest for group work require multiple abilities?
4. How do you form groups? Could you seat them in a way members of each group can discuss with each other comfortably?
5. What problems do you have in using group work for teaching English? How do you manage them?
6. Why do you think some learners participate more actively than others?
 - How do the active and passive participants see themselves?
 - How do others in the class see them?
7. How do you organize and conduct group work? That is, how do you
 - lead groups in to group activities?
 - monitor performance progress?
 - give them feedback ?
8. Did you orient the students to the regular use of group work at the beginning of the academic year?

APPENDIX 3

INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS' INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Have you done many activities in groups this year? If so, have they helped you to talk in English?
2. How does your English teacher from groups?
3. Do the group activities in the text book require different abilities so that they cannot be done by an individual member?
4. Does the teacher assign roles to all group members? Who does he/she often name as group leaders?
5. What problems do the students have in doing group work? How does your teacher help you to overcome them?
6. Why do you think certain students participate in group discussions more actively than others?
 - How do the active and passive participants see themselves?
 - How do other students view them?
7. How does your English teacher present a group lesson? That is,
 - how does he/she set a group activity?
 - what does he/she do while the students are working in groups?
 - what does he/she do at the end?

APPENDIX 4

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF OBSERVED TEACHERS' RECORDED INTERVIEW SCRIPTS

Appendix 4.1: Interview with Teacher One (T₁)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for volunteering to give me an interview. I wish to ask you some questions related to group work and to start with my first question, how often do you use group work compared to other strategies? Are teachers interested in using group work for teaching English?

Teacher (T₁): I do not use group with particular attention. Since there are different methods of teaching English, I use it like any other method when it is appropriate. And many teachers like to use group work for teaching English because it is easy for them.

A: Do you always adapt group activities in the text book to the learners' level, interest, age and background?

T₁: Yes I do I make adaptations to the group activities to the extent of removing the unsuitable ones. This includes simplifying and translating meanings of words so that the students could easily understand them.

A: Okay. Are group activities incorporated in the student's text book in sufficient quantity and quality? Is there a need to add more?

T₁: Yes, it is necessary to add more as group activities are few in the text.... There are times when it becomes difficult for me to find even one from a unit. Unlike tasks for other skills such as reading and writing, group activities are rare in the text book.

A: Do most activities you and the text book suggest for group work require multiple abilities?

T₁: They do not as such require different abilities. They follow the usual procedure of requesting three or four students to share their views on a topic and present that orally or in writing. They are similar except that they differ in titles....

A: To make this question clear, do the activities essentially require the contribution of each group member?

- T₁: No they do not necessarily require the contribution of every group member. That is, they could be done by individual members of a group.
- A: How do you form groups? Could you seat them in the classroom in a way members of each group could discuss with each other comfortably?
- A: I group students according to their seats. Since their manner of sitting is also inconvenient, if I attempt moving students from place to place, it will be time consuming. Besides, that may also lead to indiscipline, for grade 9 students, because they are too young. So, I form groups based on seats and I do not think that will allow them to discuss well given that all the three students on one bench could be strong while those on another could be weak and the position itself has its own impacts.
- A: What problems do you have in using group work for teaching English? And how do you manage them?
- T₁: Ok. The first problem is that the students are not used to speaking in English. Let alone speaking themselves they wish and even insist teachers to speak in their native languages. Secondly, they tend to play when they are given topic of the group lesson... Thirdly, since they lack experience for talking in groups, they do not have confidence to talk in groups to the point one feels shy to speak even a word thinking that classmates may laugh at him/her To overcome these problems, I present a good group as a model. If one group is successful, I praise that and request those around to work with them and share their experience.... And there is now tendency to give instructions in a native language for the same.
- A: All right. Why do you think some students participate in group discussions more actively than others?
- T₁: I think the first cause for the students difference in participation is their experience. There are learners who do not frequently use their native languages and those who have private tutors. Such students seem to be more active in group discussions than others. Secondly students who like the subject matter and their teacher as well may also participate more actively than others. Likewise, topic of the lesson and nature of the skill seem to affect participation. Learners who like speaking lesson would also love to do group work as it is related to speaking On the other hand, students who

participate less are those who have low interest in the subject matter and do not understand their lessons....

A: How do the active and passive students view themselves and how do other students in the class see them?

T₁: The active participants feel that they know and are competent to do their lessons. They do not expect anything from other students. Hence, they see themselves as more knowledgeable... The passive students despair easily and see themselves as incompetent and are unready to learn... They often sleep on their desks longing the English period to go soon. And to questions like “did you bring your book?” “have done your home work?”..., they have one answer – silence. And the other students regard the active students as a model to follow their examples while they see the passive ones as weak.

A: Well, how do you organize and conduct group work? That is, how do you lead groups into a group activity?

T₁: In setting a group activity, I first explain the activity and check whether or not they have understood it. I do not directly open the book and say to the students “this is group, start.” If it is a speaking task, for example, I provide them a model, perhaps a dialogue, and then ask them to do the task in a similar way.

A: How do you monitor performance progress? That is what is your role or what are the things you focus on during observation?

T₁: While the students are working in groups, I follow members who are taking part in the discussion and those who are not. There may be group members who sit idle. I do not quietly pass by them. I encourage them to participate. And I listen to something of their discussion. During observation, since the students may ask what they do not understand, answering those questions is also expected.

A: How do you give them feedback at the end of a group activity?

T₁: As I have observed the performance of each group, it is easy for me to identify their strengths and weaknesses... but I do not directly tell them by saying “you boy this is your strength, that is your weakness.” Instead, I will say to him your friend has done it in this and that way, look at his work, so that the students may know their success by

comparing one's weakness with the strength of the other. This is how I give feedback so far.

A: Did you orient the students to the regular use of group work at the beginning of the academic year?

