

**Active Learning in Teaching English Language Support Courses to
First-Year Students in Some Ethiopian Universities**

By: Kitaw Yoseph Zewdu

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the subject

DIDACTICS

**In the Department of Education
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Supervisor: Prof. NMM Mbunyuza-De Heer Menlah

April, 2017

DECLARATION

Student Number: 47245263

I declare that *Active Learning in Teaching English Language Support Courses to First-Year Students in Some Ethiopian Universities* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Kitaw Yoseph Zewdu

April 2017

Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Professor N.M.M. Mbunyuza-De Heer Menlah, for her dedication, support and guidance throughout this project. My great appreciation is extended to the University of South Africa for the research training it offered and bursary awarded to finish my study.

I must also thank all those who participated in the study (EFL instructors and their students) for sharing their experiences of the teaching and learning process in their classes.

Lastly, I also express my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia for presenting me with the scholarship that enabled me to study at the University of South Africa.

ABSTRACT

The general aim of this study was to investigate the implementation of active learning approaches in the teaching of English Language support courses to first-year university students. The study was planned to identify factors that affected the implementation of active learning in classrooms where English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught, the perceptions of EFL instructors and their students regarding active learning, the linkage between assessment practices and productive skills, and the commonly used types of active learning techniques.

The study was conducted in three Ethiopian universities and employed a qualitative approach to data generation and analysis. As such, data generation strategies focused on relevant documents, classroom observation, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. The participants of the study included 27 EFL instructors and their students (17 groups of focus group discussion), enrolled for English Language support courses at freshman level.

Based on my analysis of the data, the primary barriers to the implementation of active learning techniques in EFL classrooms were as follows:

- Students' poor background exposure to the English language;
- Students' negative associations with language learning;
- EFL instructors' ineffective classroom management;
- The adverse influence of students' external social environments;
- Dependency in group work;
- low relevance of English Language support courses;
- Lack of administrative support from Universities.

The participants of the study were aware of the importance of active learning and student-centred approaches and in favour of the implementation thereof. Despite this, they did not feel that they practised them effectively in the teaching and learning process. In fact, the instructors explained that, in the face of very unfavourable circumstances for active learning and student-centred approaches, they felt utterly disappointed, with no sense of achievement, when attempting to use these approaches in their classrooms; they did not believe that the existing situation was conducive to the implementation of active learning and student-centred approach.

Furthermore, these EFL instructors did not use a variety of active learning techniques in the teaching and learning process of English supportive courses. The dominant techniques they used were group work and pair work. They did not utilise alternative techniques to teach essential productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing). The participants also indicated that the assessment techniques they used were not closely related to lesson objectives or language learning goals in the development of productive skills.

The relationship between assessment types and active learning techniques was characterised by traditional pencil-and-paper tests designed solely for grading purposes; and not to improve the actual learning process. In grading, the weight given to productive skills was very small in contrast to that assigned to receptive skills (i.e. listening and reading), grammar and vocabulary. Their relationship involved teaching simply to prepare students for tests, irrelevant and untimely feedback, substandard assessment, absence of dynamism in the two-dimensional assessment techniques, and incongruence between assessment techniques and actual language skills and competence. In relation to feedback, both the students and their instructors pointed out that EFL students were more concerned with their grades than with the potential to learn when receiving feedback on their writing or oral presentations.

In line with these findings, this thesis concluded by offering relevant recommendations for alleviating the problems observed in the teaching of English language support courses – both in general and with particular regard to productive skills development.

Key terms

Active learning, student-centred approach, English as a Foreign Language, EFL teaching, Constructivism, first-year university students, productive skills, speaking and writing skills, basic language skills, teacher education, English Language support courses, EFL students,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Research Aim and Objectives.....	6
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.6 Definition of Key Terms.....	7
1.7 Literature Review.....	8
1.7.1 What is Active Learning?.....	8
1.8.2 Problems Related to the Use of Active Learning	10
1.8.3 Theories of Active Learning.....	13
1.8.3.2 Constructivist Theories of Learning	14
1.9 Research Design and Methodology	16
1.9.1 Population and Sampling.....	16
1.9.2 Instruments and Data-Collection Techniques	17
1.9.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation	18
1.10 Limitations of the Study.....	19
1.11 Chapter Overview	20
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	21
2.1 Theoretical Framework	21
2.1.1 The Nature of the Constructivist School of Thought	21
2.1.2 What is Cognitive Constructivism?.....	25

2.1.3	What is Social Constructivism?	27
2.2	The Issue of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.....	31
2.2.1	What is a Foreign Language?	31
2.2.2	Why Study English as a Foreign Language?	33
2.2.3	Affective Factors that influence English Language Learning	36
2.2.4	The Influence of Environmental Factors.....	39
2.3	What is Active Learning?	42
2.3.1	Pedagogical Advantages of Active Learning Approaches	44
2.3.2	Some Techniques of Active Learning for Productive Skills.....	45
2.3.2.1	Inquiry Learning	47
2.3.2.2	Problem-Based Learning	47
2.3.2.3	Cooperative Learning.....	48
2.3.2.4	Portfolio	49
2.3.2.5	Alternative Ways of Lecturing	49
2.3.2.6	Role Plays and Case Studies.....	51
2.3.2.7	Jigsaw	51
2.3.2.8	Simulations and Games.....	51
2.3.2.9	Panel Discussions	52
2.3.2.10	Poster Sessions.....	52
2.3.2.11	Debate.....	52
2.3.3	Practicing Active Learning in the Classroom	52
2.3.3.1	Staff Training	53
2.3.3.2	Student Awareness.....	54
2.3.3.3	Recommendations for the Use of Active Learning Approaches in Classrooms.....	55
2.4	Experience in using Active Learning in the EFL Instruction in a Sample of Countries.....	56
2.5	The Ethiopian Experience in using Active Learning Approaches.....	59
2.5.1	The Importance of English in Ethiopia.....	59

2.5.2	The Role of Professional Development for Instructors	60
2.5.3	Major Problems in the Implementation of Active Learning in the Ethiopian Education	61
2.5.4	The Quality of English Language Teaching in the Ethiopian Universities	64
2.5.5	Problems in the EFL Instruction in Ethiopia.....	65
2.6	Teaching Productive Skills and Challenges in EFL Classrooms.....	67
2.6.1	What are Productive Skills?	68
2.6.2	Challenges in Teaching Productive Skills in EFL Classrooms.....	68
2.7	Approaches to Teach Writing Skills.....	72
2.7.1	Product Approach	74
2.7.2	Process Approach	75
2.7.3	Genre Approach	77
2.7.4	Process-Genre Approach.....	79
2.8	Linking Critical Thinking and Writing Assignments	80
2.9	Approaches to Teach Speaking Skills	81
2.10	The Role of Assessment and Feedback in the EFL Teaching.....	84
2.10.1	Self-Assessment.....	86
2.10.2	Peer-Assessment	87
2.10.3	Teacher Assessment	87
2.11	Conclusion.....	89
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		91
3.1	Introduction.....	91
3.2	Research Paradigm	91
3.2.1	Research Approach	92
3.3	Research Design	92
3.4	Research Methodology	93
3.4.1	Research Participants.....	93
3.4.2	Data Gathering Strategies.....	95
3.4.2.1	Observation	96

3.4.2.2	Semi-Structured Interview.....	97
3.4.2.3	Focus Group Discussion (FGD).....	98
3.4.2.4	Documents	99
3.4.3	Procedures of Data Gathering	100
3.4.4	Data Analysis.....	101
3.4.5	Trustworthiness	103
3.5	Ethical Considerations	104
3.6	Pilot Study	106
3.7	Conclusion.....	108
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION.....		109
4.1	Introduction.....	109
4.2	Presentation of Classroom Observation Data	110
4.3	Presentation of the EFL Instructors' Interview Data.....	114
4.3.1	Major Factors that affect the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in teaching Productive Skills.....	114
4.3.1.1	Students' English Language Background.....	114
4.3.1.2	Students' Negative psychological associations with Language Learning.....	115
4.3.1.3	EFL Instructors' Influence on EFL Instruction.....	119
4.3.1.4	Influence of External Social Environments on Students' Learning.....	120
4.3.1.5	Lack of Administrative Support from Universities	122
4.3.2	Instructors' Perceptions of Active Learning Techniques and Student-Centred Approaches in EFL Classrooms	125
4.3.2.1	Self-Praise	125
4.3.2.2	Low Opinion of the Current Teaching and Learning Process	125
4.3.2.3	Lack of Professional Enthusiasm	126
4.3.2.4	Need for Change in EFL Instruction.....	127
4.3.3	Types of Active Learning Approaches most often	

	used in Relation to productive Skills	127
4.3.3.1	Failure to use a Variety of Active Learning Techniques.....	128
4.3.3.2	Failure in Students' Working Groups.....	129
4.3.4	The Extent to which Active Learning Approaches are linked to the Assessment of Productive Skills.....	129
4.3.4.1	Examination-Oriented Teaching and Learning Approaches	130
4.3.4.2	Lack of Practice in Productive Skills.....	130
4.3.4.3	Imbalance between Productive Skills and Receptive Skills	131
4.4	Presentation of the Student Focus Group Discussion Data.....	131
4.4.1	Major Factors that affect the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in teaching Productive Skills.....	132
4.4.1.1	Poor Background of Learners	132
4.4.1.2	Dependency of Students.....	133
4.4.1.3	Relevance of English Language Support Courses	133
4.4.1.4	Bad Classroom Management of EFL Instructors.....	134
4.4.1.5	Bad qualities of EFL Instructors	135
4.4.1.6	Negative psychological associations of Students	135
4.4.2	Students' Perceptions of Active Learning Approaches in EFL Teaching	137
4.4.2.1	Lack of Authentic Approach to Learning.....	137
4.4.2.2	Considering Active Learning Techniques as Means of Collecting Marks	137
4.4.3	Types of Active Learning Approaches most often used in Relation to Productive Skills.....	137
4.4.3.1	No more Alternative Techniques	137
4.4.3.2	Dominance of Product Approach to teach Writing Skills.....	138
4.4.3.3	Lack of Systematic Approach in using Students' Grouping	138
4.4.4	The extent to which Active Learning Approaches are linked to Assessment Practices	138

4.4.4.1	Lack of Focus on Speaking Skills in the Teaching and Assessment Process	139
4.4.4.2	Inappropriate Approaches to Writing Skills Tuition	139
4.4.4.3	Irrelevant Feedback	140
4.4.4.4	Examination-Oriented Teaching and Learning	141
4.5	Presentation of Information in Documents	141
4.5.1	Assessment of Student Booklet and Course Outline of the Two English Language Support Courses.....	141
4.5.2	Handbook of Higher Diploma Programme for Teacher Educators.....	145
4.5.3	Sample Tests and Examination Papers for Two English Language Support Courses	146
4.5.3.1	Communicative English Skills Course.....	146
4.5.3.2	Basic Writing Skills Course	147
4.6	Discussion	147
4.6.1	Major Factors affecting the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in EFL Classrooms.....	148
4.6.1.1	Students' Poor Background Exposure to the English Language	148
4.6.1.2	Students' Negative Associations with Language Learning	149
4.6.1.3	EFL Instructors' Poor Classroom Management.....	152
4.6.1.4	The Adverse Influence of Students' External Social Environments	155
4.6.1.5	Dependency in Group Work.....	156
4.6.1.6	Irrelevance of English Language Support Courses	158
4.6.1.7	Lack of Administrative Support from Universities	161
4.6.2	EFL Instructors' and Students' Perceptions regarding Active Learning Approaches.....	162
4.6.3	The Most commonly used Types of Active Learning Approaches for Productive Skills Instruction.....	163
4.6.4	The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Productive Skills Instruction.....	165

4.7	Conclusion.....	167
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
	OF THE STUDY.....	167
5.1	Introduction.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.2	Summary of the Study	169
5.3	key Findings of the study.....	169
5.3.1	Major Factors affecting the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in Productive Skills Instruction.....	172
5.3.2	Perceptions of EFL Instructors and their Students regarding Active Learning Approaches.....	175
5.3.3	The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Productive Skills Teaching	1763
5.3.4	The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Productive Skills Teaching.....	173
5.3.5	How do Instructors implement Active Learning Approaches in Productive Skills Instruction?	176
5.4	Recommendations.....	177
5.5	Contribution of the study.....	182
5.6	Further Research.....	183
5.7	Concluding Remarks	184
REFERENCES		1856
APPENDICES.....		206
	Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate.....	206
	Appendix B: Letter of Request for Permission to conduct Study	207
	Appendix C: Letter of Permission to conduct Study – University of Gondar.....	208
	Appendix D: Letter of Permission to conduct Study – Bahir Dar University.....	209
	Appendix E: Letter of Permission to conduct Study – Debre Markos University.....	210
	Appendix F: Classroom Observation Schedule.....	211
	Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Guide for	

Students in the Freshman Programme	214
Appendix H: Interview Guide for EFL Instructors who teach English Support Courses	216
Appendix I: Sample Transcription of the Interview with EFL Instructor.....	218
Appendix J: Sample Transcription of Student Focus Group Interviews	225
Appendix K: Sample of Basic Writing Skills Test 1.....	230
Appendix L: Sample of Basic Writing Skills Test 2.....	232
Appendix M: Sample of Final Communicative English Skills Examination	234
Appendix N: Sample of First Communicative English Skills Test	240

ABBREVIATIONS

BDU: Bahir Dar University

DMU- Debre Markos University

EnLa 1011- English Language Course code for Communicative English Skills

EnLa 1012- English Language Course code for Basic Writing Skills (Sophomore English)

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

TEFL: teaching English as a Foreign Language

FDRGE-The Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia

HDP: Higher diploma programme for teacher educators & other instructors

MoE: Ministry of Education of Ethiopia

Nuffic- the Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education

TGE- Transitional Government of Ethiopia

UOG: University of Gonder

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the present study, *Active Learning in Teaching English Language Support Courses to First-Year Students in some Ethiopian Universities*. As such, it includes brief explanations of the study's core elements; i.e. background, problem statement, methods and theories underpinning the study, and so forth. These elements are further developed in later chapters.

1.1 Background of the Study

Since the introduction of modern education in Ethiopia during the early 20th Century, English Language teaching has been given great emphasis within the country's formal education system by each successive political dispensation. As Ethiopia is one of the few African countries never to have been colonised, there is no legacy of colonial languages within Ethiopian society; the English language is only introduced to children once they begin their formal education, starting in primary school and extending to the tertiary level. As a result, the study of English in Ethiopia is characteristic of foreign language (rather than second language) study. This creates challenges for students, who should ideally be able to study the language easily and use it effectively for their academic, social and work-related purposes.

Nevertheless, the English language is highly valued in Ethiopia. It is considered essential for trade, education, diplomacy and communication at both national and international level. It is one of the mediums of instruction in the country's educational institutions, especially at secondary and tertiary level (FDRGE 1994: 24; MoE, 2002: 121; Nuffic, 2011: 4). English is considered to be one of the world's most useful languages for business purposes and in connection with social, economic, and political affairs. This strong emphasis on the value of English – considering the country's social, political and economic interests and the context of English as an international language – is the rationale behind citizens learning to speak, read and write English.

In 1992, after the fall of the military regime in 1991, Ethiopia's new government laid out a new education and training policy, which completely changed the education sector. This policy, which remains in effect to the present day, places emphasis on the use of active learning (student-centred) approaches and a shift away from the traditional teacher-centred teaching and learning process (TGE, 1994: 3; Tesfaye, 2003: 7). Moreover, since

English is used as a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education throughout the country, the need for quality English language education is a major focus of this policy (MoE, 2002: 121). The Ministry of Education also indicates in this policy that the poor mastery of English at all levels of the education system is a serious problem (MoE, 2002: 113) which the Ethiopian government is determined to resolve.

Meanwhile, to address other problems and challenges faced by the higher education sector in relation to income generation, autonomy, quality and relevance of education and research, the government introduced a new proclamation in 2008 (Tesfaye and Kassahune, 2009: 194). English language teaching was one of the branches to be reshaped in line with the reforms in higher institutions proposed by this new proclamation. To effect these changes, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, universities were organised into clusters to draft a new curriculum. As a result, many changes were observed in the curriculum – particularly in terms of mode of delivery, assessment and evaluation. In terms of English language education, the primary change advocated by this proclamation was the implementation of active learning and continuous assessment.

A survey conducted in various Ethiopian universities in 2007 found that there were serious weaknesses among graduates in their English language speaking and writing proficiency (MoE, 2007: 4). It was reported that the students struggled to produce and edit written texts and that their verbal interactions in academic work environments were ineffective. In response to these disconcerting findings, a draft curriculum was prepared by a government task force and, after being approved by the ministry of education, became operational in September 2009 across all the universities in the country. The hope was that the new curriculum would, among other things, help to alleviate the kind of challenges discovered in the survey.

In a recent report, however, the Ministry of Education revealed that both students and their instructors continue to experience considerable difficulty in using English for academic and communicative functions, and that the English language is viewed as a barrier to learning in higher education institutions (Getnet, 2016: 13). In this report (*ibid.*) the MoE describes the quality of English language education and training as poor, and declares that the requisite learning objectives are not being achieved satisfactorily. From this, it is clear that the methods of teaching the English language and its assessment in Ethiopian education remain inadequate to encourage the proper development of English, from primary level right through to tertiary level.

The report (*ibid.*) goes on to explain that the modes of course delivery, objectives, course content, tasks and activities, assessment and evaluation, and course duration (among others) are all factors contributing to the challenges experienced in English language classrooms. It is further emphasised that these elements are not being implemented in accordance with the reforms outlined in the 1992 education policy. The overall message of the report is that there should be change not only in English language teaching but also in that of other disciplines. The findings of the present study- based on my personal observations of existing practices in university EFL classrooms – are similarly bleak. It seems that there has not been any significant achievement in lessening the aforementioned problems observed in EFL classrooms. During conferences, workshops, and departmental meetings held in three different universities, the participants of the study brought to light many challenges, the foremost of which may be summarised as follows:

Most instructors and students were confused about the relevance of active learning and its practice (Boersma, 2008: 38). There were serious concerns (for both instructors and high achiever students) regarding assessment practices by which many students achieve good grades without hard work or active participation. Most of the students' English speaking and writing skills were unsatisfactory. Large class sizes were preventing many EFL instructors from performing at their peak.

Moreover, departmental heads complained that, since instructors failed to properly supervise their classes, active learning approaches could not be implemented effectively in the teaching and learning process. Many instructors reflected that they did not benefit from their short-term higher diploma training and that they still did not have in-depth knowledge about current pedagogical practices. These were some of the problems that were shared in my informal talks with the participants and observations of departmental meetings over the course of this study.

This study was born out of my concern about implementation of active learning approaches in English Language support instruction to first-year undergraduate students. As such, this study focused on “the how” aspect of teaching and learning in English Language support courses – i.e. Communicative English Skills (ENLA 1011) and Basic Writing Skills (ENLA 1012), which are offered in one module – to first-year undergraduate students in three Ethiopian public universities. Furthermore, no other studies regarding this issue have hitherto been conducted in the three universities, which were organised as one cluster for curriculum change included in the present research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, the general consensus is that there needs to be a change of focus in the methods of teaching and assessment employed at all levels (primary to tertiary) of the Ethiopian education system (Saint, 2004: 85). To attain this change, short- and long-term training is being offered to all those who are involved in the teaching and learning process. “Active learning” (i.e. learning with a student-centred approach) and “continuous assessment” have become buzz words among Ethiopian educators (Dejene, Schippers & Ramos, 2007: 115). As part of the school community, language teachers are expected to share this idea.

According to Weimer (2002: 11), learner-centred approaches focus attention directly on learning:

What the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning, whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and how current learning positions the student for future learning.

Here, the focus is on the students; not on the teachers. As a result, the discussion focuses on what students (not teachers) are doing in the actual classroom learning activities. Due to the trend shift in language teaching from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches, many challenges have occurred in how teaching and learning is actually practised in classrooms. There are many factors that language teachers need to consider in practising this sort of approach.

Weimer (2002: 25) presents some of the issues that language teachers face in their day-to-day activities as learner-centred educators. These include shifts in the balance of power, the roles of students and teachers, the functions of content, and responsibility for learning. In addition, Weimer specifically emphasises that evaluation-related issues that mostly involve traditional pencil-and-paper tests and exams do not necessarily create opportunities for students to demonstrate other important language skills.

In student-centred approaches, by contrast, alternative modes of assessment are introduced to encourage the development of all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and other important higher-order thinking skills as part of lifelong learning. Here, it is important to note that the way teachers evaluate their students affects

the way students study; i.e. assessment has a backwash effect on the teaching and learning process and on students' learning in the long term.

Lecture method, in which instructors talk and students listen, has dominated the language classroom for centuries. Nowadays, however, educators are becoming increasingly concerned with the efficacy of their lecturing and testing methods. Many educators and other role players have suggested that a new approach is required and, as a result, active learning and continuous assessment methods have been introduced to modern pedagogical theory and practice.

According to Faust and Paulson (1998: 4), the aforementioned traditional "talk-listen" lecture method is effective only if it is used in combination with other active learning methods. They explain that various forms of active learning should be combined with traditional lectures and that students should be made to work on individual, pair and group activities to maximise the benefits of each lesson. In Ethiopia, as part of the reform of instructional practice in higher education, instructors are expected to be equipped with the theoretical concepts and practical activities involved in active learning and continuous assessment (Johnston, 2003: 8; Higher Diploma Handbook, 2003: 3).

As a practitioner in the field of English language teaching in Ethiopia, I have personally observed and experienced some of the many challenges involved in implementing active, student-centred learning and its assessment at universities in general and specifically in English language classrooms.

1.3 Research Questions

Within the context of the above problem statement, the following main question and sub-questions were set as the starting point for this study and answered in its completion. The main research question of the study is stated as follows:

How do instructors implement active learning approaches in teaching productive skills in English language?

The sub-questions, which are related to this general question, are presented below:

1. What are the major factors that may affect the practice of active learning approaches in the teaching of productive English language skills?
2. How do students and instructors view active learning approaches in language classrooms?

3. What are the types of active learning approaches most often used in the teaching and learning process for productive English language skills?
4. To what extent are productive skills linked to the assessment practices in use

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The general aim of the research was to study the implementation of active learning approaches in the teaching of English Language support courses to first-year university students.

In accordance with this, the specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- To determine the extent to which productive skills are linked to assessment in order to further strengthen their linkage in the teaching and learning process;
- To identify major factors that may affect the practice of active learning approaches in the teaching of productive skills in order to recommend better ways of doing so;
- To identify the types of active learning approaches most often used in teaching productive skills so as to evaluate the extent to which instructors apply these learning approaches in their day-to-day activities;
- To identify the belief of students and instructors with regard to the use of active learning approaches in order to understand the impact of these attitudes on the teaching and learning process.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to make an important contribution to the process of teaching and learning productive skills in English Language support courses in Ethiopian universities. It will give educators and other stakeholders a clearer picture of the process of implementing active learning in English classrooms, where it has only recently been introduced. In this way affected parties will have a better idea of what to expect in terms of assessment and instruction during this process, allowing them to identify the major challenges that may affect teaching and learning practices. This will pave the way for them to make more informed decisions to change and strengthen the teaching and learning process. Such improvements are patently of great practical significance.

By extension, once in possession of these valuable insights, all those involved in the process gain awareness about both their weaknesses and strengths in this regard. In particular, the recommendations at the end of this research provide educators with the knowledge necessary to make appropriate decisions in their day-to-day academic

activities. Based on the findings of the study, these recommendations are especially helpful for the practitioners in the field of language teaching. Moreover, the study can also serve as a reference point for those who want to learn more about the use of active learning in English classes and for those who wish to conduct further research in the area. This study is also important for the revision and development of training material for instructors and course materials for students. It contributes to the existing knowledge base about the use of active learning in language classrooms.

1.6 Delineation of the Study

The study is limited to assessment of the implementation of active learning approaches in the teaching of English Language support courses to first-year undergraduate students. Geographically, the study is specific to three universities in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. The participants of the study were all first-year students of these universities and their EFL instructors who taught them English Language support courses.

The focus of the study is further narrowed to productive language skills (speaking and writing). This study adheres to a qualitative research approach.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The following are important words that need definition as they are used throughout the study:

English Language support courses for first-year undergraduate students in Ethiopia: These are two different courses (Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills) offered to first-year undergraduate students in Ethiopian universities. These courses are designed to improve students' academic skills. One of the courses focuses predominantly on writing skills, while the other deals with the four language skills.

Active learning approaches: Active Learning is, in short, anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture. It is a process whereby students are actively engaged in building understanding of facts, ideas, and skills through the completion of instructor-directed tasks and activities (Meyers and Jones, 1993: 15; Bell and Kahrhoff, 2006: 1). There are various terms used to describe active learning and these include: student-centred learning, collaborative learning (team, peer or group learning), engaged learning, and participatory learning.

Productive skills: These are the language skills (speaking and writing) that students are expected to develop so that they can be effective in their communication.

Ethiopian university system: In the Ethiopian tertiary education system, each student enrolls for an undergraduate programme in a particular discipline, in which she/he must complete modules/courses focused on a primary study area in addition to English Language support courses – Communicative English Skills (ENLA 1011) and Basic Writing Skills (ENLA 1012). This is because the medium of instruction is English so these courses are provided to help sharpen students' language skills. All first-year students are expected to complete at least these two courses and, in certain streams, some students are expected to complete additional English language support courses. The duration of university qualifications ranges from three to five years, depending on the discipline and level of study.

One-to-five group structure: This is a learning group in the Ethiopian education where five students are grouped as a unit to support each other permanently throughout the academic year.

1.7 Literature Review

This study covered a wide range of literature on the subject of active learning approaches and how they are implemented in language classrooms. The information – including topics such as the challenges experienced in applying these learning approaches, the types of approaches that can be used in the process of teaching and learning productive skills and the relationship of assessment with teaching – yielded by this literature review were dealt with in detail in Chapter Two. Constructivism, the theoretical framework underpinning this study, was also unpacked in Chapter Two.

Every effort was made to obtain the relevant literature from all the available resources – including books and e-journals – in the UNISA library. Moreover, hard copy references were obtained from Addis Ababa University. Some highlights of the literature review are presented below.

1.7.1 What is Active Learning?

Active learning refers to a teaching and learning approach whereby students do more than simply listen to a lecture. Students are actively engaging in the lesson – they are doing

things like discovering, processing, and applying information. Active learning "derives from two basic assumptions: (1) that learning is by nature an active endeavour and (2) that different people learn in different ways" (Mynard and Sorflaten, 2003: 6).

As Meyers and Jones (1993: 13) assert, Active learning involves providing meaningful opportunities for students to talk, listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, although most researchers agree that students learn a great deal when they engage in active learning, traditional lecturing does still have its place. It is not advisable to attempt active learning without content or objectives.

Benjamin (1991: 68) states that active learning has the following common characteristics: Students are involved in more than listening, less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing students' skills, students are involved in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation), students are engaged in activities (e.g. reading discussing, writing), and greater emphasis is placed on students' exploration of their own attitudes and values.

Research has consistently shown that traditional lecturing methods, by which professors talk and students listen, dominates college and university classrooms. Analysis of the research literature (Chickering and Gamson, 1987: 1), however, suggests that students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in higher-order thinking tasks such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Within this context, it is believed that strategies promoting active learning be defined as instructional activities that require students to do things and thinking about what they are doing.

Use of these techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful impact upon students' learning. Some research studies evaluating students' achievement have demonstrated that many strategies promoting active learning are comparable to lectures in promoting the mastery of content but superior to lectures in promoting the development of students' skills in thinking and writing (Prince, 2004 ; Bello, Brown & Kebede, and 2005: 167; Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess, 2012:111). Furthermore, some cognitive researches have shown that a significant number of individuals have learning styles best served by pedagogical techniques other than lecturing (McKinney, 2009: 3).

Therefore, a thoughtful and scholarly approach to skilful teaching requires that faculty members become knowledgeable about the many ways in which strategies promoting active learning have been successfully used across the disciplines. In addition to this, each faculty member should engage in self-reflection, exploring his or her personal willingness to experiment with alternative approaches to instruction. There are many types of active learning techniques employed in language classrooms (McKinney, 2009: 3):

- Concept mapping
- Writing and producing newsletters
- Keeping journals or logs
- Analysing case studies
- Compiling mini-research proposals or projects
- Utilising student-generated examination questions
- Arranging student debates
- Analysing or reacting to videos
- Utilising games
- Arranging student-led review sessions
- Enabling collaborative learning groups
- Enabling Think-Pair-Share
- Utilising oral presentation and cooperative learning.

1.8.2 Problems Related to the Use of Active Learning

According to Bonwell and Eison (1991: 2), there are several common challenges observed in the implementation of active learning and assessment in the classroom: the powerful influence of educational tradition, faculty self-perceptions and self-definition of roles, the discomfort and anxiety that change creates, and the limited incentives in place for faculty members to change. In addition, certain specific obstacles are associated with the use of active learning, including limited class time; a possible increase in preparation time; the potential difficulty of using active learning in large classes; and a lack of the needed materials, equipment, or resources.

Assessment is a critical day-to-day issue for classroom teachers. As such, many writers (Shepard, 2000:5-6; Stiggins, 2005:324-328; Ferrer, 2006; 10-12; Xamaní, 2013:-2-3) have proposed a wide array of theories with regard to the purpose, types and problems of assessment. Perspectives on the issue are constantly shifting, with concurrent shifts in the

practice of the philosophy of education, and many arguments made both for and against active learning.

As mentioned, in the past, traditional pencil-and-paper testing was the dominant mode of assessment and its purpose was primarily to determine whether or not students should advance to the next grade or level (Poehener, 2008: 3). However, nowadays, this approach is heavily criticised and alternative modes of assessment are being introduced. The purpose of these new modes is to help the teaching and learning process, rather than simply to facilitate pass and fail decisions. As Poehener (2008: 8) explains, this unification of assessment and instruction is grounded in Vygotsky's understanding of development; i.e., that students are benefitted from being given different tasks and activities (which meet their individual learning styles) to perform.

Regarding writing skills specifically, Hirai, Borrego, Garza, and Kloock (2010: 108) state that teachers need more practice in teaching effective writing skills in order to be able to train students how to write. The writers add that, as there is a problem in teaching writing, there is also a problem in assessing/correcting students' pieces of writing. Perhaps the single greatest barrier of all, however, is the fact that faculty members' efforts to employ active learning involves risks – the risks that students do not participate, use higher-order thinking, or learn sufficient content; the risks that faculty members feel a loss of control, lack the necessary skills, or be criticised for teaching in unorthodox ways (Bonwell and Eison, 2003: 11). This is supported by Poehner's (2008: 4) revelation that, in one particular study, many language teachers expressed their fear of teaching to the test as well as their lack of awareness about the principles and underlying theoretical concepts of assessment. Moreover, Starke (2007: 7) mentions teachers' concerns in relation to lack of time, loss of control, lack of students' commitment and interest, dependency in group work, and learning style differences in student-centred classrooms.

At the same time, with regard to productive skills, Thornbury (2000: 112) explains that the teaching and assessment of speaking skills, in comparison with receptive skills, present complicated problems both in terms of practicality and in terms of scoring criteria. Setting and marking a paragraph of writing or reading is relatively simple and does not take much time. However, speaking tests are very different in nature and are also time consuming, as the teacher must try to evaluate individual performance and so may need to record each student's speech/dialogue to mark at a later time. Determining scoring criteria is also a challenge in terms of objectivity and maintaining positive relations between teachers and their students.

Since students learn English as a foreign language in Ethiopian primary and secondary schools, the amount of attention paid to each of the four language skills is not equal. Moreover, students do not have opportunities to practise their speaking skills outside of school since the language is generally not spoken in everyday life. As a result, this skill is not seen as essential by the students and teachers and it is not usually part of the formative and summative assessment. Teachers seem to feel that they are wasting time when they teach the parts of the textbook related to speaking skills because these are not covered in the national and entrance examinations. As such, students spend very little time on speaking skills and writing skills, and instead they use their time to study other features of English language that could be part of the tests and examinations.

When they start university, however, all students are expected to work on all four English language skills in order to be able to effectively complete their academic (and, later, professional) tasks. This is expected of them by the various colleges and departments in all universities throughout the country. These objectives for graduates and professionals are indicated in the national curriculum for higher institutions set by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, at this point, they face a different approach and new demands in the language classroom. Instructors now shift to a student-centred approach, and speaking and writing skills are given priority in the lesson objectives. Assessments, meanwhile, are conducted in accordance with these changes. After all, a language programme that gives priority to productive skills, but does not evaluate accordingly, does not achieve its objectives (Thornbury, 2000: 123).

Within this changing context, however, there are many difficulties associated with large class sizes, teaching and assessment culture, and time and energy needed in assessment, as observed in classroom settings. Similarly, the process of teaching and learning basic writing skills presents its own challenges for both the students and the instructors in the context of the Ethiopian education system. Despite the fact that students do not receive enough training and practice in utilising English at secondary and preparatory school, they are expected to be good at not only speaking but also writing paragraphs, essays, and reports when they reach university.

Unsurprisingly, the students experience anxiety and frustration in these courses and the instructors feel dissatisfied with their ability to accomplish learning objectives due to various reasons. The students do not appear to practise their English frequently and so they show little progress over time. They focus only on their grades and they do not give attention to the instructors' feedback intended to help improve their skills. No long-term

learning is given priority. Students struggle with the fact that the teaching and learning process and evaluation at university is different from and not complimentary to their past experiences.

Clearly, solutions are needed for this critical problem in the Ethiopian education system. This must undoubtedly begin with a study, such as this one, regarding issues surrounding the teaching and learning methodology and the assessment practices involved in these English language support courses.

1. 8.3 Theories of Active Learning

There are many learning theories that guide the teaching and learning process. These learning theories influence the ways in which teachers approach instruction in their classrooms. Generally, these learning theories can be grouped into two categories: those that follow the traditional teacher-centred approach, and those that follow the modern student-centred approach. Both theories influence the thinking and practice of educators regarding their teaching methodologies.

Teaching and learning theories emerge from various philosophical concepts surrounding how we understand the world. Proponents of the teacher-centred approach adhere to an objective model known as positivist epistemology, which serves as the basis for behaviourism. Advocates of a student-centred approach, meanwhile, are adherents to constructivist or interpretivist epistemology, which claims that knowledge is formed by the construction of meaning by the learners themselves. Currently, the modern student-centred approach is gaining momentum in the Ethiopian schooling system. However, certain relevant features of the traditional approach are being combined with this modern approach to obtain maximum benefit from the teaching and learning process. It is clear that each approach has its own advantages and limitations, and there is no one best method that is suitable for all types of learners, contexts, contents, and so forth.

This study has considered numerous learning theories that postulate how students integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes in the English language teaching and learning process. Note that the information presented below presents a general overview of these theories to show patterns, differences and commonalities rather than to break them down to their smallest details.

1.8.3.1 Behaviourism

Until recently, behaviourism as a learning theory has dominated the day-to-day practice of teaching and learning in Ethiopia and all over the world due to the development of learning psychology. According to behaviourism, students learn concepts by internalising, or memorising. James (2006:7) and Hayford (2007: 12) explain that, in this paradigm, learning is viewed as a conditioned response to external stimuli, which involves rewards for correct behaviour and punishments for incorrect behaviour. Teachers are expected to fill up the empty minds of students, who are expected passively to accept and memorise what is presented to them in order to correctly repeat it later. With behaviourist approaches, teachers play the dominant role in teaching and assessment. As such, behaviourism is a positivist approach to learning or knowledge development.

