

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

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS HINDERING  
LEARNERS' SPEAKING ABILITY: KOTEBE COLLEGE OF  
TEACHERS EDUCATION IN FOCUS**

**BY:  
AREGA MEKONNEN**

**JUNE, 2010**

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## Declaration

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

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## **Definition of Terms**

Oracy- fluency in speaking and listening

Conative function- aspects of the language which aim to create certain response in the addressee.

Instructor/teacher-exchangeably used

Ideational function- transactional function

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to explore some of the major problems hindering the English language speaking ability of Freshman English major students at Kotebe College of Teachers' Education. The sample for the study consisted of 56 students and one spoken English instructor of the two sections. In the process, three different kinds of instruments: students' questionnaire, students' and teacher's interview and classroom observation were used. Accordingly, all the sample students filled the questionnaire, eight selected students and their spoken English instructor were interviewed and classroom observation was held three times in each section.

Finally, the results of the study indicated that the students' native culture has greatly influenced their English language speaking ability. They also did not have the confidence to express their ideas in English both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, it was found that the teacher did not motivate them to the required level. Other problems like low vocabulary and poor grammar knowledge also affected their speaking ability of English. In the classroom, the students were often corrected for the errors they committed while speaking. Some students were also shy /afraid to participate in spite of the provision of a few activities to engage them into using the language.

To improve their ability of speaking English, therefore, the instructor should create a free, enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere of learning and students, on their part, must use this opportunity to freely practice in the language and develop their speaking ability.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Teaching of a foreign language aims at developing the communicative ability of students so that they will be able to use the language for a variety of interactive purposes. However, as stated in Brown (1984:1), language learning for much of its history has been concerned with the relative skills especially with in the written language.

Current thinking, however, stresses the fact that second language ability can be developed through using the target language for communication. This communicative use is not only the goal but also a means of learning a foreign language (Littlewood, 1981). Language teaching, therefore, should focus on raising the communicative ability of the students since the primary purpose of language is to enable people to exchange ideas as well as to interact each other.

It is, therefore, important to develop oral fluency which is the goal of teaching the productive skill of speaking in a language class. According to Byrne (1986:9), oral fluency is "the ability to express oneself intelligibly". He also states that if students achieve this ability, they can express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily understandable and with an acceptable level of accuracy.

However, developing oral skills in learners is not an easy task for many English teachers, particularly for those teaching English as a foreign language. Some of the problems in developing oral skill are lack of environmental support for foreign language learners, insufficient time for learning and difficulties in finding life like situations to motivate the students to communicate in the foreign language (Deporto, 1997).

Thus, to overcome the above problems in teaching English as a foreign language, teachers should employ effective techniques to involve their students in the target language. In addition, they have to be careful while selecting/preparing speaking activities. In this regard, Ur (1996) suggests that the speaking activities to be designed should be capable of arousing the interest of the learners to talk a lot, motivating them to participate evenly and helping them to produce language of an acceptable level. In this way, language teachers can maximize the participation of their learners in using the target language for communication.

However, the responsibility of the EFL teacher in teaching the spoken language to the students is not as such easy. In relation to this, Brown and Yule (1983:25) make the following point:

*Spoken language production, learning to talk the foreign language, is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for the teacher to help students with. The practical problems are obvious. In written production, each writer can set himself without disturbing the other members of the class. But in speaking, each speaker needs to speak individually and ideally; he needs someone to listen to him speaking and respond to him. When he speaks, he makes a noise which will disturb other students unless they are saying the same thing at the same time, or unless they are listening to what he says.*

The idea put forward by these scholars is really a problem a teacher of foreign language faces in his/her teaching of the spoken language. This entails a conducive environment for the effective practice of the skill.

The ultimate goal of students learning a foreign language is to use it in the process of exchanging ideas, transmit messages as well as receiving them. Nevertheless, in spite of formal English instruction, students in countries like ours are not capable of using the language to express ideas or to communicate with others. Concerning this, Widdowson (1978) comments that the problem still lies on the part of students because in developing countries students have got formal English teaching for several years but remain deficient in

their ability to actually use the language and to understand its use in normal communications.

Local research findings in this area can be cited from works by different researchers. For example, Mekonnen (1998) states that speaking skill is the most difficult for most of the students indicating that special attention and support should be given to its teaching and the study skills.

On the other hand, Awol (1999) states that in our country where English is the medium of instruction, the speaking skill was supposed to have been given much importance. One would expect that students are given chances for oral exercises and presentation in English classes which they would then transfer to their other school subjects. However, there is very little speaking work done in our schools in English classes. As a result, students are very weak in their ability to speak English.

In addition, Tamene (2000) states that teachers do not encourage students to creatively use the target language. He also explains that the only utterance made by students is responding while soliciting and reacting are restricted to teachers.

At last, Abrham (2006) found out that the majority of the students do not make frequent practice to bring a change in their speaking ability. They also lack confidence and are afraid to express their ideas in English. My research is also similar to Abraham's but differs in the sense that I have included culture and classroom atmosphere.

In recent years, however, with the aim of fostering better education in our country, the Ministry of Education has launched the teaching of different subjects in high schools by a technologically advanced device, namely plasma.

Though students have got the opportunity to learn English via plasma, no tremendous changes are observed in the students' language performance particularly with the speaking aspect (Aberash, 2005). This is attributed to lack of participation on the part of the learners. She further indicates that observing various samples of communicative activities on plasma TV does not necessarily mean involving students in such activities.

Generally, in addition to the above problems, there are other factors like culture, classroom atmosphere and speaking activities which the present researcher thinks could affect the speaking ability of the learners. Hence, the researcher is interested to identify if these problems really hinder the speaking ability of the learners with particular reference to Freshman English Major Students at Kotebe College of Teachers Education.

## **1.2. Purpose of the study**

The main objective of the study is to explore the problems hindering the students' speaking ability with particular reference to Freshman English Major Students at Kotebe College of Teachers' Education.

To this end, it is aimed at answering the following research questions.

- a. Does (native) culture affect the speaking ability of the learners?
- b. To what extent is the classroom environment conducive to learn speaking?
- c. To what extent are the students given speaking activities to practice speaking?
- d. What should be the role of the instructors to alleviate their students' problems of speaking English? What about the students themselves?

## **1.3. Significance of the Study**

By trying to explore some major problems learners face in speaking English, the findings of this study would:



1. Come up with some useful means of minimizing the challenges in speaking.
2. Contribute for the improvement of the speaking ability of the Freshman English Major students under study.
3. Trigger interest in other researchers to do further studies in the area.

#### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on the problems hindering the students' speaking ability with particular reference to Freshman English Majors at Kotebe College of Teachers' Education in Addis Ababa.

#### **1.5. Limitations of the Study**

The study was conducted in only one college with a limited number of students. It would have been more indispensable had it included subjects from other colleges. Moreover, other than culture, classroom atmosphere and speaking activities, other factors such as previous language learning materials might also affect the students' English language speaking ability. Nevertheless, the researcher did not include these due to constraints of time and money.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1. The Speaking Skill**

Many scholars have defined speaking differently. For instance, Chaney (1998: 13) defines it as the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non verbal symbols in a variety of contexts. Another scholar, Bygate (1987: 37) says that speaking is the skill which most of the time requires face-to-face interaction of at least two people to be conducted. Bygate further states that speaking is the skill that students will be judged upon most in real life situations and most often the first impression of a person is based on his/her ability to speak fluently and comprehensibly.

Besides the above scholars definition of speaking, Johnson and Morrow (1981: 10) explain that speaking is an activity which involves two or more people in which the participants are both hearers and speakers and have to react to what they hear and make their contributions at high speed to achieve a set of intentions and/or goals that they want to achieve in the interaction.

Another definition is given by Widdowson (1978:57) while he states that speaking, as instance of use is, part of reciprocal exchange in which both reception and production play a part. This concept tells the fact that the skill involves both receptive and productive participation.

#### **2.2. The Speaking Process**

Like other language skills, the skill of speaking has got its own stages. In other words, it includes activities that occur prior to, during and after the actual speaking event (Seely, 1995). For instance, before speaking, the speaker might determine the actual content of the message, how it should be presented, and what kind of audience will be hearing the message. During while speaking, the speaker must attend to such things as presenting a clear message, tone of

voice, suitable vocabulary, possible responses, the environment and non verbal gestures. At the post speaking stage, on the other hand, the speaker might accept comments, answer questions, explain concepts not understood, and/or assess the process (Ibid).

### ***2.2.1. Pre-speaking***

This is the first stage of the speaking process which Seely (1995) calls as the stage of planning and organizing. Just as prewriting precedes drafting, pre-speaking precedes before students actually speak. Students' experiences, observations, and interactions inside and outside of the classroom have an impact upon what they say and how they say it. Pre-speaking activities involve thought and reflection, and provide opportunities for students to plan and organize for speaking. Some purposes for pre-speaking include:

- To choose a speaking topic
- To determine purpose
- To determine audience
- To determine format

### ***2.2.2. While Speaking***

This stage according to Seely (1995) engages students into interactions with peers and other audiences. Students who have been provided with supportive, collaborative environments and opportunities to prepare for their informal and formal speaking experiences are more likely to have the confidence needed to "go public" with their ideas and information.

Moreover, Seely (1995) shows that in order to interact with others, students need to engage in a variety of formal and informal speaking situations depending upon their purpose for speaking. This stage has the following purposes.

- To express personal feelings, ideas or view points
- To tell a story
- To entertain or amuse
- To describe
- To inform or explain
- To request
- To inquire (question)
- To clarify thinking
- To explore and experiment with a variety of ideas and formats
- To converse and discuss (Ibid).

### ***2.2.3. Post Speaking***

This is the final stage of speaking which according to Seely (1995) is a time for reflection and setting goals. Following while speaking experiences, both formal and informal, it is important to have students reflect upon their performance. Their reflection, whether it is oral or written, should include the teacher who can help them set personal goals for improving their speaking abilities. This type of reflective assessment and goal setting encourages critical thought. Some purposes for post-speaking activities include:

- To reflect upon performance
- To set goals for improvement

## **2.3. Developmental Stages of Speaking**

Seely (1995) classifies the developmental stages of speaking into four stages ranging from dependence to independence.

### ***2.3.1. Novice Speaker***

A novice speaker as the name indicates is unskilled and therefore needs encouragement. He uses a limited vocabulary and encounters difficulties with pronunciation. He also lacks self esteem and seems shy. A speaker at this

stage exhibits little interest in group interactions and attempts to learn by listening to the conversations of others. Moreover, he gets engaged at times of brief conversations (Seely, 1995).

### ***2.3.2. Transitional Speaker***

This stage, according to Seely (1995), comes next to the first stage of speaking. As compared to the novice speaker, a transitional speaker is self involved and more confident. He initiates conversation with in a circle of trusted friends and volunteers responses when certain that the contribution is acceptable. He also participates in reading/speaking activities as part of a group. When requiring information, he asks questions. A speaker at this stage uses vocabulary adequate for informal communication.

### ***2.3.3. Willing Speaker***

Seely (1995) points out that speakers belonging to this group are peer involved and achieve self assurance. These speakers introduce topics and ideas for conversation and discussion. They enter into discussion about topics or ideas of personal interest and participate comfortably in conversation and in other oral interactions. Besides, they also extend vocabulary as required and demonstrate a growing sense of audience when speaking (Ibid).

### ***2.3.4. Independent Speaker***

An independent speaker, as indicated in Seely (1995), is autonomous and assumes leadership roles. Such a speaker initiates conversation and discussion. He also encourages others to contribute their ideas. He knows an extensive vocabulary which he uses appropriately. When he needs clarification or interpretation, he requests for more information. Furthermore, he differs tactfully with ideas or attitudes deemed personally unacceptable.

## **2.4. Purpose of Teaching Speaking**

Speaking is taught for different reasons. As pointed out by Bygate (1987) and Ur (1996), speaking lessons enable learners to develop their oral ability, to foster their ability of thinking in English and to accelerate the learning of the other skills. Besides this, the skill should be taught since it is the basic medium of communication.

In the process of interaction between teacher-student and student-student, speaking a language is found to play greater role. For this reason, the skill should be taught. The ability to speak is essential not only for classroom interaction but also for communication outside of the class. According to Klippel (1984), success in the skill provides better opportunity to the learners to broaden their knowledge in other academic fields. Moreover, interaction with others will widen the scope of knowledge one has.

Haozhang (1997) on his part states that the purpose of teaching speaking is to improve the oral production of the students. As a result, language teaching activities in the classroom should aim at maximizing individual language use. He also added that oral production requires the teacher not only to create a warm and humanistic classroom atmosphere but also to provide each student with a turn to speak or a role to play. Pair work and group work are, therefore, often implemented in the oral communication class. Owing to the above factors, the skill needs prior attention and should be treated accordingly.

## **2.5. Characteristics of Spoken Language**

Speaking a language is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions (Shumin, 1997). Speaking is closely related or interwoven with listening which is the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized. Thus, to speak a language, one must know

how the language is used in a social context. This is because each language has its own rules of usage as to when, how and to what degree a speaker may impose a given verbal behavior on his/her conversational partner (Berns in Shumin, 1990).

Ur (1996) states the following characteristics of spoken language.

- a) Speech is spontaneous: in most situations people do not plan ahead of time what they are going to say. Only in more formal situations such as when a person is being asked to give a speech do people plan and organize their speech. The fact that speech is spontaneous means that it is full of false starts, repetitions, incomplete sentences and short phrases. However, Bygate (1987) points out that teachers may require their students to do more forward thinking and planning than native speakers do in real life.
- b) Producing spoken language is time constrained. This shows that students must be able to produce unplanned utterances in real time; otherwise, people will not have the patience to listen to them.

In addition, Ur (1996: 120) lists the following characteristics of successful speaking tasks:

- a. Maximum foreign talk: this refers to avoidance of students' talking in the mother tongue and too much teacher talk i.e. students should get maximum exposure in speaking English.
- b. Even participation: at times of group activities, outstanding students dominate other members. Teachers should avoid this problem and guarantee equal opportunities for students of different levels.
- c. High motivation: to arouse student's interest to speak, they should be provided with an interesting topic. The teacher must also make sure that the task is in line with the students' ability.