T₁: No, I did not do that at the beginning of the academic year.... Rather I give such explanations at the beginning of units, new units. I say there are such and such things in this unit... There is a trend of telling in advance that there is some kind of group work in this or that unit... if it is going to be done, for instance, the day after tomorrow.

A: Does the plasma teacher assign group work or spares you time to conduct it? Your brief comment in relation to plasma, please.

T₁: Of course, the plasma teacher... sets group tasks. Perhaps, the main problem is shortage of time. It allows about 5 or 6 minutes for a group activity. The class teacher is expected to form groups, to explain the activity and procedures within these minutes. The time the plasma teacher gives is so inconvenient that he/she often draws the activity to an end before the students understand it or just when they begin discussion. So, we are forced to use additional minutes contrary to him/her.

Appendix 4.2: Interview with Teacher Two (T₂)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for volunteering to grant me an interview. I want to ask you some questions related to group work and to begin with, how often do you use group work compared to other strategies? Are teachers interested in using group work for teaching English?

Teacher (T₂): ... Since the instruction is through plasma, my use of group work depends on that schedule. If the lesson for the day is group work, I form groups and get the students do it... In line with the student centered approach, the use of group work seems to be obligatory to provide the learners the opportunity to freely discuss with each other. Accordingly, other teachers too use group work based on the plasma transmission.

A: Do you always adapt group activities in the text book to the learners' level, interest, age and background?

T₂: Yes I do adapt them. Students coming to Dire Dawa are those from various regions such as Oromiya and Harari whose knowledge of the target language is low because they have been learning in their mother tongues there. Again, most of them are teenagers. So, I usually adapt group activities to their knowledge as well as age and I am sometimes forced to use local language in order to help them understand and follow the lesson with motivation.

A: Are group activities incorporated in the student's text in sufficient quantity and quality? Is there a need to add more?

T₂: Of course, there is a need to add more. Some group activities in the text book do not seem to consider the age of the learners and the time of the lesson itself. Thus, by arranging make up classes and using their free periods, I teach the students using additional activities so that they could acquire discussion skills and there by develop the target language English.

A: Do most activities you and the text book suggest for group work require multiple abilities?

T₂: There are group activities which can be done individually and those which can not be. Because the students come from various environments, they may have different

knowledge and experiences. Therefore, we need to put them in groups so that they share their different knowledge and experiences and then have a common understanding.

A: How do you form groups? Could you seat them in a way members of each group could discuss with each other well?

T₂: I form groups randomly. It is very difficult to seat groups in a way they can discuss with each other comfortably. I have told you that there are about 90 students in a class. It is not easy to put 90 students into small groups and get them participate in a group discussion.

A: What problems do you have in using group work for teaching English? And how do you manage them?

T₂: There are a number of problems. As I told you the students come here from different regions where they have been instructed in their mother tongues. When they join grade 9 here, they cannot follow their lessons very well because English becomes the medium of instruction. Secondly, since the plasma transmission is too fast for them to follow, many prefer silence... On the other hand, there are few fast students who dominate groups. Yet another problem is that the students tend to disturb because they are too young... while I observe one group here, the one over there disturbs. When I go there, this group goes into a different story. Hence, there are problems with the students, with the physical setting of the classroom and the program itself.

A: Why do you think some learners participate in group discussions more actively than others?

T₂: One factor for participation may be condition of their up bringing. Some students are brought up in their families to be silent while others are brought up to talk freely. The other reason is that those who have the ability to express themselves talk more and dominate groups to be viewed as competent while those who do not know English remain silent.

A: How do the active and passive participants see themselves and how do other students perceive them?

T₂: The active students who consider that they could win the teacher's and the classmate's recognition see themselves as highly knowledgeable where as those who do not

participate have low self-esteem because they know that they are weak. Other students in the class also see the active students as strong and the passive ones as weak.

A: Ok. How do you organize and conduct group work? That is, how do you lead groups in to a group activity?

T₂: I set a group task according to the plasma. The plasma teacher provides the topic. After that I would provide some clues that would help them to do the activity. I would get each group to have its own secretary and chair person who leads the discussion and finally present the group product.

A: All right. How do you observe and monitor performance progress? That is what are the things you focus on during observation?

T₂: I observe each group by moving around. I follow whether or not members of each group are doing their task. I also check whether they are on the topic or deviating.

A: How do you provide feedback at the end?

T₂: When the group task is over, if I have six groups ...I would give two the chance to present their work to the class. Then, I would provide groups a general conclusion by way of informing how they had to do, what their strengths and weaknesses were and how they could improve for future.

A: Did you orient the students to the regular use of group work at the beginning of the academic year?

T₂: Yes I do this every year. When pursuing grades 1-8, the students already have some group experience.... As they join high school, we provide a general orientation about group work to each section in order that the students learn to learn from one another ... by sharing their inner thoughts.

A: Any thing you wish to add?

T₂: Well, the students have been taught grades 1-8 by classroom teachers. When they start secondary education, they are taught by the plasma teachers who do not seem to consider their attitudes, level and age. Sometimes, the plasma teacher sets a group activity and soon draws the discussion to a close. The plasma transmission greatly affects the use of group work in that it does not allow enough time for classroom groups to discuss and share experiences well. With regard to the plasma, thus, I suggest that the timing needs improving.

Appendix 4.3: Interview with Teacher Three (T₃)

A(Adem): I would like to thank you for volunteering to give me an interview. I want to ask you some questions related to group work and to begin with the first one, how often do you use group work to teach English in contrast to other strategies?

Teacher (T₃): I use group work in accordance with the course schedule and time available in order to get the students discuss in groups and improve their English. To this end, I try to help them understand ideas clearly. As the plasma is incompatible with their level, I sometimes get them discuss what is difficult in their native languages first and then in English.

A: Okay. Are teachers interested in using group work for teaching English?