1.8.3.2 Constructivist Theories of Learning

This theory of learning has an impact on language teaching and its research (Reagan and Osborn, 2002: 8). In contrast to behaviourism, constructivist theories of learning state that learners make sense of the material and that they are active and responsible participants under the guidance of their tutors. The focus is on what goes on inside (not outside of) their brains, with thinking taking place in a meaningful way, and rote memory techniques being discarded. Here, previous knowledge is seen as a basis for understanding new information and this leads to the development of formative assessments, i.e. assessment for learning (Hayford, 2007: 15). Each learner actively forms his/her own understanding in a meaningful way, based on personal experience. Hayford (2007:15) adds that standardised assessment does not have a role to play in this paradigm as it focuses on discrete forms of knowledge whether it is correct or wrong; here, the focus of assessment is on the level and complexity of understanding.

Hayford (2007: 16) explains that students can be good at regurgitating memorised facts without understanding the material meaningfully. With the behaviourist approach, paper-and-pencil tests are used to measure whether students have mastered the relevant content. However, the forms of assessment in the constructivist approach are varied and complex; this nature enables instructors to assess learners' depth of understanding and ability to apply the new knowledge. As such, constructivist forms of assessment are different from traditional pencil-and-paper tests. They can be done both in and out of class, individually, in pairs, or in groups. Owens (2007:31) , Beck and Kosnik (2006:2), and Liu (2015: 42-43) point out that the constructivist learning theory holds that students construct actively their own understanding using their previous knowledge and experience

by interacting with their environment, and they are not passive receivers of information, but active meaning makers. In keeping with this, assessment is expected to be “authentic” and closely linked to the teaching and learning process. In other words, instructors do not simply teach for the test.

In the behaviourist approach, assessment of learning is merely done to see whether expected knowledge encoded for students by experts has been properly transmitted to them by a teacher or other delivery agent. The focus is not on the individual understanding of the students. This is why much of the data for this study has been collected, analysed and interpreted in line with constructivist theory. Generally, although EFL instructors are expected to use a variety of strategies to assess learning and to make appropriate decisions, in reality, instructors do not seem to do so due to various constraints.

In principle (as is claimed by the various department heads, colleges and other directorates) assessments are used for multiple purposes. In truth, however, instructors most often simply collect test scores and add them up either to promote students to the next level/grade or keep them back. Instructors do not have time to use assessment for improving learning – especially with the modular approach whereby a course spans just two weeks and classes are very large.

Some active learning methods, such as project-based learning, are commonly practised in language classrooms to facilitate skills learning. Project-based learning is considered particularly valuable and it plays a significant role in language learning right from the lowest levels of the system.

According to Tiangco (2008: 2), the various forms of project-based learning have been effective in English language learning in the schools of Taiwan; these include skit performances, classroom/stage drama productions, group reading presentations, song writing and performances, debate, comic book writing, school newspaper club participation, and the teaching of English to peers from less fortunate schools (2008: 3). All of these techniques have their own application procedures and principles, which are important not only for language instruction but also for that of all other subjects.

1.9 Research Design and Methodology

This study followed a qualitative approach to data generation and analysis. Thus, it adhered to the tenets of qualitative research (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 20). It was an exploratory study into the research question: How do instructors implement active learning approaches in teaching productive skills in English language? This approach was useful in obtaining the general picture or insights into the issue under investigation.

Once the data were obtained, they were grouped according to themes and analysed and interpreted with the view to answering the aforementioned research question. An interpretivist (phenomenological) epistemological perspective was adopted to describe situations, experiences, and phenomena (Chism, Douglas & Hilson, 2008: 2).

1.9.1 Population and Sampling

The population of this study was made up of the EFL instructors who offer English language support courses and their first-year undergraduate students at three Ethiopian universities: Debre Markos University, Bahir Dar University, and the University of Gonder.

These universities all fell into the same cluster when the national higher education curriculum was revised in 2007-2008. As part of this, committee members from the universities' English Language and Literature departments were brought together to work on the revision of departmental courses for the regular undergraduate programme in all three institutions. The students participated in focus group discussions involving six to eight students per group. The criteria used in selecting these participants included their availability during data generation and willingness to take part in the study. Diversity was also taken into account. Thus, they were chosen using a purposive sampling technique (Yin, 2011: 88).

EFL instructors involved in the study were interviewed individually. These instructors were those who taught the two English Language support courses for first-year students in the three universities. They were chosen using a purposive (judgmental) sampling technique (Berg, 2001: 34; Dornyei, 2007: 114; Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 239; Yin, 2011: 88), based on the following criteria: the extent to which they were able to provide the necessary information, ease with which they could be accessed, their teaching schedules for the courses, and their willingness to take part in the study.

1.9.2 Instruments and Data-Collection Techniques

The data-gathering strategies used in this study were observation, focus group discussions, interviews, and analysis of relevant documents. I also conducted classroom observation in some of the classes in order to witness the actual teaching and learning process in action. Here, I was predominantly a non-participant observer of the class activities. The observation was structured and performed with the use of a checklist. This helped me to identify the types of active learning methods in use and the ways in which instructors used them in the classroom to teach productive skills. I performed the observation myself by recording the relevant points in a notebook. Audiovisual recording was not performed as this can be disruptive in the classroom and most instructors do not like it.

The focus group discussions were held with the students to get detailed information regarding their beliefs about active learning approaches, assessment types and related challenges in using them in the language classroom. The information was recorded mainly via tape recorder and handwritten notes regarding nonverbal elements (instances of the interview) of face-to-face communication.

Interviews were semi-structured, enabling me to focus on the basic questions of the study. This facilitated the collection of detailed information about participants' beliefs regarding the use of active learning, how assessment is performed, and challenges in using active learning in language classrooms. As part of the document analysis, sample test papers, assignments, students' booklets for the two English Language support courses, course outlines, the harmonised English curriculum, and the handbook of the higher diploma programme for teacher educators, were consulted.

1.9.3 Trustworthiness

In order to make the research more trustworthy, I eliminated all potential for ambiguity from the data-gathering instruments. They were evaluated by myself and my colleagues, and later used in a pilot study to test their effectiveness before the actual data was collected. As part of the qualitative research, all points were considered to make accurate, valid and consistent research instruments. As this study is a qualitative one, I was able to ensure the reliability and validity of the research by selecting some of the participants to evaluate the credibility of the findings and my interpretations thereof, taking in to account the specific context of the academic environment.

Moreover, I have provided rich and detailed descriptions of the data-collection procedures used, my approach to analyses and findings, and my interpretation of the study to my peer evaluators. This has allowed them to decide upon the transferability of the study, in relation to the characteristics of the population and the study setting, based on a complete picture of the situation (Creswell, 2007: 36 & 207). Overall, the different sources of the data, my own experiences on the three campuses, and my collaboration with colleagues were very important factors in increasing the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of the study.

1.9.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from different sources were categorised and analysed thematically to give interpretation. The following were the procedures followed to analyse the data as described by Creswell (2007: 155). First, the tape recorded interview data were transcribed into text. Detailed notes of the nonverbal features were added as part of elaboration of the specific interview and focus group discussion. This helped to understand the transcripts better.

Next, the transcripts were divided into specific statements based on their similarity, and clustering these statements into concepts in relation to the themes (category) of the interview. Finally, all the clusters were grouped together in themes to describe the findings of the study. Since the data analysis can be done manually with the help of computer, there was no need for the use of software programme for the analysis. Generally, the data were analysed in the above procedure to answer the basic question of the study, and forward relevant recommendations.

1.10 Ethical Considerations

All relevant ethical guidelines were taken into account in the conclusion of this study. For instance, concepts like the ethical principles and guidelines of *The Belmont Report* (Delanda, 2009: 4), which are reflected in UNISA's code of research ethics for conducting research, underpinned the ethical principles adhered to throughout this study. Specifically, issues of anonymity, confidentiality, safety, and informed consent were taken very seriously:

The participants were kept anonymous: their names were not important to the study and so they are not identified during interviews and discussions or in the transcripts thereof. In place of participant names, numbers are attached to the interview transcripts.

Confidentiality: Those who were willing to give their information were not identified in person in any form. Their data were also analysed together with others' data; no personal identification markers can be identified in their responses.

The participants gave informed consent: They were made aware that they were free to withdraw from interviews or focus group discussions at any stage if they did not want to take part.

Safety: The study did not harm the participants in any way. It is not my intention to use the results of this study against its participants now or at any time in the future.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research has certain limitations. Data-generating techniques are not objective in nature and may be affected by subjectivity (bias) of the researcher or participants. Within this context, in order to get the rich data needed, researchers must handle participants with great care. Participants may not be interested in taking part in the study or may not, for various reasons, give relevant information. It may thus be a challenge to persuade participants to get involved and provide meaningful information. Thus, a large amount of experience and an interactive personality is needed on the part of the researcher.

In conducting classroom observation, I was only able to attend some classes, some of the time to get the general overview of the issue under discussion. The huge amount of time, money and energy it would require to observe all classes in all three universities throughout the academic year were simply beyond my means. If it had been possible to conduct more intensive observation for a longer time, an even more detailed picture of actual classroom practices and first-hand information about how EFL instructors use active learning approaches in their classrooms would surely have emerged.

To compensate for this, I engaged in extensive focus group discussions with the students and conducted individual interviews with EFL instructors in the three universities. I also approached the participants in a friendly and non-threatening manner so that they felt

comfortable to reflect their ideas in the data-generation process. I then invited those participants who were ready to take part in my study to complete and sign their informed consent forms.

1.11 Chapter Overview

The study is divided into five chapters, as described below:

Chapter 1 (the present chapter) introduces the study. It provides detailed explanations of the background, problem, objective and significance of the study. This chapter serves as a basis for the other chapters.

Chapter 2 is the literature review. It describes the pertinent literature surrounding the study area. Topics discussed here included the nature of active learning, theories of active learning, the implementation of active learning, and the linkage of active learning to assessment.

Chapter 3 deals with research design and methodology. It provides detailed descriptions of nature of the study, data-gathering instruments, sampling techniques, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation, in line with the research design and methodology of the study.

Chapter 5 is the final part of the dissertation. It presents the findings, conclusion and recommendations. This concludes the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter describes the theory and practice of active learning in detail as it relates to the primary aim of this study, which is to assess the implementation of active learning in EFL instruction. In line with this, the basic research questions of the study as presented in Chapter 1 are problems in using active learning approach, types of active learning techniques used in the EFL instruction, the beliefs of instructors and students, and how active learning and assessment are linked.

Resources that are current and relevant to the study have been consulted. The focal points covered are definitions, strategies or techniques of active learning, challenges in implementing active learning in language classrooms, and the experiences and theoretical concepts that guide the implementation of active learning approaches.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the fundamental concepts underlying the introduction of active learning approaches in general, and productive skills teaching in particular. All of these learning theories represent assumptions or guidelines to direct the actual teaching and learning process in the language classrooms. As Biggs (1996:348) presents, theories of teaching and learning that apply for higher education range from the traditional objectivist model to the recent constructivist one. The traditional model was dominant for a long period of time in the schooling process. However, due to criticisms raised against this model, constructivism has been introduced in many countries all over the world.

Thus, as part of this study, it is good to be aware of these theoretical frameworks, which reflect the philosophical thoughts behind the practice of active learning approaches. In connection with this study, the two forms of constructivism – i.e. cognitive constructivism and social constructivism – are the focus of the following discussion.

2.1.1 The Nature of the Constructivist School of Thought

Constructivism is a school of thought that explains the nature of the learning process, how students form their own knowledge and experience, what the teacher should do to facilitate students' learning, and how teachers assess students' progress. It is a school of thought for second-language learning (Brown, 2007: 9). The central idea of the

constructivist learning theory is that learners construct their own understandings of the world in which they live, based on their experience, and their perspectives evolve based on past and new knowledge and experience (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 8).

According to Matthews (2005), there are three major traditions of constructivism: philosophical constructivism, sociological constructivism, and educational constructivism. Similarly, Biggs and Tang (2007: 21) state that constructivism has different forms, identified as: individual constructivism, social constructivism, cognitive constructivism, and postmodern constructivism. All of these forms of constructivism have one common idea, which is that learners construct knowledge by their own efforts, using their background experience to do so (Biggs and Tang, 2007: 21).

That is to say, teaching is not a mere transmission of information to students; it is a matter of helping them to engage actively so as to internalise the desired knowledge, skills, and attitudes. What matters is not what teachers teach, but what students learn. The students are expected to actively construct their own understandings, based on the input they get from their environment and by integrating this with their existing knowledge (Gunduz and Hursen, 2015: 527). In other words, they are involved in interacting with various influences (fellow students, teachers, parents, books, films, etc.) and later individually process or reconstruct their existing paradigms based on new information obtained from these sources. Thus, as asserted by Vygotsky (Kaufman, 2004:304-305; Yang and Wilson, 2006:365), students engage in two overlapping cognitive processes: *intermental* and *interamental*. The support they get from others gradually decreases as they become more matured and independent in their learning. As such, the curriculum also expands until students are able to form a full picture of each concept.

This is the nature of the student-centred approach. As Gunduz and Hursen (2015: 527) further assert, students' learning is influenced (often erroneously) by prevailing perspectives (phenomenography and constructivism). As such, teaching is partially a matter of changing students' perspectives or the ways in which they see the world (Biggs and Tang, 2007: 20). In specific relation to formal education, this theory of learning is further divided into two categories: individual and social. Eroglu (2005: 3), Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005: 18), and Jordaan (2011) report that the constructivist approach is divided into two parts: social constructivist (proposed by Vygotsky) and cognitive constructivist (developed by Piaget).

Similarly, Liu and Matthews (2005: 387) add other synonymous words for the two types of constructivism: cognitive, radical or personal constructivism, on the one hand, and social or realist constructivism, on the other. These two types of constructivism, in short, focus on the role of active thinking at the individual level and on that of the group (the social element) in the learning process.

These ideas are complementary to each other, which means that social interaction is important for learners' meaning formation, which is also strengthened by active and reflective individual thinking. Constructivist learning is associated with students' active participation in meaningful, relevant, and authentic learning activities, and the teachers are expected to play a facilitating role instead of engaging in indoctrination or one-sided lecturing (Xamaní, 2013: 1). Students are expected to be autonomous learners, critical thinkers and active participants, together with their peers and teachers (Xamaní, 2013: 1).

According to Prince and Felder (2006: 3), the role of positivism as a model of education was influential for centuries in the teaching and learning process of higher education. According to positivism, absolute knowledge (objective reality) exists independently of human perception.

In this model, the teacher is considered to be "the prime source of knowledge", and his or her major role is "to transmit this absolute knowledge" to the students, mainly by lecturing and the students are expected to "absorb this through listening and note-taking (Prince and Felder, 2006: 3). This is known as a teacher-centred approach. According to Wilhelm, Baker and Dube (2001), it is also referred to as a presentational, curriculum-centred, or industrial model of education.

After the decline of the dominance of positivism due to the criticisms it faced, there came the idea of constructivism in the teaching environments of the schools in the Western world. This theory is believed to start off in the 18th-century philosophies of Immanuel Kant and Giambattista Vico, although some have traced it as far back as the 4th–6th century B.C. in the works of Lao Tzu, Buddha, and Heraclitus (Prince and Felder, 2006: 4). Similarly, Eroglu (2005: 2) argues that the idea of constructivism dates back to the times of Socrates, who believed that students and teachers should talk to each other to interpret and construct the hidden knowledge in their spirit. This shows how practical experience with the sources and reasoning are important to shape understanding in meaning formation. However, Liu and Matthews (2005: 387) claim that this learning theory

emerged as a new model of learning by the 1980's and 1990's as educators' interest declined in the behaviourist and information-processing perspectives.

Among the prominent educators, philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists who contributed a lot to the current understanding of constructivism are Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Jerome Bruner, David Ausubel, and Lev Vygotsky (Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004; Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 5-7). Their ideas have influenced the language teaching process like the case is in learning theories.

Thus, in relation to language teaching rethinking, during the 1970s, the idea of grammatical competence was questioned and theoreticians of language teaching argued that language learners need the communicative competence to use language in specific contexts, which answers the questions of what to say and how to say it appropriately in a given context based on the situation, the participants, their roles and their intentions (Richards, 2006: 8). The behaviourist method of teaching was replaced by a cognitive constructivist view of human learning (Byram and Garcia, 2009: 496).

This idea was the result of the new cognitive linguistics discipline (Littlemore, 2009: 1). This new discipline focuses on the use of language for meaning making purpose and interaction with the physical world. As a result, communicative language teaching has emerged all over the world as a new way of teaching language, which resulted in major changes in theories, approaches, methods, syllabus materials and actual practices in teaching English as a second or foreign language. Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009: 3) state that students need to speak and write the target language in order to master it. However, there are two extreme beliefs about the use of L1 in L2 teaching by writers in the field of language teaching. Some writers argue that students should not use their mother tongue in learning a second or foreign language, while the others are in favour of the use of some amount of L1 to facilitate the learning of L2.

Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009: 5) further argue that too much emphasis on L2 and avoiding L1 may lead to teacher-centred nature of the teaching and learning process, which is not good for the nature of communicative classrooms. Brown (2007: 12) discussed that constructivism has two major forms, which are complementary and discuss the nature of language learning both at individual and group level. This is explained in the following section.

2.1.2 What is Cognitive Constructivism?

The Cognitive Constructivist theory is based mainly on Piaget's research work and with more contributions of followers such as Bruner, Ausubel, and von Glasersfeld (Liu and Matthews, 2005: 387). This theory claims that learning takes place, not by indoctrination and rote memory, but when students construct and reconstruct meaning for themselves (Ozer, 2004; Attard, Di Lorio, Geven & Santa, 2010: 9). The teacher should organise learning experiences that encourage students to construct knowledge for themselves, when necessary adjusting or rejecting their prior beliefs and misconceptions in light of the evidence provided by the experiences (Prince and Felder 2006: 4). Here the students are responsible and active participants to their learning. They work individually and with others for deep understanding of the given content areas.

Students are the focus of constructivist learning theory. As a result, students' autonomy and initiative play very important roles, in addition to teacher's support in the teaching environment (Prince and Felder (2006: 4). As part of this role, students could be given chance to evaluate themselves of the learning progress in the teaching and learning process using self-assessment, which is in line with the learning theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (Esfandiari and Myford, 2013: 113).

To implement this model of teaching in the actual classroom practice, Biggs (1996: 349) state that teachers need to provide types of learning activities relevant to the subjects they teach, tolerate students' errors and see them as signs of current level of understanding, and recognize that substantive learning comes over a long period with the help of group interaction. They are also encouraged to use student-centred approach and authentic assessment (Biggs, 1996:361). The students' role shift from passively receiving information from the teacher to constructing meaning actively based on the given learning activities (Liu, 2015: 43).

The types of teaching and learning activities that the teacher uses are very important in implementing the desired lesson objectives since they determine the level and type of students' learning. As Biggs (1996: 354) present, teachers are advised to bring teacher-controlled, peer-controlled, and self-controlled learning activities in a constructivist class so that students could benefit a lot from the instruction. The students also have to be well aware of learning strategies and the teachers also should feel responsible to train students as a preparation for learning so that they can help themselves in the long run (Biggs 1996:355).

From the above explanation it is possible to see that the instructional process goes in a more user friendly manner. That is to say the learning activities presented are in line with the previous learning experience of students so that it is easy for them to relate the past experience with the new to understand and achieve the given tasks. The instructional process is more of cooperation than competition. The students help each other to attain the learning objectives.

Prince and Felder (2006:1) state that the motivation students hold highly affects their commitment and efforts they expend towards their learning. Students are likely to engage in contents and learning experiences when the tasks and contents are authentic (real world) problems, challenging, related with their interest, culture, gender, social life, etc. Generally, when they see the importance of their learning, they are determined to work hard and be responsible learners. This idea supports the way constructivism defines learning.

All new learning involves transfer of information based on previous learning (Prince and Felder, 2006). This means that students relate the new information to their previous knowledge. Here, they could change, reshape, or create new deep understanding, may be removing misconception. This is done when students expend a lot of time and energy working actively involving all their sense organs on the content and learning experience with others and individually. The contents, learning experiences, tasks and activities should be organised using constructivism principles suggested by theoreticians such as Lev Vygotsky.

By contrast, the traditional way of the teaching and learning process (lecture-based and rote learning) does not challenge students to work in such a way to create deep understanding. As a result, students focus on memorising some factual information, but they do not have reasoning. The meaning-making activities of constructivist research are similar with the sociological theories of sense-making, which have primarily been applied to teachers. Schmidt and Datnow (2005:950) refer to symbolic interactionists such as Blumer (1969) to describe how “human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have constructed for them”. Schmidt and Datnow (2005: 950) go on to state that “meanings are modified through an interpretive process used by the people involved in those encounters. Sometimes meanings are contested, or they are affected by power relationships in a given interaction”. Prior knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and experiences are important components in the differentiated interpretations of policy.

Spillane, Resier, and Reimer (2002: 389) have created a three-stage framework for understanding sense making. These include a) individual cognition (including prior knowledge, beliefs, experiences and emotion), b) situated cognition (where multiple dimensions of a context or situation play a key role), and c) the role of representations or policy stimuli. In short, policies do not maintain uniformity on the road to implementation.

In relation to teaching writing skills in language classrooms, the Cognitivists' approach is applied since they see writing as "a thinking and problem solving activity" (Dueraman, 2012: 257; Richards, 1995: 108). As a result, researchers have developed a model of the process of writing and have conducted many studies. For instance, Flower and Hayes (1997) have studied how writers approach tasks in the process model of writing (Dueraman, 2012: 257). In this activity, students are given authentic problems to think critically and solve the problems. Then, after they gather ideas, they are expected to draft their composition. Students are actively involved to attempt their tasks. However, the cognitive approach was criticised for its focus on individual thinking and neglecting the social elements of language learning. The following social constructivist approach is added to explain "when" and "how" the studied concepts should be used in a social setting (Dueraman, 2012: 258).

2.1.3 What is Social Constructivism?

Derived from the works of Vygotsky, this theory of learning is discussed widely by other followers such as Kuhn, Greeno, Lave, Simon, and Brown (Liu and Matthews, 2005: 387; Yang and Wilson, 2006:365). This theory is elaborated extensively in many social science disciplines such as Social Psychology, Sociology, Education, and Anthropology. This learning theory claims that students do not learn as isolated individuals (intrapersonal process) but as an active member of a social group (Brown, 2007: 304; Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 7). That is to say "learning is essentially a social process" (Gunduz and Hursen 2015: 526).

The interaction of language learners with peer group, the teachers, and other people out of classrooms plays a significant role in the development of learning a new language (Yang and Wilson, 2006: 365). Learning takes place in a socio-cultural environment and the learners are seen as active constructors of their own learning (Yang and Wilson, 2006: 365; Pritchard and Woollard, 2010: 7). Similarly, after reviewing some researches, Rust, O'Donovan, and Price (2005: 233) conclude that "knowledge is shaped and evolves through increasing participation within different communities of practice". Dueraman

(2012: 258) adds that productive skills are constructed in a social context, where students get knowledge from their interaction with the social environment how to and when to use the language they studied individually. The effect of the socio-cultural environment on students' learning is said to be greater than the achievements of the students doing things individually.

In relation to this idea, Vygotsky (1978: 27 & 57), Vygotsky (1986: xxxvi), and Lock and Strong (2010: 109) explain that learning occurs in two types of dialogues: intermental and intramental dialogues. Here the learner is expected to interact with the teacher, other students, and the learning materials available in the teaching and learning environment. Then the student constructs his/her own understanding independently through rethinking about the new ideas, concepts etc., by relating to the background knowledge (Ozer, 2004). This is meaning construction through meaning negotiation. In short, learning is seen as an interactive process in which the students are supposed to communicate with the source of knowledge, information, ideas, and so forth, in the given social settings, and then the learners are expected to engage in an active role of reconstructing their own knowledge, idea, etc., in their own minds.

Therefore, meaning making is not seen as a passive role of simply memorising what is presented from any source of knowledge in the learning environment. There is always an active internal mental process of negotiation of meaning. In this way, learning is seen as an active mental process that needs the active participation of the learner in the given social environment.

Moreover, Yang and Wilson (2006:365) add to the above discussion that the purpose and motivation of learners to their learning plays a great role in the learning process. As Prince and Felder (2006:5) state motivation to learn affects the amount of time students are willing to devote to learning. That is to say students are more motivated when they can see the usefulness of what they are learning and when they can use it to do something that has an impact on their lives.

Here, this concept can be considered in a context of language classroom. When the students have a great interest and motivation to learn a foreign language, they are likely to engage intensively at their own personal will in tasks and activities to achieve their desired goals. They do not study only to pass classroom tests.

Another concept of social constructivism is the issue of support available in the learning environment, labelled as “scaffolding” in Vygotsky’s term (Vygotsky ,1978:86 ; Yang and Wilson 2006:365).Accordingly, this support comes from the parents, peers, teachers, or reference materials, and all these are important for the students to work effectively in the learning situation. This theory reflects that language and interactions with others such as family, peers, and teachers play a big role in the construction of meaning from experience (Prince and Felder, 2006: 45).

As a result, meaning is not simply constructed; it is co-constructed. Using this idea, many researchers of writing theory (cognitivists) have revised and proposed their models of teaching writing (composing process) in which the socio-cultural elements are included as influential factors (Behizadeh and Engelhard, 2011: 203).The other term, the zone of proximal development, is Vygotsky’s term describing the range of activities the learners do based on their current performance level (Yang and Wilson 2006; Zhao 2010: 4).The students are presented with challenging learning tasks and this serves as a motivation to work hard. The learners seek help from the environment when they face difficulties or when they need feedback to their progress in their learning performance. Thus, the difficulty level of the learning tasks should not be too easy or too difficult to attain the tasks. And then the support is provided accordingly. This support in turn helps the cognitive development of the learners, i.e. the social element helps the individual meaning construction.

Based on the constructivist approach, the teaching and learning process is not aimed at cramming of content or rote learning; it focuses on meaningful learning. As meaning is individual as opposed to the positivist thinking that there is “only one truth”, the students are encouraged to come with divergent thinking, formulating, shaping, and redefining their concepts.

They are not forced to focus on one correct or best answer like the positivists say. For example, in reading literary texts, the reader is involved in a transaction with the writer of the text using his background knowledge, beliefs, expectations, and as a result meaning is determined based on this interaction in the text (Amer, 2003: 68; Behizadeh and Engelhard, 2011: 203). This is a constructivist approach to teaching reading skill in EFL classrooms. Meaning making is done in a self-constructed way and it is part of being reflective and active in the learning process. Most often students are encouraged to have multiple interpretations of events, ideas, concepts, etc in a given learning environment. In

this approach, students are not enforced to memorise ideas from external sources, but form their own understanding based on the given resources.

Dueraman (2012: 258) reports that speaking and writing skills are constructed socially, where people, peers, teachers and native speakers are likely to help the students improve their skills. This type of support is especially important for teaching speaking skill in EFL context, since students do not get favourable environment outside the classroom. They spend a lot of time talking in their mother tongue than using English, and do not spend enough time in practicing speaking English.

Similarly, Spolsky (1998: 28) emphasises the role of social context in learning a second language, by showing the interplay among factors such as attitude, motivation, age, personality, previous knowledge, capabilities, and learning opportunities in the learning community. Moreover, Jordaan (2011: 1) asserts that, by creating conducive environment in the classroom, social constructivism principles could be applied to teach speaking for students who faced problem to use their mother tongue.

In relation to this idea, Allahyar and Nazari (2012:86) note the following:

Speaking and writing are conceived as cognitive tools that mediate internalization and externalize internal psychological activity, re-socializing and recognizing it for the individual; tools that construct and deconstruct and regulate knowledge.

This means that they are important for meaning making and reaching consensus with others in the given environment, in which students use language for meaningful communications. This makes the students to be active participants, not passive recipients of knowledge.

Generally, as each theory of learning is not complete by itself, there is no dominance of a single theory in the actual teaching and learning process. Dueraman (2012: 260) reports that the integration of the two learning approaches in the EFL classroom has been productive in Thailand. Strengthening this idea, Hinkle (2006: 111) contends that nowadays teachers are expected to practice “principled eclecticism” by taking good sides from each learning theory and method of EFL teaching. Thus, the two theories of learning are taken as theoretical frameworks for this study as they are practiced in the EFL/ESL teaching contexts to teaching and learning process of the four language skills in general and the two productive skills in particular. In short, the classroom setting helps students to

get input from others and creates opportunities for students to use the language in a meaningful way (Allahyar and Nazari, 2012: 86).

2.2 The Issue of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

The following section describes the issue of foreign language starting from its definition, and then adds why English is a dominant language. It discusses the effects of globalisation on the choice of language learning. Moreover, it gives highlights about affective factors, which are likely to influence students' language learning, and their success.

2.2.1 What is a Foreign Language?

The term 'foreign language' is used to refer to the teaching and learning of any non-native language outside of its country or the speech community, whereas second language refers to the teaching or learning of any non-native language within one of the speech communities where that language is traditionally used (Freed, 1991: 4; Brown, 1994: 116; Saville-Troike, 2006: 4; Brown, 2007: 205). For instance, learning English in Ethiopia is considered as a foreign language since there is no speech community in the country, while in Kenya it is a second language as there is a speech community in the country due to colonialism. These two approaches of learning are different in some variables like the role of the language in the lives of students, the motivation and attitude of learners, and the context in which the students learn the languages (Freed, 1991: 5).

When a language is studied as a foreign, in contrast to second language, it has got two characteristics: it is studied in formal language classrooms for academic purpose and for international communication, and not for communication with the nearby society that the students live in; when a language is studied as a second language, it serves as a means of communication in the society where it is learnt (Wilton, 2009: 54; Golkova and Hubackova, 2014: 478).

Moreover, learners study foreign language for the purpose of cultural enrichment, communicative benefits, inherent interest and personal motivation (Wilton, 2009: 54; Jamshidnejad, 2011: 4). It is also studied for curricular purpose, and it is not used by the students in their immediate environment for any social communicative purpose (Saville-Troike, 2006: 4). As a result, since the environment is not conducive to present students

with varied and extensive language input, students face challenges to learn and use the language effectively.

When students learn English as a foreign language, their mother tongue is the dominant means of communication while the use of English is limited to academic purposes, for business purpose, or for travel to any English speaking country (Camenson, 2007: 2). However, the writer also states that the teaching of English as a second or foreign language does not show any critical difference in methods or approaches of teaching. Moreover, in relation to students, and the environment they study in, the following are the differences mentioned:

EFL learners generally spend fewer hours per week studying English than their ESL counterparts in settings within English-speaking countries.
EFL learners have little exposure to English outside the classroom and also have little need or opportunity to practice their newly acquired language skills.
A classroom of EFL learners has a common native-language background.
ESL classes generally consist of students from a variety of countries.

(Camenson, 2007: 2)

In contrast to L1 speakers, foreign language learners have some differences in their language skills proficiency. In terms of productive skills, for example, they do not have the same level of writing skills and they have little exposure to the target language texts they study (Grabe, and Stoller, 2009: 445). For instance, when students learn English as a foreign language, they have little exposure to speaking or reading texts out of their classrooms. This will be a challenge for students to use the language for communicative purposes.

It is clear that students are obliged to learn foreign language(s) in a formal setting due to the benefits they are to obtain or develop as productive and competent citizens in their respective societies. Chan, Chin and Suthiwan (2011: 1) present that the European Union (EU) has indicated that competency in foreign language is considered as one of the vital skills necessary for effective participation for a life time in a society. Chan *et al.*, (2011: 1) further explain the following about the significance of competence in foreign language:

Competence in foreign languages has long been recognized as an indispensable economic and social resource within a culturally and linguistically diverse Europe and beyond. Competence in foreign languages is not limited to technical skill in a particular language but also includes openness to different cultures and respect for others and their competence and achievements. Learning other languages promotes an extended sense of identity, making people

feel part of more than one linguistic and cultural community. It also increases people's employment, education and leisure options, which in turn may generate a whole range of personal, social and workplace competencies.

From this extract, it is easy to understand that for the better future of young people in order to operate in the modern society, the knowledge of some kind of foreign language is essential. This is true in the time of globalisation and information age where people are expected to work and live in a more diversified social environment and handle a vast amount of information written in non-native languages.

This demands a common means of communication, and people are expected to use these languages to satisfy their individual and social needs in the competitive market society. In support of this type of idea, the US Department of Education stressed the importance of foreign languages for American government in terms of national security and competitiveness in the global economy (Chan *et al.*, 2011: 2). That is to say if America does not use foreign languages to get intelligence from around the world, it is difficult to be informed of current situations and reality in the fight against terrorism.

Moreover, it is also essential to reach to customers using foreign languages in order to sell goods and services in the global market. These languages have got greater economic values in the current globalisation time. Some of these languages that students are required to study for the benefits of both the individuals and their countries include English, German, French, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and others (Chan *et al.*, 2011: 4). These languages are among the most frequently appearing list in many universities in the world due to their economic, social and diplomatic reasons.

2.2.2 Why Study English as a Foreign Language?

English language is studied as a mother tongue, as a second language, and as a foreign language all over the world. It is the most widely used language among the living languages in the world. Those who use English all over the world as a native language, as a second language and as a foreign language totally add up to the point where one-sixth of the world's people use English as a means of communication (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill and Pincas, 1980: 1; Jamshidnejad, 2011: 3). Thus, as English is not limited to its mother tongue speakers, learning English is not optional, but essential one for many people in the world (Momani, Asiri and Alatawi, 2016: 21).

Due to the importance of English as a lingua franca, it is studied as a subject and serves as a medium of instruction in educational institutions all over the world (Jamshidnejad, 2011: 3). The language has played a big role in the political, economic, and social aspects of these countries. For instance, some West African countries used English as their official language to unify the country as there is no other common language that the population could easily use (Broughton *et al.*, 1980: 1). It is also a language for science and technology and that is why students are expected to study it. Thus, the influence of English language is observed in some ways in the lives of world people and they are obliged to use it.

Among the list of foreign languages that students are expected or interested in studying, English is number one choice for the majority of them due to its global influence in many parts of the world. For instance, English is studied as one of the most important foreign languages in Chinese universities (Chan *et al.*, 2011: 4). Many countries (both developed and developing ones) have developed foreign language education in their curriculum and recommend their citizens to learn and use English for their social and business practices.

Citing the ideas forwarded by the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2003), Chan *et al.* (2011: 5) share the following points about how globalisation with its challenges and opportunities forced countries to use English language:

Recently, globalization in various fields of the economy and society has advanced rapidly. Transfers of information and capital across national borders as well as the movement of people and products have increased. Thus, international interdependency has deepened. At the same time, international economic competition has intensified entering a so-called period of "mega-competition". Much effort is necessary to meet such challenges. Globalization extends to various activities of individuals as well as to the business world. Each individual has increasing opportunities to come in contact with the global market and services, and participate in international activities. It has become possible for anyone to become active on a world level. Furthermore, due to progress in the information technology revolution, a wide range of activities, from daily life to economic activities, are being influenced by the movement to a knowledge-based society driven by the forces of knowledge and information. Thus, there is a strong demand for the abilities to obtain and understand knowledge and information as well as the abilities to transmit information and to engage in communication. In such a situation, English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. For children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language.

In some parts of the world, English is studied as a foreign language. Here the role the language plays in the countries is a bit different from the purpose of English studied as a

second language. When English is a second language, it is an alternative means of communication for the population and is used dominantly in the mass media, government offices and business institutions.

However, when people study English as a foreign language, they use it just in limited instances, and it does not have a big role in the social life at the individual level, or in the different sectors at the national level (Broughton *et al.*, 1980: 6). Moreover, there is no regional variety of English that students learn or the population use. As a result, students are expected to study American English or British English as model. This is true in the Ethiopian schooling system.