- d. Right language level: the activity set for students should fit with their language ability. Otherwise, they will be frustrated and are likely to give up or revert to their native language.

## **2.6. Uses of Spoken English**

Speaking activities designed in accordance with the language abilities of the learners are of great advantage to promote their speaking ability. Such activities are offered to compensate for the lack of communicative opportunities in the students' environments. Therefore, it is essential to design interesting and meaningful activities thereby motivating students to participate voluntarily in them (Shuying, 1999).

The following scholars (Holliday, 1985; Brown and Yule, 1983) state that spoken language has two different functions for the users: the interpersonal and the ideational functions.

### ***2.6.1. The Interpersonal Function***

This is also called interactional function and is concerned with the social, expressive and conative functions of language. It is reflected in the kind of social talk that we participate throughout the day in conversational exchanges with family, friends, colleagues, etc. This kind of relaxed verbal interaction is the use of language to establish and maintain social relations. According to Holliday (1985), the ability to use language for social purposes begins early in the language experience of native speakers and is not explicitly taught in formal classroom situations.

In this function, students share information and ideas with listeners by speaking informally and sharing through conversation. Moreover, learners practice common social exchanges such as greetings, complaints, congratulations and so on (ibid).



### ***2.6.2. The Ideational Function***

The ideational or transactional function of language on the other hand is quite different from the use of language for social relations. For Holliday, this function refers to the use of language to express and communicate information. It is an aspect very essential in most real life situations whether in study or business, professional or most other work contexts.

When the purpose is to transmit information rather than to maintain social relations, language is used to get things done, to produce a result in real life terms. A case in point is when the speaker needs to give information to a listener so that the listener can respond in appropriate ways. This component, therefore, shapes students' perceptions of the world and represents these perceptions as knowledge (ibid).

Another scholar, Seely (1995), stresses the fact that both social and intellectual talks have a place in the classroom. As a result, there should be a chance for crossover between social and intellectual or ideational talk. Some classroom talk experiences are spontaneous and occur without teacher prompts or instruction while other speaking activities require planning and structure. However, both language functions are invaluable and need to be treated properly.

### **2.7. Oral Skill and Interaction**

Oral communication is a vital component of the English language arts curriculum and provides the base for growth in reading, writing and listening abilities. Oracy consists of both verbal and nonverbal communication (Seely, 1995). Therefore, it is important for teachers to recognize that non verbal communication is culture specific and be aware of the differences that may exist across cultures when students express themselves non-verbally.

Developing students' communicative oral skills is one of the most important goals in language teaching. However, Deporto (1997) comments that developing oral skills is a real challenge for many EFL school teachers since the students do not live in an English speaking environment and most of them attend schools where English is taught as a curricular subject.

In contexts like this, it is very difficult to achieve good standards of oral productions because the input students receive is insufficient. In addition, there are too few classroom hours and most teachers, although proficient in the target language, are not native speakers of English. Finding realistic situations which motivate students to communicate in the foreign language is also difficult (Ibid, 1997).

Bygate (1987:5) on his part discusses the distinctions between the two kinds of skills: motor perceptive skills and interaction skills.

*Motor perceptive skills involve perceiving, recalling and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language. This is the relatively superficial aspect of skill which is a bit like learning how to manipulate the controls of a car on a deserted piece of road far from the flow of normal traffic. It is the context free kind of skill.*

Oral skill, on the other hand, involves more than this. In this regard, Mackey (1985: 266) states that oral expression involves not only the use of the right sounds in the right patterns of rhythm and intonation but also the choice of words and inflections in the right order to convey the right meaning. Mackey's idea clearly shows the essence of choosing the right forms of words, their correct arrangement and their proper utterance to produce the right meaning.

Learners' language production should not be controlled from outside since this will decrease their competence in oral skill. Such control causes the learner to

be unable to transfer his knowledge from a language learning situation to a language using situation. Nor presumably will the learner be able to transfer much of any motor perceptive skill to a language using situation (Wilkins, 1974). This indicates that in addition to the motor perceptive skills, there are other skills to be developed which as Wilkins says are those of "controlling one's own language production" and "having to make one's own choices". This kind of skill is interaction skill. It is the skill of using knowledge and basic motor-perceptive skills to achieve communication (Wilkins, 1974; Mackey, 1985 as cited in Bygate, 1987).

Besides this, Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish between long and short speaking turns. According to them, long speaking turns tend to be more prepared-like a talk on the radio while short speaking turns are worked out as the speech proceeds.

Growth in real communication revolves around increasing fluency and effectiveness. Students, therefore, need to be able to speak clearly using appropriate volume. They need to be able to give or follow directions, negotiate, ask questions, suggest answers and organize and present information. They also need to adapt their speaking for different audience, purposes, formats and topics. According to Seely (1995), as students become more proficient speakers, they develop their abilities to interact socially, to develop self awareness and to inform.

## **2.8. Speaking and Listening**

Oral communication is a two way process. It involves a speaker and listener. The speaker usually speaks in the presence of a listener who is expected to comprehend and react to the spoken message. In other words, when the speaker encodes the message in appropriate language, the listener decodes or interprets the message. Concerning the listener, Byrne (1986) has the following

to say: "...the listener is helped by prosodic features such as stress and intonation, which are part of the meaning of the spoken utterance, as well as by facial and bodily movements such as gestures."

Speaking is closely related or interwoven with listening which is the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized. This skill feeds on listening, which precedes it. Usually, one person speaks and the other responds through attending by means of the listening process (Shumin, 1997). During interaction, every speaker plays a double role-both as a listener and a speaker.

In relation to the listening process of the learners, Mendlson and Rubin (1995:35) state, "While listening, learners must comprehend the text by retaining information in memory, integrate it with what follow and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and of incoming information".

Speakers should adapt their message in line with the listeners' reaction. With the help of these reactions, the message can be adjusted from moment to moment, understanding can be improved and the speaker's task is facilitated (Brown and Yule, 1983; Bygate, 1987).

To speak a foreign-language with confidence, therefore, learners must have the opportunity to listen to what has been correctly spoken at normal speed. In this way, the learners' minds can move rapidly in the language without thinking about the individual words and their position in a sentence (Rivers and Temperly, 1978; Brown and Yule, 1983 in Bygate, 1987).

## **2.9. Speaking Skill in Language Learning**

Previously, the chief concern of language teaching focused on the study of the written language. And this was true to the English language as well. Bygate (1993:7) also states, "Speaking has been an undervalued skill due to the fact that it is transient and improvised and can, therefore, be viewed as facile, superficial or glib". However, other scholars such as Richards et al (1987:1) comment that the dynamic changes and developments in methods of language teaching throughout history reflect recognition of changes in the kind of proficiency learners' need, such as a move towards oral proficiency rather than reading comprehension as the only goal of language study. Because of this, speaking is getting the attention of the researchers and teachers in the day today teaching activity (Jones, 1993).

The researches conducted on the importance and place of speaking in language teaching and the teachers' practical activities have come to show that speaking is a vehicle of language learning (Bygate, 1993). Speaking enables students to relate what they know with what they are learning. In addition, it increases students' confidence, gives life to the teaching learning process and builds good relationship between teachers and students and among the students themselves.

## **2.10. Speaking in English Lessons**

Classroom speaking activities are usually based on texts. However, it will be necessary to create other activities that provide students with better speaking opportunities and at the same time motivate them (Shuying, 1999). To accomplish this, Shuying advises that it is beneficial to employ themes of interest that stimulate discussions and debates and those which can overcome students' fears of speaking.

The speaking class is a place where students get more exposure to learn the oral skills and to put them in to practice so as to facilitate the learning of the spoken language. Regarding this concept, Seely (1995: 1) states:

*As learning and applying the skills of oral English are so closely related, the classroom should be a place where the use of the spoken language is sensitively supported and where active listening is developed and valued. Talk enables students to make connections between what they know and what they are learning and listening helps them to acquire knowledge and explore ideas.*

Students' practice of the oral skills in English classes focuses on varieties of speaking activities. Again, these activities need to be graded in order of complexity. Practice with such activities improves the speaking ability of the learners. In relation to this, Murcia and Olshtain (2001: 177) have the following to say:

*Speaking activities, like listening activities, can be presented on a continuum from easier to more difficult tasks. For younger, beginning level learners, the teacher may begin with guessing games that require only one word answers and gradually increase the complexity so that the learners have the opportunity to express themselves using longer discourse as soon as possible.*

In speaking lessons, activities that increase student talk and promote interaction among Students for communicative purposes are of vital role. Consequently, teachers need to be systematic to design motivating tasks so that learners are engaged in interactions.

It is also agreed that to make students ready for more autonomous speaking activities, a teacher should engage students in role play, group discussions and use of the target language outside the classroom. Besides, he/she has to use the learners' input and give them feedback. To accomplish these, however, students need sufficient information and language background. It is important

that the teacher should be careful not to embarrass the learners while conveying feedback.

## **2.11. Some Factors that Affect Students' Speaking Ability**

### ***2.11.1. Anxiety***

In the teaching and learning of a foreign language, anxiety is a common experience teachers encounter in the classroom. As Phillip (1991) points out, students with this problem manifest characteristics such as sitting at the back of the room, trying to hide in their seats, never volunteering to speak and if asked, responding in barely audible whisper.

There are different components of foreign language anxiety. Some of them are communication apprehension and fear of negative social evaluation. Comprehension apprehension arises from learners' inability to express their ideas adequately (Horwitz et al, 1986; Phillips, 1992 in Brown, 1994). Learners are used to expressing mature thoughts and ideas in their own language. When they find that they can't do the same in their target language, they are frustrated because they feel that their self esteem is at the risk of negative social evaluation. As a result, they develop low self esteem and lack of confidence to communicate orally.

On the other hand, fear of negative social evaluation emanates from general irrational beliefs and distorted view of language learning that learners bring with them to foreign language classroom (Horwitz et al, 1986; Phillips, 1991). According to these scholars, students will develop beliefs like "I will make mistakes and people will laugh at me" and "my accent is not good".

However, it is advisable for foreign language learners to minimize such beliefs and actively participate in any speaking activity. Teachers should also provide convincing orientations on the matter to their students.

### **2.11.2. Large Class Size**

It is necessary to create a favorable condition in order to make students speak (Byrne, 1991). If there are things which cause learners to lose interest to speak, they will not engage into using the language for communication purpose. Byrne also added that while students speak, they must be engaged in extended speech activities in the class. However, the size of the class has a great effect on the communicative practice.

Classroom size can also affect students' problem of speaking (Nolasco and Arthur, 1988). They further explain that the interaction and success of the activity will be influenced by the organization of the classroom to suit speaking. This indicates that to enable students to communicate in pairs or groups, a good classroom arrangement is needed.

The following are some of the unfavorable conditions which can happen in large English classes thereby affecting the speaking skill: shortage of suitable textbook and other print materials and rows of heavy desks which make moving around the class impossible (Ibid). In large EFL class, it is important to introduce speaking strategies to the students such as asking for clarification and using fillers, etc (Haozhang, 1997).

### **2.11.3. Shortage of Vocabulary and Grammar**

For communication to occur, the speaker needs to have at least some words and the skill of putting them together to make his meaning across. A student devoid of these factors will not communicate effectively. Therefore, shortage of vocabulary and grammar hinders students' speaking ability both inside and outside the classroom. In relation to this concept, Tsui (1995: 83) states, "When students have low English proficiency, this could lead to reluctance to speak in class. Most of the time, teachers report that so many students know the answer of a question, but are unable to express it in English."



Besides this fact, Byrne (1986) makes an important point as follows: students need language for communicative purposes and to succeed in this mission, they must master as much of the vocabulary and grammar. Thus, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar has a significant role in making students speak in English classes.

#### ***2.11.4. Not Making Continuous Practice***

Students' continuous practice of speaking is essential to improve their ability of expressing ideas in English. In this regard, Johnson and Morrow (1981) state that a foreign language is acquired best through practice. What one can understand here is, because it is a skill, it is through practice that it can be best learnt. Repeated practice is, therefore, advisable to develop speaking and use it in appropriate circumstances.

Teachers' use of suitable teaching and testing techniques can also have its own role to engage students in to language practice. As pointed out by Johnson and Morrow (1985), speaking practice and oral exams contribute a lot to make students able to utter something. Thus, the provision of real exams fosters speaking skill due to the fact that failure to talk during the exam might end in low results.

There is also another possible way of pushing EFL learners to talk. In relation to this, Rudder (1999: 24) states, "Teachers can create activities that engage students in meaningful interaction, in which their attention is focused more on what they are saying than on how they are saying it. It is this free practice that enables learners to use the language outside the "artificial" context of the classroom." According to Rudder's idea, to make students use English purposefully, focus should be not on accuracy but on whether they communicate their message properly.

It is clear that practice makes perfect, so, teachers ought to provide interesting activities to put learners in to language practice. Lack of practice in different speaking activities such as role plays and simulations during speaking lessons can result in inability to use English in communication.

### ***2.11.5. Classroom Atmosphere***

Speaking classes need to be places where the students can feel motivated or eager to practice the skill. Interest in practice increases with the provision of activities that get the attention of the learners. Regarding this, Deporto (1997) says, "If interaction is the aim, it is necessary to create a suitable atmosphere that would allow students to express themselves freely and make them feel eager to communicate, to "mean" in the foreign language". Besides this, Deporto comments that a teacher centered classroom would never provide the opportunities for students to interact.

In pronunciation/speech work, perhaps more than any other part of language study, a comfortable classroom atmosphere is essential for maximum achievement. Classroom interactions need to be enjoyable and supportive with a focus on strength as well as weaknesses. In other words, the learning climate need to be one where even the most retiring (and the most unintelligible) students can lose their self consciousness and embarrassment about "sounding funny" as they work to modify pronunciation/speech features of their oral communication skill (Morely, 1985).

Moreover, Seely (1995) points out that as learning and applying the skills of oral English are so closely related, the classroom should be a place where the use of spoken language is sensitively supported and where active listening is developed and valued. Talk enables the students to make connections between what they know and what they are learning and listening helps them to acquire knowledge and explore ideas.