T₃: Yes, they love to. However, given that the students cannot quickly understand instructions the plasma teacher gives because their knowledge of English is low, there is tendency to get the students discuss in English after they grasp concepts in their native tongues.

A: Do you always adapt group activities in the text book to the learners' level, interest, age and background?

T₃: Obviously, the students do not like some group activities in the text book because they do not seem to consider their level and experience. I adapt such to their interest, level and experience when I come across.

A: Well, are group activities incorporated in the student's text in sufficient quantity and quality? Is there a need to add more?

T₃: .Of group activities incorporated in the English text, some are suitable while other are not specially in terms of time the plasma teacher allows. So, certain group activities should be discarded and other should be included. There are things that need such improvements.

A: Do most activities the text book and you suggest for group work require multiple abilities so that they can't be done individually?

T₃: Most group activities in the text book are those which students could do individually. Specially bright students can easily do them. Nevertheless, it would be better for the students to do them in groups because they feel more comfortable to openly discuss and understand difficult ideas in groups than in whole class situation.

A: How do you form groups? Could you seat them in the class in a way members of each group could discuss with each other very well?

- T₃: I form groups based on their seating arrangement not to waste the lesson time... Of course, it is possible to place groups so that members of each could discuss well by keeping down the number of groups... It is also possible to help the students understand ideas by mixing strong students with weak ones in groups though the plasma makes it difficult.
- A: What problems do you have in using group work for teaching English? Could you mention the major ones?
- T₃: I think, there are three main problems. One is lack of the target language proficiency on the part of the students. The second problem is the high number of students in a class. And third is that the plasma teacher does not allow enough time for the students to do group activities.
- A: Why do you think some learners participate in group discussions more actively than others?
- T₃: One reason for this is that students who have low group experience hesitate to openly and actively participate out of fear of making mistakes before classmates. The other, perhaps, is if the teacher labels groups by writing group 'A', group 'B' ... on the blackboard and if there are fast students in each, they would consider group work as competition and tend to talk more so that their group would win.
- A: How do the active and passive participants see themselves and how do other students view them?
- T₃: Apparently, unlike the passive students, the active ones are always motivated... and see themselves as competent. Other students also view the active students as strong and the passive ones as weak.
- A: There is status difference among the students. Could I have your comment on the extent to which status affects interaction?
- T₃: Yes, the learners differ in status. For example, there are high, average and low achievers in the same class. They do not all participate equally.
- A: How do you organize and conduct group work? That is, how do you lead groups in to a group activity?
- T₃: I would first give them explanations. That is, I help them to have clear concept about the topic of discussion. Next, I would form groups by mixing strong students with weak ones and then request them to start discussion.
- A: How do you follow and observe their work while the students are discussing in groups?

- T₃: After forming groups and getting them to discuss, I move about and follow what each group does. I observe so that members of each group participate and I follow their progress.
- A: How do you finally provide feedback to groups?
- T₃: I provide feedback by writing... the answer(s) of each group on the blackboard so that the whole class would see the result of each group. Finally, I would announce to the class the group or groups that got the right answer.
- A: Did you orient the students to the regular use of group work at the beginning of the academic year?
- T₃: Definitely ... Like in other units, there is a group activity in the first unit. I helped the students have basic concepts about group work at the very beginning. That is, I explained to them about the objective of group work along with its advantages and disadvantages at length. By responding to their questions... I tried to help them have concept about small groups.

Appendix 4.4: Interview with Teacher Four (T₄)

A(Adem): I would like to thank you for volunteering to give me an interview. I wish to ask you some questions related to group work and to start with the first one, how often do you use group work in contrast to other strategies and are teachers interested in using group work for teaching English?

Teacher (T₄): No, most of the time it is difficult for us to teach English through group work. You know, this is because the students usually go into personal affairs when they form groups. So, we use it sometimes, not frequently.

A: Do you always adapt group activities in the course book to the learners' level, interest, age and background?

T₄: Yes, I sometimes adapt group activities in order to make the topics of discussion suitable to the students' context ... For example, if it is story telling, I get them to discuss about their own childhood stories in groups ... Certain group activities in the text book are those one cannot expect ... I think those group activities whose theme are project or project proposal, for instance, are not to the learners' level. I replace or adapt such.

A: Are group activities incorporated in the student's text book in sufficient quantity and quality? Do you find it necessary to add more?

T₄: Of course, there is need to add more group activities because there are not enough in the English text book.

A: Do most activities the text book and you suggest for group essentially require different abilities so that they could not be done individually?

T₄: As can be seen, most group activities in the text book are those which fast students could individually do. Even when the task encourages the participation of all, the students do not like to take part in group discussions. Thus, group discussions are often dominated by few members.

A: All right. How do you form groups? After forming groups, could you seat them in the class in a way that is suitable for discussion?

T₄: No, no. The class is quite inconvenient to place groups for suitable discussion given that in classes I presently teach there are about 70 or 80 students. So, to get them do group work, I am forced to request the students face each other by turning just as they are. This of

course does not lend for a sound discussion in that it leads to indiscipline and other troublesome situations.

A: What problems do you face in using group work for teaching English? Could you mention the major ones, if any?

T₄: The first and most notable problem is that the students are unable to talk in the target language. Next, they tend to go into a different business. Completely forgetting the topic of discussion, they take up their own points... about what they saw before the class...The other problem is that the class size itself is so large that it is difficult for a teacher to monitor...umm...and the nature of furniture also poses its own problem.

A: In order to discuss with each other well, participants should be of equal status. Could I have your comment on how status is reflected in your class rooms to inhibit the patterns of interaction?

T₄: Definitely, status is reflected in my classrooms. So to speak, students coming from private and government schools have varied abilities. Those from private schools are very active at communicative English and dominate groups. Thus, status matters but not very often. Sometimes children from rural areas are seen to show efforts to learn more.