As English language is distributed in all parts of the world, it is no longer of native form, but developed into different varieties based on the locations and ethnic groups of people. For instance, some of these varieties are identified as Caribbean, West African, East African, Indian, South-east Asian, Australasian (Broughton *et al.*, 1980: 4). Among these varieties of English, educational institutions prefer to teach their students the universally understood form of English, i.e. the British English or the American English. Students who study English as a foreign language will have two types of reasons: one is to use the language for integrative purpose, and the other is to use it for instrumental purpose (Broughton *et al.*, 1980: 5).

Similarly, as Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014: 10) state, among the reasons mentioned to teach speaking skill to foreign language learners, the following points are mentioned: the mastery of the skill is a priority area for students, oral proficiency is seen as a progress in the language learning and oral skills are essential areas in foreign language teaching. However, it should be understood that students should not be expected to show full mastery of the language they learn due to the influence of various barriers for effective achievement. Therefore, teachers, students and parents should not put unduly achievement expectation on students. This helps to avoid frustration in the teaching and learning process.

The language learning process beyond the classroom is not conducive for the majority of students in learning a foreign language. This is because the students do not get relevant input out of classroom situations in their immediate environment. Adding to this idea, Graves (2008: 167) states that foreign language students do not get authentic speech community in their immediate environment, the activities and contexts are simulated or designed just for academic purpose, and the learning tasks are not types of authentic

communication activities that encourage students to use the new language in a meaningful manner; therefore, what is done in the classroom does not most often prepare students to language proficiency expected in the society.

2.2.3 Affective Factors that influence English Language Learning

The Affective factors that language learners have play a great role in the effectiveness of students in the teaching and learning process. Many researchers have indicated this idea in their research findings. Students present a type of attitude towards learning English language, the culture and speakers of the language, and the importance of learning English for both social and academic reasons. Their attitude could be either negative or positive for some personal or practical reasons.

Generally, these attitudes are likely in turn to affect the motivation of students to learn the language in the academic setting (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 38). However, Ruiz-Funes (2002: 36) reports that, in most of the foreign language classrooms, teachers complain that students do not see the need for learning the language and its benefits in their social environment. They show low motivation for learning. Then, teachers use external means of motivation to help students work hard. That is they relate the activities students do with examination score or grade the students earn.

As motivation is very important in language learning, EFL teachers have to identify factors that encourage students to push more in the language learning process (Yusimah, 2014: 189). Adding to this, Yusimah (2014: 190) explains that motivated language learners are more likely to learn a lot quickly than other students who are not motivated. Thus, it is advisable for the teachers to use techniques and strategies in their instruction to motivate students to be committed learners. For example, it is advisable to use information communication technology (ICT) in EFL class since it has the potential to arouse the interest and motivation of students towards learning English. Furthermore, Yusimah (2014: 190) discusses that, when students are motivated to learn, they minimise their misbehaviour and become supportive for classroom management. Rather they become active participants in the classroom discussion.

Among other factors influencing students' learning of a foreign language are their beliefs about learning language, their anxiety levels, their self-perception, and their self-esteem. As Zhou (2011: 110) indicates, these variables have great influence over the language learning anxiety. In turn, if this anxiety level is high, it affects negatively students' success

and effort in learning the language. Jamshidnejad (2011: 4) reports that anxiety, stress, and nervousness are the common feelings that EFL students mostly experience in the learning process.

Zhou (2011: 110) explains communication anxiety as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication”. Thus, it is good to assess the level of learners’ anxiety in the teaching and learning process. The students will be concerned about the negative evaluation that comes from both the teacher and other students to the poor performance of learners. Also if students feel they have low aptitude to learn a foreign language, it is very difficult for them to study hard and show progress (Zhou, 2011: 113).

In addition to this, there are also other factors that are likely to affect the teaching and learning process. As Kumaravadivelu (2006: 39) mentions, the environmental factor is one of them. This factor incorporates the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions that are likely to influence the teaching and learning process of English language. In addition to these elements, in terms of pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 39), what happens in the language classrooms can also have important impacts – both positive and negative – on the students and their language learning.

This is related with interaction of the teachers, the curriculum, and the students in the whole of the language learning process. For instance, if the teachers do not have positive feelings to their teaching or the students, they will not work hard to help their students. It is also difficult to create relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. This has got its own impact on the students attending the teaching and learning process. The teachers are likely to affect the students’ language learning attitude based on their personality and methods of teaching, intelligence, patience and creativity (Camenson, 2007: 7).

Teachers of English need to have some good qualities like intelligence, patience, and creativity that every teacher is expected to have. They need to have a good understanding and special talent of their field in connection with other related disciplines like linguistics, psychology, testing and measurement, sociology, language learning theories, etc. (Camenson, 2007: 6). This helps them to have general understanding about language learning, and how people learn languages. They must be sensitive to individual differences among language learners for a better treatment of their students.

Some of the other qualities that the language teachers should possess include enthusiasm for the subject matter, tolerance, flexibility, maturity, communication skills, having interest in continuing professional development and appreciation of different cultures (Camenson, 2007: 7). Moreover, they need to be well informed of current teaching materials, classroom management methods, teaching methodology, lesson planning, and student evaluations (Camenson, 2007: 16).

The motivation students have towards the language they learn is also an important factor. There are two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental (Broughton *et al.*, 1980: 5; Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 40). The first one concerns the interest of students to have integration with the speakers of the language they want to learn. The majority of foreign language learners do not develop this type of motivation most of the time since it is unrealistic to get the chance of joining the native speech community (Broughton *et al.*, 1980: 7; Brown, 1994: 117). Thus, they are likely to resort to the other form of motivation.

Instrumental motivation refers to the interest of learners to use the language for an academic, commercial, or any other business purpose. Therefore, those who study English as a foreign language should get awareness and be clear with their reasons why they try to learn it. It is very difficult to be successful in mastering the language if students just do things for the sake of passing classroom tests or examinations. They should have their own motivation to learn it. In relation to this point, Jamshidnejad (2011: 3) states that EFL learners have a lot of motivation to learn and use the language for oral communication. This is a good asset to the EFL classroom and instructors have to exploit this characteristic of learners to their instruction.

Thus, level of the students' motivation has a big role either to facilitate or to impede the students' language learning. Furthermore, as Biggs and Tang (2007: 32) assert, in order to motivate students to learn a subject, they need to understand the importance of learning that subject and the chance to succeed in achieving it. If they lack one of these things, the students consider learning a subject as a waste of time, money and other resources. This is a concept explained by the expectancy-value theory of motivation (Biggs and Tang, 2007: 32). Citing various prominent psychologists (Maslow, 1987; Rogers 1994; Krashen 1985), Harmer (2001: 74) stresses that it is good to consider the mind state of language learners as it determines highly the success of the students in the teaching and learning process. He adds that this humanist approach has influenced the language instruction in terms of material writing, and methods of teaching.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that, in some situations, people associate learning a foreign language with linguistic and cultural imperialism (Brutt-Griffler, 2009: 248), and show negligence or little commitment to study that language in a serious way. As a result, they will be obsessed with the development and use of other indigenous languages in their homeland. This type of feeling may come partly from the belief that EFL learners have to be “perfect” like native speakers in their use of the language, yet this is not a true assumption, as native speakers are not perfect in their speech and it is not also attainable for L2 speakers to act like native speakers (Jamshidnejad, 2011: 5). Thus, it is good to assess the students’ attitude and belief towards native speakers and their language (Jamshidnejad, 2011: 5). If they develop false beliefs towards language learning, they face serious problems in teaching and learning process.

Most of the people use these languages in running their day-to-day business, and do not understand the long term implications of being limited to the use of minority languages in their specific regions or in their country; they do not understand the benefits of studying other languages of more economic advantages at national or international levels. The youngsters of these countries face disadvantage in the national or international market society. These countries will not be free from the effects of globalisation even if they dislike it and are unprepared for it.

Thus, foreign language teachers should not present themselves in the classroom in any way that threatens, demoralises or neglects the psychological needs of their students. Teachers need to be aware of the external social and political contextual factors that may affect the language learning process and work hard to harmonise them so that they can create conducive situation for the teaching and learning process.

2.2.4 The Influence of Environmental Factors

The wider environmental factors in which the teaching and learning process goes on have also a big role. As Kumaravadivelu (2006: 42) presents, these factors embrace social context, economic conditions, political situation, educational trends and family contexts at the national and global level. These factors affect either positively or negatively the whole of the education sector in general and the language learning process in particular. So, it is good to reconsider these things in the teaching and learning process of English language. It helps students and language teachers to get awareness about “what”, “how” and “why” they are learning the language.

With regard to the impact of social context in language learning, Kumaravadivelu (2006: 43) argues as follows:

Social context is critical because it shapes various learning and teaching issues such as (a) the motivation for L2 learning, (b) the goal of L2 learning, (c) the functions an L2 is expected to perform in the community, (d) the availability of input to the learner, (e) the variation in the input, and (f) the norms of proficiency acceptable to that particular speech community.'

Kumaravadivelu (2006: 43) argues that appropriate social settings generally facilitate second language learning. Moreover, the background of learners, the broader social, economic, political, and educational environments all interacting together have the potential to influence the students' language learning "in ways unintended and unexpected by policy planners, curriculum designers or textbook producers" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 44).

However, in relation to learning English as a foreign language, the points mentioned above are of limited instances to students in the Ethiopian context. The society at large does not use English for the day-to-day social roles, and mostly the language is limited to the language classrooms. As a result, the students do not get supportive social environment to facilitate their language learning (Shi, 2013: 63). That is to say they do not get extra language input from their home or village, nor do they have the chance to use their English for real communication in their locality.

Dueraman (2012: 265) states that learning a second language is different from acquiring a mother tongue in some ways: the environment is not rich for second language learners, the language is not used in daily lives of students, and students do not learn all the language they are taught. It is difficult for students to process and practise the language naturally since there is no authentic context and situation to use language that they learn in the class. In particular, the productive skills need a lot of practise and authentic environment to use and develop them (Dueraman, 2012: 266).

As the major purpose of studying English language in EFL/ESL classroom is for academic purpose, all those involved in the instructional process should be clear with the nature of academic language when they plan and execute instructional objectives in teaching English language. The use of English is limited to academic environment, and not for social purpose in the community. Thus, students learn and practice this type of language, which is more of text book based. Then the preparation of the syllabus and teaching

material takes into account this type of content. However, in practice the teaching materials are not attractive for the students. In connection with this idea, Sakale (2012: 1102) observed that most textbooks for speaking skills lack authenticity and suffer from artificiality. This hinders the motivation and interest of EFL learners.

Jordaan (2011: 82) defines academic language in relation to the English language as:

Language needed to succeed academically in all content areas, including the English used to interact in the classroom and the English used to obtain, process, construct and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form using appropriate learning strategies.

Jordaan (2011:82), meanwhile, identify three dimensions of language proficiency in EFL/ ESL teaching: conversational fluency, discrete skills and academic language proficiency. The first one refers to the type of language use in social settings out of a classroom where learners use simple grammatical structure and high-frequency words for their day-to-day interaction. The next one refers to the learning of rule-governed aspects of English such as phonology, grammar and mechanics in a formal instruction. The third one refers to the ability students have about using the language of instruction in the teaching and learning process as defined above. This needs a more focused and intensive instruction, and takes a long time to develop.

Thus, the development and use of conversational and academic language in EFL/ ESL setting is different from the case in using English as a mother tongue (Jordaan, 2011: 82).For example, in EFL setting students are exposed most often to academic language and not, to conversational language. As a result, it is unlikely that students become proficient in both skill areas, i.e. in conversational and academic language proficiency. This awareness helps participants to avoid ambitious expectations and feelings of frustration for not attaining them.

There are some challenges that students face in learning English as a foreign language. Some of these factors are lack of exposure to use the language, motivation, attitude, age and mother tongue influence. In relation to this, Yule (1996: 196) contends that teenagers or adults (in contrast to L1 learners) experience problems because they try to study a language for few hours per week in a school, without using it for their daily interaction in the social environment. Other theorists have also mentioned the role of cultural awareness in the language learning process.

In relation to this idea, Prabu (2011: 48) admitted that as culture and language are closely related, it is very important to introduce the EFL/ESL learners with the elements of the target language so that the students can facilitate their understanding, and they can be clear with the context how the language is used. Furthermore, the writer adds that EFL/ESL teachers are highly recommended to add authentic materials from the target culture, proverbs, cultural issues, ethnographic studies, literature and films for presenting culture in the teaching and learning process (Prabu, 2011: 55). If students are introduced to the culture in such a way, they will get background knowledge on how to use the language in authentic situation to communicate successfully with the native speakers.

Yule (1996: 192) further explains when the learners are stressed, unmotivated, and frustrated in the instructional process, especially during error correction, they are unlikely to learn the language successfully. These are attitudinal factors affecting students' feelings, motivation and self-esteem in the language learning process. For example, if they get many negative comments about their activity from their teacher, the students are likely to dislike the subject and the teacher. After some time, they develop negative attitude to the teaching and learning process.

Yule (*ibid.*) further explains this idea that children learn their mother tongue in a natural setting without such feelings, with more encouragement from others, which is different from learning a second language, which involves much mockery from others and intensive instruction. As a result, nowadays, language teachers are expected to tolerate students when they make errors in practicing the language they learn. This encourages the students to study and practice more work.

2.3 What is Active Learning?

According to Michel, Cater, and Varela (2009), active learning is “a broadly inclusive term, used to describe several models of instruction that hold learners responsible for their own learning”. Students are involved in “doing things and thinking about what they are doing”. Thus, the students are active, not passive, learners as many of their sense organs are involved in the teaching and learning process. As Agbatogun (2014: 260) mentions, this idea of active learning can be linked to Confucius's famous statement: “I hear, and I forget, I see, and I remember, I do, and I understand”.

That is to say when one is engaged in doing something using most of the sense organs, it is likely that he/she will do it actively and understand and remember it better. This is very important in the teaching and learning process. Students practice the given learning task with active mental state and that helps them to avoid boredom in the lesson, and use their mind to work out problems using higher order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. It is not merely receiving information, and responding to it in a surface level learning.

It is anything that students do in the class, which involves many sense organs –other than passively listening to the lecture sitting in the classroom(Felder and Brent, 2009:1). Many researchers have found out that active learning has a positive impact on students' learning in improving their understanding and retention of knowledge and skill (Prince, 2004:225). In the teacher-centred approach teaching –learning process, lecturing was the dominant teaching method, and students were expected to receive knowledge from their instructor and internalise it in some way through memorisation. The retrieval and manipulation of this information was the goal of the lecture.

According to Michel, Cater & Varela (2009: 398), this way of learning is called passive learning, which was dominant in the western world schools for generations. Educators have argued that this method of information transfer is not enough for the development of critical thinking among the student population, and suggested many alternative techniques to facilitate the teaching and learning process in order to maximise students' learning (Bonwell and Eison, 1991:5).

Sivan *et al.* (2000: 381) also report that there is no common agreed-upon definition of active learning: “the use of the term active learning relies more on intuitive understanding of educators and the term has been presented in contrast to the use of a teacher-centred approach where students are passive in the learning process.”. Sivan *et al.*, (2000: 381) described that active learning consists of three interrelated factors: basic elements, learning strategies, and teaching resources. According to this classification, the basic elements are the cognitive activities that help students to interact and manipulate, and master the skills and knowledge they get. These are the four language skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading, writing and reflecting. The other one is a strategy that uses the basic skills. Some of them are journal writing, case studies, group work, simulations and cooperative works.

The resources include outside speakers, reading materials, field trips, teaching technology, etc. in which the teacher uses to implement the teaching and learning process. Active learning helps learners to be participants in the teaching and learning process in which complex learning objectives are attempted: analysis, synthesis, evaluation, exploration of values and attitudes (Sivan *et al.*, 2000: 381). Gautama (2008: 11) state that active learning is based on two assumptions: learning is an active practice and different students learn in different ways. Thus, effectiveness of lecture method could be improved by the mix of some active learning techniques.

2.3.1 Pedagogical Advantages of Active Learning Approaches

By reviewing other research findings, Michel, Cater and Varela (2009: 401) and Hadded (2006: 32) mention that active learning has a number of benefits for students, which include raising motivation, engaging in tasks and activities, engaging in higher order thinking skills such as synthesis, and evaluation, and avoiding passive listening.

Similarly, to check the effectiveness of various active learning approaches, Sivan *et al.* (2000: 381) conducted a study on undergraduate students who were taking business area courses in Hong Kong university, and found out that active learning increased students' skill to apply the knowledge they got, improved the students' independent learning skill, increased learners' interest for the curriculum, and prepared them for their future career. Jones (1999: 623) argues that active learning is effective in increasing students' retention, encouraging higher order thinking skills, presenting students with different learning styles and strategies, and thereby increasing students' motivation for learning. Moreover, when students are presented with authentic instructional tasks, they become active and highly engaged in the instructional process (Tuji, 2006: 2).

In contrast to active learning, many studies have indicated that lecture method has its own drawbacks on the students and their learning. For example, Michel, Cater, and Varela (2009: 401) mention failure to retain much information after the session and lack of attention of many students during the class as common problems or weaknesses. These problems have motivated educators to seek alternative ways of teaching and learning approaches. In another study, Gilbert, (2010: 7) reports that EFL students in Turkey who were taught in constructivist approach shown deeper understanding, higher self-efficacy, better scholastic learning.

In teaching a chemistry course for technology students at North Carolina State University, Bullard and Felder (2007: 167-176) reported that they used a student-centred approach in their teaching. In doing so, the professors, with their colleagues, used a variety of active learning approaches in their course delivery. These include mainly cooperative learning and problem-based learning in addition to other techniques they use daily to run the teaching and learning process. Here, before they start teaching the course, all the inputs were carefully considered and organised to maximise students' learning and adapt the new ways of teaching and learning. These include distribution of well-prepared hand-out, discussion with the students, grouping students for learning, and motivating students to work hard. Generally, after completing the course and taking the assessment, it was reported that the students did a lot better than they would do when they are taught in a traditional way (Bullard and Felder, 2007: 174).

In another survey study at Haromaya University, one of the universities in eastern Ethiopia, researchers evaluated the effectiveness of active learning strategies in teaching chemistry major students. These researchers found the students to be motivated, participated, developed their communication skills, developed group approach in solving problems, helped to organise various activities, which avoided monotonous tasks (Bello, Brown & Kebede, and 2005: 167). Furthermore, these researchers point out that the positive effects would be obtained when resources are provided sufficiently, time is effectively used for the activities, students have access to information from the internet and other sources, all students are supported and motivated to participate in teaching and learning process (Bello, Brown & Kebede, 2005: 167-168).

In another study summarising other findings, Oakley *et al.*, (2004: 9) reported that collaborative learning was very important in helping students improve their grades, to avoid surface learning, to retain information longer, to get communication and team work skills, and to get awareness about work related environments in their future career.

2.3.2 Some Techniques of Active Learning for Productive Skills

There are a number of ways or techniques to use active learning in each subject area in the day-to-day classroom situation. There are different names for Active learning methods. Some call them strategies or techniques, while others refer to them as approaches or methods. Citing other critics, Michel, Cater and Varela (2009:402), summarise that there are many forms of active learning practices such as pausing for some time during lecture, using short writing exercise in class, using quizzes, and self-assessment exercises, doing

laboratory experiments, involving in field trips, applying debates, games, role plays, and group discussions in the classroom session. In relation to productive skills, the techniques could be grouped in terms of speaking skills and writing skills (Momani, Asiri and Alatawi, 2016: 21).

In one study exploring the implementation of constructivist foreign language methodology, Boufoy-Bastick (2001: 3-9) reported that active learning was successfully implemented to teach French as a foreign language. Some of the common features of this classroom are the following; the students were made to be autonomous to choose what to learn, how to learn and when to learn; moreover, they were expected to identify their learning style, to use their own language learning strategies and to study the language independently. They were made to be aware of the culture (enculturation) of the language they learn. The teacher designed contextualised learning activities that range from simple rote-learning games to more complex need-driven communication tasks. For instance, some of the tasks were voting in France, argument against nuclear weapons, and becoming investigative journalist for a problem observed.

In the learning process, the students focus on the given learning tasks, not on the linguistic item. The learning tasks are simulated real world tasks and events. These tasks helped to motivate students engage actively as they touch the feelings of the students. Using this method, all the four language skills were taught in an integrated manner. This was identified as a different approach from that of traditional foreign language teaching, which was criticised for its focus on objective aspects of the language knowledge, testing how much the students recall the linguistic content knowledge taught and how they can apply it to similar situations (Boufoy-Bastick, 2001: 3).

Boersma (2008: 5) explains that language teachers who use a variety of appropriate teaching methods in their classes are more likely to motivate and engage students to enjoy successful language learning. For example, teachers who ask open-ended questions in their classrooms encourage students to work hard, discuss together with their friends, and generate more information, and engage in critical thinking skills to answer the question, and this reflects one of the characteristics of active learning in the classroom (Tuji, 2006: 3).

However, if the teachers feel that strict control and transmission of knowledge is essential feature in their classroom, they will ask close-ended question since it is easy to pose and give feedback for their students, and they do not apply active learning strategies

effectively (Tuji,2006: 3). Among the varieties of techniques that can be used by classroom teachers, the most researched and frequently recommended ones are summarised in this review.

2.3.2.1 Inquiry Learning

The teaching and learning process in a constructivist classroom is based on solving problems; learners ask questions, research a topic, and use various approaches and resources to reach conclusions (Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004). This approach can be applied in teaching writing skills as students generate ideas to write the composition in the process approach to writing. Students go through the process and write their drafts, and then they revise their drafts by adding more ideas and asking more questions to generate.

2.3.2.2 2.3.2.2 Problem-Based Learning

As a form of constructivist learning, language educators emphasise the role of project-based learning in the EFL instruction. According to Prince and Felder (2006:11), this method has got recognition by many researchers for developing deep understanding, recognising the relationship among concepts, developing the ability for meta-cognitive and reasoning strategies, and improving teamwork skills, and class attendance.

Ke (2010: 100) also lists that it is a student-centred approach in which teachers play a supportive role, students help each other, leads to authentic integration of skills and content knowledge from various sources, which relates real-life tasks, it is motivating, empowering and challenging for the students, and it improves learners' confidence, self-esteem and autonomy. In short, this approach is said to improve students' language skill and cognitive abilities.

After reviewing some research findings, Ke (2010: 102) indicated the successful completion of the project-based approach in the EFL instruction for the reasons mentioned above. Moreover, Ke (2010: 107-108) has also found that students' motivation increased, they engaged in collaboration and independent work, they gave emphasis for both process and product of learning, and developed confidence in using the language.

2.3.2.3 Cooperative Learning

This method of learning is helpful to understand a lesson better and improve communication skills of students; Students learn a lesson better when they try to teach their friends (Stanford, 1997:2). The students may work inside or out of classroom with their group members and they are responsible for their share in the assignment. They help each other in working on the given project or assignment.

In cooperative learning, students work with group members outside the classroom and in class discussion. Here, the students help each other, share responsibility for their individual and group's task, have social skill for their interaction, get feedback (Michel, Cater, and Varela, 2009: 35; Richards and Rodgers, 2001 : 192). This helps students to maximise their learning within the group's interaction. Felder and Brent (2009:2) say that there are a lot of things that teachers can use in their classrooms and what they can ask students to do in class is limited only by their imagination. There are many techniques that students can engage both individually and in groups. For example, case studies, problem-based learning, inquiry learning, and discovery learning are instructional ways in which students work actively, taking significant responsibility for their own learning (Prince and Felder, 2006: 124).

In relation to implementing cooperative learning in the classroom, Oakley *et al.* (2004: 11-21) advised teachers to follow certain procedures. In doing so, they are expected to form groups of mixed ability and set goals to be achieved, and evaluate the students' progress continuously throughout the course. Oakley *et al.* (2004: 10-22) have stressed the role of the teachers to closely monitor the progress of each group and the individual members in the teaching and learning process. Citing other research findings, Seid (2012: 39-40) explained that the following are some problems of cooperative learning technique that teachers should be aware of: some students do all activities while others are idle, it could be time consuming without proper procedure, less skilful students are ignored by active students, active students feel they wasted time working with less skilful students, and learning part of a task specialisation while they do not know a lot about the other part done by their friends.

2.3.2.4 Portfolio

Using portfolio is an important technique to teach EFL students to improve their language skills. Aydin (2010: 196) and Dueraman (2012: 265) report that portfolio is important to improve students' self-confidence, to develop writing skills, to learn actively, to motivate them, to increase awareness, and to integrate their language skills. It is also useful for the teachers and schools to show what they are doing to other stakeholders. That is to say it serves as a documented evidence of the teaching and learning process.

In line with the constructivist theories of learning, portfolio is important to help students work hard on key learning objectives and the teachers will be able to see the individual progress of their students (Tiwari and Tang 2003: 270). Portfolios are useful to show sample drafts of writing tasks, comments and revisions made, and other language learning activities for parents, teachers, and for the students themselves ; they are also important to improve students' language learning (Gomez, 1999: 4 & 8). For instance, Gomez (1999: 9) reports that students' writing improved in Kentucky due to the positive impact of portfolios.

Students can be made to engage in self-assessment and peer-assessment of their own language learning activities (Birgin and Baki, 2007: 76). This helps students to identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they can take lessons for the next activity. Portfolios are also useful to involve students in setting learning goals, to reflect their opinions about the instruction and to develop assessment techniques for evaluating their language learning activities (Gomez, 1999: 7-8). This enables students to voice their reflection of the language instruction writing in their portfolio. Portfolios are useful to serve as authentic assessment techniques for the language teachers in order to get more reliable data about language development of the students over time (Gomez, 1999: 7; Birgin and Baki, 2007: 76). Teachers can make the necessary changes in the lesson plan based on their evaluation of students' portfolio.

2.3.2.5 Alternative Ways of Lecturing

Lecturing is a widely used method of teaching in many classrooms and it has got a long history in the teaching and learning process. Although lecturing is criticised for its nature to encourage passive way of learning, it is considered to be an effective way of presentation of a vast content in a relatively short period of time.

Educators advise that some modifications can be done to lecturing so that it facilitates students' learning. Some of these modifications (alternatives) are combining lecturing with questions and discussion, pausing for few minutes, pause and asking questions, and writing short notes after session (Stanford, 1997:1). The first one is done by presenting questions to the students and addressing them during the lecture period. This makes the students to focus on the main points of the session. The other is to give time to let students think over the whole content covered in the lecture and question themselves about the points they are not clear on. This also helps students to see the gaps in their note-taking.

In addition, the teacher could also help the students to work in groups in discussing key points of the lesson and raise more questions they do not understand. Then, the teacher can cover these questions after the break. Finally, the teacher may help students to exercise free writing or brainstorming on a piece of paper all the key points covered in the lecture. This encourages the students to review their lesson and identify areas for later revision.

Generally, lecturing can be combined with questioning and discussion for more effective learning. Students will get time to pause and think over what they listen to in the classroom, and discuss with group members to understand better the lesson and to attain deep learning. Jones (1999: 622) points out that goals of higher education that involve higher order thinking skills are not easily achieved by traditional way of lecturing that encourages passive learning.

In relation to the limitations of lecturing, Jones (1999: 622) mention that lecturing is criticised for lack of feedback about learning, inability to sustain students' attention, poor recall of lecture materials, the belief that all students learn content at the same rate with similar level of understanding, and the same learning strategies.

As a result, educators have presented other techniques to maximise students' learning. Among these forms, one is active learning. To strengthen this idea, Hadded (2006: 33) suggests that the lecture method can be combined with in-class activities in which students will work either individually or with their peers, and facilitate students' learning. This is done mostly by asking questions, which can be attempted in a few minutes.

For instance, the teacher may ask students some questions and they list their answers and later share ideas with their friends in the classroom, everybody become an active

participant in these activities (Haddad 2006: 39). In addition to this, cooperative learning can be combined with the lecture method to increase participation and engage students in higher order thinking (Mills-Jones, 1999: 633).

2.3.2.6 Role Plays and Case Studies

Role plays and simulations make students take part seriously in the given task. In that way, students practice more and work hard to achieve the learning objectives. Based on the real world stories or events, students are presented with decision making, analysis or conclusion (Stanford, 2: 1997). The ambiguity of events in the learning experiences and the discussions that follow to make things clear help students to develop many learning strategies such as reasoning and arguments. These are very important elements in the development of critical thinking skills.

2.3.2.7 Jigsaw

As a form of cooperative learning, jigsaw is important to the teaching and learning process in a language classroom. Mengduo and Xiaoling (2010: 115) explain that jigsaw encourages the use of social skill, avoids competitions among students, raises individual and group responsibility for learning, and increases interaction of group members to accomplish the given tasks.

Thus, in relation to the productive skills, like the other language skills, students get the chance to talk a lot with friends and transfer their ideas in writing using English language. In their study involving EFL college students, Mengduo and Xiaoling (2010: 122) concluded that jigsaw increased students' participation, interest and focuses on the language use to achieve learning tasks in the EFL classroom.

2.3.2.8 Simulations and Games

Here students are given a role play to take part in the simulated situations. In such a case, students engage actively in producing ideas and reflecting to their friends. They become happy to participate (Haddad, 2006: 39). These are important to use in speaking and writing activities. For instance, students can be given crossword puzzle for vocabulary learning, and they can also play roles in simulations of a certain social inequality (Faust and Paulson, 1998: 16). This could be used in developing activities for teaching speaking and writing skills.

2.3.2.9 Panel Discussions

Students could be required to talk on a controversial or thought-provoking topic to their group members turn by turn for a few minutes (Faust and Paulson, 1998: 16; Haddad, 2006: 39). This type of task makes students to read a lot and prepare organised research papers. After the individual presentation on the given topic, students get chance to reflect their opinion. This helps them to reflect their ideas before group members and in front of the whole classroom students. Moreover, it helps them to develop self-confidence to use their English for a meaningful purpose. It is not just a simple drilling to practice language. This type of task makes students to practise language skills in an integrated way. Here, students experience reading for making note, writing an academic paper, and presenting to an audience.

2.3.2.10 Poster Sessions

Students are given a task in groups and when they complete the task they present it in a poster display (Haddad, 2006: 40). This is also good for the groups to learn from each other in handling given tasks. They can compare and contrast their posters so that they will be motivated to work hard for next round activities. Moreover, the posters can be oral explanations and prompts for some writing activities. What matters is the creativity of the classroom teacher to integrate these types of activities with the daily lesson.

2.3.2.11 Debate

This is a type of task in which students take sides either in favour of or against the motion (Faust and Paulson, 1998: 16). Students learn formal arguments for a variety of occasions. This technique is good for EFL learners to talk on a subject of their interest. This helps them to develop fluency and confidence when they speak before a group of people.

2.3.3 Practicing Active Learning in the Classroom

Considering the classroom situation is important in order to implement active learning in the teaching and learning process. In relation to this, Michel, Cater & Varela, and (2009:400), suggest some dimensions to promote active learning in the classroom. These are context, class preparation, class delivery, and continuous improvement. Context refers to creating conducive or relaxed environment in the classroom. Preparation for classroom

refers to thinking and planning of classroom reflection by creating new ways of doing things on the part of the teacher or instructor before coming to the classroom. Then, it is essential to implement the planned lesson appropriately and get feedback to use it for further improvement of the teaching and learning process.

Dieu, Campbell and Ammann (2006: 7) argue that as a shift away from the traditional teacher-centred approach, peer-centred teaching is an alternative to teach EFL/ ESL since students work hard in their own style of learning out of the classroom, everywhere and anytime. In such a way, they improve their language skills using the available resources in their environment even if there is no speech community; they will not be dependent upon their teachers; however, their teachers should play a supportive role to assist the students.

In this connection, audio-visual material plays a great role for language learning. For instance, students can collect material from the internet (e.g. e-mails and pen pals) and practise them individually and with their friends. This helps the students to see how the language is used in real world meaningful contexts thereby using it to express their ideas (Dieu *et al.*, 0062005: 7; Griffith and Lim, 2010: 81).

2.3.3.1 Staff Training

Among the major factors affecting the implementation of active learning in the teaching and learning process, the awareness and training of the academic staff is the most important one. In relation to this, Pundak and Rosner (2008:153) indicate that, when instructors are faced with new ways of teaching methods, they are not ready to take risks in attempting innovations as they experience a threatening feeling of uncertainty. They may also stick to the previous way of teaching in order to show that their past way of doing things was correct, and they also tend to take role models from their universities that may not be relevant to the present situations.

Gibbs and Coffey (2004: 89) describe two different approaches of staff training. The first one is a teacher-focused approach in which the trainee is primarily concerned with the organisation, presentation and testing of content and their own teaching behaviour. The second one is a student –focused approach in which the teacher is primarily concerned with supporting students' learning so that they develop their skills in the teaching and learning process. As teaching is both art and science, the teacher's way of presentation is really important to determine the success of active learning.

After they get training on how to use active learning, teachers are expected to develop teaching techniques and activities that are appropriate for the subjects they teach. That is to say the teachers are expected to be good at designing relevant teaching techniques in addition to being content experts.

2.3.3.2 Student Awareness

Students are the main stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. Classroom instruction will not be effective unless there is understanding and full cooperation on the side of the students. When teachers introduce any form of innovation in the instruction, students have to accept it and engage willingly in implementing it to be effective. However, there is always resistance when new things are introduced in the instruction.

According to the study of Felder and Brent (1996: 44), students showed resistance to work with active learning approaches. It is natural that not all students accept and work with innovations in the instruction using active learning willingly. Due to the influence of previous experience in the teacher-centred instruction, lack of understanding why they are learning in the new method and students' preference for surface level understanding of the instruction, students do not show interest to learn using active learning approaches (Faust and Paulson, 1998: 19; Pundak, Herscovitz, Shacham & Wiser-Biton, 2009: 219).

These students are hesitant and resistant to the new teaching and learning process. Therefore, classroom teachers are expected to create awareness for students with some training and guidance so that they can use active learning effectively. The communication environment in the classroom is also a factor to implement active learning in the instructional process. Students do not actively participate and work hard to do learning tasks and activities when there is negative communication environment in the classroom (Faust and Paulson, 1998: 19). As they feel stressed in such environment, they do not contribute ideas in discussion or do not come prepared to classroom by reading and writing assignments. Moreover, in an EFL classroom, students do not have the courage to be active and reflective learner, and they prefer a teacher-centred approach, which does not affect their self-concept and self-esteem (Boersma, 2008: 27).

Summarising the above points, Doyle (2008: 18-19) presents the following reasons why students do not accept a change from teacher-centred to student-centred approach positively:

Old habits die hard.
High schools remain teacher-centred institutions.
Learning is not a top reason students give for attending college.
Students do not like taking learning risks.
Learner-centred teaching does not resemble what students think of as school. Students do not want to put forth the extra effort learner-centred teaching requires. Students' mind-sets about learning make adapting to learner-centred teaching more difficult. Many students follow the path of least resistance in their learning.

From the above list, it is possible to see that previous learning experience, understanding about teaching and learning process and lack of commitment to and motivation for learning are major elements that affect students' engagement in innovative approaches of instruction. These student related-variables are primarily attitudinal issues, which can be addressed over time.

Therefore, to minimise these types of challenges, teachers should work hard to make students believe that the method is relevant for their learning (Felder, 2007: 183). As a result, the students' resistance is likely to decrease through time as students experience the new methods of the teaching and learning process (Felder, 2007: 184).