Extending his suggestion, Seely (1995) further states that the students' speaking skill develops best in dynamic interactive learning environments where enough time is provided for them to share and listen to a variety of ideas. Consequently, a safe, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere is critical for the development of productive talk in the classroom.

The classroom, thus, must be a non-threatening environment where students are eager to communicate and where the focus is on the process of learning, not on error correction. Errors should be viewed as a natural part of the learning process never as drawback.

#### **2.11.6. Culture**

Foreign language learning by its nature requires making enough practice with it. However, the culture which the learner belongs to influences this process. As Shuying (1999) suggests, for many learners of English, aspects of their native culture heavily influence their overall communicative English proficiency. What Shuying states seem to apply in our country where about 85% of the people are in rural areas. And even worse, most of them are uneducated. Families in such places appreciate their children for being silent. Nevertheless, the child reflects the same thing when he/she is learning language at school. In this regard, Bilhart and Galanes (1995: 88) indicate that "The culture in which a person is raised profoundly affects that person's communicative behavior".

As far as the impact of native language and native culture on foreign language learning is concerned, Valdes (1986: 2) says: "A native culture is as much of interference for second language learners as is native language". Valdes, therefore, points out that, the learner's culture equally interferes in the learning of language as does the native language. In English lessons in

Ethiopia if learners do not get appropriate word to use in speaking, they revert to using their mother tongue. This hinders language learning. The same to this, the culture learners have practiced at home, for example being silent, is exhibited in language classes by 'saying nothing' in the class, which is a hindrance for language learning.

With regard to the influence of culture on language learning, Dupraw and Axner (1997) explain that culture is often at the root of communication challenges and it influences how one approaches problems and how to participate in groups and communities. Because of this, when people from different cultural groups take on an exciting challenge of working together cultural values sometimes conflict. As a result, misunderstanding can occur and members react in ways that hinder partnership or communication. In continuation to this idea, Bilhart and Galanes (1995: 88) suggest, "Communication among people of diverse backgrounds (and hence with diverse communication patterns) is challenging; it can result in an enriching experience or a disaster."

Bilhart and Galanes (1995) also point out that it is important to understand and think about your culture because it affects everything you do particularly your communication behavior. They further state that most people are ethnocentric in their responses to others believing that their native culture is superior and interpret the behavior of all people by the norms of that culture. However, they argue that successful communication among people of diversified cultures requires them to give up their ethnocentricity.

As Shumin (1997) indicates, many cultural characteristics of a language also affect second language or foreign language learning. This is due to the fact that various cultures and subcultures have different rules about what is appropriate communicative behavior. She further explains that what is considered rhetorically sensitive and appropriate communication depends on

the culture. Similarly Dupraw and Axner (1997: 1) comment on the influence cultural differences as follows:

*Awareness of cultural differences doesn't have to divide us from each other. It doesn't have to paralyze us either for fear of not saying the "right thing". In fact, becoming more aware of our cultural differences as well as exploring our similarities can help us communicate with each other more effectively. Furthermore, recognizing where cultural differences are at work is the first step toward understanding and respecting each other.*

Some or almost all of the cultural influences suggested by different scholars above seem to be reflected in our situation. We live in a multicultural and multilingual nation. Owing to various circumstances, people/students/ belonging to diversified languages and cultures happen to learn or work together as in universities or colleges. These students from all corners of the country are to work together in the same class. Because of culture, some are shy as they are from a society which appreciates silence while some others might be a bit better. As a result, there will be silence in the group or only few members behave dominantly. Others may tend to use their mother tongue or contribute nothing to the group.

In situations like this, it is advisable to introduce or teach students about the target culture, how and when to speak, how to perceive the world, what is and is not appropriate behavior (Valdes, 1986; Bilhart and Galanes, 1995 and Engle Bert, 2004). After all, language and culture are intertwined to such an extent where one can't survive without the other. It is impossible to teach language without teaching the culture. This clearly shows that learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). Consequently, teachers of a language are also teachers of a culture (Byram, 1989).

In the process of language teaching, it is, therefore, agreed that the teacher must relate language to culture if a coordinate system is to result from the learners' efforts. In relation to this, Brooks in Valdes (1986: 123) has the following to say:

*If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning; for unless he is warned, unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols.*

Brook's idea underlines the fact that language meaning is obscured without some recognition of cultural values. The concept put forward by Brooks is very essential for language teachers including those found in our country. It is because many of them give emphasis for the target language alone while not giving attention for the target culture.

The implications for language teaching and policy making are, therefore, vast and far reaching. As a teacher of language, one must be culturally aware, considerate of students' culture and inform students of cultural differences thus promoting understanding. Language policy must reflect the target language culture as well as the students', teachers' and administrative persons' culture thus avoiding any cultural misinterpretations (Leveridge, 2008).

### **2.11.7. Lack of Interest in Speaking English**

As speaking is a skill, it is better practiced when the learner makes use of it now and again. On the part of the text book which they are to work on, it should be accompanied by speaking activities which are likely to engage learners in to speaking practice. Teachers, on their part, should be helpful to give the required assistance and to prepare their own speaking activities which suit the students' level as well as interest when necessary (Chaney, 2006).

In activating learners to speak in English and to boost their interest in the skill, Brumfit and Johnson (1979: 17) suggest, "Language items of speaking are presented with exercises of sufficient variety to sustain the interest of the learners and to establish the structures in the learners' memory". As to these scholars, speaking exercises of various types are incorporated in to the speaking sections to promote the knowledge of the language system to develop the students' interest and their competence in speaking by means of controlled performance. However, failure to prepare a variety of activities to make students speak in English can make them lose interest to participate in the activity.

In relation to this concept, Dobson (1981: 13) states:

*The students may not be interested in the activity of speaking that teachers have scheduled. So if you see that they are bored or uninterested in the activity, immediately switch to something else. Teachers should know their students well enough to anticipate what will or won't interest them, but variety in the activity may be always a good antidote to slackening interest.*

As indicated by Dobson above, teachers have a great responsibility in providing learners with different types of activities which motivate learners' to speak. Another scholar, Byrne (1986) argues that sometimes the language students know is not sufficient to express themselves with ease. In this case, they must be given the opportunity to try out language for themselves and to make the best use of what they know in a variety of situations. The errors they make in their attempts to speak could be gradually avoided with continuous support/guidance/.

Focusing on the psychological problems that learners' lack of interest in speaking English can cause, Byrne (1986:76) explains that "There are many problems to note here. In the first place, although many learners are happy to speak in groups or under your guidance when doing some drills, they are

inhibited when they are asked to express themselves freely in the presence of the whole class." This shows that the degree of motivation given to them is not that much strong so as to put them in to speaking among the class students without worrying about making mistakes.

### ***2.11.8. Teacher's Role***

For students to practice speaking in English, they require activities that are motivating and are in line with their level of understanding. To this end, a teacher has a greater role to create a favorable condition so as to motivate the learners. In this regard, Wilkins (1974:6) states, "In making students speak English in the classroom, teachers ought to enable their students to use the language communicatively in real situation, that is, they must arrange conditions to help students practice speaking". It is also essential that practice of speaking should be free from teacher's intervention.

Since fluency needs practice in the language, learners must be free from everything which intervene them. In supporting this concept, Wilkins (1974) says, if a student commits a serious mistake in the process of practicing speaking at every chance he gets, teacher's intervention should be avoided. As many scholars agree, this may hinder speaking practice. In continuation to this, Littlewood (1981:16) suggests, "If students are made to be free in speaking practice of English, this makes them improve their speaking capability without external influence." Thus, it is good to give learners the freedom to express their ideas or feelings in relation to the discussion. However, when a student attempts to describe or explain ideas using his own potential, he faces interference from his/her teacher which will in turn cause him to interrupt or totally stop his speaking practice in the class. With regard to this, Littlewood (1984:84) says:



*When a student is communicating or describing in order to express the meaning he/she wants to express, a teacher shouldn't interfere as long as it doesn't necessarily lead to any observable error in the forms used. For example, if a student who doesn't recall the word 'kettle' uses the phrase 'the thing we boil water in intervention of a teacher is rather destructive.*

Moreover, Kayi (2006) suggests that teachers have to reduce their speaking time in class while increasing student speaking time. Extending his suggestion, he states that teachers should ask eliciting questions such as "what do you mean? How did you reach that conclusion?" in order to prompt students to speak more. Like others, Kayi warns teachers not to correct learners' pronunciation errors very often while they are speaking because it distracts the learner from his/her speech (ibid).

Therefore, intervention of teachers while students are at work is not advisable. Because a student whose response is interrupted now and then might feel frustrated and stop to contribute his part. That is why Allwright and Bailey (1991) state that giving immediate feedback to students' errors is disruptive. This feedback or treatment should, therefore, stay until the learner finishes what he wants to say.

### **2.11.9. The Students' Role**

Foreign language learners are expected to play a more active role in using the language for real communicative purposes. In line with this, language teachers should provide them with appropriate speaking activities which are helpful for language practice. Learners, on their part, must feel responsible and attempt all (Rudder, 1999).

As opposed to the traditional method, the way learners learn English these days is using the communicative approach. It is because, the primary function of language is for communication. In relation to this, Grant (1987) says that

learners will learn how to interact one another through communicating by using language. Another scholar, Bygate (1987) suggests that part of success or failure in speaking English is attributed to the way the students perceive the use of language.

Furthermore, the interest learners have towards the learning of speaking plays a vital role in developing their speaking skill. With regard to this concept, Wallace (1991) points out that one of the crucial factors for success in speaking English is what the learners bring to the learning situations. Thus, during speaking classes, learners ought to feel motivated which is a pre-condition to participate in varieties of speaking tasks. This in turn enables them to interact with their peers as well as their teacher and thereby improving their speaking skill.

## **2.12. Techniques to Minimize the Problems Hindering Speaking Ability**

English language teaching aims at developing the students' four basic abilities out of which speaking activity is considered a very important aspect. Nevertheless, there are a series of problems which inhibit students from developing this skill. To lessen their influence, therefore, a number of scholars suggest certain techniques/activities which can be designed and given to students learning English as second or foreign language.

### ***2.12.1. Creating a Good Classroom Environment***

Most of the English language teaching takes place in the classroom. This shows that classroom teaching is an important factor in the process of developing the students' speaking abilities (Yingyu, 2008). If this is the case, creating a conducive classroom atmosphere which provides learners the freedom as well as the initiatives to try to speak is very essential. According to Yingyu, the

presence of a conducive learning environment is viewed as a pre-requisite to engage learners successfully in different speaking activities.

In order to make the learning environment suitable, the teacher plays a significant role. In relation to this, Yingyu (2008) suggests that to achieve a free and whole some classroom environment, it is necessary for the teacher to give each student a feeling of satisfaction in attaining some goal, however, small during each class hour to prevent the students from being embarrassed in any way to, be as patient as possible with the students' mistakes, to enconfidence those who are having great difficulty.

In addition, Seely (1995) points out that, classrooms should be places where students can ask and answer meaningful questions and in which the teacher and the students are co-learners, collaborating with one another to communicate ideas and information. On the contrary, unless the student feels at ease in the class with his teacher and fellow students, he won't be able to achieve the freedom necessary for learning to produce sounds that are strange for him (Yingyu, 2008). This implies that a safe, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere is critical for the development of productive talk in the classroom for all the students. When a learning environment such as this is created, learners talk a lot, participate evenly, are highly motivated to speak and produce language of an acceptable level (Ur, 1996).

### ***2.12.2. Using Proper Teaching Methods***

In the classroom, we must use various methods to create opportunities for students to practice speaking. This is because a good method is a bridge to success (Yingyu, 2008). Taking this fact in to account various methods/ techniques are recommended for use in teaching oral language.

### **2.12.2.1. Discussion**

This is an activity used to enconfidence foreign/second language learners to talk about familiar topics suggested by the teacher (Littlewood, 1981). Hence, students will have enough to say on such topics which they have been exposed to. In the class, students hold discussions for various reasons: to arrive at a conclusion, to share ideas about an event or find solutions in their discussion groups. However, before the discussion, it is advisable that the purpose of the discussion activity is set by the teacher (Kayi, 2006).

In addition, class discussion provides students with an opportunity to introduce topics of their personal choice depending on their level of language proficiency (Hatch, 1978). As a result, every member of the group can get actively involved in the speaking activity.

In relation to class discussion, the following points are worth considering (Kayi, 2006).

- Equally divide the chance of speaking among group members.
- Avoid forming large groups so that quiet students can contribute their part in the discussion.
- Rearrange group members in every activity in order that students can work with various people and learn to be open to different ideas.
- Encourage students to ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support, check for clarification and so on.

In class discussions students are the major participants doing the actual talking themselves. Meanwhile, there shouldn't be direct interference of the teacher (Ibid).

### **2.12.2.2. Role Plays and Simulations**

One way of getting students to speak in different social contexts and to assume varied social roles is to use role play and simulation activities in the classroom (McDonough and Shaw, 2003; Kayi, 2006). Students, therefore, pretend as they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles.

In addition, Atkins et al. (1995: 135) see role play and simulations as a "Way of bringing situations from real life in to the class room." It is also stated that when we do role-play, we ask our students to imagine a role, a situation and purpose(s) and act them out. For instance, the teacher gives information to the learners such as who they are and what they think or feel, i.e., the teacher can tell a student that 'you are David, you go to a doctor and tell him what happened last night and ...' (Harmer, 1984).

Thus, using role-pays and simulations in the classroom has many advantages. First, they are interesting and they motivate students. Secondly, they increase the self confidence of students (Harmer, 1991). In role plays and simulations, the students are the main participants and the teacher is the organizer, observer, adviser and encourager (Yingyu, 2008).

### **2.12.2.3. Communication Games**

Speaking activities based on games are often a useful way of giving students valuable practice. Game based activities can involve practice of oral strategies such as describing, predicting, simplifying, asking for feedback through different activities (McDonough and Shaw, 2003).

Games are important for English Lessons (Atkins et al, 1995) in that:

- They give students a chance to use English in a meaningful way.
- They motivate the students by making the lessons enjoyable.
- They encourage the students to speak and participate actively.

Moreover to make games effective:

- They should not be played too often.
- They should be short.
- There should be rule, objectives.
- The topic should be familiar to the students.
- You should keep control of the class during the game.