A: Why do you think certain students participate in group discussions more actively than others?

T₄: For one thing participation depends on the learners' interest. Secondly, their background, the school they come from, also affects it. That is, if they are happened to have group experience, they would actively participate. On the other hand, there are some learners who do not give group work due attention and tend to discuss personal issues in a native language as the teacher cannot observe all groups due to class size.

A: How do the active and passive participants see themselves and how do other students view them?

T₄: Here, the reverse holds. I think those who do not participate seem to feel that they know enough. Concerning others' attitude towards the active and passive participants in terms of knowledge they have no special opinion.

A: How do you organize and conduct group work? That is, how do you lead groups into a group activity?

T₄: I will first say that we are going to do group work to day and give them the topic. Next, I will provide a brief explanation about the topic. Then I request the students to form groups and get them start.

A: How do you observe and monitor groups' performance progress? What are the things you focus on during observation?

T₄: I focus on language during observation. Since there is mother tongue intervention, I check if they are using English or not. I would also check whether or not they are on the topic for there are times they go off. I observe to see how well they have understood the instructions, and they are participating and to check that there is no domination.

A: How do you provide feedback at the end?

T₄: After a group discussion has been completed, there is presentation. When a group representative presents the group product, the strengths and weaknesses of the group can be seen from that. Then, if the group wants to improve their work, members could add more ideas. After that, there will be floor for members of other groups to criticize or ask.

A: Did you orient the students to the regular use of group work at the beginning of the academic year?

T₄: As I told you earlier, I was not here at the beginning of the academic year. However, at any school, there is no trend of preparing students to the use of group work at the beginning of school year. Rather, teachers including me brief about group work the very day they want their students to do it or at most one day earlier.

APPENDIX 5

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS' RECORDED INTERVIEW SCRIPTS

Appendix 5.1: Interview with Student One (S₁)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for your cooperation. I want to ask you some questions about group work and to begin with the first one, have you done many activities in group this year? If so, have they helped you to talk in English?

Student (S₁): We do not frequently do group work. We do it sometimes and when we do so, we obtain useful knowledge from it.

A: Ok. How does your English teacher form groups?

S₁: In our classroom, our teacher assigns a group task by grouping students together based on roll number; for example, by saying let those from number 1-6 work together in one group and so on. That is, we do group work according to roll number.

A: Do the group activities in the text book require different abilities so that they can not be done by an individual group member?

S₁: ... In fact the activities given to us for group are those we could individually do. But we do them in groups in order that we could share different views. I believe that is the point in group work.

A: Does your English teacher assign and explain roles to members of each group? Who does he/she often nominate as group leaders?

S₁: During group work, the English teacher describes things to be done within each group ... He/she does not assign a particular role to each group member but leaves the responsibility to share roles among themselves to group members ... And generally, male or female, academically strong students are selected as group leaders.

A: What problems do the students have in doing group work? How does your English teacher help you to overcome them?

- S₁: Some of the learners' problems when doing group work include lack of text books, low proficiency in the target language and shortage of time. Our teacher helps us with these problems by telling us meanings either in English or in a native language, by suggesting where we could get text books and by allowing more minutes to do group activities.
- A: Why do you think some students participate in group discussions more actively than others?
- S₁: Students who actively participate are those who are interested ... and thus follow their lessons attentively. On the contrary, those who are inattentive and careless about their lessons seem to be passive. There may be other factors which inhibit participation. For example, one may not even understand the lesson of the day if he comes to class disappointed by his parents.
- A: How do the active and passive students see themselves and how do other students view them?
- S₁: The active and passive participants see themselves in contrast to one another. That is, if I participate well, I see myself with a sense of fulfillment and self-confidence in relation to my friend who is passive. Likewise, she feels that she performs less compared to me. Particularly, other students view the active students as more knowledgeable.
- A: How does your English teacher conduct group work? That is, how does he/she lead groups into a group activity?
- S₁: Normally, he comes to class with a group assignment he has thought over. He first provides explanations about it ... and also tells its objective. Next, he requests the students to seat in groups according to roll number and then encourages them to do the activity in groups.
- A: What does the teacher do while the students are working in groups?
- S₁: The teacher moves about and observes groups. He allows the learners to ask if they have difficulties. He encourages them by answering their questions and it goes on like that.
- A: What does he do at the end of the group activity?
- S₁: After the group activity has been completed, the teacher takes the floor to explain as to which group did well, which performed poorly and which went off the topic.

Appendix 5.2: Interview with Student Two (S₂)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for your cooperation. I want to ask you some questions related to group work and to start with my first question, have you done many activities in group this year? If so, have they helped you to express ideas in English?

Student (S₂): Yes, we have done a number of activities in groups and they enabled us to talk in English to a certain extent.

A: How does your English teacher form groups?

S₂: Our teacher requests us to form groups according to roll number. He says from this number to that will be in one group, ... and we form groups by dividing ourselves into groups accordingly.

A: Do the group activities in the English text book require different abilities so that they cannot be done individually?

S₂: The activities we do in groups can also be done individually. However, since one may not know what the other knows, we do them in groups to share knowledge with each other and develop it together.

A: Does your English teacher assign a role to each group member and explain that? Who does he usually name as group leaders?

S₂: Our English teacher does not assign roles to group members. The group members divide roles among themselves and elect the strongest student as a group leader ... And a bottom rank student has never been nominated as a group chairman so far.

A: What problems do the learners have when doing group work? ... How does your teacher help you to cope with them?

S₂: The learners mainly have problems of understanding meanings in English and lack of enough time to complete the activity in group ... Our teacher sometimes helps us by telling meanings of difficult words and expressions in native languages.

A: Why do you think certain learners participate in group discussions more actively than others?