2.3.3.3 Recommendations for the Use of Active Learning Approaches in Classrooms

There are many suggestions that educators forward to teachers so that they can introduce and use active learning in their classrooms. The University of Minnesota (2012) has summarised these points that teachers should take into consideration to implement active learning effectively in their classrooms:

- To overcome student resistance to active learning, classroom teachers are advised to introduce active learning to the class early with a clear instruction on how to work with it. Here the students are informed what benefits they get and why and how the teacher is doing in such a way. This leads to agreement and trust between the teacher and the students in the learning activities. The teacher is expected to start with easier ways/ strategies and later may move on to more challenging ones, using active learning consistently throughout the course offering. This makes the students to adjust and avoid frustration.
- It is also important to give immediate feedback to students for their challenges in the teaching and learning process. This will help them not to resort to the old ways (passive learning), and to work hard more.
- Teachers also have to monitor what the students are doing in groups or individually. When the students are given a task, the goal, time given, procedure to do it and

- performance level are considered during the evaluation. Thus, the tasks or activities should not be set randomly; rather they should be designed carefully.
- Teachers also have to manage the time given and use it effectively. Based on the learning objectives, it is good to select contents to cover in the class for face to face instruction, and consider more activities that students may cover individually or in groups out of classroom.
- It is also important to determine assessment techniques that teachers may use in the class to identify what students are learning and what is confusing them. This will show the progress of the students in mastering the learning objectives. It is also wise not to race in the instruction to cover a vast amount of content. This is not teaching, but confusing. "Remember that just because you say it, doesn't mean they learn it".
- To handle dysfunctional groups, it is good to design tasks carefully. "Design group activities to include positive interdependence, independent accountability, face-to-face interaction, use of group social skills, and group processing."
- To ensure quality peer review of writing-- Teach students how to conduct a peer review. Focus on the reasons for doing them, the process to follow, and how to give (and receive) constructive feedback. Create a rubric or checklist for students to use during peer review. The students should understand the importance of peer and self-correction, in addition to teacher correction.

(University of Minnesota website, 2012)

The above description presents that both the students and the teachers should approach active learning in new ways, which are different from the one observed in teacher-centred approach. In order to use this approach, the classroom teachers are required to focus on issues like briefing students about active learning approach, engaging in effective lesson planning, using appropriate assessment techniques, organising students for effective instruction, involving students in decision making, giving timely feedback, and monitoring and evaluating the progress of the teaching and learning process. It is also good to be flexible and adapt changes during instruction by considering the dynamics of the classroom.

2.4 Experience in using Active Learning in the EFL Instruction in a Sample of Countries

There are many relevant experiences in teaching different subjects in a variety of disciplines using active learning approaches. This case is also true in the EFL instruction. As part of this description, the following section surveys the researches in relation to the productive skills in particular, and EFL instruction in general in some parts of the world.

Among the most widely known modern educators who are contributors to constructivism are John D. Bransford, Ernst von Glasersfeld, Eleanor Duckworth, George Forman, Roger Schank, Jacqueline Grennon Brooks, and Martin G. Brooks (Educational Broadcasting

Corporation, 2004). These educators have studied, written about and applied the constructivist approach in school environments. As a result, the idea of constructivism became widely known in many school environments all over the world in the last 20 years.

In Canada, the government has introduced a reform in the education sector, which applies constructivism in the school environments (Cobb, 2005). Likewise, the Turkish government introduced constructivism in the education sector to remedy problems observed in the teaching and learning process (Birgin and Baki, 2007: 77). The problems were related with surface approach to learning and poor assessment techniques. However, one major challenge to the implementation of the reform was that teachers did not have the necessary knowledge, skill, and attitude towards constructivism.

As part of a reform in education, language classrooms are also reflecting the constructivist approach in the day-to-day teaching and learning process. This is observed in the instruction, students' classroom seating, the learning activities and resources, and the assessment techniques. The concepts of the reform were not new ideas to language educators. According to Cobb (2005), language educators in general and applied linguists in particular were already practicing the ideas of constructivism in teaching languages during the late 1970's when they departed from the behaviourist point of view. Some of the key elements in the language instruction during this time were active use rather than passive use of language, student-centred than teacher-centred approach, and the role of motivation and background knowledge in learning a language (Cobb, 2005). Currently, these are some of the basis for the assumptions in the constructivist approach to instruction.

In New Zealand, the idea of constructivism has influenced the whole curriculum from top to down in the education system (Matthews, 2000:165). In Thailand, cognitive constructivism and social constructivism are practiced in EFL instructions to improve students' writing skills, and the result was considered to be fruitful (Dueraman, 2012: 260). Although the role of productive skills is strongly emphasised as a desired outcome in an EFL/ESL instruction, the teaching and learning process most often does not encourage this aspiration. There are a number of factors that may affect the realisation of this goal. Among these factors, teaching methods, teachers' training and experience, student related variables, educational facilities, class size, the purpose of the English language curriculum, and the country's situations are the major ones.

For instance, Zohrabi, Torabi and Baybourdiani (2012: 9) report that students' oral skill is not given attention in Iranian secondary and tertiary EFL teaching and evaluation, and teachers put less attention on students' speaking abilities, while they emphasise reading, grammar and writing. The main focus is to help students pass classroom tests and examinations rather than to upgrade their productive skills, i.e. speaking and writing skills. As Zohrabi, Torabi & Baybourdiani, 2012: 9) indicated, students at the university were not effective in using English communicatively and teachers did not use active learning or student-centred approach in their classroom; students were passive receptors of their teachers' instruction and poor in their use of productive skills. In short, there is no balance between the teaching of productive skills and receptive skills.

According to Dueraman (2012: 266), English in Thailand is considered as a language of education, wealth, and prestige at family level. As a result, many people are working hard to study English so that they can be proficient in their communication although they are not successful for some reasons.

At the secondary and the tertiary levels, the curriculum does not give attention to writing skills and students are not good at producing academic papers (Dueraman, 2012: 267). Since there is scarcity of skilled English language teachers, usually EFL teachers do not give chance to students to practise writing skills; rather they play the role of examiners (Dueraman, 2012: 270). This shows that the classroom condition is not conducive to the learning of writing skills. That is to say, students are not given chances to experience the process approach to writing, and teachers do not teach students study skills to develop their critical-thinking and problem solving skills in relation to writing skill (Dueraman, 2012: 272).

As their culture encourages top-down communication, the students are not motivated to interact freely with their peers and teachers, and teachers use teacher-centred approach in their teaching; this does not encourage the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills (Dueraman, 2012: 268 & 272). Zhao (2009: 3) cites Hu (2002) and Zhong and Shen (2002) in reporting that, in China, EFL instruction has got great attention in that information technology and new methods of teaching are used to teach students to get better results. There is a wide application of information communication technology in teaching English language. By using a lot of multimedia and hypermedia, they have created an innovative learning environment in English classroom (Zhao, 2009: 3). This helps to increase motivation and interaction of students.

However, despite these introductions, the EFL instruction is more of teacher-centred (Yang and Wilson,2006: 364) and test driven, where there is emphasis for grammar, vocabulary, and test-guided writing (Zhao,2008: 3). As a result, the students are not good at communication, as they do not practice the language in speaking and writing to express their idea.

2.5 The Ethiopian Experience in using Active Learning Approaches

Based on the above survey of literature, which touches upon the implementation of active learning in other countries, the next section presents the findings and insights of researchers in relation to using active learning in the Ethiopian education system. The description is about the teaching and learning process in the general education and in field specific disciplines including teaching English language. The research findings are related to the primary, the secondary and tertiary levels of the education system.

2.5.1 The Importance of English in Ethiopia

The English language was introduced in Ethiopia during the introduction of modern education towards the beginning of the 20th century. According to Mesert (2012: 23) English was introduced in the elementary school curriculum in 1947/48 with the provision of teaching materials from the British council.

In Ethiopia, the teaching of English language is given high attention in the education system starting from the primary to the tertiary levels. The new education and training policy of Ethiopia gives priority to the teaching of English language. This is reflected not only in the formal schooling but also in the kindergartens, where centres try to make the little children speak English, and satisfy their customers, i.e. children's parents. Parents prefer private schools based on the belief that their children will learn English effectively there. These private schools give priority to English for business (and not educational) reasons.

It is taught as a subject starting from primary level to the tertiary level, and it is also a medium of instruction in the secondary and tertiary level. This role of English language was not changed when governments changed the country's education system from one type to the other type in the past. This indicates that the importance of English is highly valued in the academic and social environment in the country. English is also the

language that Ethiopia uses for its communication with the international community. It is from this point of view that the subsequent governments used English as the sole foreign language in the country's education system.

As English is the instructional language in the tertiary level, students are expected to have a good command of the language to be successful in their academic life. In relation to productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing skills) students need to have proficiency to cope with the academic activities and strengthen their professional and communicative competence.

2.5.2 The Role of Professional Development for Instructors

After reviewing some studies, Alemayhu and Solomon (2007: 105) report that there is little or no recognition for the significance of teachers' professional development in the history of education. However, these writers also note that, nowadays, it is recognised that the importance of professional development is considered as an essential element to the systematic educational reform and school changes, which is expected to improve the teaching and learning process.

The major objective of professional development is to change the beliefs, attitudes, and teaching techniques of teachers in order to see success in students' learning (Alemayhu and Solomon, 2007: 105). This is because the successful implementation of school reform will depend on what happens in the classroom, and this in turn is affected by the attitudinal factors and concerns teachers have towards the teaching and learning process. These psychological elements highly influence the way teachers teach their students.

It is in line with the above idea that the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia demands every teacher, from the primary to the tertiary level, to participate in in-service training. As part of this reflection, instructors in the higher institutions take a year-long training, which is called higher diploma Programme (HDP) to upgrade their profession and improve the quality of education. This programme is designed to help instructors get awareness about the teaching profession as most of them do not have training on how to teach. The ministry of education distributes handbooks for the participants of the training. The topics covered in the teacher educators' handbook are modern approaches of teaching such as active learning, and evaluation methods like continuous assessment in the teaching and learning process of higher education. In such a way the ministry of education hopes to introduce innovation in the education sector in general and tertiary education in particular.

Furthermore, Alemayhu and Solomon (2007: 113) assert that it is a common experience that, in practicing to implement innovation in school environment, the instructors are likely to move along a continuum that ranges from no use to full use of the new strategies in their classrooms. Therefore, the success or failure of the introduction of innovative teaching strategies depends not only on persuading to adopt it but also on implementing it fully to bring about the desired changes.

Explaining this point, Alemayhu and Solomon (2007: 113) further mention the following points:

Even though individuals have been provided with identical information and similar training, teachers tend to modify the innovation to meet their own needs. Some individuals will be able to take full advantage of an innovation's potential, while others will go mechanically through the steps minimally necessary to be in compliance with an administrative mandate to follow the new program.

From the above extract, it is possible to realise that the introduction of innovation in the teaching and learning process is not be accepted equally and implemented fully by every instructor in teaching their respective subjects well after undergoing the training. That means, after getting the higher diploma certificate, the instructors may not be involved fully to teach and evaluate their students in the new ways. Teachers should not be left at personal will to implement the innovation, and educational leaders should work hard to help teachers apply the changes in their day-to-day teaching practice (Alemayhu and Solomon, 2007: 115).

2.5.3 Major Problems in the Implementation of Active Learning in the Ethiopian Education

There is scarcity of published researches about the implementation of active learning in the Ethiopian school contexts (Boersma, 2008: 103). Even if there are some articles, their focus is on the general trends of education in the primary schools. There are few studies that focus on specific subjects, like English language at the tertiary level of education. Thus, it is difficult to get many studies about the implementation of student-centred approach and active learning in the Ethiopian school contexts.

Serbessa (2006: 132), one of the educational researchers, reports that the Ethiopian upbringing or socialisation does not encourage free discussion and interaction. He mentions this problem in relation to church education, which has influenced the teaching

tradition by becoming a model for the teaching and learning process of the modern education. Church education encourages “obedience, politeness, and silence” (Serbessa, 2006: 132). These elements play a negative role in the implementation of active and reflective teaching approaches in order to make students critical thinkers and problem solvers.

In his descriptive study, which involves the Ethiopian primary schools, Serbessa (2006: 137) found out that lecture method dominates, and teachers focus on continuous assessment; the major problems in applying active learning were the country’s tradition of teaching and learning process, lack of institutional support and learning resources, teachers’ lack of skills, problems in the curricular materials, and low level of students’ interest to work in active learning approaches

In relation to problems at the tertiary level, the Ethiopian higher education used to experience many problems in the past, and these problems were considered to affect negatively the teaching and learning process. For instance, according to Desta (2004: 72-79), the following were the major problems: lack of pedagogical training for instructors, using lecture method predominantly, lack of experienced and qualified instructors, poor measurement and evaluation system, and lack of teaching resources and facilities. In connection with this idea, Al Jarf (2006: 9) indicates that large class sizes at undergraduate level has negative impacts on students’ achievement, attitude of instructors and students towards instruction, classroom instruction and students’ assessment.

Furthermore, Serbessa (2005: 127) listed that the main challenges in implementing active learning in Ethiopian higher education institutions are lack of teachers’ expertise, lack of institutional support and learning resources, problems in the tradition of child upbringing and teaching, inappropriate use of teaching materials, and lack of students’ active participation in the teaching and learning process. The Ethiopian education and training policy recommends that innovative teaching and learning approaches must be implemented. In practice, however, the traditional lecture method was still prevalent in the teaching and learning process in the Ethiopian higher education institutions (Serbessa, 2005: 127).

In order to identify the main reasons why these innovative teaching and learning approaches are not implemented, Serbessa (2005: 131-133) carried out a survey study in the institutions and obtained the following results:

Instructors felt that they use lecture method as they know it very well, and their students are in favour of it.
Some lack confidence and knowledge to apply active learning in their class
Others claim lack of resources
Some teachers fear that students may not learn concepts in detail.
The way of test (i.e. focus on right answer) led students to shift and concentrate on memorising chunks of information
The classroom seating arrangement and large class size (80 or more students) does not allow instructors to use active learning.
The activities in the teaching materials are not presented in a way to encourage independent and reflective way of learning. Most course materials with a large amount of information to be memorised and students do not feel they are learning if instructors use active learning.
Since active learning is time consuming, students do not give attention to some topics as they are expected to cover vast portion of the course.
The instructors do not feel they can manage their course in short time if they use active learning approaches. So, to balance the objectivist and constructivist views of education, more effort is needed.

From the above list of findings, it is possible to summarise that the problems are related to earlier experience in the teaching and learning process, lack of knowledge, skills and attitudes to use new teaching techniques, problems in the assessment and evaluation system, and problems in connection with the facilities and teaching materials. The findings reflected that the objectivist model of teaching is still dominant in the instructional process. There is still a gap between what was planned in the policy and achieved in practice to bring the desired change.

Thus, in order to improve the teaching and learning process as stated in the policy document, balancing the objectivist dominance by using more constructivist approaches is essential in order to achieve the desired learning objectives and match students' learning styles with the instructional approach. Similarly, Smith (2004: 61) has also reflected that the Ethiopian higher education institutions are affected by evaluation mechanisms, shortage of facilities, lack of pedagogical skills, lack of experience and qualification of instructors, poor guidance and counselling services, and dominance of the lecture method. Furthermore, according to research findings of a group of researchers on students of Debre Markos University, it was found out that most students were said to join preparatory programme without sufficient academic talents (Tesera, Shumet, and Demeke, 2010: 55). This becomes a barrier for students' academic success at the freshman programme.

2.5.4 The Quality of English Language Teaching in the Ethiopian Universities

English is used as a medium of instruction and communication at universities and colleges in Ethiopia. Therefore, students are expected to be proficient in this language to be successful in their academic works. To help students improve their academic and communication needs, two support courses are offered for undergraduate students in the Ethiopian universities. These courses are Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills. Concerning this, for instance, Seid (2012: 14) reported that students take these common courses at Addis Ababa university to improve students' proficiency as well as accuracy in using English for their university studies; however, he commented that the language performance of students is not satisfactory even after taking these courses.

Seid (2012: 15) also observed that university students were used English poorly for their academic and communication purposes. This problem is still observed in the present day in the universities and stakeholders reflect similar dissatisfaction in many instances about students' and graduates' proficiency of English.

More over, Firdissa (2012: 7) reports that graduates from Ethiopian universities are poor in their writing skills as reflected by their inability in producing short reports in connection with their jobs. In connection to this, Mesert (2012: 2) comments that there seems to be a general tendency among language teachers in Ethiopia to relegate writing to homework for fear of the amount of work and time involved in correcting students' writing because of the large number of students in a class.

Moreover, summarising the findings of previous studies, Mesert (2012: 2) concluded that it is challenging and boring to teach and develop the writing skills of most students in the Ethiopian schools and universities; so students have low writing skill and teachers do not like to teach this skill to their students. According to the findings of some studies conducted in some Ethiopian universities, it was reported that many students were not good at using English for their academic purpose, and complaints were heard even from the society that the level of English is deteriorating (Mesert, 2012: 6).

Similarly, after reviewing other studies, Seid (2012: 13) concluded that the quality of English language instruction in the Ethiopian secondary schools experienced lack of qualified teachers, inappropriate methodology, overcrowded classrooms, and shortage of sufficient books and facilities. As a result, students do not show progress in their language

proficiency after studying English for many years. Therefore, when they join the universities, they face great challenges to follow their university education. They are poor in their language skills in general and productive skills in particular to use for their academic and communication purposes.

Since it is a medium of instruction and a means of communication in higher institutions, it is likely that students' understanding of their major area courses will be determined by their level of proficiency. Therefore, if students are not proficient in using English, they face challenges in their academic progress.

2.5.5 Problems in the EFL Instruction in Ethiopia

Mesert (2012: 22) commented that the quality of English language teaching in Ethiopia needs improvement as it is characterised by traditional teaching method and poor teacher training, which affects students' communicative competence and language learning. Due to the influence of their training, teachers often resort to the teacher-centred approach.

In some studies, it is observed that instructors did not use alternative teaching methods in conducting class. For example, according to the findings of Boersma (2008: 71), many EFL instructors did not use alternative teaching methods other than lecturing in their course offering at Bahir Dar University. The researcher also claimed that the instructors are likely to change their teaching style after taking higher diploma training. The instructors also pointed out that they have problems like large class size, lack of facilities, and being busy with many things as challenges to implement a variety of teaching approaches. Thus, they are concerned with the practicality of the idea of the higher diploma training in the context of the university.

Some researchers relate the poor background of freshman students to the EFL instruction in the secondary school levels in Ethiopia. For instance, Tessema (2006:203) criticises that students are exposed to television broadcasting education (Plasma TV) in which they are passive listeners and their teachers are limited to introducing and summarising the lesson for a few minutes, while the television takes the lion's share. As a result, both students and teachers are not in an interactive way in the teaching and learning process, since the teachers' role is replaced by the television.

This is not good for the development of productive skills in the EFL instruction. Students join universities with such poor background without appropriate practice of writing

paragraphs and essays, and practice of making extended speeches to audience like the students in their classrooms. Moreover, according to the Education and training policy of Ethiopian, students are expected to take national examinations at grade 8, grade 10 and grade12 (FDRE 1994: 18). These national examinations also have a backwash effect on the teaching and learning process of the English language. As the examination at each level is objective type in which students choose correct answers, they prepare themselves for this type of activity, and do not work on improving their speech or writing skills.

Citing Taddele (1990), Hailemichael (1993) and Awol (1999), Mesert (2012: 25) also points out that, as the English language national examinations in Ethiopia focuses on the grammar of the language, the teachers and students do not focus on developing the productive skills in using the language for communicative purposes, and so their level of communicative proficiency is found to be poor, and teachers use mostly the traditional lecture method in conducting classes. As a result, when students join university, they go with a poor background in their productive skills. This becomes drawback on their academic progress at first-year level. As they are not trained for the demands of tertiary level of education, most of the students experience problems in using their productive skills for their academic purpose.

Boersma (2008: 103), in her study at Bahir Dar University reported that most of the EFL instructors did not have enough training to use modern teaching methods, were not involved in discussion and did not obtain research support to facilitate their instruction. Similarly, citing Dejene (1990) and Wagari (2010), Mesert (2012: 22) shares this idea that the quality of English language teaching (ELT) in Ethiopia needs improvement as it is characterised by traditional teaching methods and poor teacher training, which affects students' communicative competence and language learning. Due to the influence of their training and other factors, teachers most often resort to teacher-centred approach, rather than student-centred approach.

Another problem could be the beliefs of teachers about the language teaching, learning and the students. This affects the teaching and learning process either negatively or positively. In line with this, Melketo (2012: 36) states that instructors' teaching beliefs and their practices at Wolaita Sodo University indicated mismatch for some reasons, which include shortage of class time, students' interest and expectation, teaching for the test, and showing a concern for the classroom management.

Here, based on the interview, the instructors indicated that due to time constraints and lack of students' interest, they reported that it was not possible to implement fully the process approach to teaching writing skills. Thus, Boersma (2008: 105) recommends that EFL instructors in Ethiopian universities need support to use new instructional approaches in running their classes.

It is long ago that the Ministry of Education (MOE) tried to avert this type of challenge by introducing in-service training for teachers and instructors. One form of this training is the higher diploma training, which is offered for all instructors who teach at colleges and universities. This training is expected to help instructors to change their teaching style and shift to an interactive way using new methods, i.e. active learning approaches.

In Ethiopia, as English is studied as a foreign language, it is rarely used out of classroom for the day-to-day communication. As a result, students do not get the chance to practice English, and as a result they do not have proficiency in using English. After studying English as a subject and using it as a language of instruction for many years, they get some more common courses of English at the undergraduate level in addition to using it as a language of instruction.

Here, most of the students do not have a good background in using English for their academic purpose. As a result, most of the students have bad feeling about English as is reflected among Iranian students in which they see English as a burden and a difficult task to study (Behabadi and Behfrouz, 2013: 80).

2.6 Teaching Productive Skills and Challenges in EFL Classrooms

The following discussion presents issues in relation to definition of the productive skills and the barriers that affect the successful teaching and learning process in EFL classes. These are teacher-related factors, learner-related factors, school-related factors, and other common factors that influence directly the language instruction. Many research findings have identified the negative effects of these factors over the teaching and learning process.

2.6.1 What are Productive Skills?

In the teaching of English, there are four basic language skills that students have to develop for effective communication. These basic skills are reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. These skills are also categorised into two broad aspects: receptive (passive) skills and productive (active) skills. Productive skills (active skills) as opposed to receptive skills (passive skills) refer to speaking and writing as part of the four language skills (Imane, 2015: 1; Boonkit, 2010: 1306) and they are useful for “the transmission of information that a language user produces in either spoken or written form” (Golkovaa and Hubackovab, 2014: 478).

Reading and listening skills are receptive skills since they are important to get or receive information and they are the first things EFL students take on (Golkovaa and Hubackovab, 2014: 478), while speaking and writing skills are called active or productive skills since they are important to make learners produce their own idea using the new language. Productive skills enforce students to use their mind to produce information. These skills have similar goals of expressing oneself although they are different in their mode of delivery (i.e. spoken form, or written form of communication) (Imane, 2015: 1).

Boonkit (2010: 1306) notes that speaking is the most important language skill useful for communication in a variety of social contexts. For instance, it is necessary for business purposes such as presentations or job interview. It was also found out that speaking skill was rated highly by employers in comparison with academic documents and work experience (Boonkit, 2010: 1306). However, most of the time EFL students are not in conducive environment to practice and use English. For example, in the context of Thailand, EFL students do not have opportunities to use English with English speakers out of classroom situations (Boonkit, 2010: 1306). Therefore, EFL teachers are expected to play a great role in helping students to experience English in the classroom by creating conducive situations and activities.

2.6.2 Challenges in Teaching Productive Skills in EFL Classrooms

Many studies have pointed out that the mastery of productive skills is very difficult for EFL students due to various factors influencing the teaching and learning process (Alvarado, 2014: 66). One factor is that willingness and motivation are important for writing skill. Speaking is also affected by knowledge of vocabulary, shyness, fear of making errors, and the level of knowledge students have of the language and topics for speaking, self-

confidence, students' cooperation, classroom environment, and involvement (Alvarado, 2014: 67 & 70).

According to findings of Alvarado (2014: 83), the teaching of productive skills in EFL class was affected by lack of willingness to use English, bad method of teaching, lack of knowledge on the topics, lack of time for practice, fear of making error and mother tongue interference. At the very beginning students need to have a strong motivation, willingness and interest to learn English as a reflection of personal commitment. For instance, in one study it was observed that, when EFL students were made to engage in cooperative learning activities, most of the time they used their mother tongue instead of English in discussing given activities with their friends (Alvarado, 2014: 70). Again, when students used topics for writing they are well informed of, they performed better in their drafts; the freedom students have in choosing the topics of speaking had also positive impact for their motivation for speaking activities (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the method of teaching should be encouraging or conducive for the students to use the language in a meaningful way in the classroom. This is the most important place where students use the language with their peers and teachers. If the classroom is bad for using English to develop speaking and writing skills, the chance to get any other favourable place to practise their English is very rare.

It is also clear that students need content knowledge (background knowledge) on the topics they are going to write or speak on. If they do not have this information/idea, they are not effective in their practice. Again students need to be encouraged to see errors as signs of learning, instead of considering them as weaknesses. They should not shy away (reserve) from using their English in the classroom. When students are not rich in vocabulary or are not able to express their ideas in an effective way, they may resort to their mother tongue. This in turn hinders the smooth flow of ideas, and break down of communication if the audience does not know students' mother tongue.

Based on the report of Boonkit (2010: 1306), it is reported that Thai EFL students showed lack of confidence in using English in real contexts. These students were afraid of making errors in using English with native speakers. In another study on how to increase confidence and competence of students in using English in Thailand, it is indicated that the development of confidence and getting occasions to use English are mentioned as important issues (Boonkit, 2010: 1305).

Boonkit (2010: 1306) mention that a good syllabus, method of teaching, and relevant activities and situations are important to develop EFL students' speaking skill, and he further stresses that EFL teachers should put priority to build students' confidence in using English and avoid their fear of making errors. In another study, it is found out that EFL learners are introduced to other out of class activities such as listening to radio, watching television programmes, watching movies, listening to music and accessing multimedia websites, and it is found out that students improve their speaking skills (Boonkit, 2010: 1308).

It is difficult to implement a variety of active learning approaches in the classroom. Among the factors that affect this, class size, time given for the course and facilities are mentioned. Teachers find it difficult to practice effectively different teaching methods and assessment techniques in their classrooms if they are faced with these types of problems (Davis, 2003: 251; Boersma, 2008: 112; Rajcoomar, 2013: 10). As a result, it is difficult to help each student by giving feedback, which is informative and long so that they can identify their weakness and strength (Mutch, 2003: 25).

Resources available in the school environment play a big role in the teaching and learning process of productive skills. When there are hard and soft copy materials in quality and quantity, the students will get the chance to use them and practice their language. This is especially important in EFL/ESL teaching since the students do not get the speech community of the language they study in and out of the school. In connection with this, Dueraman (2012: 271) asserts that EFL students in Thailand are faced with scarcity of resources. Even if resources are there in the library such as reference books, most of the students do not like to read these books. Thus, teachers should make strategies to make students engage in extensive reading and using other resources to improve the students' language skills in general and productive skills in particular.

In connection with the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in EFL instruction, there are many promising experiences all over the world. For example, in China, in one experimental study, researchers used internet to teach reading and writing skills for Chinese undergraduate students. It is found out that students' motivation to study the language increased and their speaking and writing skills improve as they use the language for real communication with pen pals (Zhao, 2008: 2).

Similarly, other studies have highlighted the importance of other ICT inputs such as laboratories and audio-visual centres in the EFL instructions. These are important to implement student-centred approaches, and make students active participants to practice

and use the language for meaningful communication as the lesson is presented in a stimulating way for the sense organs (Riasati, Allahyar & Tan, 2012: 26). This makes the students active participants. ICT is also important to give relevant feedback for students. Generally, ICT introduced a major paradigm shift in the EFL instruction where teachers act as facilitators, guides and supporters of students, while the students themselves are the main actors in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, according to the findings of Riasati, Allahyar and Tan (2012: 26), ICT brought variety into the classroom, promoted more communication, lowered anxiety level, increased autonomy, and developed learners' particular language skills.

The other factor that may affect the implementation of a new model of curriculum change is the awareness, capacity, experience and attitude of teachers, and more over the administrative support to the teachers also play a great role (Rismiati, 2012: 47). Because the change is done by individuals, their perception and ability influence the implementation of new ways of doing things in the teaching and learning process. For instance, in Thailand, the lack of experienced writing teachers is mentioned as a problem for the poor performance of students at the secondary and undergraduate level (Dueraman, 2012: 270).

Some other problems were observed in implementing communicative language teaching method in EFL classrooms. Cheewakaroon (2011: 77) points out that students' poor proficiency, lack of motivation, large class size, shortage of time for the lesson, and exam-oriented teaching and learning were mentioned as constraints to implement student-centred approach in an undergraduate EFL instruction in Thailand. In connection with this, it was reported that, since students do not use English for their social communication, they study for passing examinations and getting a degree. So, they do not work hard beyond this target for general language proficiency. In the context of the Japanese schools, Araki-Metcalf (2011: 275) mentions that English language teachers give more focus for examination oriented approach, and they consider the teaching of speaking skills as wastage of time.

Another challenge comes from the mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their real practice in the classroom in implementing student-centred language teaching method. For instance, Cheewakaroon (2011: 80) mentions that even if teachers had claimed that they liked to implement student-centred approach in their classroom they resorted to the traditional teacher-centred EFL instruction during actual instruction.

Changing the traditional ways and using new methods in the teaching and learning process is likely to pose challenges for those involved in the process. Sometimes instructors may consider that most of the active learning methods are practical for other disciplines, not for their subjects (Stanford, 3: 1997). They consider that the time spent when students work on activities is wasted, while there is a lot of content to be covered. There is also fear of taking risks in the classroom in experimenting with new methods of teaching and learning. In addition to this, there is no institutional or collegial support to develop or change the teaching and learning process.

Michell, Cater, and varela (2009:403) recommends that class size in an EFL teaching is on average 10 to 20 students and if it is beyond this, the teaching is more likely to be lecture-based, and it depends on the country, the economy and integrity of the employer. Similarly, Griffith and Lim, (2010: 80) also commented that, in many EFL teachings, students experience large class size (35-50 students in a class), more teacher-centred approach, and more grammar type written test, which do not give chance for students to practice authentic and relevant language for their real world communication. Similarly, High school students in Iran reported that large class size was a problem in EFL teaching since the students did not get enough time to practise the language in their speech and writing (Tabatabaei and Pourakbari 2012: 110).

In contrast to this, student-centred approach is recommended since it gives chance for learners to develop their communicative competence, to practise the language and use it, and to develop their accuracy and fluency in using English (Griffith and Lim, 2010: 75).

2.7 Approaches to Teach Writing Skills

It is a common knowledge that writing in a foreign language is a difficult skill to master. Among the problems that influence the teaching and learning of writing are text organisation, vocabulary, grammar, motivation to write, purpose of writing, and content knowledge. Moreover, students are also expected to master diverse types of texts in the teaching and learning process (Gupitasari, 2013: 80).

As there is a difference between mother tongue and foreign language, writing in EFL/ESL is a very challenging task for students; some of the factors that affect students' success are the similarity of first language and foreign language in terms of genre culture, the

students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, and transfer of good writing strategies from their mother tongue to the second language (Refnaldi, 2013: 481; Tuan, 2011: 1471).

Based on the findings of Alvarado (2014: 71), grammar, mechanics and vocabulary had negative impacts on the content and understanding of EFL students' writing. In addition to the structure of English, other factors such as motivation, feedback and topic selection have also contributed to the effectiveness of students' writing (Alvarado, 2014: 71).

The other problem is that writing in English is considered as a compulsory task and studied mainly for examination-driven purpose rather than for communication (Tuan, 2011: 1471). The students practice writing tasks as forms of drills to prepare for tests and examination, not for exchange of meaningful communications. They do not plan to use writing as lifelong skill necessary in the academic and professional life.

Yan (2005: 19) adds that producing good ESL/EFL writing is very challenging for students partly because the rhetorical conventions (structure, style, and organisation) of English texts are different from the conventions of students' first languages. Therefore, students are expected to understand these differences and make effort to manage their writing (Yan, 2005: 19).

Thus, theoreticians in the field of language teaching have forwarded different approaches to the teaching of writing skill in ESL/EFL contexts. There are three approaches to the teaching of writing skill: the product approach, the process approach, and genre approach (Brown, 1994: 333; Rahman, 2011: 3; Rusinovci, 2015: 699). However, in recent times, process-genre approach is also mentioned as a fourth approach to teaching writing. These approaches introduced issues of concern to the proponents. In the first one much emphasis was given for correct use of linguistic knowledge in the final product, while in the second, much attention was given to the process of students getting their writing done. As there were more problems observed in process approach, genre was introduced by giving emphasis on cultural and social context of writing.

Refnaldi (2013: 481) suggests that there are six focuses in the teaching of writing skill in ESL/EFL classrooms; these six areas of focus are the structure of the language, the text function, the creative expression, the process of writing, the content, and the genre. The focus of the structure is about the knowledge students need to have of the language, the vocabulary, the syntax, and other forms necessary for writing a meaningful text. The

function is about the meaning of language structure, and communicative functions that students need for their immediate purpose.

The other creative focus is about self-discovery of students' own experiences and opinions and getting awareness about social position of writers and readers. Content as a focus is about what students write on different themes or topics using their own background knowledge and experience. The other focuses, process and genre, are about giving attention to the process of writing, and using a specific type of text respectively.

2.7.1 Product Approach

This approach was the dominant practice of the traditional way of the teaching and learning of writing skill. As the focus of this approach is getting correct written products, it encourages students to master the grammatical and syntactic forms, practice the structure and organisation of paragraphs and texts (Richards, 1995: 106). Some of the main features of this approach are showing the rhetorical patterns and grammatical rules using model composition, practicing correct sentence structures, avoiding errors by practicing controlled and guided activities, and paying attention to the mechanics of writing (Richards, 1995: 106).

Since it gives emphasis to linguistic knowledge of texts, students are expected to learn this through imitation, exploration and analysis of texts provided by the teachers and use them in writing their drafts (Rusinovci, 2015: 700). Writing is seen as one that involves knowledge of linguistics of a text and the students are advised to imitate the native-like models to produce their own writing, and it also helps to avoid errors that appear in their writing.

Generally, this approach gives emphasis on practice in producing different kinds of texts by avoiding errors of any form, and does not allow students freedom to create their own composition (Richards, 1995: 107). As it focuses on the finished product, rather than on how text is produced, it neglects the process which the good writers follow to produce the final draft; it is a teacher-centred approach and the teacher is expected to evaluate the draft (Rusinovci, 2015: 699).

Rusinovci (2015: 700) indicates that the product approach was criticised for its focus on the product and grammar, and for its failure to recognise the students' linguistic and personal potentials for the writing lesson. That is to say students are not allowed to actively create their own ideas and linguistic knowledge to use in their drafts as they are

expected to follow the given model writing text. Peer-correction and self-assessment are not encouraged as the teacher is seen as the only decision maker to approve the final product. This is because the approach is a reflection of the behaviourist model of teaching introduced during the audio-lingualism era, where attention was given for rhetorical drills, syntax and form in writing (Rusinovci, 2015: 699).

As a result of the above understanding of language research regarding the weakness of product approach among, a paradigm shift was observed in the teaching of writing skill. To minimise the limitations of the product approach, process approach was introduced by its proponents.

2.7.2 Process Approach

The product approach has been criticised for its negligence for the process of writing. As a result, writing researchers have introduced the process approach. This approach gives attention to how successful writers produce their texts, i.e. it focuses on the different kinds of strategies and cognitive activities that a good writer engages in the planning, drafting and revising stages (Richards, 1995: 108; Harmer, 2001: 257; Dueraman, 2012: 264). The effort the students expend on each stage helps them to get a good draft. This approach gives chance for students to practice their writing in several stages in a friendlier environment before they get the final product. These are the ways both Cognitivists and Social-Constructivists use to teach writing skills. As Rahman (2011: 1) puts it, this approach has changed the way writing is conceived and taught in a manner that is different from product approach.