#### ***2.12.2.4. Oral Composition and Report***

It is clear that students' oral skill develops best when they have sufficient oral practice in the language. One way of getting students to do this is through oral composition and report. As stated in Yingyu (2008), this is a method most teachers adopt nowadays. To involve students in the activity, the teacher could ask students to read a newspaper or a magazine or a material of their own interest before coming to class. And based on their reading, they can report to their friends in the class (Kayi, 2006).

Another variation to work with this activity is suggested by Yingyu (2008) in that at the beginning of the class, the teacher asks one student to give a class report about weather, attendance and some important events happening in schools. The students, then, take turns and every student can have a chance to do this. It won't take a lot of time in class, but the students' interests will be aroused. He will try his best to make his report excellent and different from others.

#### ***2.12.2.5. Question and Answer***

Through these activities, second/foreign language learners can be engaged in asking and answering questions about themselves or exchange their personal information.

Concerning these activities, Crooks And Chaudron (1991) suggest that question and answer tasks such as finding out personal information about fellow students at the beginning of oral interaction class have an 'ice breaking' value. A task in ice breaking is a vital pre-requisite to set the stage for a course on oral skill development, especially for students who are used to a passive classroom role.

In addition, Yingyu (2008) points out that the teacher can ask questions about the texts or other things, and let the students answer. In this way, they can exercise both listening and speaking ability, and it can also help teachers to have deeper understanding of the students.

#### ***2.12.2.6. Information Gap***

In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that the other partner does not have and the partners will share information. Information gap activities serve many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information (Kayi, 2006).

With these activities, each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information the others need. These activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language (Ibid).

#### ***2.12.2.7. Interactive Short Turns***

In activities such as these, teachers might prepare short forms of dialogues with their short responses so that students can interact with each other. As Brown and Yule (1983) suggest, not only teachers but also students should prepare their own dialogues in a short and precise way in order to provide themselves with more oral practice.

Interactive short turns require teachers to encourage the participation of all the students of the class. Teachers, on their part, should avoid dominating the conversation since their chief purpose is to make students speak English. As Brown and Yule (1983:30) explain in using the technique of interactive short turns to make students speak English, teachers should be involved in mixing learning at different levels for conversation practice, so that those who are advanced in speaking should support those who are not.

### ***2.12.2.8. Story Telling***

One possible means of exposing learners to speak in English is story telling. With this activity, students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody before hand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development and ending including the characters and setting a story has to have (Kayi, 2006).

Students can also tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at the beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short riddles or jokes as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability, but also get the attention of the class (Ibid).

### ***2.12.2.9. Interviews***

Students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people by preparing their own interview questions. It is also a good idea that the teacher provides a rubric to the students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow. Conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them to become socialized. After interviews, each student can present his or her study to the class. Moreover, students can interview each other and 'introduce" his or her partner to the class (Kayi, 2006).



### **2.12.2.10. Picture Describing**

Talking about pictures also helps in improving the oral skill of the students. In this case, students are given pictures and are made to describe what it is in the picture. To engage students in this activity, the following procedures are suggested (Kayi, 2006):

- Divide the class in to groups
- Give each group a different picture
- Let the students discuss the picture with their groups members
- Assign spokesperson to each group
- Let the spokes person of each group describe the picture to the whole class

This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

### **2.12.2.11. Pair work and Group work**

Pair work and group work give the students far more chances to speak English in the classroom. Students participate in the lesson much more actively because they are involved in talking to their friends, exchanging opinions, practicing new structures more than listening to their teacher talking. According to Lightbown and Spada (1993:85), the language produced by students working in groups is more varied and greater in quantity. In these activities, learners take the initiative to express themselves, and are more spontaneous. Asking questions and responding, they use more language functions.

In addition, Ur (1996) suggests that by dividing the class into groups, students get more opportunities to talk than in full class organization and each student can say something. Ur, therefore, recommends that teachers working with large classes should divide them into groups which are the most effective

organization for practicing speaking. Similarly, Krall (1989-1993: 161) points out that group work gives learners exposure to a range of language items and language functions. Students use and experiment with the language items they already know in order to develop fluency. They also use some items pretaught by the teacher or contributed by the members of the group to express themselves more fully and improve the quality of their performance. Preparing the presentation, they learn the new items, process them and make them more personal.

Working in pairs/groups in English lessons better facilitates language learning. In relation to this, Norman (1986:11) states, "Most people learn a foreign language better with others than on their own." This is because, working in pairs and groups is less stressful and more effective for students, especially introverts who need not perform in the front of the whole class. Such students feel more confident working with the friend they like and are more likely to accept his/her correction or criticism. There are always more and less gifted pupils in the process of language learning and these methods prevent them from not being laughed at by the whole class if they say something wrong. This is because, it is generally easier to show that you do not know or do not understand something in a smaller group than in a large one (Norman, Levihn, and Hedenquist, 1986:8).

Pair work and group work play an important role in developing speaking. As Brumfit (1984) indicates, they are the most effective techniques of classroom organization which combine aspects of communication learning and natural interaction in a stress free environment. That is why Gorgon (2008) advises teachers to spend at least one lesson a month devoted only to speaking. According to him, if the topics are adequate to the learners' interests and level, such a lesson can be really effective and give a lot of satisfaction both to the learner and the teacher. It is also essential to remember how important the ability to communicate is and provide enough communicative practice while

working with the whole class because of this, oral practice in small groups and pairs is essential.

### **2.12.2.12. Motivation**

Arousing learners' motivation so as to drive them towards autonomous language learning practice is viewed as a major role of a teacher. For instance, Dobson (1988) tries to indicate some points such as having an authentic interest in the learners giving them praise where deserved, responding to solve their difficulties etc as major sources of motivation, leading learners strive harder to succeed in speaking English.

According to Dobson (1988:15), a primary responsibility of a teacher is to revive motivation. Without strong motivation, students will fail in their attempt to bridge the gaps between the manipulation and the communicative phase of language learning, and their hopes of speaking English fluently will never be realized. What we can see from this is that motivation of learners is highly emphasized for their success, and the teacher should also concentrate on that accordingly. With regard to the use of motivation on speaking, Finocchiaro (1988:90) states, "Teachers motivating their students during speaking section make teaching and learning easier and make students active participants, more pleasant and productive".

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

#### 3.1. The Research Design

The research design is descriptive study. The researcher has chosen this method mainly because he wants to investigate some of the major problems hindering the speaking ability of Freshman English Major Students at Kotebe College of Teachers' Education. The researcher has employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data gathered.

#### 3.2. Research Setting and Subjects

##### *3.2.1. Research Setting*

The research was conducted on Freshman English Major Students at Kotebe College of Teachers Education in Addis Ababa. This college was selected because of its proximity and the presence of an instructor whom the researcher was familiar with so that he could help in facilitating the process of data collection.

##### *3.2.2. Subjects of the Study*

The target populations of the study were first year English Major Students of the regular programme at Kotebe College of Teachers' Education. First year students were selected because as beginners, it is expected that they might encounter difficulties in speaking English at times of oral presentations which would be more frequent than they did in high schools. Generally, there were a total of 65 students in two sections (35 males and 30 females). The first section had 20 males and 14 females while the next had 15 males and 16 females. Out of this total number, Nine (9) of them were absent and only 56 students participated in the study. Besides this, one spoken English instructor of the two sections was taken as subject of the study.

### **3.3. Methods of Data Collection**

#### ***3.3.1. Data Sources***

According to Patton (1990: 244), multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective. Therefore, three kinds of instruments were employed to collect data: questionnaire to the students, interview for both teachers and students and classroom observation focusing on students' participation and teacher's performance.

#### ***3.3.2. Procedure***

##### ***3.3.2.1 Pilot Study***

Before administering the questionnaires, they were piloted on a small group of first year English Major Students (5 male and 5 females) in the College (see Appendix II). Using the pilot, the questionnaires were totally revised as deemed necessary. For example, items No 10 and 11 were omitted after the pilot study was conducted. The reason is that they were general questions whose answers can be deduced from the next specific questions. Finally, these questionnaires were administered to 56 students (Appendix I).

##### ***3.3.2.2. Questionnaire***

In order to obtain valuable information about the problems hindering the speaking ability of the learners and to investigate what roles the teacher and the students should play in tackling the problem, a questionnaire of both close and open ended items was designed on the basis of the literature review.

The questionnaire had 23 items (16 close ended and 7 open ended) and was divided in to 4 parts. The first part consisted of 9 items and was designed in relation to culture, the second part having 8 items was about classroom atmosphere, the third part having 4 items was about opportunities/activities to learn speaking and the last part with only two items was about what the roles

of both the instructor and the students should be to bring about possible changes in speaking (see appendix I).

To administer the questionnaires, the researcher together with the instructor arranged time and informed students of the two sections to come 30 minutes earlier than the normal class hour in the afternoon. However, 9 students i.e., 2 males and 2 females from section 1 and again 2 males and 3 females from section 2 did not come on the scheduled time. The majority, i.e., 56 students (18 males and 12 females from section one and 13 males and 13 females from section two) were present and, therefore, participated in filling the questionnaire. One problem, here, was some students returned a few questionnaires without filling answers to the open ended questions.

### ***3.3.2.3. Interview***

In order to enrich the data gathered through questionnaire and classroom observation, the researcher employed structured interview questions for both the teacher and the students. These interview questions were designed to elicit information concerning the overall problems the subjects experienced in teaching and learning the spoken English.

To gather data from interview, Eight students (4 from each class i.e. 2 males and 2 females) were selected using purposive sampling. Each of them volunteered to respond to five questions. Similarly, other six questions were designed to interview the spoken English instructor of the two sections.

### ***3.3.2.4. Classroom Observation***

Observation is one of the techniques used to collect the required data. It is a very good way of watching and listening to an interaction as it takes place. The purpose of the observation in this study was to substantiate the data gathered through questionnaire and interview. The combination of the three

instruments: interview, questionnaire and classroom observation is believed to enrich the data collected.

An observation checklist adapted from Ranjit (1996) and the literature review was used to conduct classroom observation. The checklist was designed based on classroom events related to students' participation and teacher's performance in different speaking activities. It contained about 8 "yes" or "no" questions. With this checklist, the researcher observed two sections in their spoken English lessons three times each. Based on the observation, the researcher ticked "yes" or "no" to each item in the checklist. Finally, descriptive method was used to analyze the results of the observation held in the two sections (three times for one section). The items used for classroom observation were attached in the appendix (V and VI).

### ***3.3.3. Data Analysis***

The data collection was carried out with the three kinds of instruments: questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. In analyzing the students' questionnaire, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. However, the data from interview and classroom observation were analyzed qualitatively.

As interview and classroom observation were meant for triangulating the information in the questionnaire, they were at first treated together with the questionnaire. Furthermore, they were discussed in a separate section, i.e., analyses of students' and teacher's interviews were placed in the appendix (III and IV) while analyses of classroom observation of students' participation and teacher's performance were placed in appendix (V and VI) respectively.

Items in the questionnaire were of two types: close and open ended. The former were first tabulated and analyzed in percentages. The latter ones, however, were analyzed qualitatively along with the close ended items. Of the open ended

items, two of them (item No. 22 and 23) were analyzed and discussed under one separate topic having two sub sections (i.e. 4.4.1 and 4.4.2) as they were the only questions raised to answer the fourth research question.



## CHAPTER 4

### 4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Speaking Ability and Culture

Language and culture are interrelated. Speaking, as one of the four language skills is, therefore, related to culture and is influenced by it.

**Table I: Speaking Ability and Culture**

No	Questions	Choice	Respondent	
			Frequency	Percentage
1	Do you think the culture in your locality has influenced your ability of speaking English?	Yes	44	78.6
		No	12	21.4
		Total	56	100%
2	If your answer for question number 1 is 'yes', to what extent has it affected your speaking ability?	To a very great extent	18	40.9
		To a great extent	14	31.8
		To some extent	7	15.9
		To a limited extent	5	11.4
		Specify	-	-
		Total	44	100

According to the data in table I, 44 students (78.6%) agreed that their native culture has affected their ability of speaking English while only 12 students (21.4%) replied that their learning of the foreign language is not influenced by their culture.

With regard to the extent of the influence of native culture on students' speaking ability, 18 students (40.9%) indicated that their native culture has influenced their English language speaking ability to a very great extent. Fourteen students (31.8%) replied that their native culture has affected their speaking ability to a great extent. Seven students (15.9%) said that it has affected their speaking ability of English to some extent. And the remaining 5 students (11.4%) replied that their English language speaking ability has been affected by their native culture to a limited extent.

From the results, it is possible to see that though the degree varies, the students' native culture has influenced their ability of speaking English. To improve their English language speaking ability, therefore, parents as well as the people in their environment should give the necessary encouragement to children to help them speak freely with them in their native language. This practice will be gradually transferred in to using the foreign language freely when they go to school.

In relation to the influence of native culture on English language speaking ability, the majority of the students interviewed asserted that:

*In our locality, we are not encouraged to speak a lot even with parents as well as with neighboring people in our native language. A child is considered well behaved when he/she is silent most of the time. The reverse is true for a child when he/she speaks now and then. This culture influences our learning of English at school/ in the college particularly speaking skill.*

The idea presented by the students during the interview clearly depicts that there is influence of native culture on their English language speaking ability.

The same question was also raised to their spoken English instructor and he almost shared a similar idea saying that:

*The environment our students are grown up is suppressive. Small children are not given good ground to speak both at home and at schools. But if we see the English people, they allow small children to talk too much from the very beginning. And language needs this kind of atmosphere i.e., talking too much, saying things all the time, interacting, and never worrying about errors.*

Similarly, during classroom observation, the researcher realized that most students were less interested to speak English by their own initiative. They spoke only when their instructor requested them to do so. The problem, as stated during the interview, seems to result from the way the child has been brought up in his/her family.

In an open ended question, students were also asked to mention the influences of their native culture on their English language speaking ability. With regard to this concept, they stated the following problems:

- The saying that goes 'Silence is gold' applies in our environment and people/parents like their children to be silent.
- Feeling 'shy': this is because if we speak English outside the class/most of the time in our village, the speaker is considered as boastful by listeners.
- Anxiety: This is due to the manner we are grown up in our family. In our cultures, we are shaped to be silent right from the beginning and most of us do not speak enough even in our mother tongue. The problem gets stronger in using foreign language at school.