- S₂: Some students participate more actively than others because they have self confidence, follow their lessons in the class attentively and come to class well prepared.
- A: How do the active and passive participants view themselves and how do other students perceive them?
- S₂: Students who participate well have confidence and see themselves as competent while the passive ones regard themselves as less knowledgeable than the active students. Others too see the active students as intelligent and the passive ones as weak and believe that if they read and follow their lessons, they could be as strong.
- A: How does your English teacher conduct group work? That is, how does he/she lead groups into a group activity?
- S₂: First, he tells us the topic of the activity we are going to do in groups. Next, he explains it, announces time limit to complete the activity and then requests us to start.
- A: What does the teacher do while the students are discussing in groups?
- S₂: The teacher follows and observes what groups do by moving around. Meanwhile, he helps the students with anything difficult to them.
- A: What does your teacher do at the end of a group activity?
- S₂: At the end of the group activity, the teacher tells each group its strengths and weaknesses and gives the right answer to those who performed incorrectly.

Appendix 5.3: Interview with Student Three (S₃)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for your cooperation. I want to ask you some questions about group work and to begin with the first, have you done many activities in group this year? If so, have they helped you to talk in English?

Student (S₃)...We were not assigned many group activities ... we did a few activities in groups and we did not get much benefit from that. That is, the activities we did in groups helped some learners to talk in English not all.

A: How does your English teacher group students?

S₃: In the classroom, the students seat in 4 rows. And our English teacher forms groups according to seating arrangement by requesting every 3 students at the front to face the other 3 at the back where they are.

A: Do the group activities in the text book essentially require different abilities so that they cannot be done individually?

S₃: They do not necessarily require the contribution of all group members. Though not all some students could do them by themselves. For example, if I could do them alone, that student may not be able to

A: Does your English teacher assign and explain roles to members of each group? Who does he/she usually nominate as group leaders?

S₃: By rounding in the class, the teacher describes roles and things to be done to the group leaders so that they would brief them to members of their groups ... The teacher first identifies the most competent student from each group and appoint them as group leaders.

A: What problems do the learners have in doing group work? How does your English teacher help you to overcome them?

S₃: Basically, the students have a problem of understanding lessons in English and are hence unable to do group work discussing in English except few. The teacher helps the weaker students by giving them simpler tasks and by providing points of the lessons in their native languages.

A: Why do you think some students participate in group discussions more actively than others?

- S₃: Some students participate very well because they study at home and follow their lessons properly in class. However, certain students who do not seriously follow lessons and disturb during lesson times seem to be unable to participate in group discussions.
- A: How do the active participants and the passive ones see themselves and how do other students view them?
- S₃: Those who actively participate know that they outperform other students in the class and therefore see themselves as more knowledgeable. Since they know more, they help those who are less able. Unlike the active students, those who participate less see themselves as weak. And other students also view the active participants as intelligent and the passive ones as weak.
- A: How does your English teacher present a group lesson? That is how does he/she lead groups in to a group activity?
- S₃: First, he provides the topic. Next, he explains how to do that and then signals us to start working in groups.
- A: What does your teacher do when the students are discussing in groups?
- S₃: While we are working in groups, the teacher goes through the class in order to observe groups and respond to strong students who ask questions.
- A: What does the teacher do at the end of a group activity?
- S₃: At the end of a group task, our English teacher moves around ... to collect what the students have done in groups. He/she helps the students with difficulties if they have any and leaves the class when the time is over.

Appendix 5.4: Interview with Student Four (S₄)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for your cooperation. I want to ask you some questions about group work and to begin with the first one, have you done many activities in group this year and if so, have they helped you to talk in English?

Student (S₄): No, we have not actually done a number of activities in groups this year. Rather, it was at the elementary school that we did so. We are making use of the skills and abilities we developed then here now.

A: Why do not you do several group tasks here at high school as you did at the elementary?

S₄: Here, we are not told or instructed to do tasks in groups. We are not often assigned activities to do them in groups. We are not required to do group work and discuss in groups several times.

A: How does your English teacher form groups?

S₄: Our English teacher forms groups according to our seating arrangement. There are 4 rows and the students' seat in 3's or 4's. Thus, he groups us by saying, for example, in this row you 3 are one group ...

A: Do the group activities in the text book require different abilities so that they cannot be done individually?

S₄: They do not as such demand multiple abilities. In fact, they could be done individually. However, we are requested to do them in groups so that all the students will be benefited or can acquire ... knowledge by sharing ideas together.

A: Does your English teacher assign and explain roles to members of each group? Who does he/she usually name as group leaders?

S₄: Our English teacher does not assign roles to groups and nor does he nominate group leaders. Instead, members of each group share roles among themselves and also elect a group leader. Of course, we select a student who has better knowledge as a group chairman.

A: What problems do the students have in doing group work? Please mention the most serious ones.

S₄: The greatest problem the students have when doing group work is poor ability to communicate in the target language. During group discussions, to understand others and

get our thoughts across, we do not know enough words and expressions in English. Our English teacher always requests us to discuss in English while he knows that we cannot. I think, he has to help us to talk in English first.

A: Why do you think some students participate in group discussions more actively than others?

S₄: I think some students take part in group discussions more actively than others because they have developed more knowledge by studying very well and carefully following the lessons teachers provide.

A: How do the active and the passive students see themselves and how do others view them?

S₄: Those who actively participate assume themselves to be better than others in knowledge pertinent to hard work where as the passive participants feel that they are less competent because they work less. Similarly, other students view the active participants as competent and the passive ones as weak.

A: Do students who are from higher economic families, physically attractive and those who are socially active talk more during group discussions to be viewed as competent?

S₄: Yes, students who are physically attractive, socially active and those from rich families are influential in group discussions. However, when they participate, they do not often forward good ideas and comments.