As part of this introduction, changes are observed in the role of the students and their teachers, as well as the instructional activities used in the teaching and learning process. Richards (1995: 109) reports that students are involved in learner-centred activities in which they get control over what they write, how they write and what they evaluate. This is different from the product approach in which students work on the language-focused activities. Students write on topics they are familiar with, and help each other in brainstorming and drafting.

The teacher plays a facilitator role, and does not restrict students' efforts to get "correct writing" like the case in product approach. The teacher sets appropriate tasks for individuals and groups, gives timely feedback, and teaches the strategies to follow in writing, arranges authentic contexts for the writing, teaches the principles and convention

of the writing task, etc. So, writing skills is essentially not taught, but learnt (Rusinovci, 2015: 700). Here, many active learning techniques are used to facilitate the practice of students. Students are not restricted to a model text just to follow in drafting their own writing. They are free to create their own draft based on the guidelines.

In relation to the actual instructional activities that the students may engage in the process approach, there are many things that students do in the three phases of the writing stages. Citing other critics (Koch and Brazil 1978; Lindemann 1982; Proett and Gill 1986) Richards (1995: 112-114) presents the following points.

Planning stage: These are quick writing, brainstorming, free association, clustering, and information gathering in the form of interview or observation. All this help the students to generate a lot of ideas to choose from for their first draft. This helps the students to gain confidence since they get content to write on to their paper.

Drafting stage: Here students use some of the points they got in the planning stage and expand them as they write their draft. They limit the purpose, audience and form of their writing. Moreover, they work on the introduction, body and conclusion parts of their draft. They ask themselves a number of strategic questions as they write their draft.

Revision stage: Finally, students work on the draft to make it better by changing some ideas and editing the mechanics and grammar. Students could be provided with checklists to focus on.

Here, in addition to teacher feedback, there are other methods such as oral feedback or writing conferences, peer feedback, written feedback, audio-taped feedback and computer-mediated feedback (Gonzalez, 2010: 60). These are important elements in practicing writing skill and to identify the good sides and the weak parts of the draft. Specifically, in writing skills, peer assessment encourages students not to be dependent upon teachers, to express their voice for their partners, and to gain a sense of reader awareness (Iida, 2008: 175). These are important to help students to work hard by themselves, with their group members or with their teachers.

The instruction of writing skill may proceed according to the two learning theories, working individually as well as in cooperation with others. The teachers use appropriate techniques and resources to effectively implement the instruction. In EFL instruction, it is good for students to get a lot of input from the environment so that they can strengthen their knowledge and skill. In relation to this, Dueraman (2012: 265) report that EFL students could be benefited greatly if they engage in extensive reading so that they can get a lesson to write their own text. They can enrich their vocabulary, structure, style or pattern of development and other features of discourse.

The process approach to writing is not without limitations. Researchers mention some of the weaknesses in relation to lack of focus on readers, and lack of clear purpose of writing (why it is written), lack of focus on grammar and organisation, limited view of development of writing skill only in repeated exercises and procedure, and lack of focus for effects of the social and cultural issues on construction of meaning in different kinds of writing (Rahman, 2011: 3-4; Rusinovci, 2015: 701).

Rusinovc (2015: 701) further explains that this approach tries to make ESL students “writers” when they are not ready to use the language, focus on student voice by ignoring problems in register and good argumentation, and tries to put much emphasis on writer’s purpose while it ignores the role of readers and community, and totally limits students’ attention to the skills and processes of writing only to classroom situation. In order to compensate these shortcomings of process approach, the genre approach was introduced by language researchers (proponents). It gives clear explanations for students on how the specific language works in a given social context.

2.7.3 Genre Approach

Citing Swales (1990), Rahman (2011: 3) and Tuan (2011: 1471) define genre as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes”. Mesfin (2013: 64) adds that, as a socially recognised way of writing, genre approach is all about a culturally or socially recognised form of writing like social letters or reports. This indicates that the texts are organised for a certain group of readers with certain purpose. Students get awareness about the way language is used in different communicative events (what and how language is used) by the particular discourse community (Mesfin, 2013: 66). This is related with the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky for learning and interaction (Tuan, 2011: 1472). This is to help students support each other in practicing the given writing task, and lower their anxiety of producing an EFL/ESL text.

This is expected to help students identify peculiar features of the texts or contexts and model them to draft their own text. Students practice in their drafts the problems in relation to vocabulary, grammar, and organisation. As an alternative to process approach, genre approach is applied in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Rahman, 2011: 1). This form of teaching writing is growing in Australia and in some countries of Asia (Refnaldi, 2013: 482).

In genre approach, students are presented with a specific genre of text so that they can focus and discuss on its distinctive features in order to apply the features in writing their own drafts. Some of the genres include advertisements, news articles, police reports, personal letters, and scientific papers. For example, if the given text is about scientific papers, students pay attention to its common features such as the use of passive voice, and tense in writing this type of text (Rahman, 2011: 3-4). The students are then made to practice on many exercises of the same genre to model the language and use it in their writing. So, imitation and practice are considered important aspects of this approach.

In relation to the stages of teaching of writing skills in the genre approach, three steps are followed: modelling, negotiation of students and teacher, and independent drafting of the genre (Rahman, 2011: 4-5; Tuan, 2011: 1471). In the first phase, students are introduced to the specific genre. They scrutinise text structure, language, and its functions both for educational and for social purposes. In the second phase, the students share information with their teacher on how the language can be used in the specific social contexts and attempt exercises to practice the language forms and it involves reading, research on the given topic (Rahman, 2011: 5; Tuan, 2011: 1477). Then, based on this input, the students try to draft their own writing using the given context.

According to the findings of some experimental studies, genre approach was more effective to improve students' writing skill than process approach for second language learning students. For example, Rahman (2011: 5) points out students who participated in genre approach for three weeks performed better than other groups who took lesson in process approach. These students did better in organising their text and achieving communicative functions.

As learners are made aware of the text features and conventions of the genre under discussion, they will get background knowledge that serves as a base for later writing of drafts of their own. This is considered especially important for students who are less proficient in ESL/EFL writing. Therefore, as writing is a more challenging task than other language skills, students who have little exposure to EFL/ESL writing needs this type of approach to be successful in learning since it helps students to understand how and why linguistic conventions are employed for a particular discourse, know content management in writing, and understand writing as a tool for a particular communication (Rahman, 2011: 7; Tuan, 2011: 1471).

Mesfin (2013: 69) and Rahman (2011: 7) mention that the genre approach has some limitations: as students are expected to follow a model text, they are not free to develop their own style; students are considered as passive receivers of information and does not focus on other skills important for writing such as lack of focus on content production; writing is considered under social situation with a particular purpose in which students have to mimic and understand it. That restricts the natural process of learning and the creativity of the writers at advanced level. Rahman (2011: 7) concludes this idea with the following point: “at its best it helps learners to identify and interpret literary texts; while, at its worst, it interferes with learners’ creativity”.

2.7.4 Process-Genre Approach

In recent times, researchers in the field of ESL/EFL writing have introduced an eclectic approach, which has got the elements of all the other approaches of writing. Citing various researchers (Badger and White, 2000; Kaur and Chun, 2005; Kim and Kim, 2005; Gao, 2007; Babalola, 2012), Yan (2005: 20) and Gupitasari (2013: 90) report that the process-genre approach is a synthesis of concepts taken from the two approaches, i.e. process and genre. The three approaches mentioned above were criticised for their weaknesses.

To counterbalance the limitations mentioned above in genre approach, some theoreticians introduced an eclectic approach called process-genre approach taking good points from each method to help students achieve better in developing their writing skills (Rahman, 2011: 7). In their research findings, they confirmed that if teachers introduce the lesson first using genre model, later it is possible to transfer to process approach so that students take the advantages of each side both at beginners’ level and later at advanced levels in writing on the given topics or contexts. Rusinovci (2015: 704) on his part also commented that the process-genre approach integrates the good sides of the two approaches, i.e. they are complementary in the teaching of writing skills in ESL/EFL environments. Using a good model text, students understand and explain the purpose of writing, its audience and the context under which it is written; these are parts of genre approach.

Later, they can engage in the planning, drafting, conferencing, peer reviewing, revising, editing, and publishing activities. These are elements of the process approach to writing. After the students get sufficient knowledge about the topic, purpose, audience, cultural contexts and message of writing, they can practice producing their drafts with the help of comments from their peers and teachers. Based on the given comments, they will revise

the drafts to satisfy the readers. In this way they learn to develop their writing skill and get awareness on how writing is done in the actual environment out of classroom.

With regard to the effectiveness of process-genre approach, many research findings indicated that students' writing skills showed improvements after they have been taught using this approach. In an action research, Gupitasari (2013: 93) found that students' writing scores were improved after teaching them using process-genre approach. This finding was also similar with the findings of other researchers (Gupitasari, 2013: 92).

2.8 Linking Critical Thinking and Writing Assignments

According to Bean (2011: 80), a well-designed writing assignment is important for the development of critical thinking. Students can be helped to develop their cognitive and intellectual growth using this type of writing assignments. After a longitudinal intensive research on the teaching style of college instructors, Bean (2011: 80) states that the experienced instructors present their students with assignments, which are provocative, challenging, authentic and good. The students then work hard with more motivation and curiosity to complete the tasks. These assignments then create the natural critical learning environment that makes the students active and critical thinkers. Griffith and Lim (2010: 80) and Bean (2011: 81) mention that critical thinking is a positive and productive activity in the teaching and learning process, and critical thinkers are actively engaged in life; these are important tools to stimulate the passive and unmotivated learners. Thus, students are expected to develop this kind of thinking and use it properly in their academic and even after graduation in their work related tasks.

In relation to writing skill, students are expected to use the same kind of thinking while they compose their writing tasks such as paragraphs, essays, term papers, research or discipline specific reports. All in all critical thinking is essential in producing these types of discourse genres. Moreover, Bean (2011: 80) asserts that in order to be effective in genre-specific writing, students should get subject matter knowledge in their discipline, and genre conventions, such as its method of arguments and referencing.

Writing skill involves critical thinking and dealing with subject matter. Thus, writers are expected to answer not only the subject matter issue but also the rhetorical questions beyond merely forwarding meaningful information. They pay attention to the readers' background analysis and the style of writing. Similarly, Wingate (2006: 461) states that

writing is found out to be an essential skill in the understanding and construction of subject based knowledge in higher education institution.

Bean (2011: 85) explains successful courses include the teaching of both subject matter and critical thinking, and students are “active, involved, consulting and arguing with each other, and responsible for their own learning”. This is a characteristic of student-centred classroom where active learning is practiced widely.

Among the guiding principles that the writer proposed for designing courses that involve critical thinking, the following are some of them:

- Problems, questions, or issues are the point of entry into the subject and a source of motivation for sustained inquiry.
- Students require formulating and justifying their ideals in writing or other appropriate modes.
- Students collaborate to learn and to stretch their thinking, for example, in a pair problem solving and small group work.
- Courses are assignment-centered rather than text and lecture centered. Goals, methods, and evaluation emphasize using content rather than simply acquiring it.

(Bean, 2011: 85)

Now it is clear that, when students deal with these types of courses, they need more time to work deeply and extensively on the given assignments and activities. This is especially true in writing tasks, in which students need time to draft, revise and edit their composition. It is really hard to evaluate students' writing, which is produced during a timed examination. Instructors also should be careful not to design topic-centred assignments, in which students may focus on collection of information without analysis and argumentation.

2.9 Approaches to Teach Speaking Skills

Sakale (2012: 1103) defined speaking as “an interactive process of constructing meaning, both its form and meaning depend on the context, the participants, their experiences, the environment, and the purpose for speaking”. This indicates that speaking is not a mere reflection of linguistic features, but a more complex issue involving the interest of other people, a meaningful interaction with a clear objective that depends on other contextual and environmental elements since speaking has got a more dynamic nature.

Golkovaa and Hubackovab (2014: 480) states that speaking is an important productive aural/oral skill, which helps to generate systematic verbal utterance together with non-verbal symbols in order to express our ideas to the audience. As an active use of language, speaking is the most important means of communication in understanding and expressing ideas, feelings, responses, and opinions with other people (Golkovaa and Hubackovab, 2014: 480).

This shows that speaking is very difficult in that it requires speakers to have cognitive, affective, and sociolinguistic competence in order to communicate effectively in different social and cultural situations. Speaking is a “cognitively demanding undertaking” for EFL students (Sakale, 2012: 1100).

Boonkit (2010: 1306) explains that there are other elements necessary for speaking proficiency, “including listening skills, socio-cultural factors, affective factors, and other linguistic and sociolinguistic competence such as grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence.”. Moreover, pronunciation, vocabulary, and collocations are important elements that learners need to practice to develop fluency in speaking (Boonkit, 2010: 1306).

Among the four language skills, Speaking is a highly valued talent in which students of tertiary level institutions are expected to develop so that they can be effective and proficient in their academic, and later work related communication. In relation to this idea, Rahman (2010: 2), states that this skill is expected of Indian graduates for academic and professional reasons in the globalised world.

As Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014: 9) state, speaking is an important part of everyday interaction and its teaching should go beyond the simple repetition of drills or memorisation of dialogues; it requires the students’ effort to show good impression in communicating fluently and comprehensively in real social contexts. As a result, students are expected to take some English Language support courses in higher institutions to improve their oral communication.

As Rahman (2010: 2) acknowledges, oral communication is more than a simple transfer of words between the communicators, but it is a sociological encounter where in addition to meanings, “a social reality is created, maintained and modified”. Thus, students need to develop not only the linguistic competence, but also the social competence, and for this purpose they need a lot of practice in simulated and authentic contexts in the teaching and

learning process. Adding to this point, Alvarado (2014: 71) indicates that Speaking demands grammar, strategy, and knowledge of socio-linguistics and discourse issues. Therefore, students need this type of awareness to be effective in their communication and language use.

However, teaching speaking skills is considered to be challenging among the four language skills as it is difficult to get spoken language forms out of classrooms in the speech community (Bygate, 2009: 402).

The students will be active to practice the language, and get more time, while the teacher will be a facilitator. In such classrooms, fluency is encouraged over accuracy, since the students are expected to use the language in speed, ease, and naturally to exchange meaningful ideas. The teaching of speaking skill may start with the more basic level (micro skills) such as stress, intonation, rhythm, pronunciation, vocabulary and word order in a sentence. Later, the macro skills could be added for more advanced learners. Furthermore, Sakale (2012: 1104) adds that speaking has two sub-skills: listening and pronunciation. These are very important for effective communication in spoken English. The students have to identify the sound system of English language and be proficient at pronouncing and listening. Furthermore, supra-segmental features of English and body language are also necessary for face to face communication (Sakale, 2012: 1105).

As Bygate (2009: 402) reports, there is little evidence in the literature about the methods and theories of teaching speaking. Sakale (2012: 1100) also supported this view that there are no universal teaching paradigms or theories like the one in writing skill or reading skill that guide EFL teachers. This is because throughout its history language teaching was mainly focused on the written discourse, by leaving out speaking skill (Sakale, 2012: 1101). To evaluate speaking skills, the teacher may use performance types of activities that students engage in such as oral presentation, debates, or dialogues and use rating scales to evaluate the progress of learners. These are authentic forms of assessment, which are different from the traditional types of tests, direct (oral questioning by the teacher) or paper-pencil tests.

Nowadays, the teaching and learning process in language classrooms follows more of communicative approach to encourage communication. As a reflection of the interest of language educators on this issue, the idea of communicative competence, which has four components, came to be viewed.

Communicative competence is defined as “the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge” (Savignon, 1991: 264). These components are discussed as follows:

linguistic competence- this is the knowledge of learners about the grammar of the language

sociolinguistic competence- the ability of learners to use language appropriately in various contexts

Strategic competence- the ability of students to use strategies to compensate for the gaps they face in their communication in using L2. e.g. approximation

discourse competence- this refers to the use of cohesion and coherence in the talk

Thus, because communicative competence is a complicated concept, it is important that language educators understand the complexity involved in speaking English for undergraduate students.

Nowadays, student-centred approach is encouraged in the EFL instruction, and to this end communicative language teaching method is favoured by many language educators. This method encourages teachers to use a variety of active learning techniques to help students practice and use the language. Cheewakaroon (2011:70) reports that if students use the language in pair and group activities for interaction, they will be able to improve their fluency and ability of the language in a more communicative way. However, encouraging EFL learners to use English in a social communication is not always effective as it is very difficult for students to use the language for any authentic purposes. For instance, in one study, the amount of time university students in Hong Kong spent in speaking English was found to be very little despite all efforts to use the language (Trent, 2009: 257). One reason could be lack of favourable environment to use the language.

In relation with this idea, Sakale (2012: 1104) points out that collaborative dialogues are very important for the teaching of speaking skills in that students get support from each other based on the idea of Vygotsky and others who argue that “individual mental resources develop from collective behaviors”.

2.10 The Role of Assessment and Feedback in the EFL Teaching

According to the Federal Way Public Schools (2008), the word “assessment” is derived from the Latin verb *assidere*, which means “to sit with”. In the assessment of the teaching and learning process, a teacher is expected “to sit with the learner” and deal with the issue

of student's learning closely. This shows that assessment is an activity teachers do "with and *for* students and not *to* students". In other words, the issue of assessment is concerned with helping students to learn effectively.

Assessment is expected to play a key role in the teaching and learning process. Li and Barnard (2011: 138) mention that there are three functions of assessment: supporting learning, judging achievement and maintaining disciplinary and professional standards. McNamara (2009: 618) also adds that language testing has got its own impact (backwash effect) on the teaching and learning process of English. Problems in the assessment techniques are counterproductive in that students resort to low level cognitive activities, and a test-wise approach instead of engaging in tasks for deeper understanding (Biggs, and Tang, 2007: 21). Therefore, to change this type of development among the student population, it is good to influence students by designing appropriate problem solving tasks, instead of testing rote learning in the assessment procedure (Newstead and Hoskins, 2003: 71).

Similarly, Graves (2008: 167-168) reported that an examination-oriented English language teaching in Hong Kong was found to be an obstacle to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. This was because students and parents focused on textbooks that help students to pass written examinations, and did not accept teachers' recommendation to focus on improving communication competence.

The components of classroom tests and national EFL examinations highly influence the areas students study. For example, the national EFL examination in Turkey focuses on grammar, vocabulary, and reading, while the other components, i.e. speaking, listening, and writing skills are not covered (Akin, 13: 2016). As a result, based on the findings of Akin (2016:13), these tests positively affected the reading and grammar skills of students, yet they had negative impact on the development of other language skills – i.e. productive skills and listening skills – among the student population. This is because students learn and prepare themselves based on the way they are going to be evaluated.

This reminds teachers to reconsider the issue in a more serious way to mitigate some of the drawbacks that may affect language instruction. This is because the effect of tests is not limited to only educational values but also has got other impacts in the welfare and social justice in some countries (McNamara, 2009: 618).

However, all of these roles may not be practiced in the actual teaching and learning environments for some reasons. For example, summarising the findings of some researches, Li and Barnard (2011: 138) reported that writing teachers used assessment mostly for grading purpose and to defend themselves for their marking, not to facilitate students' learning. In another survey study at New Zealand University, Li and Barnard (2011: 146) reported that writing tutors were more concerned with grading the assignments than improving students learning. Moreover, mentioning the cases of U.K and American universities, Rust, O'Donovan, and Price (2005: 231) assert that assessment practice has been criticised for its weakness, not following the current thinking and principles including supporting learning.

There are two methods of assessment of speaking skills: holistic (with no clear criteria) and analytic (with a set of criteria) (Chuang, 2009: 168). Therefore, teachers can develop holistic assessment easily and quickly, but the use of analytic scale is time consuming to prepare and use for scoring. Chuang (2009: 170) advised that EFL teachers should consider the backwash effects of speaking tests, for it plays either negative or positive role in learning speaking.

Generally, assessment has a strong effect on the type of learning students may have, i.e. surface or deep learning (Rust, O'Donovan, and Price, 2005: 231). In relation to this, Tiwari and Tang (2003: 270) advised that it is good to match teaching and assessment for a positive backwash effect . That means students will study their course deeply if they think that their test / assessment will be more of higher order thinking skills, and they will use surface level approach if they know that the test requires rote learning. In relation to the composing process, teachers are advised to shift from indirect assessment (form-based and multiple choice type) to more of direct assessment (meaning focused and subjective type) of writing skills (Behizadeh and Engelhard, 2011: 203). In the constructivist approach to learning, assessment is done both by the students and their teachers, and its aim is primarily to maximise students' learning.

2.10.1 Self-Assessment

As part of the teaching and learning process in the language classroom, assessment is important to promote learning, raise students' awareness, participate in setting learning goals, foster lifelong learning, and promote democratic learning processes and needs analysis (Esfandiari and Myford 2013: 112). Furthermore, Esfandiari and Myford (*ibid*) add that self-assessment increases self-confidence, creates awareness, enables to

differentiate performance and competence, and helps to identify strengths and weaknesses. If it is properly implemented by training the students and teachers, it is likely to create positive impact in the language classroom.

2.10.2 Peer-Assessment

According to Esfandiari and Myford (2013: 113) peer-assessment is defined as a process in which equal-status students in groups or in pairs rate the writings of their fellows. More over, peer assessment is said to have a number of advantages in the language classrooms: to save time for the teacher as they help each other, students may learn something from their friends than from their teacher, students take responsibility for their own learning, students develop motivation for their learning and positive attitude to help each other and o develop the students' higher order thinking and reasoning (Esfandiari and Myford ,2013: 114). Although it has got some limitations, peer-assessment plays an essential role in the language classrooms.

In a study comparing the students' preferences for teacher's feedback versus peer feedback, Zhao (2009: 13) found that students generally valued their teachers' feedback (over that of their peers) when correcting their work, even if they did not actually understand this feedback. This is because the students felt that their teachers were better positioned than their friends to provide relevant and correct comment (Dueraman, 2012: 272).

2.10.3 Teacher Assessment

In contrast to the above ways of assessment, which are done by students, this one is done by teachers. This could be done in formative or continuous and summative ways. Formative assessment is different from the summative one. Summative assessment focuses on the final/ terminal aspect of the assessment. It is given at the end of the programme, unit, chapter or year of the programme with a purpose in mind to check the attainment of learning objectives. It does not give chance for further improvement on the given learning content. It is separate from the teaching and learning process.

In contrast to this, formative assessment is done simultaneously with the teaching and learning process. It gives chance for the students and the teacher to make some changes to attain the learning objectives. It is done not formally, but informally, with interactive and timely feedback and response to the learners. Formative assessment has the greatest

impact on learning and achievement (The Federal way public Schools, 2008). Many researchers in the field of education claim that assessment methods and systems play an important role in influencing students' behaviour and learning. In relation to this idea, Rust (2002: 145) explains the importance of linking teaching with classroom assessment in the following manner.

Assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students and then as graduates [...] If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment.

(Rust, 2002: 145)

This idea is introduced as a result of the paradigm shift of thinking from teaching or teacher-centred to learning or student-centred approach in the teaching and learning process. Here students are expected to gain skill, knowledge and attitude, which are important to the students' life after graduation (Rust, 2002: 146). The learner-centred approach means self and life-long education when teachers should change their traditional roles from teller to coordinator and from material users to teaching material providers (Baldauf and Moni, 2006: 7).

In such a way, the students are likely to give high value for their learning and work hard to attain the given lesson objectives. As teaching, learning and assessment are closely linked, there should be no mismatch among them.

In connection with the teaching of productive skills, there should be clear relationship between the teaching and learning process and the assessment procedure. The students should be aware of the relevance of the lesson and work hard to meet the lesson objectives, and then assessment should be done accordingly. Students show either deep or surface approach to their learning based on the style of the presentation in the classroom and the assessment technique their teachers use (Rust 2002: 148; Davis, 2003: 250). Thus, it is very important to reconsider whether the assessment is in line with the teaching and learning process so that assessment could have a positive outcome to the students' learning.

Jin (2010: 556) explains that testing needs high level training for teachers, and many technologies, and it is closely related to language teaching. Jin (*ibid*) comments that test construction needs a thorough grasp of subject matter, a clear conception of the desired learning outcomes, a psychological understanding of pupils, sound judgment, persistence, and a touch of creativity .

As part of the worldwide movement to combine assessment *of* learning with assessment *for* learning in order to promote students' learning, standards-referenced school-based assessment (SBA) has recently been introduced into the Hong Kong Certificate (Cheng, Andrews, and Yu, 2010: 221). Rust (2002: 148) states that a good teaching and learning process makes clear relationship between the teaching method and assessment with the learning tasks and activities students experience in the process so that they will attain the learning objectives successfully. This helps to avoid the mismatch between assessment and teaching, which is often observed in the language classroom. Furthermore, to make the assessment contribute to students' learning and to make it less threatening as much as possible, the students should be clearly informed about the assessment process and criteria so that they can prepare themselves to achieve the learning objectives (Rust, 2002: 151).

When giving feedback after the marking, the teacher has to forward it in a more encouraging way focusing on good sides as well as weakness, giving suggestion and reference for future work, and balancing negative with positive comments (Rust, 2002: 153). In relation to this, Mutch (2003: 26) states that "lecturers are often criticized for failing to give provide sufficient feedback on the quality of a student's work or the level of attainment reached by the student".

Moreover, as part of the grading of assignments and examinations, it is essential giving prompt feedback on assignments even if the number of students is big (Haddad, 2006: 47). This could be done by giving group assignments and forwarding the feedback as soon as possible so that it could affect /impact students' learning. Students could be involved in giving feedback to their friends and themselves if they are given answer sheets or guidelines to mark.

2.11 Conclusion

The theories that support the current thinking in EFL instruction are drawn from the two forms of constructivism, i.e. cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Here, the first one stresses that learners should be active thinkers, and be responsible to relate what they get with their prior knowledge to reconstruct their knowledge, to formulate new hypothesis, and reformulate later when they get more experience. They are expected to

engage in hard work in order to learn, practice, and use English language. They have to expend a lot of time, resources, and energy personally in order to be successful.

In contrast to this, social constructivism argues that learning takes place, not at individual, but at a community level, and students are encouraged to take part in the practice by being active members of the learning community and using the resources. Thus, in the language classroom, the students are encouraged to work in cooperative groups and they take a lesson from each other as they observe, practice and later be proficient in using the language. According to Packer and Goicoechea (2000: 230), and Dueraman (2012: 258), the two learning theories are complementary for this study, because students should work individually to process or assimilate what they have learnt to their long-term memory. They also need a community of learners to model, practice and use the language in a meaningful context to exchange information like real contexts.

When things are considered in relation to the contexts of this study, there is no study done that gives highlight to the issue under investigation. Thus, taking the relevant insights out of this review of literature, the study will explore the practical realities in the selected Ethiopian universities using the appropriate methodology as described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the approach, design, and methods of data generation, analysis and interpretation. In an attempt to investigate the implementation of active learning approaches in teaching productive skills in some of the Ethiopian universities on which this project focused, the study pinpointed on the problems, perceptions, relationship with assessment, and the types of active learning approaches employed by instructors in the teaching and learning process. Thus, having these as objectives of the study, the following explanation is presented to describe the process of data generation and data analysis techniques.

After indicating the research approach and design, the methodology is explained in detail. Then, the data generation strategies, procedures, data analysis techniques, and interpretations are described.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Wahyuni (2012: 69) define a research paradigm as “a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived, which then serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher”. Understanding the paradigm of the research is important because this guides the researcher’s thinking and reflects the way the research project is guided to collect data and analyse it. As Streubert and Carpenter (2011: 25) mention, understanding of the philosophical ideas behind the research is very important to avoid the development of “sloppy science and misunderstood findings”.

This study followed the interpretive paradigm, which is a philosophical approach to the understanding of the world and knowledge. It is developed by social scientists in opposition to the positivists’ approach; it argues that people cannot be studied using methods developed to study natural objects and events in the physical sciences (Neuman, 2007: 42; Ridenour and Newman, 2008: 7; Wahyuni, 2012: 71).

According to this paradigm, reality is constructed based on the subjective perceptions of people and their actions are based on their subjective interpretations; the world is made

up of social objects, which are identified by the socially determined symbols and meanings. Wahyuni (2012: 71) reports that since the perceptions and experiences of people are subjective, the social reality changes over time and results in multiple perspectives, not a single or an objective reality.

Therefore, interpretivists challenge positivists in that there is no objective reality and single truth. Thus, the idea of interpretivists influences the research process in that data is generated from the participants based on their lived experiences and perceptions to reflect the multiple realities that exist as social perception. Interpretivists believe that, in order to understand the social world of people based on their experiences and subjective meanings, it is essential to interact and to have dialogue with participants of a study to generate qualitative data, which provides rich descriptions of those social constructs (Wahyuni, 2012: 71).

3.2.1 Research Approach

This study followed the qualitative research approach in its data generation and data analysis techniques. This was because the research objectives raised issues that were more closely related to the participants' personal experiences and perceptions of the reality, i.e. the emic perspective (Neuman, 2007: 329). As Yin (2011: 7-8) and Streubert and Carpenter (2011: 20) present, qualitative research reflects the following features, which are important for this study: addressing the contextual conditions people live, sharing insights useful to explain human social behaviour, using multiple sources of evidence, studying the meanings of people's lives in the real world, presenting data in a literary style with supporting comments from the participants, recognising that the researcher is part of the research, and representing the views and perspectives of people.

Thus, to get the detailed description and to understand the phenomena from the experiences of participants in the natural setting, the qualitative approach was preferred, and the data gathering strategies and analysis techniques were designed in line with this approach in order to answer the research questions (Berg, 2001: 7; Mackey, and Gass, 2005: 162-163; Yin, 2011: 8).

3.3 Research Design

De Vos Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005: 268) describe the different definitions associated to the meaning of research designs. The writers briefly explain the types of

classifications, definitions and the confusions researchers have about this concept. One definition refers to the broad aspects of the research making process ranging from problem statement to data analysis and interpretation, while the other is concerned with the specific approaches or logical arrangements such as case study and ethnography (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 132; Yin, 2011: 76). In other words, research design is defined as "... the option available to qualitative researchers to study certain phenomena according to certain "formulas" suitable for their specific research goal" (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 268). This is relating study questions, data to be collected, and analysis techniques. De Vos *et al.*, (2005: 269) presents the major types of research designs that qualitative researchers use dominantly. These are biography, Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study.

Among these options, phenomenology is the one selected for this study as the purpose of this research is to study the problem in language classrooms in-depth using the participants (Ridenour and Newman, 2008: 86). This design helps to understand and interpret the meanings that participants of a study attach to their day-to-day experience in the teaching and learning process. All the experiences of the participants about the given problem revolve around the common themes or central meaning as part of the product of the description (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 270).

This design employed the qualitative approaches of data gathering strategies, which are important to understand in-depth the life experiences in their natural setting. This leads to the following description of paradigm and research approach as part of the methodology in the data generation and analysis.

3.4 Research Methodology

This section presents detailed descriptions about data generation procedures, participants of the study, trustworthiness of the data generation process, and data analysis techniques in order to answer the basic questions of the study.

3.4.1 Research Participants

As the study setting was in an educational institution, the participants of the study were first-year students in the three universities; i.e. Debre Markos University, Bahir Dar University, and Gonder University. The study setting for qualitative studies is the field or the place in which participants of the study live and experience the issues of the study

(Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 27). This is helpful for data generation process in qualitative studies.

The other groups of participants were English language instructors who offer English Language support courses to these students in the universities. These groups of participants were selected as they had first-hand experience of the issue to be studied; they are also identified as “participants or informants” since they play an active role in qualitative research (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 28).

Both the students and their instructors were the focus of this study because all first-year students take the two English Language support courses and many English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors teach these courses to students in the universities. They were the major sources of information about the implementation of active learning in the teaching and learning process of productive skills.

The instructors who were involved in the interview were chosen using purposive (judgmental) sampling technique (Dornyei, 2007: 114; Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 239; Yin, 2011: 88). All of these participants were involved only based on their willingness to take part in the research, their availability during the data generation process, their heterogeneous experience in the teaching profession, and their field of specialisation. Both experienced academic staff members who have long years of experience and new ones with little experience in teaching were involved in the interview. This helped me to get data from heterogeneous groups of the participants in order to get rich and relevant data (Yin, 2011: 88).

Similarly, the other groups of participants were students at the freshman programme who were taking English Language support courses in the three universities. The students were drawn from various colleges and departments to include their diverse academic backgrounds and experiences in English language learning process. Thus, the students were chosen using purposive sampling technique in order to get relevant and diverse data (Dornyei, 2007: 114; Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 239; Yin, 2011: 88).

With regard to sample size in qualitative research, Dornyei (2007: 114) and Streubert and Carpenter (2011: 30) explain that participant selection remains open until saturation level (no new data emerge) is reached in data generation process. That is determined by after initial accounts are gathered and analysed; the researcher will add more to see if no new

data emerges. Thus, in a similar fashion, I interviewed the instructors and students until I felt that the data emerging was no more new, or in conflict with the already generated one.

Currently in the Ethiopian higher education system, in each classroom students are arranged into fixed learning groups to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Each fixed learning group embraces five up to six students. I took one group of students in which the classroom representative is a member. This was because the classroom representative had a lot of information about the day-to-day teaching and learning process. I tried to approach those students in their free time by arranging a coffee or tea break to create relaxed atmosphere for the focus group discussion. Only those who were willing to take part in the discussion were involved in the study. In such a way, five to six students (participants) were chosen for the focus group discussion for one classroom. The total number of groups to be involved in the focus group discussion was determined based on the saturation level of the data they provided.

In order to generate the data from the participants of the study, 27 individual interviews with EFL instructors and 17 focus group discussions with their students were conducted in the three universities. In order to get rich data from different participants, various departmental students were involved in each university. In addition to this, nine classroom observations were made in the three universities.

In relation to the sample size, Fern (2001: 166) explains that the number of groups and group's size will be determined by the goal of the research, the homogeneity, or heterogeneity of the participants. Thus, most often it is good to increase the length of the session than increase the number of groups to get any new data in the group discussion (Fern, 2001: 166).

3.4.2 Data Gathering Strategies

In qualitative study, researchers follow a variety of data generation strategies such as observation, interview, narrative and focus-groups (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 33). These strategies are selected by considering the questions of the study, the sensitivity of the issue, the resources available, and the selected research approach (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 34).

The data generating strategies for this study were those that are in line with the qualitative research approach, i.e. observation, semi-structured interview, focus group discussion

and documents. These strategies reflect the salient features of qualitative research in that they enable the researcher to extract data from the participants of the study (Neuman, 2007: 299). The relevant theoretical discussions are made using the available references as mentioned in the following sections.

3.4.2.1 Observation

This method is called naturally occurring data generation (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 56; Ridenour and Newman, 2008: 67; Yin, 2011: 143). As Johnson and Christensen (2008: 211) point out, this is a good method of data gathering for it helps to detect the usual inconsistency in what participants of the study may say they do or like to perform, and do in actual behaviour and feel their attitude or perception. Observation helps researchers to get the real behaviour rather than elicit reports of preference or intended behaviour in the form of self-report data (Yin, 2011: 143).

I took important points by writing field notes during and after observation. The type of role I took was “the observer-as-participant” as described by Johnson and Christensen (2008: 214); I took the role of observer much more than the role of participant. However, in order to get the trust of the instructors and students, I informed them the purpose of the observation, and how the data is used in the study. This was expected to decrease the negative side effects of the observation tool (Jones and Somekh, 2005: 140).

To get relevant information in relation to the objectives of the study, I engaged in non-participant and structured observation (Clark-Carter, 2010: 100) in the classrooms while the instructors conduct class to teach students. This type of observation is employed when a researcher wants to take note of relevant things on the spot with pre-planned observation scheme (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 398). This was planned to get supplementary information on the implementation of active learning approaches in the language classrooms. I developed an observation check-list, which is attached in appendix -F.