- Laughing of the listener(s) at the speaker instead of giving encouragement.

These were the common points most students have agreed upon as effects of the native culture on their speaking ability.

As far as the influence of native culture on foreign language learning is concerned, Valdes (1986) states that native culture is as much of interference as is native language for second or foreign language learners. The idea put forward by Valdes clearly indicates that the learners' foreign language learning is influenced by the native culture they developed at home/in their village. In a related context, Shuying (1999) points out that native culture heavily influences the overall communicative English proficiency of the learners.

Native culture, therefore, is found to be one of the hindrances of speaking ability of the learners. That is why most students are not capable of expressing their ideas in English. In some cultures in Ethiopia, parents as well as elders never allow young children to communicate with them in their native language. Rather, they advise them to be silent and appreciate them for their silent behavior. This appreciation shapes children to remain silent in their school life which is to have a negative impact in improving the speaking ability of English.

In an open ended question, students were also asked to suggest mechanisms which minimize the problems caused by their native culture. In response to this, they asserted that from the very beginning, parents should give the necessary freedom to their children to express their views, opinions etc in their mother tongue and when they start schooling, teachers should create a free, relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere of learning. In this way, they said, it is possible to build the confidence to speak freely when learning foreign language particularly the speaking skill.

### 4.1.1. Confidence to Speak in English

In order to develop the ability of students to speak in English, there should be a free and relaxed atmosphere in the family as well as in the English lesson. Unless children are let free to express their ideas in their native language at home or in English language in the classroom, they won't have the confidence required to communicate their ideas effectively. More importantly, they should also know vocabulary and grammar.

**Table II: Students' Confidence to speak in English**

NO	Questions	Choice	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
5	Do you have the confidence to express your ideas in English both inside/ outside the classroom?	Yes	24	42.9
		No	32	57.1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
6	If your answer for question number '5' is 'No', what do you think is the source of the problem?	Influence of culture	12	37.5
		Lack of knowledge of English	12	37.5
		Shyness	5	15.6
		I learnt to be silent at home	3	9.4
		Specify	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be deduced from the table above, 24 students of the total sample (42.9%) said that they had the confidence to express their ideas in English both inside/outside the classroom. Thirty two students (57.1%) replied "no" for the same question. This result shows that the majority of the students lacked the confidence to express their ideas in English.

When asked why some students did not have confidence to express their ideas in English, they provided different reasons. For example, 12 students (37.5%) said that it is because of cultural influence, additional 12 students (37.5%) replied that lack of confidence to speak in English is attributed to lack of knowledge of English, other 5 students (15.6%) said it is due to shyness and the last 3 students (9.4%) explained that they learnt to be silent at home due to the appreciation their parents have for silent children.

In the above data, both the influence of culture and the lack of knowledge of English are equally cited as the primary reasons for the learners' lack of confidence to speak out their ideas in English. The rest i.e. shyness and appreciation of their silent behavior stood second and third respectively.

In relation to the concept why students did not have the confidence to express ideas in English, most interviewees said.

*In our environment, the culture of the people doesn't encourage children to speak even in mother tongue. We are advised to be silent so that parents or other members of society consider us as well-behaved children. This culture is still with us influencing our speaking ability. And when we try to speak, we feel shy/afraid and prefer to remain silent.*

In addition to this, some interviewees stated that if they try to speak in English outside the class, other people might consider them as boasts or as students overacting. These things, they say, contribute for students' lack of confidence to speak English.

On a similar question, the interviewed teacher mentioned the following points for their lack of confidence to speak in English:

*The problem seems to spring from the culture in which the students grow up. Our culture doesn't encourage people to talk too much. And language fluency comes through using it. Part of it is talking. But children in our culture are not allowed to talk at home. So from the very beginning, students lack confidence to speak.*

Besides this, the teacher also raised some factors: afraid of making mistakes in speech, lack of exposure, low vocabulary and poor grammar to connect words to use them in speech.

From the classroom observation, it is possible to realize that only some students have the confidence to express their ideas in English voluntarily on their own initiative. The majority usually kept silent and due to the pressure from the teacher, they uttered certain words, phrases or sentences in response to the questions. This indicates that there is lack of confidence on most students which can be attributed to either the influence of native culture or lack of vocabulary and grammar or fear of making errors in speech which is another hindrance in developing the speaking ability.

Different scholars mention various reasons for the students' lack of confidence to speak in English. For instance, Phillip (1991) states that anxiety is a common experience which impedes the students not to speak. Phillip further points out that students with this problem usually sit at the back of the room, try to hide in their seats, do not volunteer to speak and if asked, respond in barely audible whisper. Besides this, students' lack of confidence arises from the influence of native culture. As stated in Bilhart and Galanes (1995), one's communicative behavior is affected by the culture in which he/she is raised. That is to say, when a student is from a culture in which the society does not give freedom to young children to speak, this can make them to lose the confidence to speak English in the classroom.

Students will be confident to say something when they have sufficient words and the skill of putting them together to make their meaning across. In relation to this idea, Byrne (1986) explains that students need language for communicative purposes and to succeed in this mission, they must master as much of the vocabulary and grammar. Similarly, Tsui (1995) states that students become reluctant to speak in the class when they have low English proficiency. Thus, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar has a significant role to develop the students' confidence to speak English. Other scholars (Horwitz et al, 1986; Phillips, 1995) indicate that fear of negative social evaluation which includes beliefs like "I will make mistakes and people will laugh at me" and "my accent is not good" also contribute for the students' lack of confidence to speak English.

Therefore, to minimize the problems and improve the confidence to speak English, parents at home must allow their children to make free communication with every one in their mother tongue or in the target language. This develops the students' confidence to speak English in the classroom later. Knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is also essential for raising the confidence to speak English. Lastly, the students must get strong motivation in the classroom so that they won't bother about making mistakes which, according to them, causes people to laugh resulting in shyness on the students' side.

#### **4.1.2. Appreciation of Silent Children**

Oral communication is a vital component of the English arts curriculum and provides the base for growth in reading, writing and listening (Seely, 1995). For this success, students' continuous practice of speaking is essential to improve their ability of expressing ideas in English. However, many Ethiopian students do not make such practice and are, therefore, silent even during interactions in



their mother tongue. In return for this, they get appreciation from parents. This silence is again exhibited at school in the learning of spoken English in the classroom.

**Table III: Parent’s appreciation of Silent Children**

No	Questions	Choice	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
7	Do people/parents in your locality appreciate children for being silent?	Yes	28	50
		No	28	50
		<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
8	If your answer for question number 7 is “Yes”, do you think it is useful for improving your English language speaking ability?	Yes	8	28.6
		No	20	71.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>

In the above table, 28 students (50%) of the total sample replied that parents/people in their locality appreciate their children for their silence. Another 28 students (50%) said “no” for the same question.

Though there are parents who do not appreciate their children’s silent behavior, the result also indicated that there are parents of the same proportion who give appraisal for their children due to their silent behavior. This, therefore, has a negative impact on their children’s English language speaking ability. It is because, silent students do not involve in speaking activities as efficiently as those who are not.

Students were also asked if the appreciation of children for their silent behavior helps for the improvement of the ability of speaking in English. In this regard 8 students (28.6%) replied that it does help while the majority of them i.e. 20 students (71.4%) said it doesn't.

As indicated in the above data, the larger proportions of the students have witnessed the negative impact of being silent in improving the English language speaking ability. Of course, it is true that not volunteering to speak or practice in English is of no use for the students' speaking skill improvement.

Likewise, most of the interviewees underlined the negative impact of the appreciation of children for their silent behavior as follows:

*When a child is silent, parents say he/she is a child with good behavior. This behavior goes to school with a student and at school, when he/she is asked to speak in English to answer questions in the classroom, the student may not feel interested to do so even though he/she knows the answer.*

Furthermore, in an open ended question, students were also asked to suggest techniques of minimizing the silent behavior of the learners so as to make them speak English. In this case, they provided the following ideas:

- Training parents to change the manner of their treatment of the child right from the time the child begins to speak.
- Advising parents to encourage their children to speak freely rather than appreciating them for their silence/not volunteering to speak.
- Bringing attitude change to parents through mass media or public meetings.
- Encouraging children when they try to speak in English.
- Telling both children and parents about the importance of the ability to speak English.
- Selecting interesting topics which motivate students to speak.

- Creating a free and relaxed atmosphere of learning in the classroom.
- Warning students that silence or not volunteering to speak hides one's speaking ability.
- Giving turns for students to speak on a topic.

The use of learning a language is to apply it in real communication. In order to enable learners to communicate with a language, therefore, they should learn the speaking skill effectively. In relation to this, Haozhang (1997) states that the purpose of teaching speaking is to improve the oral production of the students. The skill of speaking English is essential not only for students' interaction in the classroom but also for their communication outside of the class. Moreover, Wilkins (1974) points out that learners' language production should not be controlled from outside since this will decrease their competence in oral skill. Such control causes the learner to be unable to transfer his knowledge from a language learning situation to a language using situation.

In order to avoid silence and improve the language production of the students, both parents at home and their teachers at school should not control their language production. Rather, they have to encourage the learners for their attempt to speak. Otherwise, learners will fail to speak or communicate with the language they have already learnt. This problem will result in lack of oral competence. To alleviate this hindrance, learners' attempt to speak should not face control from outside so that they will avoid silence/not volunteering to speak. The teacher, on his part, should create a free and enjoyable learning atmosphere in the classroom.

## **4.2. Speaking and Classroom Atmosphere**

### **4.2.1. Speaking and Motivation**

In the process of teaching the English language speaking skill, it is necessary to create a free and suitable atmosphere of learning in the classroom.

Moreover, the teacher should motivate his/her students to speak in English about themselves or other things of their own interest.

**Table IV: Motivation of Students to Speak**

No	Questions	Choice	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
13	Does your instructor motivate (giving praises, encouragement, and positive feedback) you to speak in your English lesson?	Yes	52	92.9
		No	4	7.1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
14	If your answer for question number 13 is "Yes" how often does he motivate you?	Always	21	40.4
		Often	11	21.2
		Sometimes	19	36.5
		Rarely	1	1.9
		Not at all	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the above data, 52 students (92.9%) indicated that their instructor motivated them to speak in their English lesson but the remaining 4 students (7.1%) replied they were not motivated.

They were also asked how often their instructor motivated them to speak. In response to this, 21 students (40.4%) said that they were always motivated, 11 students (21.2%) replied that they were often motivated, 19 students (36.5%) said that they were sometimes motivated and 1 student (1.9%) replied he was rarely motivated.

In addition to this, most of the interviewees explained that their instructor motivated his students to speak English in different situations. However, there

is a discrepancy between the students' response and the observation the researcher undertook with regard to motivation i.e. students got insufficient motivation other than being seated in pairs/groups to work on the activity.

This shows that the instructor should further motivate his students every time in their English lesson so that they will be encouraged to speak. Motivation, as different scholars agree, is a driving force which pushes learners to speak in English. The major role of the spoken English instructor is, therefore, to arouse learners' motivation so as to drive them towards autonomous language learning practice (Dobson, 1988). Dobson has also mentioned some major sources of motivation such as having an authentic interest in the learners, giving them praise where deserved, responding to solve their difficulties, etc. These and others lead learners to strive harder to succeed in speaking English.

With regard to the use of motivation on speaking, Finocchiaro (1988) states that the motivation of students by their teachers during the speaking lesson makes them active participants, more pleasant and productive. This indicates that the motivation of learners has a significant role for their success, and the teacher should also concentrate on that accordingly.

Therefore, spoken English teachers are expected to provide strong motivation for their students and thereby improve their speaking ability. The students, on their part, should feel free and relaxed to practice the skill. Furthermore, the teacher should make the speaking class as student centered as possible which is one means of increasing the students' motivation to speak English.

#### **4.2.2. Speaking and Its Teaching**

The teacher should make the speaking lesson free and enjoyable in order that students can feel motivated or eager to practice the skill. Moreover, he/she must increase students' talking time with the provision of different activities.

**Table V: Students' View of the Teaching Method**

No	Questions	Choice	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
12	Is your spoken English class, teacher centered or student centered?	Teacher-centered	16	28.6
		Student centered	40	71.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
13	If your answer for question number 12 is teacher centered, to what extent does it influence your speaking ability?	To a very great extent	8	50
		To great extent	5	31.3
		To some extent	2	12.5
		To limited extent	1	6.3
		Specify	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be deduced from the table above, 16 students (28.6%) said that their spoken English class was teacher centered while the majority of them i.e. 40 students (71.4%) replied that it was student centered.

Students who felt that the spoken English class is teacher centered were also asked about the extent of the influence of the teacher centered method on their speaking ability. In relation to this concept, 8 students (50%) said that it influenced their speaking ability to a very great extent, 5 students (31.3%) replied that it affected their speaking ability to a great extent, some 2 students (12.5%) responded that it affected their speaking ability to some extent and the last 1 student (6.3%) indicated that it influenced his/her speaking skill to a limited extent.

Students were also interviewed about the method their instructor employs in the teaching of the speaking skill. In relation to this, most of them replied that

he used the student centered method while the rest said that he employed teacher centered method. Similarly, during classroom observation, the teacher arranged students in pairs or groups as necessary to work on different activities. However, he never took control of each student's participation in the group. As a result, some were sitting idle; others were discussing in Amharic and finally writing the report in English which was to be presented by better speakers of each group at the end.

As speaking is a skill, it is best learnt when learners make sufficient practice with the language. This requires a student centered classroom in which learners are provided with a series of activities which engage them in to using the language. Regarding this, Deporto (1997) says, "If interaction is the aim, it is necessary to create a suitable atmosphere that would allow students to express themselves freely and make them feel eager to communicate to "mean" in the foreign language". In addition, Deporto comments that a teacher centered classroom would never provide opportunities for students to interact.

Seely (1995) states that speaking classes should be student centered in which the teacher and the students are co-learners, collaborating with one another to communicate ideas and information. Besides this, Yingyu (2008) confirms that unless the student feels at ease in the class with his teacher and fellow students, he won't be able to achieve the freedom necessary for learning to produce sounds that are strange for him.