A: How does your English teacher conduct group work? That is how does he/she lead groups into a group activity?

S₄: First he explains to us what the activity is and how to do it and then tells us to begin working in groups.

A: What does the teacher do when the students are discussing in groups?

S₄: While the students are discussing in groups, the teacher moves around and observes groups. He listens to what the students talk and corrects them if they make mistakes.

A: What does the teacher do when the group activity is over?

S₄: When the group discussion is completed, the teacher would comment as to who took part in the discussion well and who did not. He also informs how successful each group has been and specifies the strengths and weaknesses of each group.

Appendix 5.5: Interview with Student Five (S₅)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for your cooperation. I want to ask you some questions related to group work and to begin with the first, have you done many activities in group this year and if so, have they helped you to talk in English?

Student (S₅): Yes, we have done a number of activities in groups and they enabled us to speak in English and to do well of course with the help of those who have better knowledge.

A: How does your English teacher make groups?

S₅: We are allowed to group ourselves in 3's or 4's and so on as we like. Our teacher asks us to divide ourselves into groups as we find it convenient, more specifically according to closeness of areas of residence.

A: Do the group activities in the English text require different abilities so that they cannot be done individually?

S₅: The group activities in the English text could be done in group as well as individually. That means we do in group what we could also do by ourselves.

A: Does your English teacher assign and explain roles to group members? Who does he often appoint as group leaders?

S₅: Yes, our English teacher briefs what we are going to do and how. He selects academically better students and appoints them group leaders.

A: What problems do the students have in doing group work?

S₅: One problem is that some students do not listen while they are in a group setting and also tend to be careless when they go home ... There is also a problem of low ability of the target language English.

A: Why do you think certain students participate in group discussions more actively than others?

S₅: Some students are evidently more influential in group discussions because they have the ability to participate while those who are weak do not participate well because they are unable to.

- A: How do students who participate very well and those who participate less see themselves? And how do others view them?
- S₅: Learners who actively participate over estimate themselves as knowledgeable whereas those who are passive regard themselves as weak in terms of knowledge in contrast to the active ones. Likewise, other students see the active students as competent and the passive ones as incompetent.
- A: How does your English teacher present a group lesson? That is, how does he/she lead groups in to a group activity?
- S₅: Having consulted several books, our English teacher thinks over and comes to class with a group activity that is useful to us. After that he/she provides us ... and we do accordingly.
- A: What does your English teacher do while the students are working in groups?
- S₅: When we discuss in groups, our teacher sits down and checks if there are different assignments he has given to other sections (S5).
- A: What does your teacher do at the end of a group activity ?
- S₅: When the group task is over, the teacher provides feedback on the students group performance. That is, he tells the class as to which groups have understood the activity and performed well and which have done it poorly.

Appendix 5.6: Interview with Student Six (S₆)

A (Adem): I would like to thank you for your cooperation. I want to ask you some questions about group work and to start, have you done many activities in group this year and if so, have they helped you to talk in English?

Student (S₆): Yes, we have done many activities in group. And as a result, a few students, not many, could express their ideas in English in the class to a limited extent.

A: How does your English teacher form groups?

S₆: He makes groups according to the students' seating arrangement. That is, by requesting those at the front to face those at the back and perhaps he gets 6 students to work together in a group.

A: Do the group activities in the English text book require different abilities so that they cannot be done individually?

S₆: Of course, the activities we do in groups could possibly be done individually. However, if we do them in groups, we could be more successful.

A: Does your English teacher assign and explain roles to group members? Who does he/she generally appoint as group leaders?

S₆: Yes, he assigns roles to group members and explains them. And he/she usually selects those students who actively participate in the class and have more knowledge as group leaders.

A: What problems do the learners have when doing group work? How does your teacher help you to cope with them?

S₆: The learners' key problem is that they are poor in English. In the class, there are students who can speak English and those who cannot. The teachers help those who are poor in English by explaining difficult meanings and ideas in their native languages and by mixing them with those who know English.

A: Why do you think certain students take part in group discussions more actively than others?

S₆: Some students participate in group discussions more actively than others because they follow their lessons in the class attentively and read at home as well.

- A: How do those who participate well and those who participate less see themselves and how do other students in the class view them?
- S₆: Students who actively participate have high self-esteem and see themselves as more knowledgeable than others where as the passive participants assume themselves to be less competent. Other students too view the active students as competent and the passive ones as incompetent.
- A: How does your English teacher present a group lesson? That is, how does he/she set a group activity?
- S₆: The teacher first provides clear instructions about the group activity in question. After that, he signals groups to start working in groups.
- A: What does your teacher do when the students are working in groups?
- S₆: While the students are discussing in groups, the teacher observes how they take part in the discussion and how they work together in groups.
- A: What does the teacher do at the end of a group activity ?
- S₆: At the end of a group activity, the teacher gives feedback on the performance of the groups. That means, he tells the class whether or not each group has performed well.

APPENDIX 6

DESCRIPTIONS OF VIDEO RECORDED GROUP LESSONS

Appendix 6.1: Group Lesson Presentation of Teacher One (T₁)

School: Dire Dawa Comprehensive
Secondary School

Lesson topic: Introducing ourselves

Grade level: 9A

Lesson time: 40 Minutes

After writing the topic of the lesson on the blackboard, the teacher began to brief the activity like this:

To day, we are going to practice how to introduce ourselves to other people, how to give information about ourselves and how to get information about others in groups. Therefore, assume that you do not know each other - - - Now, get into groups of three and have a group leader each. And when you discuss in groups, you should take turns, be polite and you should not interrupt the other speaker.

Having said this nearly in 5 minutes time, the teacher got groups to begin discussion. In his introduction, the teacher did not give the students content knowledge of the task. That is, he didn't explain the what and when of introduction and the concept of information to be given at introduction - - -are not clear to the students. He did not give gambits to open dialogue, maintain and close it, and he did not also set the time limit. What is more, by saying "*assume you don't know each other*", he made the task unnecessary one. According to Michaelsen et al (1997), groups become reluctant to discuss when they lack content knowledge of the task.