During the observation, I attended some sessions during the teaching and learning process by sitting in a corner of a classroom. Wragg (1999: 16) and Jones and Somekh (2005: 140) advise classroom observers to contact teachers beforehand, minimise their intrusiveness, and brief participants about the purpose and likely outcome of the observation so participants are able to relax and act naturally. It helps the researcher to take note of the classroom situations, actions, events and experiences as natural and first-

hand information in the teaching of English (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 35). Generally, this data served as background knowledge in which I used the information to raise more questions during the interview and focus group discussions.

3.4.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview

As interview is good to get detailed information about the reported behaviour, opinions, attitudes and background of participants (McKay, 2006: 51; Ridenour and Newman, 2008: 76), this study used semi-structured interview as one of the data generating strategies. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 56), interview and focus group discussion are methods of data generation from the participants of this study based on accessibility, relevance and context of the research data to be obtained in order to answer the basic questions of the study.

Semi-structured interview is a hybrid type of interview, which lies between structured and unstructured (in-depth) interview (Wahyuni, 2012: 74; Mackey, and Gass, 2005: 173; Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 208; Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 34). This method has the advantages of both structured and unstructured interview types, i.e. has a focus on core questions, raise some more unplanned questions and generate more information depending on the flexibility and interest of the interviewee, and the clarity and specificity of answers; it is also a good way to generate relevant data from the participants as most often respondents may not prefer and are not committed to forward their answers in detail in writing (Mackey, and Gass,2005: 174).

Therefore, I started the interview with some questions to cover the issue under investigation and let the participants to add more explanations and information if they like during the interview. The semi-structured interview was held in places where the participants feel good, or were free to talk about their experiences (Neuman, 2007: 299). Thus, these places were under shades of trees, in the nearby student lounges in each campus, and in some free classrooms.

As Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 57) point out, this data collection method allows participants of the study to reflect their direct and clear understanding through the explanations they provide to the researcher's probing questions. Therefore, relevant questions were presented to the participants of the study. However, Streubert and Carpenter (2011: 35) warn researchers that sometimes participants give "socially acceptable answers" and the

researchers are expected to guard against this type of problem by triangulation, data saturation and development of trust with the participants of the study.

The semi-structured interview guide is attached in appendix- H. As it is presented in this section, EFL instructors were asked a set of questions, and these questions covered the specific objectives of the study (McKay, 2006: 52). The interview was held in Amharic, which is the mother tongue and /or dominant means of communication of the instructors in the universities. I used it because it is easy for participants to express their ideas without a barrier of language (McKay, 2006: 53). This made the process easy to compile the data obtained from each participant.

3.4.2.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The other type of interview that was employed in this study was focus group discussion (FGD), where a group of participants (6-8 members on average) with a similar background are asked to respond to the list of questions (McKay, 2006: 52; Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 209; Yin, 2011: 142). As the name indicates in this method, the participants of the discussion “focus” on the questions that the researcher raises during the data generation (Neuman, 2007: 300).

This method has the advantage to get a lot of information in a short period of time, to detect the emergence of problems in the teaching and learning process, to generate perceptions of participants about the issues of the language classrooms, to get information in which participants may not think of or forget when they are asked individually, and to serve as a complement to other methods of data generation (Neuman, 2007: 300; Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 209-210; Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 38). It is also possible to get a better generalisation in comparison to the results of individual interview (Vogt, Gardner, and Haeffele, 2012: 42). Furthermore, according to Johnson and Christensen, two to four focus groups are considered enough for a single research (2008: 210).

This discussion was held after the individual interview is conducted. This was because input could be obtained from the EFL instructors during the individual interview. This means I would get information that could help to understand the issue at hand when I engage in the focus group discussion. Furthermore, it is possible to get questions that need further clarification at this level. The data obtained at the individual level would be triangulated by the group’s response. However, Streubert and Carpenter (2011: 38)

advise that the researcher or moderator should be aware of the problem of “groupthink”; this is a problem where some members dominate other members of the group in the discussion and the data generated become more of a biased view.

The discussion was held in Amharic language, which is the mother tongue and /or dominant means of communication of the students and their instructors. I used it because it is easy for participants to express their ideas without a barrier of language (McKay, 2006: 53). Students rarely use English as a dominant means of communication in and out of classrooms. Instead, they communicate in Amharic language, which is the dominant means of communication in Ethiopia. As a result, they feel relaxed when they use Amharic than English. In order to make the participants free and express their true feelings in a simple language during the interview, they were informed about the purpose of the interview in particular and the study in general, what would be done with the information and its significance for them and other people (McKay, 2006: 55). The focus group discussion guide is attached in appendix-G.

Moreover, I would be sensitive to the interviewees’ response in case they have tensions or challenges to express their ideas or true feelings freely (McKay, 2006: 55). I tried to have control over the discussion by focusing on the purpose of the interview, by asking the right questions and by giving the relevant verbal and non-verbal feedback to the participants (McKay, 2006: 55). This was relevant to generate data from the participants of the study.

3.4.2.4 Documents

Efforts were made in getting data for this study using relevant documents. These documents were samples of activities in the course material, course outlines for the two support courses, sample test papers on speaking and writing skills, the harmonised curriculum for the undergraduate programme, and the handbook of higher diploma programme for teacher educators.

These documents were useful to see the types of activities, the relationship between assessment and teaching, and the focus given to productive skills. These documents were obtained from the students and their EFL instructors. Some of these documents were attached in appendix-K, appendix-L, appendix -M, and appendix-N.

3.4.3 Procedures of Data Gathering

In order to generate data using the above tools from the participant of the study, the following procedures were employed. First, the letter of cooperation and other documents were submitted to the college of Social Science and Humanities so that approval could be obtained from the Dean; and then the Dean sent the request letter to the department of English so that I could get permission to start generating data from the instructors and their students. This was done according to the bureaucratic procedures of running business in the three universities, i.e. Debre Markos University, Bahir Dar University, and University of Gonder.

After this, I tried to create a smooth and friendly relationship with the staff members in the department of English. I introduced myself to the staff members and made positive relationship. This paved the way to get relevant data from the participants of the study. Arrangements were made for the classroom observation by talking to the instructors who offer English Language support courses. This was done in the following way. First, by contacting those instructors who were willing and interested to take part in the study, I briefed them individually about the purpose, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary nature of participation in the study. This helped me to build trust and made the participants avoid any suspicion and fear they had towards the study during the audio recording of the interview and during the classroom observation.

Then, the participants were supplied with the letter of the informed consent to sign after brief introduction. Based on this preparation, classroom observation was held with the respective instructors based on the schedule. I took the time table of the weekly classroom schedules for teaching from the department head and from the instructors.

After an observation was done to the teaching and learning process in a classroom, the next step was conducting individual interview. The individual interview was done in the following manner. In order to capture the contents of the interview, audio recording was done. This had the advantage of saving objectively the actual content of the interview for analysis (McKay, 2006: 56). In order to minimise the anxiety of the participants during the interview, they were informed of the purpose of the study and told not to mention their names (McKay, 2006: 56).

When I was recording the interview, I was taking care of mechanical failure of the audio recorder, i.e. I checked and monitored whether it was working before and during the interview. As the interview was in progress, I took note of important sections of the talk to use it for analysis, to add more questions, and to motivate the interviewee that s/he has something good to talk to others (McKay, 2006: 56). In conducting the interview, I took short notes during and soon after the interview in order to capture and summarise important information.

According to Wahyuni (2012: 74), the researcher can take three types of notes during the interview: observational, methodological and theoretical. The first one is used to describe things observed during the interview. The second one refers to any issues and concerns to the method of the research. The last one refers to the themes and findings that may come from the interview. Thus, the researcher was alert about these things in conducting the interview. These are important elements for the analysis and final writing-up of the findings of the study.

Every effort was made to facilitate the data capturing process. This was done in the following ways: I tried to make the interviewees as comfortable as possible during the interview, placed key questions in the middle of the talk so that maximum focus could be given, helped participants to mirror on their responses and to add further point, conducted multiple interviews, and encouraged open-ended discussions (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 174-175). These helped me to avoid some of the limitations such as perceptual distortions and selective recall, which may come from interview as described by Mackey and Gass, (*ibid*).

3.4.4 Data Analysis

In conducting a research, after the required data is gathered using the appropriate instruments, the next step is analysis and interpretation. In the analysis of qualitative data, researchers are advised to start the process early; they do not wait until all data is gathered like quantitative researchers do (Neuman, 2007: 329). Similarly, I followed this way to start analysis early after getting some amount of data. This was useful for me to do the task little by little with no burden.

As Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 159) state, analysis refers to the process of thoroughly searching and arranging the field notes, interview transcripts (appendix-I, and appendix-J), and other relevant contents to use them to arrive at the conclusion of the study following

the specific procedures such as coding and searching for patterns; interpretation refers to developing ideas about the findings in light of the review of literature and explaining them to the readers. Furthermore, as Neuman (2007: 329) presents, the researcher's main objective is developing a model, a concept, or a bigger picture out of the details obtained from different sources.

As Neuman (2007: 330) presents, there are three types of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These types of coding are not mutually exclusive; they are done step by step successively. Open coding is the beginning of coding out of the raw data, and axial coding is done by reviewing the open codes and organising ideas to identify axis of key concepts for analysis. Finally, after the researcher has identified the major themes, s/he is expected to go through the data to review the codes and check for points not involved in the coding (Neuman, 2007: 332).

As Streubert and Carpenter (2011: 50) present, there is no single method for the presentation and analysis of qualitative data that depends on the purpose of the report and its audience. Therefore, researchers are advised to choose the most useful presentation style to communicate their findings to other interested people (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 50).

As part of this task, the following description presents how these things were done in the progress of the study. First, the data from the observation, interview, focus-group discussion and relevant documents were gathered and arranged in their type. Also, after reading carefully the field notes that were taken from observation, important points were identified out of the content by grouping similar points of the notes.

Next, by listening to the recorded interviews and focus-group discussions of the audio-tape, the content was transcribed verbatim (appendix-I and appendix-J). Here, not all content was transcribed, unless it was relevant and related to the issue under investigation (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 56). The content was organised in a cross-case analysis method (McKay, 2006: 57). This is a method of organising the responses of all participants according to the topics raised in the interview. These were related with the subtopics of the study.

Then, I read the transcriptions many times in order to identify and code key ideas in the data. As part of the reading, marginal notes were taken to list the key ideas or topics. When this was over, the list of categories (patterns) were formed out of the list of key

points. Then, the themes were identified out of these categories. In short, the theme formation followed the steps of segmenting, coding, categorising, developing hierarchy, identifying relationships, and corroborating and validating results for interpretation as described by Johnson and Christensen (2008: 539). Similarly, as Neuman (2007: 330) presents, concepts, themes and general ideas are useful as analytic tools for making generalisations and categories in the data analysis and interpretation process.

The data from the observation checklist and the relevant documents were summarised in line with the sub-questions of the study. Data from the observation were summarised into classroom facilities, students' and instructors' classroom activity, and tasks and activities employed in the teaching and learning process. These points were considered in the analysis and discussion of the whole data. Similarly, from the relevant documents obtained, important points were considered in the analysis and discussion of the findings of the study.

Therefore, in relation to this study, based on the categories formed, interpretations and explanations were given by taking extracts out of the transcripts of the interview to support these interpretations. Finally, the discussion part was organised in line with the sub-questions of the study. This helped to organise and see the whole picture in line with the study.

3.4.5 Trustworthiness

In conducting qualitative research, it is expected that researchers follow certain techniques, which show the rigorous nature of the procedure in generating and analysing the data obtained. Readers consider these things to evaluate the study. In relation to this issue, the following points were taken into account. These were credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Mackey, and Gass, 2005: 179; Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 47). These are the parallel words of validity and reliability for their equivalent meanings in quantitative study.

Similarly, Yin (2011: 19-20) adds that, in order to increase credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research, the following issues are considered: the research procedures should be explained in detail for transparency purpose, clear details of research methods have to be indicated to avoid any bias or carelessness in conducting the study, and the research has to be evidence based in its analysis and interpretation.

Credibility: To be reliable to the participants of the study, researchers are advised to do research in many contexts to get rich data, and to do so over a long enough period of time for data to be authentic (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 180; Ridenour and Newman, 2008: 62; Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 48).

Transferability: This refers to the extent to which findings of a research can be transferred from one context to another similar situation (Ridenour and Newman, 2008:61; Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 49). As Mackey and Gass (2005: 180) presented, “thick description” is expected in that the researcher clearly describes in detail the nature of the research context and participants so that readers will see the similarities and differences in comparison with other researches.

Confirmability: Researchers are advised to present in full details of the data they used to conduct their study so that other researchers can consider the repeatability of the study (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 180). That is to show in detail the “thought process and evidences’ that were important to lead to the conclusion (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011: 49).

Dependability: Researchers fully present in the paper their relationships with participants of the study and the research context so that participants could have a say about the findings and then participants and other researchers could assess whether dependable implications have been derived from the data (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 181).

Triangulation: In qualitative research, it is also possible to use designs and methods in which data is pulled from different sources, and in these ways it is possible to cross-check the validity and reliability of the research data and the findings. Thus, the data for this study is derived from different methods of data gathering instruments and many participants from the three universities. This in turn was designed to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 181; Ridenour and Newman, 2008: 88; Yin, 2011: 143).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Nowadays it is a common knowledge that researchers are obliged to follow clear ethical guidelines in conducting their studies. Ethics refer to the responsible behaviour or moral obligations of the researcher to participants in carrying out the study (Vogt, Gardner, and Haeffel, 2012: 227). As Neuman (2007: 48) puts it, ethics are a matter of balancing values

between the search for knowledge and the respect for participants of the study. To address these issues, there are a lot of details researchers have to go through.

There are some ethical issues, in addition to institutional code of conduct, or ethical guidelines that researchers abide by in pursuing their studies, which involve human participants. This issue dates back to 1940s, when medical experiments were done on Jews and others in Nazi Germany and other experiments were done in Japan to test biological weapons (Neuman, 2007: 50). There were horrible violations of human rights in conducting the experiments. Later, due to the awareness of other people, oppositions were observed against these practices.

To deal with these types of problems, some countries introduced conventions that researchers have to follow. For instance, the 1976 agreement of the Belmont report in which researchers were obliged to follow the three basic principles, i.e. respect for persons, beneficence, and justice in doing research that involves human participants (Delanda, 2009: 4). This was because after World War-II researchers had violated human rights in doing research for medical purposes.

In relation to this study, informed consent, which is “a cornerstone in ethical practice” (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 26), confidentiality of interviewees, anonymity of individuals and institutions, protection from harm or risk (Delanda, 2009: 8; Vogt, Gardner, and Haefffel, 2012: 232) were taken into account. Informed consent gives the chance for participants of the study to decide upon what may happen to them in being involved in the research (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 27). Thus, the participants will get clear explanation about the research purposes, procedures, risks, benefits, and confidentiality and anonymity issues. After understanding these things, the participants will be free to decide either to participate or to reject it (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 29).

In relation to this study, the participants were given the consent form to read and sign after I gave them brief explanation. I briefed the participants about the strategies and the procedures of the study in Amharic language, i.e. the interview, observation and focus group discussion. As the participants were able to read and understand the letter of informed consent written in English language, they were let to read it and sign it.

As the study focused on the general situation of teaching and learning process in English classrooms, it did not focus on the individual teacher or student, and their response was

not as such a serious concern or threat for other students, colleagues or higher officials in the universities. Thus, there was no known risk or harm in participating in this study.

The confidentiality and anonymity of individuals was also taken seriously to protect the participants of the study from any harm or any possible threat, which may come from anybody at any time (Neuman, 2007: 301). Their responses would not be indicated to anybody to protect from any form of attack. Furthermore, their names were not disclosed in the study, and when necessary a serial number or indefinite pronouns were used instead to safeguard the participants.

However, since the study does not focus on authorities of the universities at institution level in generating data, the issue of anonymity was not a concern and the names of the universities were identified in different sections of the study. Moreover, mentioning the research sites and attaching permission letters from the universities are also important to readers to understand the authentic and rigorous nature of the study.

Protection of participants from any form of harm is also a concern for social scientists (Delanda, 2009: 8). This research did not have any physical or mental risk associated to the participants of the study at individual or institutional levels. Rather, the research has potential benefit to the teaching and learning process of English in the higher institutions.

In addition to the core elements of ethical issues mentioned above, the organisational or institutional code of conduct would be part of the ethical guideline. Thus, the ethical guideline of UNISA was completed before collecting data and I had got a certificate of ethical clearance to conduct the study (Appendix-A). This served as a reference for the data gathering and analysis process.

3.6 Pilot Study

In order to refine the instruments of data gathering, and to experience the whole process of data generation (Yin, 2011: 37), a pilot study was conducted using classroom observation checklist (Appendix-F), focus group discussion guide (Appendix-G), and an individual interview schedule (Appendix-H). This type of engagement was also important to evaluate logistics necessary for field trip and to estimate the time it would take to complete the data generation process.

This was important to check whether the interview questions were clear for the participants to get the relevant data, and if there were other issues that I did not focus on or had to include in the classroom observation. It also helped me to see the reaction of the participants, to test the digital audio recorder, and to estimate the time necessary for the participants during the interview and focus group discussion in the data generation process. Moreover, processing the collected data gave me a chance to experience early the process of data analysis of the main study. This gave me the chance to sense the theoretical aspects of data generation described in the methodology in practical terms. This was proposed to increase the success of the data generation of the main study.

The pilot study was done at Debre Markos University using the following procedure. First, observation was held on three of the classroom sessions in which EFL instructors teach English Language support courses for various departmental students at Debre Markos University. Secondly, based on the information obtained from the observation, an individual interview was held with three EFL instructors who taught English Language support courses. In addition to this, two groups of students were involved in focus group discussion.

Based on the data of the mock interview and observation, the data gathering tools were evaluated whether they were appropriate in terms of content coverage, organisation, clarity, and wording (Wahyuni, 2012: 74). Finally, based on the lessons learnt from the reactions of the participants of the study, and problems identified in the instruments as well as the data collection process, the necessary revisions were made in the instruments and the whole process to proceed to the main study.

I tried to analyse the data obtained from the classroom observation, the individual interviews with instructors, and the focus group discussions with the students. Finally, I evaluated the data gathering tools and the process of data generation to answer the basic questions of the study. The following points were observed as lessons learnt.

During the individual interview with the EFL instructors, some of them did not understand the question of perception, "what would you feel if you were a student now?" They were puzzled to answer, and their response was not in line with the question. So, I tried to rephrase it in a way they may understand and finally forwarded what they felt. In terms of time management, I expected that it would not take more than 40 minutes for the interview with the EFL instructors individually; however, in practice it took more than an hour for most of them since they were interested to talk on the issue under investigation. This

helped me to adjust my schedule for the main study so that the participants would come during their free time of two to three hours.

Generally, I observed no major problems that would affect the process of data generation for the main study. With this step, I set out for data generation of the main study.

3.7 Conclusion

As described above, this study followed the salient features of qualitative research. Based on the above details of the methodology, the data of the study were generated, analysed and interpreted to conclude the study successfully. In the progress of the study, some changes were made in order to be flexible in data generation procedures, which is the nature of qualitative study. Thus, in the final write up of the study, a section is added, which explained the challenges and the limitations faced in the progress of the study.

CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This study raised the issue of active learning implementation in EFL classrooms. The data is generated from first-year undergraduate students who were taking English Language support courses, their EFL instructors offering these support courses, and other related documents.

In order to get the data from the participants of the study, 27 individual interviews with EFL instructors and 17 focus group discussions with students were held in three universities. For the sake of anonymity and confidentiality, the names of the participants and the universities in which they are found are not identified in the discussion. In addition to this, classroom observation and documents were also the data generating strategies.

Based on the visits I arranged to the three universities, I have carried out nine classroom observations. This was done using observation checklist (Appendix-F). In addition to this, the related documents include course outlines for the two English Language support Courses, samples of activities in the course material, sample test papers on speaking and writing skills, the harmonised curriculum for the undergraduate programme, and the handbook of higher diploma programme for teacher educators.

The central question of the study was stated as:

How do instructors implement active learning approaches in teaching the productive skills?

The sub-questions that were related to this main question were the following:

1. What are the major problems that may affect the practice of active learning approaches in the teaching of productive skills?
2. How do students and instructors view active learning approaches in the language classrooms?
3. What are the types of active learning approaches most often used in the teaching-learning process of the productive skills?
4. To what extent are productive skills linked to the assessment practice?

In general, based on the detailed description of the research methodology in chapter three, the data were generated from participants using observation, documents, focus

group discussion and individual interviews. Thus, the presentation, analysis and the discussion of data gathered is presented in the next part.

4.2 Presentation of Classroom Observation Data

As part of the data gathering methods, Classroom observation was important to collect preliminary data about the implementation of active learning in the EFL classrooms in the three universities. This data was also important to see some of the factors that would be further clarified during the focus group discussion and individual interview. Classroom observation was not a major tool of data gathering in the process of data generation. The brief visits I made to the classrooms were nine in total.

The major challenge during the observation was that instructors teach other contents like passage, vocabulary, and grammar together with speaking and writing skills. The speaking and writing sections of the booklet did not take more than an hour in a session, and then the instructors would go to the next part. Other times, the topics were given as home take assignments, in which the instructors may cover them in other extra class.

Based on the given checklist and the open ended note, the major themes identified during the observation are presented below.

Instructional Tasks: There was a one-to-five group structure in each classroom. Students sat with their group members to share the student's booklet and to discuss activities given by the instructor. The instructors taught students using learning activities in student's booklet, so the activities that students engaged in were similar from one classroom to the other classroom. In relation to speaking skills, self-introduction was one topic. Students exercised this task in pair and in a group of three to introduce themselves and others.

Another topic was debate over some controversial issues. They formed a group and argued over a motion with another opposing group. In some classrooms, students were given the chance to bring their own topics for the debate. These types of tasks are good for students to practice speaking since they get chance to produce their ideas and speak out.

I had not observed self-assessment and peer-assessment being part of the instructional activities with the exception of some practices in writing class where students exchanged their drafts of paragraphs for peer-correction. It could be stated that the classes were a student-centred type based on the groupings and the activities given.

The given time was enough for the students in most of the classes when they practiced speaking skill. It seemed that students were ready to practice for some time and present their groups' activity in the next period turn by turn. Only few volunteers were given the chance to present self- introduction activity.

On their part, the instructors gave explanation about the debate and told students to come prepared for the next period to present their debate. In writing class, students were told to write their own paragraphs using the topics in the booklet.

Instructors' Activity: During the observation, the EFL instructors were kind and voluntarily invited me to go and see what was happening. They were giving brief explanation to the students in communicative English Skills, and it was more student centred type. Yet, in Basic writing skills course, the instructors were more dominant. Most of the time was taken by the instructors lecturing about errors of sentences and the nature of paragraph. It was more of teacher-centred class.

There was no interference when students engaged in the given activities. The instructors called some of the students by their names to answer questions. The instructors were generally democratic in their classroom management. They used relevant verbal and non-verbal features in their classroom interaction, and they were audible to all students when they talked.

Students' activity: During my visit, I observed that students sat with their group members and tried to work on the given activity. They did not shout when they were told to talk with group members to work out the exercise. Most of them were not as much motivated to raise their hands to answer questions or to participate actively. They used to see each other in each group, and most of them resorted to their mother tongue (Amharic) instead of using English as medium of communication in their discussion. It was easy for them to resort to Amharic language since they are used to communicate in Amharic language in and out of classroom. In two of the classrooms I observed, during the writing activity, some fast learners completed their paragraph early and were impatient waiting idle for some time until the instructor came and commented or set for the whole class discussion.

During writing class, students tried to produce their own paragraph with no sharing of information, or any kind of brainstorming.

Classroom Facilities and Teaching Aids: The classroom was more of traditional type where teachers lecture students for content area courses. Each room was generally designed to entertain 50 to 60 students, and when there was lack of classroom, some departments used lecture halls where the seats were fixed in rows.

In these lecture halls, 60 to 70 students were assigned. The student-teacher ratio was a large one (50 to 65 students per classroom), and the temperature in each classroom was a bit hot and stuffy. May be this was due to large number of students coupled with the hot season of the year.

The students did not like to open the windows in most of the classrooms for fear of cold wind. The light and sanitation was not as such a problem. However, the armchairs were dusty as janitors did not properly polish them after cleaning the rooms during the weekend. Generally, the classrooms were not spacious for students to sit in a semi-circle for group discussion. There were no teaching aids, and other instructional material other than the student booklet and blackboard. There was noise around the classrooms by other section students.

General comments: It was difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in this type of observation as I was just watching “what” was happening, “not why?”. Therefore, I used the data as a supplementary one for the interview and focus group discussion.

The seating arrangement for many classes was not conducive. Both instructors and students could not move easily from one group to the other for exchange of ideas or to join other students. This problem was related to large class size in which 65-70 students were in one medium-size classroom in most of the departments. In addition to this, students who attended courses in lecture halls had fixed-seats in rows.

As a result, it was not possible for these students to form a group in a semicircle and face their friends. They used to see each other from left to right corner. So the seats were less comfortable for student-centred classroom. Sometimes the students wasted some minutes and made noise in and around the classrooms as they moved arm-chairs from one room to the other during ending one session and starting another class.

When EFL instructors invited students for classroom participation in answering questions or presenting ideas, only few students raised their hands, while the majority of them kept quiet in most of the sessions. The air in the rooms was stuffy or bad and hot as students did not open the windows to protect themselves from the breezy winds; the instructor also used to close the door to protect against the noise from the students in the next classroom or in the nearby corridor. This disturbance or noise is likely to influence students to distract their attention.

The major problems is that the instructors did not have time to visit each group and give feedback to all groups in the session as the number of students was big . The students did not engage seriously in the peer correction as they might not expect relevant things from their friends. The teacher did not mix or regroup students for sharing ideas among groups. There was no alternative grouping for one-to-five group structure.

One-to-five group structure is fixed one throughout the year and even may continue the next year; it is perceived more as a stable structure for administrative purposes to reach to individual students. There was no lively nature in the group since students were similar in the group for a long period of time; they could be at a disadvantage in not joining or forming new groups. Students are different in their personality, age, sex, interest, ability, and so forth. So, they need variety in the groups' mix to make the groups' dynamism optimum for students' learning.

It is likely that students get bored with each other after some time. For example, in a speaking activity, some students may be extrovert and dominant in group's discussion, while others may be shy and introvert. These silent or less assertive students need more encouragement to talk to their groups' members or to the whole class students.

The instructors did not use any checklist to evaluate students' participation in the speaking or writing activity unless there is a need for continuous assessment. This could be related to the management problem of large class size.

In some of the classrooms, the students were made to produce paragraphs. The students were given brief explanation about the topic, length, form, main idea and details of the paragraph they produce. They were given about 20 minutes to finish this activity. Most of them run out of time to write and revise their drafts, and the instructors also urged them to finish quickly. This timed- writing was taken as a form of quiz with a value ranging from 10% to 20%.

4.3 Presentation of the EFL Instructors' Interview Data

In this section, the data was derived from the EFL instructors' interview, and presented according to the sub-questions of the study.

4.3.1 Major Factors that affect the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in teaching Productive Skills

This theme is related to research question number one. It tries to explore major problems or challenges that may affect the implementation of active learning approaches in the EFL classrooms. Thus, the participants of the interview were asked a set of related questions (Appendix-H) to delve deep into the issue under investigation.

After transcribing the interview data and following the formation of themes, the following sub-themes were identified. These were students' English language background, students' negative psychological associations with language learning, EFL instructors' influence on EFL instruction, external social environment influence on students' learning, and lack of support from administration of the universities.

4.3.1.1 Students' English Language Background

All of the interviewees mentioned that, when students join the university, they come with very poor English language skills, especially in productive skills. Most of the interviewees reported that students who come from government schools are very poor in their English language in comparison with those who come from private schools.

Further, they mentioned that, nowadays, students at the freshman level do not have enough entry level knowledge, skill and attitude about English language. For instance, one of the participants said, "They consider their mother tongue as the only working language in their life time. They do not read books, magazines, newspapers, etc.; Due to this they lack content, vocabulary, and grammar in their speech and writing. This is very challenging to the EFL instructors.'

Another interviewee also added the following comment.

Students need to be brainwashed about the importance of good attitude to knowledge, need to have good language

skills to survive in the academic life. They consider their major area of study as the means and end of their learning. They do not realise the vertical and horizontal relationship of various disciplines they study.

Some respondents (five participants) reported that students have been taught English using Amharic or other vernaculars at the lower grade levels, and they pointed out that the English language teachers themselves have some skill gaps in using the language effectively. As part of the classroom facility, they also pointed out that the benches were not good for group discussion, and the teachers did not form groups of using some relevant criteria. Moreover, the new English language textbooks in the secondary schools were considered to be challenging for students to use for communication. These textbooks were said to be vague and difficult for the background of students.

In relation to backwash effects of English language examinations at the secondary and preparatory levels, most of the participants mentioned the following:

The Ethiopian school leaving certificate examination and university entrance examination are more of passages and grammar parts. Productive skills are not treated well. So, it is clear assessment culture is affecting the language learning process. Students prepare themselves based on the style of examination. At the secondary and preparatory level, students are not given the opportunity to use productive skills in an integrated way in all subject areas.

4.3.1.2 Students' Negative psychological associations with Language Learning

During the interview, some of the extracts were categorised towards the sub-theme under psychological variables as barriers for EFL instruction. All of the participants reflected the following attributes that most of the students share at the freshman level.

Lack of Motivation and Interest in learning and using English

From the discussion, it was found out that the students had poor motivation for learning English; this in turn also had negative impact on the motivation of EFL instructors to teach students. When students do not have motivation for learning, it is very difficult to go to

class to teach these students. The participants of the study also indicated that students did not engage in extensive reading unless they are told to read for completing assignments. They did not have any interest to listen to radio or to watch television programmes of English broadcasts. So, they did not have content knowledge on various disciplines to share with group members in speaking or writing activities.

Lack of Awareness of the National and International Role played by English

Students did not understand the role of English language at national and international level, and they engage in “use and throw” role type in learning English Language support courses. They didn’t have long term goals to learn and use English in their academic and professional lives. They were not clear with problems or failures they face or their country confronts in the long term for not studying any foreign language. Only few students participated in answering questions in the classroom.

Lack of Commitment to practise and use English

The participants of the study indicated that many students do not have the commitment to practise productive skills. They felt that modern students are differently orientated towards the teaching and learning process. Students are not risk takers, and unmotivated to learn English Language support courses. They take the courses because these are not optional courses in registration. Had it been based on their own option to take these courses, they would not register for these courses.

The participants pointed out that EFL learners did not engage autonomously in their tasks or activities. They further added that, when students were given challenging tasks to attempt, they tended to complain and copy from other students. They did tasks or assignments just to get marks; not to develop their skills. The students did not have any sense of shame in performing their tasks, and assignments irresponsibly. As a result, students lacked self-confidence in speaking and writing activities, and were extremely afraid of making mistakes.

One of the common comments reflected by the participants is the following.

Primarily, students should be motivated to learn English language, and after that the instructors will be prepared to serve them.

*Productive skills are not easily attained in a short period of time.
So, students should work in long term plan.*

Low Value for Knowledge and Skills

The students did not give credit for knowledge, skills and competence they are expected to develop. They wanted just to get good grade and job after graduation. They were highly concerned with the scores and grade they earn, not on the language skills they learn. Some students saw active learning approaches as methods teachers use to sit idle, and make students busy.

Most of the interviewees highly criticised the way the universities try to manage the attrition rate of students. They said that the issue of attrition rate is badly treated, which negatively affects the value of hard work in the teaching and learning process. One of the interviewees commented the following:

The universities' interest to minimise attrition rate to zero is making students to believe that hard working is not necessary to score passing grades. Students are being evaluated in a sub-standard way due to this policy protection. They dislike instructors who enforce students to work hard in attempting all activities and assignments, or participating in answering questions. The instructors are obliged to grade students in a substandard manner. This also erodes the morale of the instructors.

The other interviewee reflected on the broader aspect that students should rethink the values and attitudes they have about life, education, nationality, etc. Others also shared this view.

We need advocacy support about education, language, knowledge, wealth, life, national feelings, etc. so that students could open their eyes to see the truth. The students need a clear consultation and explanation about their goal of life. Most of them are misguided. They do not have knowledge about the nature of education and its purpose. They show a mere favoritism for their major area or field of study, yet they do not know it very well. They are not far-sighted. Getting money is considered

as the goal of life. They have bad attitude towards life, education and language learning.

The other issue discussed in detail by the interviewees was to what extent students ignore English Language support courses. All of the participants claimed that the majority, if not all, of the students pay no attention to English Language support courses. Some of the common attributes that students show are poor class participation, absenteeism, negligence in attempting home works, or assignments, and forgetting to bring exercise books and booklets.

One of the participants explained the following with disappointment. ‘ The students do not have any form of commitment to learn English in their own interest. Their attitudes are not good towards English language. They are hopeless about scoring good grade. Students tell us they do not focus on the course. They say it wastes their study time of major area courses. They say they will not study and use it in the future as major area course.

The other added the following reflection on how students ignore the courses.

Students are grouped into two. Those who are good at English (Health Science, Leather and Fashion design school, and Technology College) say English is no more challenge for us and show contempt especially for communicative English skills, while others say we studied for long time, but there is no progress. Some students like journalism or History department consider its advantage.

The other experienced interviewee shared the above points and added the following.

If you tell students to read and do assignments, you will be seen as an enemy. Those instructors who make students work hard are nicknamed traditional (uninformed), while the others who do not challenge students are said to be informed (understanding). Many students argue about the relevance/practicality of academic writing in the real world of work. The role of English in students’ life after graduation is limited.

4.3.1.3 EFL Instructors' Influence on EFL Instruction

The participants of the study also commented on the impacts that the EFL instructors have on the English language teaching in the three universities. Their ideas are summarized in the following manner:

Concerning the dedication or motivation of EFL instructors in teaching, a few (four participants) stated that it is not only the students but also the instructors who have lost the motivation in teaching and learning of English language. One of them stated the following:

I don't think that EFL instructors have the motivation to use innovative techniques in their classroom; rather they are dissatisfied, or disillusioned, and desperate about their profession. They do not have any unique strategy to help students improve productive skills. Some instructors are dedicated to their profession while others are acting in the opposite way. Maybe the fixed salary scale (the same for experienced and new ones) is not motivating.

The other interviewee also added the following.

'We are also responsible for the lack of interest of students to learn English language. Not only students, but also we teachers are low in morale (motivation) about teaching English language. After taking English language for many years, students did not see significant changes in their skills; they see little or no return at all in learning the language, and they see no meaningful teaching and learning Process in the EFL classroom. However, students love to be good at English although it could not be practical.'

Some of the interviewees in the three universities revealed that lack of supervision or monitoring system was also a problem for the EFL instruction. This was mentioned particularly in connection with wasting teaching time, effective teaching and classroom management. The following extract is an example.

Lack of supervision or monitoring system in the classroom is a gap the university has to consider. Some instructors do not go to class, or do not teach properly. Some instructors are considered as traditional, boring, and conservative when they regularly go to class, and others who do not go are considered as mood wise teachers. Sometimes many instructors do not go to class, but the department does not control this. As the number of instructors is large, it is not possible to call meetings, and share information.

Most of the participants also reflected that the classroom situation is not conducive to implement student-centred approach. One of them stated it like this.

Instructors are expected to implement student-centred approach, but it is very difficult to achieve it in the present classroom situation. We don't have time to help weak students.

4.3.1.4 Influence of External Social Environments on Students' Learning

The participants of the interview described the impact of the external social environment over the academic community and the values students develop in their life time. They asserted that these factors are highly influencing the teaching and learning process in general. Most of the factors mentioned were related to cost of living, social status and economic welfare of the academic community. For example, one of the interviewees mentioned the following in which others share his views.