Similarly, if the purpose of teaching speaking is to help students to communicate in English, the way of teaching should be student centered so that they get opportunities to express their ideas freely. A teacher centered method, on the other hand, is not advisable to engage learners in practical activities. Hence, the instructor should make his class more student centered so as to maximize his students' ability of speaking. Moreover, he must avoid correcting errors made by them in an attempt to speak English.

### 4.2.3. Speaking and Error Correction

While trying to speak in English, students commit errors in grammar or pronunciation. This time it is not recommended to tell students that they are making errors.

**Table VI: Students' Response on Error Correction**

No	Questions	Choice	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
14	Does your teacher correct errors in your speech?	Yes	50	89.3
		No	6	10.7
		<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
15	If your answer for question number 14 is 'Yes', how often does he correct your errors?	Always	23	46
		Often	10	20
		Sometimes	12	24
		Rarely	5	10
		Not at all	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>
16	Do you feel comfortable whenever your instructor gives you an immediate correction?	Yes	20	40
		No	30	60
		<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

In the above data, 50 students (89.3%) reported that their instructor corrected errors in their speech but 6 students (10.7%) replied that the instructor did not correct speech errors. For the question of how often the instructor corrected errors in their speech, 23 students (46%) indicated that the instructor always corrected their errors, 10 students (20%) responded that the instructor often corrected their errors, other 12 students (24%) replied that the instructor sometimes corrected their errors and the last 5 students (10%) said that they were rarely corrected for their errors.



Students were also asked if they felt comfortable when their instructor gave them an immediate correction. In response to this, 30 students (60%) said that they did not feel comfortable while 20 students (40%) replied that they felt comfortable.

In an interview with the students, some of them replied that the instructor corrects grammatical errors in their speech as soon as they are made. And they felt that it is an impediment for improving their speaking skill. During classroom observation as well, the researcher observed that the instructor sometimes corrected their speech errors interrupting the speaker. Nevertheless, it disadvantage exceeds the advantage and therefore, should be avoided.

However, the response of the instructor during the interview contradicted to the students' views on error correction saying that:

*In my English class, when students make mistakes, I don't correct them on the spot. For e.g. If I ask a question and if a certain student makes errors in his answer, I don't correct him/her myself. Rather, I give the chance to another student who could at least speak better. So when that student responds correctly, my target is that the student who made a mistake earlier will learn from his classmate.*

Except the instructor's response, the result of the questionnaire, the students' interview and the researcher's observation indicated the presence of error correction in the speaking lesson which is a hindrance for improving the English language speaking skill.

As long as error correction is concerned, Deporto (1997) points out that, spoken English classrooms must be non-threatening environments where students are eager to communicate and the focus is on the process of learning not on error correction. Moreover, Deporto states that errors should be viewed as a natural part of the learning process.

Fluency comes through making enough practice with the language. Thus, learners must be free from everything which intervenes them. Supporting this concept, Wilkins (1974) suggests that if a student commits a serious mistake in the process of practicing speaking at every chance he gets, teacher's intervention should be avoided. The reason is that it hinders speaking practice. Similarly, Littlewood (1981) comments that students improve their speaking capability without external influence if they are made to be free in speaking practice of English.

By and large, in order to help students to freely practice speaking, the instructor should decrease the frequency of the provision of error correction to a great extent. It should be understood that errors are a sign of learning taking place.

In an open ended question, students were also asked to mention other problems they faced while learning speaking in the classroom. Regarding this question, they indicated the following points.

- Some students laugh when a student commits mistakes in speech.
- Pronunciation difficulty (i.e. of the recorded cassette).
- Limitations in terms of vocabulary and grammar.
- Anxiety, i.e. not having the confidence to express the ideas in mind.
- Shyness i.e. due to cultural influences.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- Teacher sometimes uses mother tongue while giving instructions.

Generally, the points mentioned above were repeatedly cited by the learners as impediments for the improvement of their speaking skill. Each of the points adds up to cause difficulty in the achievement of the desired objectives. Hence parents, teachers and students themselves should feel very much responsible and play their own roles to mitigate the problems.

### 4.3. Opportunities to Practice Speaking

The chief purpose of learning a language is to use it for communication. This is made possible through sufficient involvement of students in different kinds of activities which promote speaking. This requires the teacher to employ various methods/ techniques to create opportunities for students to practice speaking.

**Table VII: Provision of Speaking Activities**

No	Questions	Choice	Respondents	
			Frequency	Percentage
18	Does your instructor give you different speaking activities in the class room?	Yes	48	85.7
		No	8	14.3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
19	If your answer for question number 18 is "Yes", do you participate in these activities?	Yes	36	75
		No	12	25
		<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be deduced from the above table, 48 students (85.7%) replied that their instructor gave them varieties of speaking activities in the classroom; the remaining 8 students (14.3%) responded that they were not given activities which promote speaking ability.

In response to whether they participated in these speaking activities, 36 students (75%) responded that they participated while 12 students (25%) of the total sample said that they did not participate in them. From this analysis, one can understand that the teacher did well in supplying students with varied speaking opportunities. As the number can indicate, the sum of the respondents who agreed that speaking activities were provided exceeded those respondents who said no speaking activities were provided to them by six folds.

Not only providing students with different speaking activities is enough but it is more essential to ensure that each student is participating in these activities.

In this regard, the sampled students were asked whether they participated in these activities. However, one fourth of the students replied that they did not participate though the majority i.e., three-fourth explained that they did. Those students who never participated were also asked why they did not do so and responded as follows:

- Lack of ability.
- Laughing of other students when hearing mistakes in our speech.
- Lack of vocabulary and grammar.
- Lack of motivation.

To alleviate the above problems, the teacher should encourage each student to work hard and he must take control of those students who laugh at the others' attempt.

As long as the students' practice in different speaking activities is concerned, some interviewed students gave the following idea:

*Our instructor really gives us some activities to practice speaking but they are not to be said adequate. The other thing is that they are not given to us very often. Though we are given some activities to practice speaking, some of us do not involve in these activities, the reason being that feeling shy/afraid to speak in front of people.*

During the interview, the instructor explained that he gave speaking activities which motivate learners to speak. However, as has been observed, the activities were not sufficient and, therefore, did not bring the expected outcome in the learners' speaking ability.

Moreover, the observation held in the classroom indicated that the instructor gave a limited type of activities such as pair work, group work and discussion. Nevertheless, to increase interest in the learners, he can also add activities of other types and can involve each student in speaking practice.

Different scholars agreed that students' ability to communicate in the foreign language could be more practical with the provision of appropriate speaking activities. In relation to this, Rudder (1999:24) states, "Teachers can create activities that engage students in meaningful interaction, in which their attention is focused more on what they are saying than on how they are saying it. It is this free practice that enables learners to use the language outside the artificial context of the classroom".

In activating learners to speak in English, the teacher can also prepare his own activities other than what is found in the text and vice versa. Hence, when the teacher observes lose of interest in the activity, it is advisable for him to immediately shift to something else. In connection to this, Dobson (1981:13) states that the students may feel uninterested to take part in speaking activities set by the teacher. In such instances, it is advisable for the teacher to shift to a different activity in order to get students' attention. And this requires the teacher to identify the kinds of activities students are interested in.

Various speaking activities prepared in accordance with the language abilities of the learners are of great advantage to promote their speaking ability. The teacher should also give sufficient motivation, take control of those students who laugh at the other students' efforts to speak and the students, on their part, must study vocabulary and the grammar needed to use the words in expressing ideas. Therefore, the selection and provision of speaking activities should consider students' interest, abilities and the like.

**Table VIII: Activities Promoting Speaking**

Tasks	Choices and Respondents											
	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at all		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Class discussion	23	41.1	12	21.4	17	30.3	3	5.4	1	1.8	56	100
Role-Play	7	12.5	8	14.3	18	32.1	11	19.6	12	21.4	56	100
Oral composition and report	6	10.7	8	14.3	24	42.9	13	23.2	5	8.9	56	100
Information gap	6	10.7	8	14.3	21	37.5	7	12.5	14	25	56	100
Interaction short turns	7	12.5	8	14.3	20	35.7	10	17.9	11	19.6	56	100
Group and pair work	27	48.2	14	25	11	19.6	3	5.4	1	1.8	56	100
Story telling	9	16.1	4	7.1	25	44.6	11	19.6	7	12.5	56	100
Picture describing	9	16.1	5	8.9	16	28.6	14	25	12	21.4	56	100
Interview	11	19.6	6	10.7	26	46.4	7	12.5	6	10.7	56	100
Question and answer	32	57.1	3	5.4	16	28.6	3	5.4	2	3.6	56	100

The table shown above illustrates how often the instructor provided speaking activities to his/her students. Thus, only 1 student (1.8%) said that they were not given class discussion, 3 students (5.4%) replied they were rarely given, 17 students (30.3%) explained it was sometimes given, 12 students (21.4%) responded that it was often given and 23 students (41.1%) replied it was always given to the students to practice speaking.

With respect to role play, 12 students (21.4%) said they were not given this activity, 11 students (19.6%) explained it was rarely given to them, 18 students (32.1%) replied it was sometimes given, 8 students (14.3%) indicated that they

were often provided and 7 students (12.5%) responded that they were always given this activity.

With regard to oral composition and report, 5 students (8.9%) replied that the instructor never gave them this activity, 13 students (23.2%) said that he rarely provided them, 24 students (42.9%) indicated that he sometimes gave this activity, 8 students (14.3%) explained they were often provided and 6 students (10.7%) responded they were always given to work with this activity.

As far as information gap activity was concerned, 14 students (25%) said that they were not given this activity, 7 students (12.5%) replied they were rarely provided, 21 students (37.5%) responded he sometimes gave the activity, 8 students (14.3%) explained he often gave them and 6 students (10.7%) responded he always gave them this activity.

In relation to interaction short turns, 11 students (19.6%) said that he did not give them this activity, 10 students (17.9%) replied that they were rarely provided, 20 students (35.7%) explained they were sometimes given, 8 students (14.3%) responded that he often gave them and 7 students (12.5%) said he always gave them to perform it.

As to pair work and group work, one student (1.8%) replied that no group/pair work was given, 3 students (5.4%) said that they were rarely given, 11 students (19.6%) responded he sometime gave them, 14 students (25%) said the activities were often given and 27 students (48.2%) explained they always performed such activities.

Concerning storytelling, 7 students (12.5%) replied that they did not perform such an activity, 11 students (19.6%) said that they rarely worked on this activity, 25 students (44.6%) responded they sometimes performed, 4 students

(7.1%) explained that they often worked with this activity and 9 students (16.1%) responded that they always performed or told stories.

As long as picture describing is concerned, 12 students (21.4%) said they were not totally given this activity, 14 students (25%) replied that they rarely did it, 16 students (28.6%) explained that they sometimes performed such activities, 5 students (8.9%) responded they often worked with it and 9 students (16.1%) said that they always performed these activities.

Regarding interview, 6 students (10.7%) replied that they never practiced, 7 students (12.5%) said they rarely worked with it, 26 students (46.4%) explained they sometimes performed this activity, 6 students (10.7%) explained that they often performed such an activity and 11 students (19.6%) responded they always practiced working with interview.

Lastly, with regard to question and answer, 2 students (3.6%) said that they did not work with such activities, 3 students (5.4%) replied that they rarely performed, 16 students (28.6%) explained they sometimes practiced, 3 students (5.4%) responded they often did such activities and 32 students (57.1%) said they were always given these activities.

As we can understand from table VIII, it was only to class discussion, pair/group work and the question and answer activities which the students were better exposed to as compared to the rest of the activities. That means the majority of the activities were not frequently used to promote the students' ability of speaking. In other words, the students were not given sufficient opportunities to practice speaking in English.

Generally, it is very essential to use different methods to create opportunities for students to practice speaking in the classroom. In relation to this, Yingyu (2008) states that a good method is a bridge to success. Hence, to bring



improvement in the students' speaking skill, the instructor should design various types of speaking activities and control the participation of each learner in each activity. In such a way, it is possible to motivate students and increase their confidence to speak English.

#### **4.4. The Role of the Instructors and the Students in Improving the English Language Speaking Ability of the Learners**

Most of the English language teaching takes place in the classroom. This shows that classroom teaching is an important factor in the process of developing the students speaking ability. Moreover, both the instructor and the students should exert their maximum effort in order to improve the English language speaking ability.

##### **4.4.1. The Role of the Instructor**

For the development of the speaking ability, teachers play decisive roles in terms of motivating the students to speak freely, creating a conducive classroom, providing suitable activities that engage learners in speaking and so on. Regarding this, students were asked to provide their own suggestions as what their instructor's role should be in the process of improving their speaking ability and they forwarded the following suggestions:

- Giving encouragement for students to speak in English inside/outside the class.
- Advising students to speak only in English in their English lesson.
- Providing various activities capable of engaging learners in speaking like interviews, discussions, pair/group work, story telling, etc.
- Giving supportive materials which help in learning to speak English.
- Forming groups and taking control of the participation of each student in the discussion.
- Motivating students to speak freely.
- Avoiding fear of speaking in students.

- Giving presentation topics and managing every one's performance in each activity.
- Making students communicate with friends only in English language.
- Asking oral questions and motivating them to give answers orally.

As long as the role of the teacher in improving the speaking ability of the learners is concerned, Wilkins (1974:6) suggests, "In making students speak English in the classroom, teachers ought to enable their students to use language communicatively in real situation, that is, they must arrange conditions to help students practice speaking. It is also essential that practice of speaking should be free from teacher's intervention.

In addition, to help learners have enough oral practice, the instructor must allot much of the class hour for students' talk. In relation to this, Kayi (2006) states that teachers have to reduce their speaking time in class while increasing students' speaking time. Extending his suggestion, he suggests that teachers should ask eliciting questions such as "What do you mean? How do you reach that conclusion?" in order to prompt students to speak more. Like others, kayi warns teachers not to correct learners' pronunciation errors very often while they are speaking because it distracts the learner from his/her speech.

Therefore, foreign language teachers in general and spoken English teachers in particular play great role in terms of motivating students, creating a conducive classroom situation, designing appropriate speaking activities and making them feel free to communicate in English.