As can be seen from the video, after two minutes the teacher began to interrupt groups in order to encourage them start discussion. He was heard saying *start, just start, don't do another thing, 'algebachihum hasabe?', didn't you understand my idea? ...* As a result, groups

soon managed to begin discussing and the teacher went on observing them. He was seen giving nods of approval to encourage participation. He was whispering to groups several times by way of helping. But he didn't discourage L1 use while several groups were talking in their native tongues. To my observation, boys were talking more than girls.

As the teacher did not provide necessary language, ideas and gambits for opening, maintaining and closing dialogues, most groups were unable to discuss meaningfully except the two selected groups. As can be seen from the video,

- There was no turn taking.
- There was continuous stream of noises.
- There was domination.

After letting them discuss for about 10 minutes the teacher got the students' attention by a kind of sudden interruption. Then, he asked three group leaders to tell him information about the person they met one by one. More specifically, he requested them to tell him:

- *Who his/her name is.*
- *Where he/she is from.*
- *Where he/she studied grades 1-8.*
- *How many brothers and sisters he/she has.*

As the video reveals it so, for example, one active female learner was observed responding to the teacher like this:

His name is Abdullahi.

He is from Jijiga.

He learned grades 1-8 in Jijiga.

He has two sisters and two brothers.

Now, he lives in Gende Kore.

Getting three active students respond to him as shown above, the teacher summarized the group lesson by saying: “*To day, we have learned how to introduce ourselves, how to give information about ourselves and how to get information about others. For more practice, we shall do another task next time.*” He did not give any sort of feedback.

Appendix 6.2: Group Lesson Presentation of Teacher Two (T₂)

School: Dire Dawa Comprehensive
Secondary School

Lesson topic: Gender Issues

Grade level: 9G

Lesson time: 40 Minutes

As he entered the class, the teacher greeted the students and told them that they were going to do group work on gender issues. He wrote the topic and went on explaining the activity. Of course, he made the concept clear easily by mentioning roles men and women often take. Then, he asked the students to make groups in 6's and elect their own secretary and chairman. And he wrote some discussion questions on the board:

- *Is the home women's right place?*
- *Are women less able than men? (in education, leadership ... for example)*
- *What activities do men and women do?*
- *Can women take men's roles?*

Building on, after briefing roles to the secretary and the group leader, the teacher got them start the discussion within about 5 minutes. Unfortunately, he didn't set the time limit, didn't provide necessary language and establish routines and norms for working in groups.

When the students were discussing in their groups, the teacher was observing them in an effort to encourage participation and to listen their points. As to my observation, he was visiting some groups now and then. The topic being of common interest, many groups were discussing well, sometimes in English and mostly in Afan Oromo and Amharic. As an example, two members of one group, one boy and the other girl, were heard discussing in Afan Oromo like this:

- B: Dhalaan dhiiraan qixaan sumarraa dhugaa? * Are really women equal with men?
G: If –hin shakku! * Sure!
B: Dhirra biyya bulcituun moo? * With men who rule a country?
G: Dhalaan daran bulchuu hin oolu. *Women may better rule.

To my observation, during the discussion, there was no turn taking and the students were talking in mass as they like. Discussions were dominated by few active members. Boys and the group leaders who were mostly males were seen to talk more. Some were witnessed talking to each other even across groups over the topic. There was also much use of native languages – Afan Oromo and Amharic. Surprisingly, the teacher didn't discourage the use of L1 a little.

After leaving the groups to discuss for about 15 minutes, the teacher stopped them by offering two group leaders the chance to present results of their groups. Having listed the roles men and women are expected to assume in the society, the first presenter stated that the other issues had split their group into two. The second presenter also stressed that their group too could not reach agreement over those issues except one.

Lastly, the teacher took the floor to finalize the group lesson with a kind of feedback on content. He told the students not to worry about their not reaching consensus because the issues are always controversial to the world and he deliberately used them as a tool to get them talk in English.

Appendix 6.3: Group Lesson Presentation of Teacher Three (T₃)

School: Dire Dawa Comprehensive
Secondary School

Lesson topic: Contextual Meaning

Grade level: 9A

Lesson time: 40 Minutes

The teacher entered the class, greeted the students and told them that their lesson for that day was group work. Next, he wrote the topic on the blackboard and directions that notifies them to contextually guess meanings of words from the passage. He then wrote the following five words on the blackboard.

1. *Influenced*
2. *Assets*
3. *Enterprises*
4. *Networks*
5. *Widespread*

Proceeding with, the teacher began to explain the task. He said that they were going to work in groups to guess meanings of these words from the passage. He did not provide necessary language, brief cooperative norms and nor did he describe multiple abilities a vocabulary task of the kind might require. He could have refreshed their memory of a context and clues that might serve them to guess meanings contextually. Rather, he simply requested the students to form groups according to their seating, to open their books on page 227 and instructed them to begin working in groups. Doing this in 4 minutes, he led groups into discussion without setting time and explaining what they do in each phase clearly.

As the video shows it, while they were discussing in their groups, the teacher was moving here and there to observe and encourage groups. To encourage groups the teacher was heard saying to them “*read the passage, guess meanings, - - -discuss, you can give different meanings.*” Of course, he was particularly focusing on certain good groups. He was sometimes moving and sometimes standing at the centre. According to my observation, there was no turn taking between group members during the discussion. Discussions were seen to be dominated by the few male learners. That is, the students were talking at the same time

uproariously in a manner that indicates they have no small group experience. There were shouts. There was no discipline. Three students were seen to enter the class 15 minutes after the lesson began without the teacher's permission. As the teacher didn't treat the task so that it would encourage cooperation, several groups particularly those at the back were discussing their own points in their native tongues. Two female members of one group were heard talking, about their own issues in Amharic:

- Q: Samint lemin keresh gin?* *Why didn't you come last week end?
A: Akiste metita. * My aunt came to visit us.
Q: Abet wishet. *Oh! That is a lie.
A: Bewnet. * Really!