Students showed negligence to knowledge, skill, attitudes, and profession due to the corrupt social environment. They stated that it was possible to get wealth without hard work through social networking, political affiliation, or illegal trade system. This eroded the moral strength of citizens to work hard and lead decent life. For instance, they added that in their work environment, it was not personal competence, or knowledge that rewards people, but other variables that were non-predictable and non-academic issues. Family and religious institutions did not give respect for knowledge and its success. In employment, competence and knowledge were not required, instead other criteria were set. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees also attributed the failures in English language teaching to the factors mentioned below.

Low Value of Knowledge and Skills

Almost all of the participants of the study underscored that they have low passion for their profession. They related their low motivation with the current unfavourable conditions of the social, economic, and political conditions. Lack of role model in the academic community was also mentioned as a problem. For instance, they stated that people do not buy books and engage in reading to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes. These types of things are not encouraged at societal level. It is also clear that many people try to get wealth in short cut without hard work and long time experience. As a result, students do not give credit for knowledge and show lack of interest for learning. Furthermore, most of the jobs in government offices do not need English language skills. This made students to belittle the value of English language skills.

Misperceptions about the Role of the English Language

The participants of the study explained that, in their institutions, they use English language for course delivery in the classrooms; English is limited to the classroom communication. Many students have got the idea that English does not play any role out of classroom in the local community. Other departmental students and their instructors are also said to have a wrong belief that English Language support courses are good only to score grades, not to get any relevant knowledge.

Concerns over the Cost of Living and Social Status

The majority of the interviewees reported that for a variety of reasons EFL instructors are not doing their professional work. They explained that they are dissatisfied with their salary, the cost of living, the political situation and their social status. Instructors' professional lives and morale are seriously damaged by different factors like cost of living and social status. They complained that the administration, the students and the society at large do not respect instructors. They claimed that they are not decision makers on professional issues, but politicians do this on behalf of them.

To sum up the points, the factors mentioned above are likely to influence negatively the teaching and learning process in EFL class. As a result, this effect is likely to harm students' engagement to improve their productive skills.

4.3.1.5 Lack of Administrative Support from Universities

The participants of the interview also complained on the role the administration plays in the teaching and learning process. They raised this issue in connection with provisions of facilities, giving relevant trainings, planning for experience sharing with other universities, giving incentives for staff members' efforts in updating teaching modules, and conducting tutorial classes for interested students, etc. Most of them reported that universities are highly interested in other non-academic issues. They urged that every penny of the huge budget should be invested directly on students' academic progress, not on other non-academic issues.

In relation to the absence of incentives to update teaching materials, the interviewees seriously criticised the administration for neglecting such cost issues. They also admitted that this has a negative impact on the teaching and learning process in the EFL classroom, as one of the interviewees confirmed:

There is no encouragement for hard workers. The administration of the universities is not willing to pay for module preparation for English supportive courses. They are very strict for any type of payment request. They do not support module preparation claiming that students will not go to the library for extensive reading on their course if they get handout or any module. However, in language classrooms students should get text at hand for practice purpose. We cannot write everything on the board. It is time consuming, boring and inefficient.

The other issue that all of the participants complained was large class size. They reported that it is a serious problem for English language classrooms although the universities did not pay any attention. Some of the extracts are:

Large class size in each classroom (60 to 70 students, or up to 100 in lecture halls) of the respective departments is a serious / a very bad problem for any language classroom.

When I was in London for training, we were 22 in our class. We had frequent feedback from our teacher. But in this university, in Basic Writing skills course, we made one

individual test and two group assignments due to large class size. We did not give timely feedback.

In the past it was possible to write six paragraphs individually. Nowadays, our tests are more of objective type, which is easy for marking and grading. It is difficult to collect marks out of 200% in a large class size.

In relation to teaching resources or inputs to the language classroom, most of the interviewees commented that there was lack of teaching resources including audio-visual ones in variety and quantity. Most of the reflections were similar with one of the participants' comments:

We do not have audio records, video, LCD projectors, tape recorders, clean classrooms, seats, chairs, etc. The classrooms are not furnished with facilities which are very important for the teaching and learning process. There is shortage of classrooms, offices, and tutorial centres to help students in the university. That is why large class size is a common experience.

The other concern of the interviewees was the students' course material or module. Many of the informants stressed that the current teaching material was not appropriate for the two English Language support courses. They reported that it was not prepared in a way that gave focus on productive skills and its content was not motivating for the learners. For example, they commented that some contents such as curriculum vitae, letter writing, report writing, oral presentation, and the like should have been part of it. The students were also said to depend too much on the modules and did not read extra materials.

One of the experienced respondents reported that he cares for the content he used in the daily lesson as he didn't believe that the teaching material compiled by others was good.

I prepare my language contents in my class to teach English Supportive Courses. I am not limited to the booklet organised by the department. My approach is more of English for specific purpose. It is good to make students to speak and write using contents they are well aware of. For example, Fashion and

design department students use contents of their field.

In relation to the higher diploma programme (HDP) training given to instructors, the following were recurring points that the interviewees raised as challenges.

Lack of Supervision and Follow-Up after Completion of Training

They mentioned that lack of supervision and follow up after taking the training leads to negligence on the part of instructors in implementing the knowledge and skills they got in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, they hinted that it is also necessary to reconsider whether classroom supervision should be conducted in order to identify those who are good at teaching, and those who need support in actual classroom teaching. They recommended that it should be a focus area for the universities to consider in the future.

Negative Attitudes towards Higher Diploma Training

The majority of the participants felt negative attitude towards HDP training. One source of the problem was its relevance for the instructors, and the administration also affected negatively the motivation of instructors in handling the training and giving incentives. They stated that there were differences made among universities in conducting the training and giving incentives. Most of them pointed out that they experienced nothing new during the course of their training. They also complained that they faced lack of time to attend the training session as they were busy teaching students. Some of the comments are presented below:

I do not think it will contribute to the professional development of EFL instructors; especially it is wastage for TEFL graduates. Language teaching has got its own unique characteristics and methods of teaching; it should not be led by general education principles or theories.

It is generally a fake form of training that is done mechanically as a form of routine task.

I don't think that HDP is doing its business in the current situation. Similarly, student-centred or active learning approach is not

practiced properly. It is just a form of pretending, and I see the training as wastage.

4.3.2 Instructors' Perceptions of Active Learning Techniques and Student-Centred Approaches in EFL Classrooms

In order to see the perception of instructors towards active learning and student-centred approaches, the instructors were asked some questions using the interview guide.

First, the participants were asked what they would feel if they were students at this time. Almost all of them reflected that although there are good things such as students' freedom, and fair grading, they questioned the quality of education and the level of knowledge they gain, the types of skills and the strong characters students develop. They attached a high value towards their academic lives in contrast to the current academic lives of their students.

Some of the common themes they pointed out are described in the following section.

4.3.2.1 Self-Praise

When the participants were asked about their academic lives they experienced, they mentioned that although they did not get good treatment like the current students, they pointed out that they were hard-working to complete their education successfully. Some of the comments were the following:

*I would score good grade if I were a student by now.
Nowadays, students are lucky as they can get better treatment,
and distribution of materials. They have the right to check their
scores of tests and examination results. They get scores in group
with no individual effort, and scoring average grade is not challenging;
they get good grade even if they do not deserve it.*

*In our case in the past, we did not experience good support
in the teaching and learning process. We used to depend on our efforts.'*

4.3.2.2 Low Opinion of the Current Teaching and Learning Process

Most of the participants reported that they have low opinion of the current teaching and learning process in the universities. Some of their recurrent comments were the following:

I don't think I will get the relevant knowledge and skill attending class with the current students. They do not give credit for knowledge, and this is demotivating for me. I have low opinion of the teaching and learning process. The system is filled with too much carelessness.

I don't think there are good instructors and students in the current situation at higher institutions. I am lucky for not being part of this generation of students. They cheat in the name of active learning and student-centred approach.

If the instructor is not dedicated, we will be at a disadvantage when everything is left for me in the name of active learning approach. Otherwise, it is a good approach for students."

The respondents were asked to comment on their personal satisfaction in the teaching and learning process in the EFL class. Almost all of them (except one participant) reported that they were totally disappointed, and did not feel any sense of achievement. Dissatisfaction was one of the themes observed out of their reflection of the majority of the participants. Only one respondent stated that he was motivated to teach his students and was happy with his teaching techniques. The following are the common themes out of their comments.

4.3.2.3 Lack of Professional Enthusiasm

During the discussion, the participants reported that they were faced with lack of professional enthusiasm. The following were some of their comments.

I am fed up with the whole process due to the above problems.

I am just considering myself as preacher, one-sided flow of information.

Students do not engage with interest.

I don't have any satisfaction about the whole of the teaching and learning process (active learning approach, student-centred approach).

We did not implement these things properly.

4.3.2.4 Need for Change in EFL Instruction

Moreover, from the discussion with the participants of the study, it was found out that all of them felt need for change in the EFL instruction. Some of the comments were the following:

I see from time to time the teaching and learning quality is deteriorating. The classes are not effective in my opinion due to the above problems Higher diploma training, one-to-five grouping, etc. are not remedies for English language teaching.

I don't think that we are using student-centred approach and active learning effectively in our EFL classrooms. The reality on the ground is very different. It seems for technical purpose that we mention in our reports.

4.3.2.5 Positive Perceptions towards Active Learning and Student-Centred Approaches

With regard to the beliefs and philosophy of the instructors about language teaching, most of the respondents reflected positive opinions in relation to student-centred approach and active learning technique. However, they hinted that the classroom conditions were not conducive to implement these things in the EFL teaching. Some of their comments were the following.

Student-centred approach is essential; Students should be involved in expressing their ideas, and feelings using the language. The language content should be chosen carefully, but I use more teacher-centred approach due to the problems we face in implementing it. Active learning or student centred approach is a widely phrased, but poorly practiced issue in the universities.

4.3.3 Types of Active Learning Approaches most often used in Relation to productive Skills

In order to see the types of active learning techniques most often applied, the participants were requested to comment on the usages of active learning techniques in their EFL class. The majority of the respondents reported that they do not use any innovative technique other than group work and pair work. Thus, failure to use a variety of active

learning techniques was one of the themes. The following are some of the specific points out of their reflections.

4.3.3.1 Failure to use a Variety of Active Learning Techniques

Almost all participants reflected that the practice of active learning approaches was very poor in the EFL instruction. They mentioned lack of time, large class size and examination-oriented teaching as reasons for failure to use innovative teaching techniques.

Some of the common comments that the participants reflected are the following.

I don't think that EFL instructors are using a variety of active learning approaches in conducting class, as most of them are desperate about the impact of the teaching and learning process. Our current practice is more of teacher-centred than student-centred approach due to lack of time, and large class size.

As our way of teaching and learning process is more of examination-oriented, I don't use alternative teaching methods; I restrict myself to the students' booklet; there is no innovation experience. Even students do not use them for learning due to lack of commitment.

A few of the respondents tried to portray that they are implementing student-centred approach and used various types of active learning techniques in teaching productive skills. Some of their common responses are the following.

I use mostly student-centred approach, but sometimes we use lecture/ teacher-centred approach.

I believe in my profession and am innovative in my teaching techniques. I reflect upon and evaluate my teaching techniques. I use them not because of prescription, but my interest.

4.3.3.2 Failure in Students' Working Groups

In relation to students' working groups, all of the respondents claimed that the new one-to-five group structure was not working effectively, and stated that it was making many students dependent on few group leaders who attempted to work the assignments. One of the respondents reflected this common view.

I do not think that they have got benefit from the grouping.

It is a means that universities use for administrative purpose.

Many students do not like grouping, especially girls do not have interest to join boys in the group.

Some of the participants added that let alone attempting tasks and assignments, some students even forget to write their names and identity card numbers due to their negligence for active participation. The participants also mentioned that it is very difficult for assigning grade for students individually during evaluation.

Another interviewee argued that many students preferred to work individually, but when they are forced to be part of the group, they pretend as if they are working or studying with their group members. He pointed out that it was just a prescription of the ministry of education, not the interest of the academic community.

Moreover, he reminded that, in their culture of education, the society encourages competition than cooperation. He concluded his comment by saying that students' grouping does not reflect the interest of learners in terms of sex, language ability, interest with class mates, and learning style preference.

4.3.4 The Extent to which Active Learning Approaches are linked to the Assessment of Productive Skills

The interviewees were asked a set of questions about the linkage between assessment of productive skills and active learning approaches used in the language classroom. The issue of assessment of learning, and lack of innovation in assessment techniques were identified out of this discussion. The following are the common points taken out of the transcription.

4.3.4.1 Examination-Oriented Teaching and Learning Approaches

Most of the participants agreed upon one point that the way EFL instruction goes on is in more examination-oriented manner. Both the instructors and students shared this view. The participants mentioned that even if they try to help students to practice productive skills, the students do not engage to work hard unless the activities are related with scores. As a result, there is no relevant feedback for the tests, assignments, and classroom practices. Some tasks and activities of productive skills in the Communicative English skills module are not attempted if they are not helpful for the test or examination. The participants stated that the assessment is done to collect marks, not to help learners learn.

They also mentioned that most of the students do not deserve the scores and grades they earn as they are incompetent in their language skills; since they are policy supported or favoured students, the marking criteria for tests and examinations are substandard, and the assessment is more of objective type, which is not good for language skill development. However, they said that students' grade is relatively good despite their low proficiency.

Some of the common reflections that the participants forwarded were the following.

ELT teachers do not teach, but rush to collect marks out of 100% or more, and there is no meaningful learning in the ELT classroom. We do not practice assessment for learning. We relate each activity with marks so that students give attention for the course. It is teaching for the test. Most of the time, we are teaching for the test. All our activities are exam-oriented.

4.3.4.2 Lack of Practice in Productive Skills

The majority of the participants confirmed that there was not good practice in the EFL instruction. They stated that students do not like to spend time in practicing productive skills as they were busy in other courses. Due to this, they said that some instructors award good grades so that students do not complain, but with no meaningful learning.

4.3.4.3 Imbalance between Productive Skills and Receptive Skills

The participants also commented on the issue of assessment and teaching in the EFL instruction. Most of the participants reported that, in their assessment more weight (80%) was dominated by the receptive skills area, while less weight (20%) was left for productive skill. This was true in Communicative English skills course. This showed imbalance between the two skills. They also added that there is no dynamism in the teaching and assessment of productive skills. They said that EFL instructors focus on content coverage of the booklet than on improving students' language skills. Thus, in practice it was more of teacher-centred classroom. They gave easy tasks with simple marking criteria so that students would not fail in the assessment. It was not to help students learn and practise speaking and writing skills.

Among the common reflections by the participants of the study, the following is the one that portrays the above theme.

Most of the tests are loosely connected to the skills we wan to develop. The language competence we want students to develop should be closely related with our assessment type. Nowadays, the language tests are more of objective type, not subjective one like the normal language tests.

To conclude, it is possible to point out that the relevance of assessment is very little to the language learning process, and there is no innovation in the assessment process of productive skills. The whole process of the EFL instruction is more of teacher-centred approach and does not encourage the development of speaking and writing skills. As the tests and examinations do not focus on development of authentic speaking and writing skills, the students do not make efforts to improve their language skills.

4.4 Presentation of the Student Focus Group Discussion Data

The students were presented with a set of questions to conduct the focus group discussion. The discussion revolves around the four objectives of the study. The data is presented in the following sub-sections in line with the themes of the specific objectives.

4.4.1 Major Factors that affect the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in teaching Productive Skills

4.4.1.1 Poor Background of Learners

The first problem that the interviewees observed was poor background of learners in their language skills in general and productive skills in particular. All of the participants claimed that, at high schools and preparatory levels, English language teachers did not give attention to productive skills. Moreover, they explained that, as the English language examination in the grade 10 national examination and university entrance examination does not cover productive skills, they confirmed that neither students nor their teachers give attention to productive skills in the EFL instruction. Therefore, they declared that they did not see any progress in their English after studying this subject for many years. All of the reflections of the participants can be grouped in the following themes.

Poor Attention to Productive Skills

Most of the participants indicated that they did not get good practice in productive skills at the lower grade levels; their teachers also did not focus on this skill as it was not part of the examination and they also confirmed that their teachers used to tell them to skip speaking and writing activities as these would not appear in the final examination and national examination. They also added that too much attention was given for grammar, vocabulary and passage in the EFL instruction. It was also observed during the discussion that students from government schools were said to be relatively poor in their language skills in contrast to students who come from private schools due to the difference in the English language teaching.

Most of the participants reported that they did not read and listen to English texts in extracurricular activities. As a result, they mentioned their limitation in content knowledge, which would serve as a resource for their speech and writing.

Examination-Oriented Teaching

The participants of the discussion reported that, at high schools and preparatory schools, their English language teachers used to teach English in a more examination oriented manner. That means it was more of teaching for the test. The evaluation system was designed mostly to collect test scores for grading purpose.

Lack of Confidence in using English

The participants of the discussion reported that the majority of the students have problems using English due to lack of confidence. As a result, they declared that most of them show lack of confidence and interest to practise and use their English for their social and academic purposes. For instance, the participants mentioned their previous experience in the elementary schools and in the secondary schools in which most of the students and their teachers were silent during *English days* in the schools for fear of making mistakes in speaking English.

4.4.1.2 Dependency of Students

Another difficulty that the participants mentioned was dependency of students on few group leaders, or high achiever students. In relation to students' dependency in group work, all of the interviewees claimed that many of the students do not work hard when they are given tasks to attempt with their group members. They asserted that only the group leaders or few students would attempt it and would submit it to their instructor. They also added that some instructors have negative attitude towards one-to-five group structure, and they mentioned that, due to this opinion, many students do not consider their group as important learning tool.

4.4.1.3 Relevance of English Language Support Courses

A third factor mentioned as a problem in employing active learning techniques was the value students held towards English Language support courses. With regard to the relevance of English Language support courses to develop students' productive skills, they pointed out that the courses did not help them to improve their speaking or writing skills. The explanatory reports from the respondents for the above theme are the following:

Concerns over the Relevance of English Language Support Courses

All of the participants shared their view that Communicative English Skills course did not help them to improve their communication skills. They stated that they merely registered and did activities for the sake of collecting marks to get passing grade. They also commented that the same is true with Basic writing Skills course. Nothing was different from the type of English they got in the secondary school.

Problems with Course Materials

Most of the participants described that the course booklet contents are not attractive to practise speaking and writing skills. They added that the course titles and the actual classroom activities they experienced in the classroom did not match. They mentioned that there were not many tasks and activities for productive skills in the course booklets.

In relation to Communicative English Skills, the majority of the participants mentioned that most of the contents are covered by passage, vocabulary, and grammar, which are parts of receptive skills. They exclaimed that they did not get both communication skills and good grade after taking Communicative English skills course.

Lack of Focus on Productive Skills

The participants reported that the course content of Basic writing skills was more on sentence level writing, and instructors would spend a lot of time on this portion and finally they would rush to finish the course and make us produce paragraphs and essays in groups. As a result, they said that they did not get time for practicing more advanced levels of composition. Consequently, they mentioned that they did not benefit from this course, too. They added that there in the university, there was no good practice in productive skills. They stated that they did not get anything different from their previous knowledge to pass the tests and final examination.

4.4.1.4 Bad Classroom Management of EFL Instructors

In connection with the instructors' classroom management, the participants of the focus group discussion reported that generally it was very bad and negatively affected their feeling towards the teaching and learning process and the courses. They mentioned that most of the instructors used to tell them that they were empty vessels, and passed the course because of their mercy, not due to students' effort.

They stated that most of the instructors told them that students' language background was bad, and the instructors did not believe language is learnt through practice. Most of the instructors were also perceived to be demotivated and uncommitted to teaching English. Some participants also shared the idea that many EFL instructors used to tell them that students show contempt for the instructor and the courses, and then bragged that their

courses were mandatory for students' successful graduation. As a result, they confirmed that they were afraid of EFL instructors for fear of revenge in complaining about them.

The participants further pointed out that the two English Language support courses were not very hard, but the instructors' approach was very bad; they degrade them for not answering questions correctly. This was because they expected them to be perfect in the daily classroom practice. Moreover, in two of the universities, the participants mentioned that EFL instructors missed many periods and wasted students' time. However, they pointed out that it was not possible to complain against them in any way.

4.4.1.5 Bad qualities of EFL Instructors

With regard to the opinions they have towards their EFL instructors, they were asked to describe the good EFL instructors using some evaluative adjectives. During the discussion, most of the participants claimed that the instructors they knew could be described using the opposite meanings of these descriptive adjectives.

According to the opinions of the participants, the following were the attributes of good EFL instructors; however, their instructors did not show these qualities to the students in the EFL instruction:

Encouraging, not cursing, committed to teaching, not pretending

One with no bias of any form and who give regular feedback

Motivating, active, respected by students. Show bright face and polite

Explaining things well, communicative, understanding others' culture

Helps students to practice the language

Patient, observant, exemplary, manage feelings and behaviour

One who does not deduct many marks from students' work/not error focused.

4.4.1.6 Negative psychological associations of Students

With regard to the students' psychological variables as barriers to EFL instruction, the participants of the focus group discussion mentioned recurring points as categorised in the following manner.

Lack of Commitment and Motivation to Learn

The participants of the discussion reflected that students have problems of self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes in speaking and writing activities. Generally, they were said to be afraid of using English language. Further, they pointed out that students focused on the amount of marks they scored, and the grade they got; they did not give attention to the instructors' comments. Again, the participants mentioned that students are not risk takers, and not motivated to learn English Language support courses; they registered for these courses because they are compulsory courses. Had it been on their own option to register, the participants confirmed that almost all students would not register for these courses.

Becoming hopeless about language learning

The participants also pointed out that another problem was poor motivation or interest for learning English Language support courses, as they do not expect to score good grade in the courses. When they start the courses, they said that it is with bad mood, but when they finish them, they feel relief. The participants mentioned that most of the students are not autonomous learners to engage in tasks or activities; they are desperate about improving their English. They further added that those who were interested to take the courses at the beginning would feel resentment at the end when they realize that they were not relevant to develop their language skills.

Examination-Oriented Approach for Learning

The participants reported that students are highly concerned with the scores and grade they earn, not on the productive skills they have to develop. They added that even the instructors seem to share this feeling due to their approach to teaching and assessment. In connection with the library resources and the booklet they have, the participants pointed out that the materials were not good for the teaching and learning process and also indicated shortage of these resources. Most of the participants reported that the references given in the course outline are not found in the library. They also further reported that the booklets for the two English Language support courses are not good for developing productive skills. They mentioned problems such as technical vocabulary, and lack of content in relation to their field of specialisation.

4.4.2 Students' Perceptions of Active Learning Approaches in EFL Teaching

With regard to their perception about active learning approaches, the participants of the study reported that they had awareness about the importance of active learning and student-centred approach although they did not practice them effectively. Although they knew about the relevance of active learning approaches, they were not committed to work hard. They pretended as if they were doing things expected of them. In practice, however, they seemed to feel comfortable with teacher-centred approach. Some of the common themes formed out of the discussion were the following.

4.4.2.1 Lack of Authentic Approach to Learning

The participants reported that although they were aware of the importance of active learning techniques, they stated as if they were using them. They added that most of their instructors used usually teacher-centred approach in the teaching and learning process. They also reported that most students do not have the commitment to work hard, do not engage in the given tasks and activities, and expect the instructors to lecture to them.

4.4.2.2 Considering Active Learning Techniques as Means of Collecting Marks

The participants also commented that students use the given tasks and assignments just as a means for collecting scores for grading purpose, not for meaningful learning. As a result, they confirmed that students considered active learning techniques as irrelevant things. They added that they had similar experience in the primary schools and secondary schools.

4.4.3 Types of Active Learning Approaches most often used in Relation to Productive Skills

The participants were also asked to comment on the types of active learning approaches most often used in the teaching and learning process of productive skills. Based on the recurring points, the following common themes were developed.

4.4.3.1 No more Alternative Techniques

It appeared that students engaged in the given tasks and activities only when they were related with scores or grades. Due to this tendency, they did not use alternative approaches in the practice of productive skills. Unless the activities were related with test

scores or grading, students did not engage actively and practice effectively individually or in groups.

It was more of examination –oriented approach. Most of the time students didn't participate in doing the given tasks; instead the group leaders were given responsibility to complete and submit the tasks. Due to this, the instructors focused on collecting test scores and used the data for grading purpose. There was no practice of peer correction and self-assessment in the teaching and learning process. Some of the common points that the participants reflected were presented in the following manner.

4.4.3.2 Dominance of Product Approach to teach Writing Skills

In the discussion, the participants revealed that most of the time many students produced their piece of writing using product approach. They did not follow process approach in paragraph writing; that means they produced one paragraph with no revision or editing. That was done just as a form of examination. Furthermore, they pointed out that there was no writing practice in communicative English skills course; on Basic writing skills course, they said that their practice was mostly on sentence level writing.

4.4.3.3 Lack of Systematic Approach in using Students' Grouping

The participants mentioned that they did not use a one-to-five group structure effectively. They asserted that students used it as a means to escape hard work since only one or two students completed the assignment. Because of this, they felt that the grouping made them dependent upon other good students. They also added that the evaluation system was hurting the morale of high achiever students, for they get similar marks with other group members who did not work on it.

Due to this dependency feeling, they stated that most of the students did not like to engage in an individual speaking or writing activity since they prefer group's evaluation.

4.4.4 The extent to which Active Learning Approaches are linked to Assessment Practices

The participants of the study were asked a set of questions about the linkage between assessment of productive skills and active learning approaches. In relation to this idea, the following were the common themes formed out of the transcription.

4.4.4.1 Lack of Focus on Speaking Skills in the Teaching and Assessment Process

The participants reported that the weight given for speaking skill in the assessment was very small. This was due to large class size. The way of assessment was dominantly on the topic “self-introduction”, in which the value was not more than 10%. The instructors did not set any written rubric to evaluate the students. The students were not aware of these criteria. A variety of techniques were not used in the teaching of speaking skills.

The participants mentioned that, in relation to speaking skills assessment, most of the participants indicated that they have taken self- introduction out of 10%. In one of the universities, a group of participants reported that they took self- introduction, presentation and debate; each activity was done twice in group and individually. The participants also pointed out that many EFL Instructors did not show their test score on time, and they did not use clear criteria for the evaluation of productive skill. With regard to assessment of writing skills, the respondents’ ideas were presented in the following manner.

4.4.4.2 Inappropriate Approaches to Writing Skills Tuition

The students applied a product-oriented approach to practice paragraph writing. It was timed form of writing in that students did not get time to revise their drafts. This was related to the instructors’ way of teaching. They often gave short time (about 20 to 30 minutes) in which students were expected to produce and submit their drafts in the classrooms. The students did not spend time to practice writing. Then, the instructors assigned marks to the drafts. It took some weeks to finish the marking and give feedback to the students. However, the students did not value the comments; rather they gave more attention to the score or grade they get.

The Tendency to avoid Burden in the Teaching and Learning Process

As the instructors complained large class size in the teaching of writing skills, they tried to focus on contents and activities that are not time consuming. Thus, instead of focusing on writing activities of paragraphs and essays, they give too much time for sentence level writing in the teaching and assessments. The students did not like this and consider the teaching and learning as wastage of time since there was no new knowledge added to their understanding.

Lack of Practice on Writing Skills in Communicative English Skills Courses

The majority of the participants mentioned that they produced a paragraph out of 10% in Communicative English Skills course, while in some departments of the two universities there was no such paragraph writing. That means 90% of the assessment weight was taken on the other skills (reading, grammar, listening and speaking). Therefore, the students reported that they did not get enough practice of writing skill in Communicative English Skills course. Some of the groups of students mentioned that they used to write three paragraphs day after day with no feedback. It was just a form of composition examination. Another group of students stated that they produced a single paragraph for practice purpose and wrote another on the next period as a quiz, which was valued out of 10%.

More Focus on Sentence-Level Writing in Basic Writing Skills Courses

Here the participants of the study pointed out that most of the activities in the given course books were related with sentence level writing. That means out of the given lecture hours, this part took most of the lecture hours. As a result, since there was a tendency for teaching for the test, almost all of the participants pointed out that too much weight was given for sentence level writing in the tests and quizzes. This dominance of sentence level writing was not interesting for students. This was because they reported that they had got enough of it at the secondary schools and in the preparatory levels. As a result, they hinted that they did not get enough time to practise more advanced levels of writing skills.

4.4.4.3 Irrelevant Feedback

The students stated that most of the time the comments of the instructors were aimed at deducting marks for errors of mechanics and spelling. They did not encourage the good attempts of students. In relation to assessment for learning, the participants were asked to comment on their experience if their EFL instructors used to give timely feedback to help students practice the language. Most of them reported that they did not get this type of experience in the teaching and learning process. The common themes formed out of the discussion are the following.

4.4.4.4 Examination-Oriented Teaching and Learning

The participants indicated that the assessment was done just to collect test scores and finally used to grade students. It was not used to help students improve themselves for the next round tasks and activities. This was the nature of the traditional teacher-centred approach where the instructors lecture and finally administer tests and examinations for grading purpose before the semester is completed. It was also learnt during the discussion that their previous learning experience in the secondary schools seemed to affect their current learning approaches in the freshman programme. That is to say they followed a test wise approach for language learning. Some of the common reflections were presented in the following list of points.

Instructors used assessment to collect marks on productive skills and did not use these to improve students' language skills. We did not practice a lot before the test, and did not get timely feedback on our progress. May be this is due to large class size.

4.5 Presentation of Information in Documents

The aim of this data source was to get relevant information which was useful to see the types of activities, the relationship between assessment and teaching, and the focus given to productive skills in the curriculum and the course outline. Moreover, it was also important to see specific details in the documents as part of the reflection of the participants of the interview.

4.5.1 Assessment of Student Booklet and Course Outline of the Two English Language Support Courses

4.5.1.1 Communicative English Skills Course (Enla, 2011):

According to the Harmonised National Curriculum for the undergraduate programme of the department of English, the following were major objectives and course rationale for offering this course to undergraduate students in all streams in Ethiopian public universities.

Course Rationale and Objectives

The course description presented that the course was proposed to develop and improve students' language competence. It was also aimed at developing students' communicative abilities in English, which would help students to develop their communicative skills and overall language competence in English.

In relation to productive skills, the writing section was planned to focus on summarising a text and writing descriptive paragraphs, while the speaking section was expected to touch upon topics such as introducing oneself and others, interviewing and discussion, stating and supporting propositions, stating one's opinions, organising and taking part in a debate, making a persuasive speech, and questioning. The following were the objectives that the students are expected to achieve after taking the course.

- Express their ideas in various communicative contexts
(in pair or group discussion, public speaking settings etc.)
- Use various vocabulary learning strategies and techniques
- Write and present reports
- Read various materials and make their own notes
- Identify the structure of oral and written discourses
- Attend to their academic work with ease and with clarity.

Assessment Plan

- Continuous Assessment (50%)
 - Speaking-oral presentation 10%
 - Writing-test(5%) and assignment(5%) 10%
 - Listening 10%
 - Reading and Vocabulary-test 10%
 - Grammar-test 10%
- Final Examination (50%)

Course Delivery

The suggested methodology that instructors are to use include lecture, group work and individual work. Based on the assessment of the course outline and the continuous assessment done, the EFL instructors involve the productive skills in their students'

assessment. The most common task for speaking skill assessment is self-introduction and debating over an issue. The marks or weight given are 10% for self- introduction in the two universities, while in the other it may be taken out of 25%. This is because in this university the whole assessment system is taken out of 200%, which is the combination of tutorial and lecture hours. Finally, it was reduced to 100% for grading purpose. Thus, the weight given for speaking skill was proportional with the weight given in the other two universities. Similarly, in relation to writing skill, it was a common practice that students produce one short paragraph as a form of quiz and it is taken out of 10% in the two universities, while in the third university it was taken out of 25%, and in addition to this, one job application letter is added out of 25%. All the topics for the tasks are indicated in the different sections of the students' course booklet.

Contents

In relation of productive skills, the content of this course are the following:

- Finding out about other people
- Introducing oneself and others
- A short Personal description or story
- Responding to the speaker's purpose
- Writing a brief summary of a talk
- Public speaking
- Writing a short summary of a talk
- Organising and taking part in a debate
- Writing a brief summary of key ideas from a text
- Writing a descriptive essay about a marriage ceremony
- Brainstorming and discussing on what makes a good learner
- Summarising a talk
- Summarising an academic article
- Writing an essay on learning English

Tasks and Activities in Productive Skills

The activities that the students are expected to engage in are the following:

- Introduce themselves to their partners
- find out information about others
- Participate in group discussions
- introduce themselves
- write a personal description
- write summary of the talk

practice and present public speeches
participate in debating organized in the classroom
write summary and descriptive paragraph
practice writing summary and essays

4.5.1.2. Basic Writing Skills Course (Sophomore English) (Enla 212)

This course is the former course entitled Sophomore English, which was offered for second year university students and is designed to introduce students to the nature of academic writing. Now this course title is changed into Basic Writing Skills in the Ethiopian public universities after the harmonization of the national curriculum of the universities. Yet, in some departments this course retained its previous title, Sophomore English.

Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to develop students' writing skills. It covers sentence level writing, paragraph level writing, and essay level writing. The course objectives that the students are expected to achieve include the following:

construct meaningful sentences in English
learn to compose a paragraph that has a clearly stated topic sentence and details ;
use appropriate coordination and subordination skills to relate ideas;
identify and correct common sentence problems
Compose paragraphs that have clearly stated topic sentences and supporting details
write a well-structured essay of different types (descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative)

The Course Content

The major contents of this course are sentence structure, sentence types, common sentence errors (fragments, run-on sentences, dangling modifiers and agreement errors), paragraphs and their structures, essentials of a paragraph, basic types of paragraphs, techniques of paragraph development, structure of an essay, types of essays and techniques of essay development.

Tasks and Activities in Productive Skills

The students are expected to attempt the following activities to complete the course.

Identifying subject and predicate
Expanding subject and predicate
Structural classification of sentences
Correcting faulty sentences
Activities on using punctuation marks
Identifying topic sentences and supporting details
Achieving coherence and unity in a paragraph
Types and methods of paragraph development
Activities on free and guided writing
Activities on nature and structure of an essay
Activities on how to write the body and the conclusion and steps on essay
Activities on writing different types of essays

Course Delivery and Assessment Plan

The suggested methodology that instructors are to use are just similar with those mentioned above in communicative English Skills.

Assessment plan:

Continuous Assessment (50%)

Quiz (2): 15%

Test (2): 15%

Assignment (2): (20%)

Final Examination: 50%

4.5.2 Handbook of Higher Diploma Programme for Teacher Educators

This handbook is prepared by the Ministry of Education and distributed to all universities in Ethiopia. All instructors in the universities are expected to take this training and get certificate as a form of teaching license.

The contents of the handbook are divided into four chapters or modules.

1. The reflective teacher educator
2. Active learning project
3. Improving Assessment
4. Action Research project

The handbook also presents the objectives for taking the training to become good teacher educator. The duration for each module is also limited in session. Moreover, the assessment procedure, roles and responsibilities of the tutors and candidates are presented.

The training is taken in a yearlong for two semesters. The whole content is a general education approach for teacher educators. As part of the training, chapter two and three are related with the nature of active learning techniques and assessment methods instructors may use. It is hoped that the trainees will get awareness about these issues so that they can make informed decisions in the teaching and learning process.

From this training it is hoped that the participants get awareness about teaching methods, assessment types, and the nature of good teacher educators. This will help to improve the teaching and learning process, thereby improving students' learning. These are reflected in the objectives of the training.

4.5.3 Sample Tests and Examination Papers for Two English Language Support Courses

As part of this document, the sample tests and examinations were collected and analysed in terms of the focus areas in the language skills and contents.