#### **4.4.2. The Role of the Students**

Foreign language learners are expected to play a more active role in using the language for real communicative purposes. In connection to this idea, the students were asked as what their roles should be in the process of developing their own speaking skills and suggested the following points:

- Actively participating in different activities.
- Speaking only in English at school (whether in class or outside).
- Speaking with friends in English, watching movies, films.
- Volunteering to speak whatever topic we are given.
- Avoiding fear of making errors in speech.
- Involving in every activity the instructor gives us to do.
- Making a lot of practice in speech.
- Sharing/exchanging ideas in English during discussions, pair/group activities and soon.
- Communicating only in English when we meet together even outside the school.

Regarding the role of students in improving their speaking skill, Rudder (1999) states that learners must feel responsible to participate in different speaking activities presented by the teacher. The reason is that it is through this method that learners can best practice speaking English. Similarly, Grant (1987) says that learners will learn how to interact one another through communicating by using language. If learners make enough practice in a given activity, they will improve their fluency. In relation to this, Bygate (1987) suggests that part of success or failure in speaking English is attributed to the way the students perceive the use of language.

Thus, students taking spoken English course have to make great efforts to improve their speaking ability: they should try hard to practice with each activity, to communicate only in English in the classroom, to ask and answer

questions voluntarily, to talk about a certain topic of their own interest and so on.

In general, in order to improve the speaking ability of the students, both parties should exert their maximum effort. The responsibility of developing the students' speaking ability should not be laid upon the instructors alone. Of course, they have lots of things to do in the process. Much is expected from the students themselves as well. They have to change their mind that they must avoid fear and try to speak English in the classroom in different circumstances.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1. Summary

English is a language of wider communication. As an international language, it is taught in almost all countries in the world including Ethiopia. However, students in Ethiopian schools, colleges/universities do not have the expected ability to express their ideas in English in spite of their learning of English as one of the school subjects. The main purpose of this study was, therefore, to explore some of the major problems hindering the English language speaking ability of Freshman English Major Students with particular reference to Kotebe College of Teachers' Education.

In this study, the researcher tried to investigate the influence of (native) culture, classroom atmosphere, lack of speaking activities and the role of both the teacher and the students in improving the English language speaking ability. To this end, the following basic questions were formulated.

- A. Does (native) culture influence the speaking ability of the learners?
- B. To what extent is the classroom atmosphere conducive to learn Speaking?
- C. To what extent are the students given speaking activities to practice Speaking?
- D. what should be the role of the instructor to alleviate the students' Problems of speaking? What about the students?

In order to answer these questions, the researcher took the whole Freshman English Majors in two sections, i.e. a total of 65 students out of which only 56 participated in filling the questionnaires while the remaining 9 students were not present during the administration of the questionnaires. In addition,

interview questions (6 items for the teacher and 5 for the students) were prepared to substantiate the data gathered through questionnaire.

Another data collecting instrument, observation, was also used to assess the teacher's performance and the students' participation in speaking activities. Hence, two observation checklists each having 8 items were designed (one for the teacher and the other for the students).

The data from close ended questions were tabulated and analyzed using percentage while descriptive method was used to analyze the data from open ended questions, interview and classroom observation.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the analysis of the information obtained through the completed questionnaire, interview and classroom observation, the following factors were identified as hindering the English language speaking ability of Freshman English Majors at Kotebe College of Teachers Education:

- The students' native culture had greatly influenced their English language speaking ability.
- The appreciation parents gave to their children in their locality for being silent had a negative impact on the students' speaking ability of English.
- Most students did not have the confidence to express their ideas in English.
- The degree of motivation given to the students to speak was not sufficient.
- Problems of low vocabulary and poor grammar had a negative impact on the students' speaking ability.
- Teacher's correction of his students' speech errors discouraged them not to speak.
- Some students never participated in speaking activities though they were sometimes given such activities to engage them in speaking

English language. This was due to anxiety as well as feeling shy to speak in front of/ with their friends.

- Except group work/ pair work and class discussion, other speaking activities were rarely given to students.

Therefore, to minimize the problems already identified, it is important to suggest possible solutions.

### **5.3. Recommendation**

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Students had better control the silent behavior they developed at home/in their locality/due to the influence of their native culture and feel free or relaxed in their spoken English class so that they can practice in different speaking activities. The teacher, on his part, should create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere which can motivate students to speak.
- Parents should give freedom to their young children to communicate with them freely in their mother tongue like the children in foreign culture. This practice will have a positive impact in language learning when the child goes to school.
- The teacher should give encouragement to whatever attempt the student does in trying to express his/her ideas. This develops confidence in the students to freely speak out their ideas.
- Motivation plays an important role in making students speak English language. Therefore, the teacher had better arouse their interest by giving varieties of activities and making them involve in each activity.
- The students have to learn vocabulary and grammar communicatively so that the students' vocabulary stock and their knowledge of grammar increase. This minimizes the problems of lack of words and the grammar needed to connect these words to express ideas.

- One feature for a conducive classroom atmosphere is avoidance of error correction. In other words, the students should be free from being corrected in response to the errors they committed while speaking. This is because, if a student is corrected for his/her speech errors, not only the student who is corrected but also the rest of the students will feel discouraged and stop their attempt to speak. Moreover, errors are signs of learning taking place but not of failure. Therefore, creating a safe, comfortable and relaxed atmosphere is critical for the development of productive talk in the classroom. In addition, to make a language classroom interactive, teachers should not be sensitive to students' errors.
- Students should control their fear and shyness and participate in different speaking activities. The reason is that the learning of foreign language requires a lot of practice with it.
- The teacher had better increase the frequency of the other activities as he did in group /pair work and in class discussion in order that the degree of students' involvement in speaking increases and the ability to speak gets improved.
- Students in lower grades should be taught English in meaningful contexts. In addition, they must be given opportunities to use the language for interactive purposes. This could lessen the problem they will later encounter in colleges/universities.



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***Appendix I***  
***Questionnaire for Students***

**A Questionnaire Designed for First Year English Major Students at  
Kotebe College of Teachers Education**

**Dear Student,**

I am doing a research on "An exploration of the problems hindering the learners' speaking ability". The purpose of the study is to identify the major problems which hinder the speaking ability of first year English major students at Kotebe college of Teachers Education. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the questions given in this questionnaire. The data Obtained will be used for a research paper that serves as a partial fulfillment for MA degree in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). I greatly thank you for the valuable Information that you provide me with. Your responses will remain confidential.

Note: 1- No need to write your name

2- Encircle your answers for the close ended questions.

3- Write your answers for the open ended questions on the space provided.

4- Put the sign "✓" in the box to the show the frequency of the activity (for item number 24)

### Part I

***This is the first part of the questionnaire with Nine items. It is meant to collect information pertinent to the influence of culture on the students' speaking ability. (YOU CAN SELECT MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)***

1. Do you think the culture in your locality has influenced your ability of speaking English?  
A. yes                      B. no
  
2. If your answer for question no 1 is "yes", to what extent has it affected your speaking ability?  
A. to a very great extent      C. to some extent  
B. to a great extent              D. to a limited extent  
E. if any other, specify\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. List some of the influences of the culture in your locality on your English language speaking ability. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What mechanisms do you suggest to minimize the problems caused by culture? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Do you have the confidence to express your ideas in English both inside /outside the classroom?  
A. yes                      B. no
  
6. If your answer for question no 5 is "no" what do you think is the source of the problem?

- A. influence of culture    B. lack of knowledge of English  
C. shyness                      D. I learnt to be silent at home  
E. if any other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do people/parents/ in your locality appreciate children for being silent?

- A. yes                                  B. no

8. If your answer for question no 7 is "Yes", do you think it is useful for improving your English language speaking ability?

- A. yes                                  B. no

9. If your answer for question no 8 is "no", what do you think is the solution? \_\_

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### ***Part II***

***This part is intended to investigate the degree of suitability of the classroom atmosphere to practice speaking. It has 8 items (No. 10-17)***

10. Does your instructor motivate (praises, encouragement, positive feedback) you to speak in your English lesson?

- A. yes                                  B. no

11. If your answer is "Yes" how often does he motivate you?

- A. always                              B. often                              C. sometimes  
D. rarely                                E. not at all

12. Is your spoken English class, teacher-centered or student-centered? It is

\_\_\_\_\_

13. If it is teacher-centered, to what extent does it influence your speaking ability?

- A. to a very great extent              B. to a great extent              C. to some extent  
D. to a limited extent                E. if any other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Does your teacher correct errors in your speech?  
 A. yes                      B. no
15. If your answer for question number 14 is "Yes", how often does he/she correct your errors?  
 A. always                      B. often                      C. sometimes  
 D. rarely                      E. not at all
16. Do you feel comfortable whenever your instructor gives you an immediate correction?  
 A. yes                      B. no
17. What other problems do you face when you learn speaking in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III

***This part of the questionnaire has four items (No. 18-21). It is aimed at finding out the degree of frequency in which different activities are provided to the learners to practice speaking.***

18. Does your instructor give you different speaking activities in the classroom?  
 A. yes                      B. no
19. If your answer for question No 18 is "yes", do you participate in these activities?  
 A. yes                      B. no
20. If you say "no" what are the reasons? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Activities	Frequency
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	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
Class discussion					
Role-play					
Oral composition and report					
Information gap					
Interaction short turns					
Group and pair work					
Story telling					
Picture describing					
Interviews					
Question and Answer					

21. How often does your instructor let you perform the following activities? (Show the frequency of the activity by putting a "✓" mark under the frequency adverb).

#### Part IV

*The last part of the questionnaire with only two items (No. 22 & 23) is designed to obtain information about what the role of the instructor and the students should be to bring about possible changes in your problem of speaking.*

22. What do you think should be the role of your instructor to improve your speaking ability? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. What do you think should be the role of the students? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***Appendix II***  
***Questionnaire for Students***

**A Questionnaire Designed for First Year English Major Students at Kotebe  
College of Teachers Education**

**Dear Student,**

I am doing a research on "An exploration of the problems hindering the learners' speaking ability". The purpose of the study is to identify the major problems which hinder the speaking ability of first year English major students at Kotebe college of Teachers Education. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the questions given in this questionnaire. The data Obtained will be used for a research paper that serves as a partial fulfillment for MA degree in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). I greatly thank you for the valuable Information that you provide me with. Your responses will remain confidential.

Note: 1- No need to write your name

2- Encircle your answers for the close ended questions.

3- Write your answers for the open ended questions on the space provided.

4- Put the sign "✓" in the box to show the frequency of the activity  
(for item number 24)

## Part I

***This is the first part of the questionnaire with Nine items. It is meant to collect information pertinent to the influence of culture on the students' speaking ability. (YOU CAN SELECT MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)***

1. Do you think the culture in your locality has influenced your ability of speaking English?  
A. yes                      B. no
2. If your answer for question no 1 is "yes", to what extent has it affected your speaking ability?  
A. to a very great extent      C. to some extent  
B. to a great extent              D. to a limited extent  
E. if any other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
3. List some of the influences of the culture in your locality on your English language speaking ability. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What mechanisms do you suggest to minimize the problems caused by culture? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have the confidence to express your ideas in English both inside/outside the classroom?  
A. yes                      B. no
6. If your answer for question no 5 is "no" what do you think is the source of the problem?  
A. influence of culture                      C. shyness  
B. lack of knowledge of English          D. I learnt to be silent at home  
E. if any other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do people/parents/ in your locality appreciate children for being silent?  
A. yes                      B. no

8. If your answer for question no 7 is "Yes", do you think it is useful for improving your English language speaking ability?

A. yes

B. no

9. If your answer for question no 8 is "no", what do you think is the solution? \_

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### ***Part II***

***This part is intended to investigate the degree of suitability of the classroom atmosphere to practice speaking. It has 10 items (No. 10-19)***

10. Is there a suitable atmosphere in the classroom to express your ideas in English freely?

A. yes

B. No

11. If your answer to this question is "No" what do you think are the reasons? \_

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12. Does your instructor motivate (praises, encouragement, positive feedback) you to speak in your English lesson?

A. yes

B. no

13. If your answer is "Yes" how often does he motivate you?

A. always

B. often

C. sometimes

D. rarely

E. not at all

14. Is your spoken English class, teacher-centered or student-centered? It is

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15. If it is teacher-centered, to what extent does it influence your speaking ability?

A. to a very great extent

B. to a great extent

C. to some extent

D. to a limited extent                      E. if any other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16. Does your teacher correct errors in your speech?

A. yes                      B. no

17. If your answer for question number 16 is "Yes", how often does he/she correct your errors?

A. always                      B. often                      C. sometimes  
D. rarely                      E. not at all

18. Do you feel comfortable whenever your instructor gives you an immediate correction?

A. yes                      B. no

19. What other problems do you face when you learn speaking in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Part III

***This part of the questionnaire has four items (No. 20-23). It is aimed at finding out the degree of frequency in which different activities are provided to the learners to practice speaking.***

20. Does your instructor give you different speaking activities in the classroom?

A. yes                      B. no

21. If your answer for question No 20 is "yes", do you participate in these activities?

A. yes                      B. no

22. If you say "no" what are the reasons? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. How often does your instructor let you perform the following activities?  
 (Show the frequency of the activity by putting a "✓" mark under the frequency adverb).

Activities	Frequency				
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all
Class discussion					
Role-play					
Oral composition and report					
Information gap					
Interaction short turns					
Group and pair work					
Story telling					
Picture describing					
Interview					
Question and answer					

#### Part IV

*The last part of the questionnaire with only two items (No. 24 & 25) is designed to obtain information about what the role of the instructor and the students should be to bring about possible changes in your problem of speaking.*

24. What do you think should be the role of your instructor to improve your speaking ability? \_\_\_\_\_

25. What do you think should be the role of the students? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix III**

### **Students' Interview Questions**

1. Could you tell me the major problems that hinder your speaking ability?
2. Do you make efforts in order to improve your speaking ability in English and be an efficient speaker?  
If you say "No" Why?
3. Do you feel that your culture has influenced your ability of speaking English: If "Yes," how?
4. How conducive is your classroom environment to engage you in speaking practice?
5. Does the instructor give you different speaking activities to practice speaking English?