After about 11 minutes the teacher brought the discussion to an end by clapping twice. As there were no secretaries and group leaders, he did not get any group to present its final result. Rather, he fronted the class, with a book on hand, and started to ask individual students to give the definitions the five words one by one as follows:

- T: What is the meaning of widespread?*
S: Extending a group of people.
T: Extending a group of people? Excellent. (Writes the definition repeating the student orally)
T: You can give different answers ... guess.

At this time, the students were heard saying loudly "*teacher ... teacher*", "*gashe*" to get the chance to respond. When they finished providing definitions of the five words in the above way, the teacher asked the class to go on defining additional 6 words listed in the book. Although they did not discuss them, the students gave the definitions of the 6 words as before. As the video depicts it, in providing the definitions of the 6 words one by one in a whole class situation, the few active students along the teacher dominated the class. In fact, instead of asking the students to tell only the meanings of words, the teacher had also to ask them to put the words in sentences of their own. In addition, while a context limits meaning of a word, the teacher was seen to give different meanings for some words. For example, for the word 'role', he wrote three meanings: aim, position, and target.

Finally the teacher summarized the lesson like this:

T: Do you have any question?

C: Silence.

T: Is it clear?

C: Roared yes.

There ends the story. He left class without providing feedback saying they would proceed from page 230 next time.

Appendix 6.4: Group Lesson Presentation of Teacher Four (T₄)

School: Dire Dawa Comprehensive Secondary School **Lesson topic:** Relative Clauses

Grade level: 9C **Lesson time:** 40 Minutes

Having greeted and informed the class that they were going to have a group lesson, the teacher wrote the following questions under the topic on the board:

1. What are relative clauses?
2. What are the special features of relative clauses?
3. How many types of relative clauses are there?
4. What is the relation between relative clauses and relative pronouns?
5. Give some examples

By way of introducing the activity, the teacher first explained the five questions. Then, she requested the students to sit in groups of six according to their seats and also asked each group to have its own secretary and chairman who would present the group responses orally at the end. Having said this in about two minutes, she signaled them to start discussing in groups without checking clarity of instructions and fixing a time limit.

As can be seen from the video, while the students were working in groups, the teacher attempted to observe what each group was doing almost equally by moving around. At this time members of different groups were discussing on the questions by trying to give examples. They were raising points such as “*what is the definition of a relative clause?*”, “*what is the difference between a defining and non-defining relative clause?*” ... During the discussion, groups were also heard to talk both in English and local languages – Afan Oromo and Amharic: a member of one group said in Afan Oromo “*Walumaan seenanii bar*”. (They collocate together) and members of the other group were discussing in Amharic as follows:

Q: Relativ Kloz mindinew?

*What is a relative clause ?

A: Arefte neger be ‘who’ - - -mayayaz - - -

*Linking sentences by ‘who’...

Q: Yehuletu liyunetis?

* How are the two differ?

A: Difayining sihon omit madreg annichilm

* In case of defining ...we can’t omit..

During the discussion, secretaries of certain groups were seen to write points being made. However, the groups manifested greater lack of interaction skills how to begin, maintain and complete a conversation. As they do not know how to take turns and for how long one should hold the floor, discussions remained to be one sided. Some active male learners were witnessed to dominate the females and other less able male learners. Besides, groups were talking loudly and in mass to disturb each other rather than keeping their voices low. What is more, certain groups especially those at the back did not even turn to face each other to discuss well. As the teacher didn't assign roles provide discussion skills and necessary language, the discussion was dominated by few. De-motivated by domination, they were talking personal issues in native languages.

While the groups were discussing, the teacher was interrupting all groups turn by turn just to repeat her very instructions un-requested. As a result, the discussion was totally dominated by the teacher, the secretaries and the group leaders until she drew it to a close after about seven minutes by requesting three group leaders to present.

The first presenter faced the class and began his presentation by giving the definition of a relative clause and explaining its special features. The teacher asked him to give an example of a defining and non-defining relative clause. The student began a sentence and failed to finish it. By saying let us improve his presentation, the teacher completed his sentence and wrote it on the board. Like the first, the second and third presenters responded to questions 1-4 by looking at blackboard but unable to give examples. She helped them as before.

Following, by posing the same questions to individual students, the teacher got them respond in turns in a whole class manner. Next, she allowed them to ask questions. The few active students who answering her questions asked questions and she explained. Lastly, by using her self as an example to explain the difference between a defining and non-defining relative clause:

W/rt 'X' who is your English teacher is a graduate of Jimma University.

She finalized the group lesson without providing feedback on product and process except that she mentioned some grammatical mistakes.

APPENDIX 7

Classroom Observation Frame

Teacher roles	Sub Skills	Observed Teachers				
Stepping in to Group Activity	Introducing the activity	T1	T2	T3	T4	
	Providing relevant language					
	Composing groups					
	Checking clarity of instructions					
	Briefing norms for cooperation					
	Describing particular abilities					
	Assigning functionary roles					
	Naming group leaders					
	Setting work stations					
	Setting time limit					
Monitoring Group Activity	Movement					
	Encouraging interaction					
	Discouraging L1 use					
	Interventions					
	Offering helps on request					
	Letting groups struggle with task					
	Noting persistent language mistakes					
	Keeping groups to topic					
Stepping out of Group Activity	Winding groups down					
	Getting every one's attention					
	Providing feed back on	Product				
		Process				
		Language use				