## **Analysis of Students' Interview**

Q1. Could you tell me the major problems that hinder your speaking ability?

- S1. Yes. The major problem is that if I want to speak English, I am afraid I will make mistakes in pronunciation.
- S2. Well, the main problems are lack of practice and injustice idea from parents which says that children should not speak with elders. In our culture, people encourage silent children by discouraging those who speak now and then.
- S3. Yes. The problem for me is the inability to listen to the plasma teacher's pronunciation in my high school English course. The other problem is culture. In my environment, if I speak in English, I will be called a boast.
- S4. Ya. In my opinion, the problems are not having good base in elementary classes because of our teachers' poor method of teaching, lack of correct grammar and low vocabulary and being afraid of making mistakes. The other serious problem is that I was not encouraged to speak in my mother tongue when I was a child. As a result, I don't have the confidence to speak in English now.
- S5. ... is that I have no background knowledge and teachers and other people in our environment do not motivate students to speak English.
- S6. My problems are lack of grammar and not making practice with the language every where.
- S7. ... are lack of practice to speak in English, problem of pronunciation and not getting enough knowledge in my lower grades' education
- S8. Lack of vocabulary and not knowing their meanings and lack of self confidence to speak out my ideas. In addition, in our culture, if I try to speak in English, people will give a bad name to me.

Q2. Do you make efforts in order to improve your ability of speaking English?

- S1. No, I don't, because it is very difficult. I speak only when my

teacher asks me a question otherwise I like to be silent the whole lesson.

S2. Yes, I do. I sometimes try but I am not a good speaker. And my classmates laugh at me when the lesson is over.

S3. Yes, I do. I speak in English with my friends.

S4. Yes, I do. But when I speak, my friend doesn't respond. In addition, I am afraid to speak in the class room because there are many students.

S5. Yes, I do. The problem is that I don't use correct grammar and when the instructor listens to my fault, he immediately corrects me and I feel worried.

S6. Yes, I do. The reason is our instructor tells us to practice speaking in English every day. However, he doesn't like listening to our grammatical errors.

S7. Yes, I do. I listen to BBC; I speak with my friends and answer questions in class.

S8. No, I don't. It is because I am silent even with interactions in Amharic. I am usually a listener to what others say. I developed this habit in my village. But now, when I sometimes try to speak English in our dormitory or in the cafe or outside, my friends laugh at me and I feel shy to speak.

Q3. Do you think your native culture has influenced your ability of speaking? If "yes", how?

S1. Yes. Because the language needs much practice but let alone in English, I don't even like to speak much in my mother tongue.

S2. Yes, I do. Though I am good at expressing ideas in writing, I really become troubled to say them orally because I feel shy.

S3. Yes, I do. For example, when our teacher assigns chair persons to present group's idea, I always hide myself not to be assigned because I am afraid to talk in front of many people.

S4. Yes. The reason is at home, I was a good model for other children

in my silent behavior. In return for this, my parents and other people appreciate me. But now I have faced a problem. I couldn't speak due to that influence.

S5. Yes, I do. You see the silent behavior does not help me to speak English. But, I haven't improved it yet.

S6. Yes, I do. Because in our culture, people never speak English though they are educated. But now, I am trying to speak since I am an English department student.

S7. Yes, I do. For instance, if I try to speak in English after I turn back home from school, those who listen to me say that 'don't boast here'. Therefore, I keep silent and people consider me as a disciplined child.

S8. Yes, I do. Because parents or other people in our locality never encourage children/students when they hear us speaking. Moreover, teachers in high schools do not emphasize on this skill and never give motivation to do so.

Q4. How conducive is your classroom environment to engage you in speaking practice?

S1. Our spoken classroom is equipped with different materials. So, it is conducive. He also motivates students.

S2. It is conducive. The instructor makes us do some kinds of activities like telling stories, dialogues and so on. The problem is that, he gives correction for students' speech errors.

S3. The spoken class is suitable. The instructor initiates students to involve in different kinds of activities. For e.g. in pair or group work, discussion, listening to the foreign accent through tape recorder and so on.

S4. It is suitable because the instructor advises us to practice in the language. However, when we make mistakes, he corrects us very often. As a result, some students do not speak English in the class.

S5. Yes, it is conducive. Because we practice to speak, to report, to describe with each other. When he gives corrections to our errors,

we learn from him.

S6. It is not conducive because when I try to answer questions, the teacher often interrupts me to correct my mistakes. Hence, I try to speak English only when there is exam or when the teacher asks me.

S7. It is not suitable because he doesn't motivate students.

S8. I don't think it is conducive. The reason is that he never accepts students' ideas if they are not grammatically correct. However, he motivates students to speak.

Q5. Does the instructor give you different speaking activities to practice speaking English?

S1. Yes, he does. However, he usually gives us pair work.

S2. No, he does not because we work only with pair or group work activities.

S3. Yes, but it is only discussion and pair or group work activities that we work with in the class.

S4. Yes, he does. However, some students do not participate in the given activities. Some others discuss in Amharic.

S5. Yes, he gives us class discussion. The problem is when we are asked to report our discussion; we always select a student who speaks better.

S6. Yes, he does. The problem here is that he doesn't check each student's participation in the group. Most of us discuss in Amharic.

S7. Yes, he does. But the activities are not enough. He can also add others like storytelling, role play, picture describing, etc.

S8. Yes, he does. But he doesn't motivate weak students to take part in the activities. The types of activities we work with are also the same.

## **Appendix IV**

### **Teacher's Interview Questions**

1. How do you prepare yourself to enable learners to speak in English in the class and how do you see the speaking activities presented in the textbook?
2. What do you think would be the major problems hindering students' ability of speaking in English?
3. Do you think the student's speaking ability is affected by his/her culture? If yes, how?
4. Do you feel that there is a conducive classroom atmosphere to interest learners to speak? If "No" what are the problems?
5. How do you manage to correct your students when they make errors in pronunciation as well as in grammar while speaking?
6. What do you think are the reasons that students become in volunteer to express their ideas when they are asked to do so?

## **Analysis of Teacher's Interview**

**Q1-** How do you prepare yourself to help learners speak in English in the classroom?

**T-** Basically our students have problems in speech, so one technique I employ is encouraging students to answer my question. I did not wait until the student's raise their hands. I just ask silently sitting students sometimes. I want everybody at least to say something in my class especially at times of presentations. The target, here, is to help students at least to develop confidence to speak and thereby develop their fluency. Actually, our students have setbacks that come from the culture and native language.

**Q2** – what do you think would be the major problems hindering the students' speaking ability of English?

**T** - Yah, it is all rounded. The most serious one is the culture we grew up in. Our culture doesn't encourage people to talk much. And language fluency comes through using it. Part of it is talking. But, in our culture, children are not allowed to talk much at home in their mother tongue. So, from the very beginning, students lack confidence to speak.

**Q2-** What other factors do you think affect speaking?

**T-** The other factor may emanate from the curriculum and probably we don't have much focus at schools on language improvement. Much work is not done though there is ELIC in our campus. I don't see much help they do to the students because the students who come to our classes are poor in English grammar as well as vocabulary.

**Q3-** Do you think the student's speaking ability is affected by his/ her native culture?

**T** - Yah, I agree with this question very much. For example, if we take the English people, small children from the very beginning talk too much. Language needs this kind of atmosphere i.e., talking too much, saying things all the time, interacting, and not worrying about errors. However, the situation our students are grown up is very suppressive. Children are,

therefore, not given good ground to speak right from the beginning and the same thing is reflected when they go to schools, colleges or universities. As you know, in many cultures in our country, students do not try to speak English outside the classrooms because their friends consider them as boast.

**Q4-** Do you think that there is a conducive classroom atmosphere to interest learners to speak?

**T -** Well, by the way, English is not a matter of interest for English majors. It is a matter of profession. They should speak for their bread not for their interest. To be competitive, they need to speak. This itself is a source of interest i.e., the target itself is a motivation. Of course, with this, we have two modern laboratories for speaking and listening with recorded cassettes from the British council and others from ELIC. All these things could create interest. There are also English clubs like movie clubs and photography clubs. Students are allowed to watch movies, listen to the news broadcast and talk about them. With these, we are trying our best to motivate learners to speak.

**Q5 -**How do you manage to correct your students when they make mistakes in grammar / pronunciation while speaking?

**T -** Most of the time, I never correct them. Even when the student lacks Words, I just help him/ her get it and continue his/ her speech. But, I don't tell him that this is right and that is wrong. If I am to correct their mistakes, I don't do it on the spot since this will discourage the students from using the language.

**Q6-** What do you think are the reasons that the students do not volunteer to express their ideas when asked to do so?

**T -** It is due to cultural factors and being afraid of making mistakes.

## Appendix V

### Checklist for Classroom Observation (for students)

**Instruction:** put a tick in the box for the activity observed in the class.

A no	Assessment of students' over all behavior during classroom observation	Yes	no	Total
1.	Do the students use English in asking/answering questions?			
2	Do students use English in pair/group discussions freely?			
3	Do students make great efforts to speak English with their friends in the class?			
4	Do students ask their teacher for clarification when they face difficulties?			
5	Do students use polite requests while asking questions?			
6	Are they interested to answer questions when they are asked?			
7	Do they give attention when the instructor teaches speaking?			
8	Can they express their ideas accurately and without difficulty?			

### ***Analysis of Students' Participation during Observation***

As pointed out above, with an eight item observation check list, the researcher observed each of the two classes three times. In the first class, 34 students (20 males and 14 females) and in the other 31 students (15 males and 16 females) were observed. The observation was held while the teaching and learning was on process and therefore, gave the researcher practical evidence.



In the four lessons observed, it was possible to see that the teacher used recorded cassettes to acquaint his students with the pronunciation of native speakers of English. Moreover, he made them present a summary of what they listened to after organizing their ideas in groups. This was meant for promoting both their speaking and listening ability. Sometimes, they were also presented with readymade questions and questions with blank spaces to be answered from the speech they listened to. In the rest of the observation sessions, students were made to do pair work, group work, and describing people.

During the observation sessions, the researcher came to understand that few students used English by their own motive to ask/answer questions. The majority, however, kept silent from asking/ responding in relation to the discussion. They spoke only when the instructor unfortunately asked them. Otherwise, they were simply engaged in listening to others' speech. Almost the same thing happened in the other two lessons' observations of the same class. I was eager to know why most students did not speak and raised this issue to some students outside the class when the lesson was over. The reason they gave was 'we are not sure if our grammar is correct or not. If it is wrong grammar, he immediately warns us saying: don't say like this, but say this'. So, we prefer to keep silent from trying to speak.

During pair/group discussions, they spoke in their mother tongue unless the teacher went nearer checking their work. The common phenomenon most groups practiced was that they held discussions silently in mother tongue and finally used English in writing or reporting the groups' decisions. Therefore, though most students during the interview explained that they made efforts, the observation showed that the effort was not that much encouraging to improve their speaking skill.

It is common that students face difficulties and help from their teacher might be very crucial. However, most of them were observed that they neglected the problem whether they came to the right judgment or not. In spite of these kinds of students, there were some who insisted on asking a point which was vague to understand. In such circumstances did the other students try to write note. But, as students of the English department, they should not wait for somebody else to raise the questions while it was also ambiguous for themselves to understand.

In those observation days, almost the same students happened to raise hands to respond to questions every lesson. This time, the instructor wanted to involve the rest and asked some students by name, but no interest was seen in the question as their answers and facial expressions could indicate.

During the spoken English class, the students, most of the time, were made to listen to recorded cassettes and respond orally or in written form to the questions raised. Therefore, since much of their listening was to be followed by speaking/ their own response, they usually gave attention to the lesson. When it comes to expressing ideas to the questions already asked, most of their sentences were incorrect. i.e., they had fluency as well as accuracy problems.

In general, the observation indicated that the students did not involve actively in speaking activities which play vital role in improving one's speaking ability of English.

## Appendix VI

### Checklist for Classroom Observation (Teachers)

A no	Assessment of activities related to teacher's performances during classroom observation when he teaches speaking lessons	Yes	No	Total
1	Does the instructor effectively use English to give instructions?			
2	Does he make his learners use the target language in discussions?			
3	Does he make learners participate in different speaking activities?			
4	Does he motivate students to speak?			
5	Does he emphasize persistent correction of errors?			
6	Does he accept the students' response?			
7	Does he organize students in groups to perform speaking activities?			
8	Does he encourage silent students to participate actively?			

### ***Analysis of Teacher's Performance during Observation***

The two sections of Freshman English students were learning the Spoken English course by the same teacher. As a result, the researcher's observation was limited to only one person in both sections.

The instructor used English language effectively while giving instructions or explaining points to the learners. The problem comes when a question of making learners use the target language arises. With regard to this concept, it was possible to realize that he did no further work other than assigning students in to groups and allowing them to discuss.

As we all could think of, most students need continuous follow up while working in pairs/groups to solve problems. If teachers turn their faces, students will immediately shift to their mother tongue and use it as a medium of their discussion. It was the same thing that the researcher observed during classroom observation. The teacher was very much concerned with the outcome but not on how they reached this outcome. This doesn't help the speaking skill. More than this, the most important thing is their exchange of ideas in English to come to agreement/decision.

As far as participating students in different speaking activities is concerned, it is possible to say that he had a good attempt though there was resistance from the students' side. This was because students did not easily lend themselves to participate in speaking activities. In addition, the degree of motivation he gave to the students to speak was also less than enough. Students, during the interview, also reflected this idea. He gave little encouragement when a student tried to speak. This itself could cause students to stop their attempt to speak. Sometimes when a student made grammatical errors in speech, he told the right word interrupting the speaker. This was also true from the analysis of the responses of the students' questionnaire. This indicates the persistent correction of errors.

In relation to organizing students in groups, the instructor really did well. As appropriate to the kind of each activity, he arranged students in pairs/groups, larger groups, and then to class discussion. However, in each group, it was common to find silent students never volunteering to speak. These students required strong motivation but he did not give that much attention in encouraging them and making them participate in different speaking activities. In general, he used good English understandable for most of the students. He also made students listen to recorded cassettes to help with his students' pronunciation. However, the motivation he had to give to students was not sufficient.