4.5.3.1 Communicative English Skills Course

This course has got the major objective to develop the four language skills of learners. In the tests and examination, it was found out that the lion share of the weight was given for receptive skills, not for productive skills. Most of the contents covered in the evaluation refer to passage, vocabulary, and grammar. May be these are preferable for objective type of evaluation as instructors complain about overcrowded classrooms. For speaking skill, it was a pair and group presentation which was taken out of 10% to 20%. The topic was self- introduction. It was only in few of the tests that some questions of introducing other people were added. The samples of these tests are attached in the appendix part of the dissertation.

4.5.3.2 Basic Writing Skills Course

This is a writing course to help students develop their composition skill. In the tests and examinations, I observed that mostly they were objective to show correct and wrong answers, which were easy for marking and grading. The weight given for sentence level writing was a lot. The students make correction to subject and verb agreement problems, the use of punctuation marks such as comma and full stop, the placement of modifiers and other errors of grammar. In the paragraph level of writing, the students were requested to insert topic sentences, add conjunctions, identify unity destroyers, and underline conclusions or topic sentences of paragraphs. The students were not made to compose essays and other types of writings. Mostly, students were made to produce paragraphs in groups of five or six students. These paragraphs were marked out of 10 % to 20%. These were done in a timed manner like any other quiz. It did not give time for exercising the process of writing.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that the productive skills were not given the same weight as the other receptive skills in tests and examinations. Moreover, even the questions and contents of the productive skills added in the assessment did not enable students to practice and develop authentic writing and speaking skills.

4.6 Discussion

This section discusses the findings based on the themes formed out of the data analysis in line with the basic questions of the study. The main themes of the study are organised in line with the four sub-questions of the study:

- Major factors that affect the practice of active learning approaches in the EFL classroom;
- Perceptions of EFL instructors and their students regarding active learning approaches;
- Types of active learning approaches most often used in the EFL classrooms;
- The relationship between assessment practices and teaching of productive skills.

After the collected data was analysed, the results were categorised into the relevant themes of the study and discussion was added using the constructivist learning theory. Furthermore, the findings were supported by other research findings.

4.6.1 Major Factors affecting the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in EFL Classrooms

According to the findings of the study, the responses from the participants of the study were grouped into subthemes and presented as follows. Most of the problems the instructors raised were similar with the points the students mentioned.

4.6.1.1 Students' Poor Background Exposure to the English Language

This was the main challenge that both groups of participants revealed as an obstacle to the teaching and learning process in higher institutions. They asserted that, nowadays, students join university with little knowledge of English language. Similarly, Cheewakaroon (2011: 77) points out that undergraduate students suffer from poor language proficiency, among other things.

Further, they commented that the nature of the language teaching at the primary and secondary school is not helpful for students to develop their productive skills. The focus was said to be on the grammar and reading passages so that the students can be prepared for the classroom tests and national examinations. The four language skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) are not said to be treated equally. In addition to poor background of students in using English, their upbringing also affects their interaction with others. For example, Serbessa (2006: 132) mentions that the Ethiopian upbringing or socialisation does not encourage free discussion and interaction, and as a result it is likely to play a negative role in the implementation of active and reflective teaching approaches in order to make students critical thinkers and problem solvers. As a result, most of them tend to be introvert.

When students learn English as a foreign language, they have little exposure to speaking or writing texts out of their classrooms. Mostly English is used for academic purpose, not for other social communication out of academic context (Jamshidnejad, 2011: 14). Students have low input from the environment that could help them to develop their skills. This will be a challenge for students to use the language for communicative purposes (Grabe, and Stoller, 2009: 445). The contextual opportunity that is found in second language learning is not found in learning a foreign language. Generally, students' proficiency and fluency in using English is very low since they did not learn the language in an authentic environment and for spontaneous communication (Jamshidnejad, 2011:

16). Rather, they learn it in an artificial environment in classrooms where neither the teachers nor their students had any experience with native speakers.

Poor background of English is also related to low academic performance of students joining preparatory programme and freshman level. For instance, according to research findings of a group of researchers on students of Debre Markos University, it was found out that most students were reported to join preparatory programme without sufficient academic talents (Tesera, Shumet and Demeke, 2010: 55). Kahsay (2012: 116) mentioned that students' academic achievement in freshman programme is strongly related to their good background at the per-university level. Kahsay (2012: 118) added that students joining public universities in Ethiopia showed poor preparation and low score (i.e. including English language) in the entrance examination record of consecutive academic years from 2005-2009. This becomes a barrier for students' academic success at the freshman programme.

4.6.1.2 Students' Negative Associations with Language Learning

As Walters (2007: 56) states, getting awareness about the psychological conditions of students towards the teaching and learning process is very important for both groups to be effective in achieving their objectives. That is to say the EFL teachers have to identify the motivation of students towards the EFL classroom, and what motivates or de-motivates them in the language instruction. This will help the language teachers to better organise and satisfy the needs of students. As Walters (2007: 57) mentions, some psychological variables like attitude, confidence, awareness and doubt are vital elements in the students' academic lives. The most important skill students have to develop in higher education is not just cramming content, but learning about how to learn, how to use information efficiently and how to apply their skills to novel and unpredictable situations (Walters, 2007: 56). Thus, students should be guided on how to approach their learning, or be aware of relevant learning strategies and styles.

In relation to the findings of this study, negative psychological associations were the other challenge that the participants of the study mentioned as a problem for English language learning. The negative psychological associations mentioned were the following:

- low motivation for English language learning,
- lack of self-confidence for using English,
- lack of commitment to study,

highly interested only on the scores or grade they get, and belittling the importance of English in their academic and professional life.

These are psychological variables that could harm the language learning process. For instance, Grabin (2007: 139) states that students are interested to engage in only what is necessary to get good grade than the language skills they are expected to learn in the teaching and learning process. That is to say students do not focus on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have to develop.

As Jamshidnejad (2011: 8) points out by reviewing other research findings, students' fear of making mistakes in using English in front of their teachers and friends is considered as a learning barrier in an EFL instruction. This is because students do not practice using English with freedom. As a result, they do not see progress, and do not learn the language without making mistakes. They do not see errors as sign of language learning.

According to the constructivist theory of learning, all the above psychological problems are not expected to be observed in a student-centred EFL classroom. These are serious challenges that affect the teaching and learning process negatively. Therefore, all stake holders need to take serious measures to alleviate the problems in order to implement constructivist theory of learning in the EFL classrooms.

This is similar to the findings of Doyle (2008: 20-21) who reports that "learning is not a top reason that students give for attending college". It is only to get a job for earning a living, and are not concerned with getting knowledge. Doyle (2008: 20) reports that high school students were not interested in the subjects they study, but on getting good grades to join universities and to get good jobs after graduating. In another study, it was found out that "37% of students would drop out of college if they thought college was not helping their chances of getting a job" (Doyle, 2008: 21). Shi (2013: 68-69) mentions an experiment on teaching English in the universities using the constructive approach, and she found out that students who were not interested to learn Basic English course earlier showed a change of attitude to practice it using the new techniques. As motivation is a key component of learning, the EFL instructors need to work hard to motivate their learners.

The instructors were desperate that their students would not change their mind even if they tried to advise their students to shift their attitude towards English language. In a student-centred classroom, it is the student who is responsible for his/her learning, and they need strong motivation for engaging in the given learning task. In the absence of this

motivation and self-responsibility, it is easy to observe serious hindrances in the language classrooms.

In connection with the reasons that students did not like student-centred approach, Doyle (2008: 18-19) lists the following points:

- Students are not risk takers for their learning;
- Previous schooling experience is mostly teacher-centred;
- Students are not interested in learning, but in getting a job after finishing schooling;
- Old habits are very difficult to be forgotten;
- They do not want to apply extra effort in student-centred approach.

As Cheewakaroon (2011: 77) states, lack of motivation is a major problem for students in the EFL classroom. Prince and Felder (2006:5) mention that the motivation students hold towards their learning highly affects their commitment and efforts they expend in the teaching and learning process. Boersma (2008: 5) states that language teachers who use a variety of appropriate teaching methods in their classes are more likely to motivate and engage students in successful language learning than those who do not use new techniques. According to Vygotsky's theory, students' success in language learning depends on their purpose or motivation for learning (Palmer, 2005: 1855; Yang and Wilson, 2006: 365). For example, if they plan to pass a quiz, they do not study beyond that for general knowledge and wider communication. That will be more of surface level of understanding.

The constructivist theory of learning supports the presentation of authentic learning tasks that are relevant and meaningful for students (Xamaní, 2013: 1). That means, the given tasks and activities should be related with the culture and experience of the students so that they will get motivation to attempt the learning activities. That will sustain the interest of students to work hard by themselves inside and outside the classroom.

As Kumaravadivelu (2006: 33) points out, anxiety has a negative effect on the teaching and learning process of the EFL classroom. Students are afraid of the negative comments that come from teachers, classmates, and other acquaintances. The anxiety level that language learners experience in or out of classroom is likely to influence their language learning. Kumaravadivelu (2006: 34) indicates that high anxiety can hinder language acquisition, but low anxiety is considered as conducive to second language acquisition as it is likely to persuade students to go for action.

Zhou (2011: 110) defines communication anxiety as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication”. If this anxiety level is high, it affects negatively students’ success in the language learning. Students also could be negligent to study English due to the belief that their mother tongue or other national languages are enough for them to be competent in the society, and see foreign languages as threats to their own languages (Brutt-Griffler, 2009: 248). This type of belief could be found in the society and is likely to affect negatively the students’ motivation and commitment to study English.

Currently, the Ethiopian government has introduced an initiative to the development and use of indigenous languages for schooling in the primary schools and some in the secondary levels, and for using them as working languages in the respective regions and zones. As a result, people nowadays generally have got the notion that their languages are enough to operate in the society, and do not see the need to study foreign languages including English. This seems to influence negatively students who are obliged to study English in the formal schooling. As a result, their progress in learning and using the language for communication is not generally satisfactory.

4.6.1.3 EFL Instructors’ Poor Classroom Management

In connection with the impact of the instructors’ classroom management on the language instruction, both groups hinted the negative impact it created on the teaching and learning process. All of the students were not generally interested with the way the EFL instructors handle the language classroom. Most of the students pointed out that the instructors treated them badly, were not open for classroom discussion, and degrade them for not giving the correct answer in a question and answer session. It was also reported that many of the instructors spent their class time for other purposes and later rush to finish the course in two of the universities.

The instructors also pointed out that they do not go to class with a good morale for language teaching due to some other problems they mentioned. The method of teaching, the textbook, the students’ interest to learn, the social context, and so forth were concerns for the instructors. In line with this idea, Al Jarf (2006: 9) states that large class size in undergraduate programme has negative impacts on students’ achievement, attitude of instructors and students towards instruction, classroom instruction and students’ assessment. Generally, large class size is a disadvantage for EFL instruction. The

average class size is 60 to 70 students in Ethiopian public universities, while language educators do not favour more than 25 students in a classroom.

It is clear that, in a student-centred classroom, the type of relationship is not a master and servant kind. Thus, the instructors have to respect the students' identity, their views, and contributions in the given activity. The students have mentioned a lot of personality traits that they think their EFL instructors should have in the student-centred classroom. These are encouraging, observant, motivating, manage relations and feelings, supportive, patient, role model, understanding, and optimist.

During the interview, students reported that these personality traits were not observed among their instructors. As a result, they claimed that they attended class with fear and distress, which are bad for the teaching and learning process. It should not be forgotten that every effort should be made to develop trust among the students and the instructors and make students motivated, open, confident and reflective.

Good teaching is both an art and science (Chan *et al.*, 2011: 11). Thus, the way the language teachers behave in the classroom when interacting with the students affects the positive psychological condition of students. Brown (1994: 202-203) advises EFL teachers to think of generating classroom energy, establishing good rapport with the students, balancing the praise and criticism they forward towards their students in their classroom management so that they can create positive, stimulating and energising environment in their classrooms. This will create conducive environment for students to engage in the learning tasks and activities.

Jamshidnejad (2011: 15) warns EFL instructors who focus on students' errors in using English, and who do not encourage them to use their English in the classroom. This is because students do not use their chance to practice their English in which there is no other alternative. Chan *et al.*, (2011: 11) add that the following teachers' behaviours affect positively the outcome of learning: teachers' willingness to create healthy emotional environment in the classroom, teachers' praise and encouragement to release tension and teachers' acceptance, clarifying, building, and developing students' ideas.

Some of the good qualities that English language teachers need to have include enthusiasm for the subject matter, intelligence, patience, and creativity, flexibility, maturity, communication skills, having interest in continuing professional development, appreciation of different cultures, and tolerance (Camenson, 2007: 7). Similarly, Brown (1994: 429)

also adds some attributes of language teachers in connection with interest for their profession, dedication, motivation, appreciation of cultures, and so forth in the language teaching process. Further, he also mentions a long list of characteristics that language teachers have to possess in terms of technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and more personal qualities (Brown, 1994: 430). These attributes are seen as good qualities that attract students to work hard in a more motivated and committed manner considering the teachers as role models in the foreign language contexts.

Moreover, they need to be well informed of current teaching materials, classroom management techniques, teaching methodology, lesson planning, and students' assessment and evaluations (Camenson, 2007: 16). All of these things will help the classroom teachers to better present themselves for the students in their day-to-day interaction. When language teachers behave in the opposite of these personality types, they create damaging effects on students' learning (Chan *et al.*, 2011: 10). Therefore, what matters is not only the knowledge and skills of the language teachers but also their personality or behaviour in interacting with their students in and out of the classrooms. The teachers are likely to affect the students' language learning attitude based on their personality and methods of teaching, intelligence, patience and creativity (Camenson, 2007: 7).

Generally, the classroom management style is an essential component in the teaching and learning process, which may affect learning either positively or negatively. The students are not happy with their interaction with the EFL instructors. Thus, it is good to address the issue in order to improve the strained relationship with the students. This will pave the way for a better teaching and learning process.

The bad classroom behaviour of students could affect the whole of the teaching and learning process. As Harmer presents (Harmer, 2001: 126-127), the problem behaviours come from families of students, previous learning experience, damage to self-esteem of learners, boring lesson activities, discomfort of students due to other factors like boredom or extreme temperature, and teachers' reaction in the classroom. Thus, for a better language instruction it is good to reconsider these factors as potential sources for misbehaviour of students in the language classroom. According to the social-constructivist theory of learning, the methods of teaching should be shifted from teacher-centred to student-centred thereby using relevant learning tasks and making students engaged and autonomous in the instruction (Gunduz and Hursen 2015: 527). The instructors have to

also focus on the lesson and should not demand too much for students to be perfect. They have to also consider students' interest in selecting course materials and learning tasks. This helps instructors to be in smooth relationship with their students.

4.6.1.4 The Adverse Influence of Students' External Social Environments

Here the instructors claimed that the way the students view the teaching and learning process in general and English language learning in particular is highly influenced by the larger social or external environment of the society in which they live in.

Most of the factors mentioned were related to cost of living, social status and economic welfare. The attitudes and values the students develop are shaped by this larger context of the society. The findings of the following study can be an example for this situation. A group of researchers studied the motivation for learning of 844 students in undergraduate programmes in some British universities. They wanted to know why the students were cheating in the examinations to get good grade, and understand their reasons for studying in a university. From this study it was found out that the majority (66%) of the students related their reasons to study with getting a good job after graduation, while some other students (24%) related their study with personal development (Newstead and Hoskins, 2003: 63). This shows that the job market as part of the larger social environment affects the way students approach their learning.

According to the views of the instructors who participated in my study, nowadays the society is reflecting low opinion of education and learning excellence, while at the same time giving higher respect for money, income generation business, and for people who run such activities.

As a result, the academic community feels a sense of negligence revealed by the larger social environment. The students have also emphasised the higher social values given for money, businessmen, political affiliation, subjectivity in offices, and other short-cuts for success in life. They stressed that the hard-working people and their efforts do not make any difference if they are not wise to act according to the current norms of the society.

That is to say many people in the society are getting other alternatives that enable them to get wealth, power and respect in a way that is not decent or deserving. They say that academic excellence is not correlated with these "success indicators" or interest areas in

the larger social environment. As a result, they feel they are neglected by their social environment to get these things.

In relation to this idea, Kumaravadivelu (2006: 44) states that the background of learners, the broader social, economic, political, and educational environments all interacting together have the potential to influence the students' language learning "in ways unintended and unexpected by policy planners, curriculum designers or textbook producers". These environmental factors are likely to influence the teaching and learning process of English (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 39). The Ethiopian ministry of education has also hinted the need to address these types of problems in its policy document, which states that the problems in relation with teachers' living conditions and their professional needs have to be addressed (MoE, 2002: 106). Generally, both the students and their instructors have underscored the negative influence that these factors have on the values the academic community develops towards teaching and learning process.

4.6.1.5 Dependency in Group Work

Richards and Rodgers (2001: 196) identify three types of cooperative learning groups based on the length of time in which they stay functional. Among these study groups, "cooperative base group" is the one that lasts for a year as a stable team. In the current context of the Ethiopian universities, this type of group is called one-to-five group structures. This grouping is used not only for English language but also for other subjects that students learn. Based on the constructivist theory of learning, study group of students is considered as an important supportive social element for learning the new language. However, the students are expected to contribute anything important for their groups, and dependency is not encouraged in any way. The groups are more of cooperative type in which there is interdependence among the members.

Seid (2012: 39-40) reports that, despite its advantages, group work has got some weaknesses that instructors should be aware of. These weaknesses are mentioned in connection with lack of responsibility and time wastage. Seid (2012: 39-40) mentions the following as the major problems in relation to this issue:

- Some students do all activities while others are idle;
- It could be time consuming without proper procedure;
- Less skilful students are ignored by active students;
- Active students feel they wasted time working with less

skilful students; Learning part of a task while they do not know a lot about the other part done by their friends.

Harmer (2001: 118) also presents the following disadvantage of group in the language classroom: some students become passive, while others are dominant, and some students do not like group's learning. As a result, these factors may hamper the effectiveness of the language classroom and the grouping. Therefore, it is essential for the instructors to reconsider these challenges when they design tasks in group work or cooperative learning. This helps to run the teaching and learning process smoothly.

In relation to this study, students' dependency was the other challenge that both the students and their instructors mentioned unanimously as it was hindering individual efforts of students and the sharing of responsibility in a group's task. In the formal learning groups nominated as one-to-five group structure in each classroom, only few students in each group were active in attempting the given tasks and assignments, while the majority were idle enjoying their own private business. The high achiever students also complained about this burden, and preferred to engage individually in completing these tasks and assignments.

The students were expected to use cooperative learning in the language classrooms so that every member of the groups would work hard and contribute his/her own share to the given task. However, the grouping made the students not independent, but dependent upon few good achievers. Yet, the good achievers complained that they were not beneficiaries of the one-to-five group structure. This was because they were busy working on the given tasks with no contribution from other members and did not have free time to study individually. This didn't entertain diversity of students' learning and it was not also designed carefully so that it could reflect interdependence.

The group's interdependence nature is very important element since everybody contributes anything necessary to complete the given task so that it is not a burden for few students (Richards, and Rodgers, 2001: 193). These researches further indicate that, in using cooperative learning group, positive interdependence, individual responsibility, group formation, and social skills of the students are considered essential elements (Richards, and Rodgers, 2001: 196). However, from the reflection of the participants of this study, it was possible to conclude that the interdependence and responsibility elements were not observed in the learning groups who work together.

The tasks and activities that the students work with their group members need to be designed carefully so that the learners could be benefited from their practice. The tasks should not be set merely to make students busy, or collect marks for evaluation purposes. The students perceive group work as a means instructors use to collect marks for grading purpose and as a form of help for low achievers to score good grades since students get the chance to copy answers from high achievers in completing their assignments.

Students also reflect the tendency to use their mother tongue during the classroom discussion, and the language teachers are offended by this experience. They complained that the students are not using English to attempt the given class work or activity with their group members. In relation to this issue, Harmer (2001: 132) says that it is neither possible nor advisable to totally stop the use of students' mother tongue in the teaching of English, and adds that it is a matter of when, and how to use it to help students learn and use English.

In order to handle these types of problems, the writer further mentions the following points: setting clear guidelines about the use of English, using appropriate tasks, creating "an English atmosphere in the classroom", and using motivation and persuasion so that students could use English in the classrooms (Harmer, 2001: 132-133). Furthermore, based on social-constructive theory of learning, cooperative groups are very important in EFL classrooms so that students can work with their classmates to practise their English. The groups create the social context in which students communicate with each other, creating their own English speaking classroom community. Therefore, the formation of study groups (group structures) should be done carefully by considering the benefits students derive out of the groups. In such a way, students benefit from the interdependence, taking into account the social nature of learning based on Vygotsky's theory (Kaufman, 2004: 304). Here, students are expected to be active learners in the language learning process in order to see progress.

4.6.1.6 Irrelevance of English Language Support Courses

The participants (students) of the study dominantly commented that the type of English language course they experienced in the freshman level is not important to improve their language skills. They pointed out that, due to problems of content selection, teaching for the test, and instructors' approaches to teaching, they did not see anything new at this level in contrast to the teaching of English at the lower grade levels. Moreover, they also indicated that had it been in their own option, they would not have been registered for

these types of irrelevant courses. This view is similar to that of Shi (2013: 63), who states that EFL instruction in Chinese universities faced problems on the side of methodology and textbooks: teachers lecture, give exercises and administer tests and examinations. The textbooks were also reported to be in content based and structural approach. As a result, students were not motivated to engage in the teaching and learning process since their academic life was long and boring for many years in (Shi, 2013: 63).

The instructors also supported this view and pointed out that after taking the course the students show little or no progress at all in their language skills. This is a source of concern for the academic community as it seriously influences the language teaching and learning process. In relation to this idea, Seid (2012: 14) commented that the language performance of students is not satisfactory even after taking English Language support course in the Ethiopian public universities. In relation to the idea of scaffolding in social constructivist theory of learning, instructors are advised to set challenging but achievable language learning tasks so that students could be motivated to learn (Yang and Wilson, 2006: 365).

Students are likely to engage in contents and learning experiences when the tasks, and contents are authentic (real world) problems, challenging, related with their interest, culture, gender, and social life. This idea is in line with the social-constructivist learning theory, which argues that students work on tasks or activities when the tasks are interesting, meaningful, related with their background, and attainable based on their current level of understanding (Kaufman, 2004: 304). Learning contents and tasks should not be selected from available sources randomly by instructors merely because they catch their attention. This type of problem was mentioned by the participants of the study. This is not the characteristic of student-centred EFL classrooms. Students' background should be considered in the content selection.

Harmer (2001: 253) adds to this point that language teachers should consider these factors to help students use English to produce their own ideas spontaneously. For instance, when the language teachers set tasks and topics for productive skills, factors such as choosing interesting topics, creating interest in the topics, activating schemata, and varying of topics must be considered (Harmer, 2001: 253).

In connection with this study, the course books for English Language support courses are prepared by some instructors organised in ad hoc committee in each university. However, they use the syllabus of the harmonised curriculum. They do not conduct any serious pre-

test or evaluation. They select some chapters from some sources of their favourite text and compile into a teaching material. Then, other instructors use it, and do not have any option to use other course materials for their teaching.

Thus, the selection and preparation of contents and experience in the language classroom needs to address those aspects of learners' variables. In connection with course book selection and evaluation, Harmer (2001: 301) points out that language teachers show negligence and are not ready to pre-test or conduct any post-use evaluation. He adds that it is good to use students' opinion and teachers' comments of the course book in terms of layout, design, content, and experience.

Similarly, as Olson (2007: 2) states, language teachers should be aware of students' needs and motivations about English language learning so that they can design tasks and activities that are suitable for their students. That is to say in order to conduct the teaching and learning process effectively in a student-centred classroom, understanding students' motivation for language learning is essential.

In relation to the difficulties of teaching writing skills, Mesert (2012: 2) points out that it is challenging and boring to teach and develop the writing skills of most students in the Ethiopian schools and universities due to various factors including large class size and lack of students' interest to learn English; so students have low writing skill and teachers do not like to teach this skill to their students. Similarly, this type of problem was observed in schools of Botswana in that students considered writing skill as boring and fearful task, and wanted to avoid it as much as possible (Adeyemi, 2008: 26). Furthermore, Tuan (2011: 1471) commented that, nowadays, writing in universities is more of language-based instruction that focus on sentence writing for examination orientation rather than focus on creating compositions for real readers outside classroom context. As a result, students' motivation to learn the skills is very little.

According to the findings of other studies, many students in Ethiopian universities were not good at using English for their academic purpose, and complaints were heard even from the society that the level of English is deteriorating (Mesert, 2012: 6). Therefore, the selection and preparation of course materials is a crucial point in the language teaching and learning process that it should be done very carefully by professionals. It should include tasks and activities that raise topics of interest for students and that encourage critical thinking and exploration for self-learning. Things should be prepared in line with the nature of constructive learning theory.

4.6.1.7 Lack of Administrative Support from Universities

The Administration of the universities plays a supportive role in the teaching and learning process. This role is essential in introducing and implementing innovation in the teaching and learning process (Rismiati, 2012: 47). Moreover, Adula (2008: 70) states that applying pressure with support on academic staff is necessary to bring about innovation in the teaching and learning process. That is to say it is advisable to enforce and reinforce instructors at classroom levels in order to implement the skills and knowledge obtained from trainings. However, as Biggs (1996: 361) mentions, the management is likely to act negatively as observed in many countries by evaluating learning in terms of per cent (numbers) or grade leaving aside the quality of learning students have achieved. This type of institutional control to evaluate learning performance is an approach of behaviourism far from the assumptions of constructivism.

During the interview, the instructors attributed some of the problems they face to the administration of the universities. They complained that, due to the negligence of the administration, they could not discharge their professional responsibility. The problems they mentioned were related to lack of facilities, large class size, poor incentives, bad management, lack of plan for experience sharing, and relevant capacity building programmes. These findings are consistent with the research findings of Adula (2008: 70) who mentioned failures on instructors to implement skills obtained from higher diploma training in their respective classrooms.

It is essential that the administration should work hand in gloves with the academic staff to best serve the students in the universities. It is good to reconsider the distribution of resources in the classrooms, learning centres and libraries so that students work in a student-centred environment. The overcrowded classrooms are also boring for language instruction. English Language support courses should not be seen similarly with other content area courses, which could be covered using lecture or teacher-centred method.

The administration should work to improve the conditions of classrooms, buy more relevant reading materials, minimise the number of tests and examinations, and innovate the teaching and learning process in the English classrooms. Language researchers such as Davis (2003: 251) and Rajcoomar (2013: 10) mention that large class size, time given for the course and facilities allocated as factors that affect the teaching and learning process in the EFL classroom. Similarly, Al Jarf (2006: 9) indicates that large class size at

undergraduate level has negative impacts on students' achievement, attitude of instructors and students towards instruction, classroom instruction and students' assessment.

Due to this, it is difficult for the language instructors to provide timely and relevant feedback for their students. The classrooms available are not different from the traditional teacher-centred type of classroom. If these classrooms are not motivating, the students will not have positive attitude towards the teaching and learning process. The types of language classrooms in the student-centred approach are different from the traditional types of teacher-centred classrooms in terms of room size, number of students per classroom, and facilities.

According to the social constructivist theory of learning, all the necessary facilities should be supplied to the classrooms so that students could engage in the learning tasks (Yang and Wilson, 2006: 365). The classroom should be a supportive environment for the students in the teaching and learning process. Other resources in the library and English language centre are also essential resources they can use. This shows that the traditional classroom setting should be changed to a more social setting in which students get more cooperation than competition. Therefore, the administration has to rethink the organisation of the classrooms for the teaching and learning process in line with the constructivist theory of learning.

4.6.2 EFL Instructors' and Students' Perceptions regarding Active Learning Approaches

It is clear that the perception people have about things affect either positively or negatively the way they think and act in the environment. In relation to language instruction, Cheewakaroon (2011: 80) points out that there is a challenge of mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices in the EFL instruction. There is a sort of inclination to exercise the commonly held view stated as "teachers teach the way they were taught".

As the education culture is more of teacher-centred approach, the instructors are likely to teach their students in a way they were treated while they were students. There is a tendency to stick to their past experience of the teaching and learning process. In addition to the instructors' reaction, as Felder and Brent (1996: 44) reported, the students may not accept and work with active learning approaches willingly. Thus, it is good to reconsider

the perceptions of both groups for the successful implementation of innovative teaching techniques.

Both groups of participants of the study reported that they were in favour of active learning techniques and student-centred approaches although they mentioned it was not satisfactory in the actual classroom practice. The instructors further added that they were totally disappointed, and did not feel any sense of achievement in using active learning and student-centred approach; they did not believe that the current situation was conducive to implement active learning and student-centred approach.

This is a similar view to Cheewakaroon (2011: 80) who explains that, even if teachers claim to like to implement student-centred approach in their classrooms, they generally resort to the traditional teacher-centred EFL instruction during actual instruction. Similarly, Kaufman (2004: 310) also mentions that even if teachers are aware of the advantages of constructivist theory of learning, they do not easily shift to student-centred approach to implement constructivist approaches of learning.

It is good to have general attitudinal change to practice the innovations in the teaching and learning process effectively. The actors of the instruction may engage in a mechanical way up to a point that it is minimally enough for discharging responsibility “to be in compliance with an administrative mandate.” (Alemayhu and Solomon, 2007: 113).

4.6.3 The Most commonly used Types of Active Learning Approaches for Productive Skills Instruction

From the response of the EFL instructors, it was identified that the majority of them did not use any other innovative technique other than group work and pair work. The students also shared this view that it was mostly group work and sometimes pair work they used to engage in attempting given tasks and assignments. The limited techniques were also identified in the course outlines and observations made to the classrooms.

Shi (2013: 68-69) mentions the finding of an experiment in teaching English in the Chinese universities using the constructivist approach. It was found out that students who were not interested to learn Basic English course showed a change of attitude to practising it using the new techniques. Shi (*ibid.*: 64) adds that, in constructivist theory of learning, students are encouraged to create their own knowledge individually and in

groups, instead of reproduction of knowledge. Therefore, EFL instructors are expected to play a big role in preparing learning tasks and activities for their students.

Some of the techniques for teaching speaking skill include discussion in pair and then in group, role play, problem solving, and information gap activities (Jones, 2007: 30). However, the students reported that, in most of the classes these types of activities were not employed. It is more of a monotonous group activity in which some students talk while others listen leniently as usual, and finally the groups' representative will report if he/she is asked by the teacher to do so. The students do not have the motivation to present their opinion unless the activity is related with marks. As Shi (2013: 63) reports, this type of classroom is not motivating for students since they are fed up with the teacher-centred approach while most of them are passive.

In writing class, students just do it as a form of exercise, not as a means of communication in which they get meanings (Jones, 2007: 34 & 36). Most often the students do not read their friends' paragraphs as they do not consider it as an important learning goal, or they feel their English is not good to evaluate others' piece of writing. They do not value the comments from their friends as long as the teacher gives them a passing score.

Most of the students depend too much on instructors for correction and they are sensitive to the marks the instructors give, not to the process of writing as a way of learning. The instructors focus on the end product than the process, and this trend is common in the students' academic experience.

To some extent, it was also found out that students also engaged in individual oral presentation for classroom practice and evaluation purpose. This was also observed in the given assignments and students' booklet or course guide. Other techniques that could be employed for the teaching of productive skills were not utilised effectively. This shows that there is a gap in doing what should be done and what is being done.

Researchers in the field of language teaching claim that it is good to use student-centred approach with a variety of techniques of lesson presentation so that students could be benefited out of the interaction. For instance, Dieu *et al.* (2006: 7) point out that peer-centred teaching helps language learners to work hard in their own style of learning out of the classroom, everywhere and any time. This is expected to encourage students to work at their own pace, and minimise their dependency on their instructors.

The teachers are expected to play a supportive role in facilitating the learning environment. However, the teaching techniques they used in practice are limited and the students became dependent over other good achiever students. The formal grouping of the students in each classroom does not have the nature of interdependency, good assessment technique, or monitoring system (University of Minnesota website, 2012).

Therefore, the grouping plays a negative role by making students dependent on other few students in completing assignments, while the majorities are idle and neglecting the lesson objectives they should have achieved. In relation to this point, Kaufman (2004: 310) reports that even though teachers know the advantage of constructivist approach to instruction, the traditional teacher-centred approach still dominates in many educational environments.

Moreover, as the types of teaching techniques are limited in variety, the students would feel boredom in the whole teaching and learning process. The trend to stick to the traditional ways of the teaching and learning process has to be shifted to the new approach to student-centred practice. Even if instructors are trained to be active teachers, it is likely that they do not accept and practice new ways of teaching techniques since they experience the feeling of uncertainty (Pundak and Rozner, 2008). Thus, it is good to design new instructional materials for the supportive courses and help further instructors in supervision or in classroom observation when they conduct class. As Brown (1994: 429) states, this type of observation is one of the most neglected areas of EFL teachers' professional growth.

Generally, it could be stated that there were no different techniques used in the teaching and learning process. There were a lot of other techniques that could be utilised for the teaching of productive skills. Those techniques would help students to attend class regularly and engage actively. Using a variety of teaching techniques will help students to practice English language purposefully with motivated feeling.

4.6.4 The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Productive Skills Instruction

The linkage between assessment and teaching is expected to be strong since it directly affects the teaching and learning process. It is clear that students engage in either deep or surface learning in the way they will be assessed later (Rust, O'Donovan, and Price, 2005:

231). Thus, assessment has a backwash effect over the teaching and learning process. As Cheewakaroon (2011: 77) reported, the language classroom is affected by the exam-oriented approach to teaching and learning.

As part of the constructivist theory of learning, Xamaní (2013: 2) states that teaching, learning and assessment process should be integrated in such a way that these are done in a student-centred approach to promote students' learning, not just for grading or judgment purpose. That helps students to be lifelong learners as they know how to learn. Students are expected to be autonomous learners who engage in a kind of active and reflective instructional environment. The major purpose of assessment is not for grading, but for helping students to learn by considering their day-to-day progress in the language learning process. Thus, it is said to be assessment for learning, not of learning (The Federal way public Schools, 2008).

The participants of the study shared common points of view that the assessment and productive skills are not closely related as it is desired in the lesson objectives or the goals of language learning. The relationship is characterised by the following attributes:

- Teaching for the test;
- Irrelevant and untimely feedback;
- Substandard assessment;
- No dynamism in the techniques applied most often;
- Loosely connected to the language competence and skills students want to develop.

Specifically, in relation to feedback, both the students and their instructors pointed out that students in the EFL class highly value the grading than the feedback they get for their piece of writing or oral presentation. It is clear that students are not concerned about the knowledge, but on the grade to be graduated.

The quality and quantity of feedback is also not satisfactory for both the students and their instructors for some reasons. Number one problem that instructors raise is large class size and lack of interest for the feedback on the side of students.

The issue of feedback for learning is also absent in the actual practices of EFL classroom. All of the participants of the focus group discussion indicated that they want to get pass mark or good grade by any means regardless of the type of knowledge and skills they

may earn. The type of feedback is also more product-oriented, which is not helpful for furthering students' learning. The Instructors' feedback is also said to be limited to mechanics, vocabulary, and grammar in connection with writing skills. Mostly students want to get feedback from their instructors. The students do not trust themselves and their peers to engage in self-assessment or peer-assessment.

Based on the relevant documents in connection with the assessment, the weight given to the productive skills is small (20%) in one of the courses; i.e. Communicative English language Skills. The biggest part (80%) is given for reading skills, grammar, listening and vocabulary. In the other course (Basic Writing Skills) the teaching and assessment is dominated by sentence-level writing, which is not a new concept for students, and does not give more chance to practice composition. The types of writing activities are limited to sentences and paragraphs with group members. There is no practice of writing essays, styles of academic papers, letters, e-mail, presentations, or reports. These were the points of focus that the course rationale was based to offer the course for students at the freshman level.

The other topics such as paragraphs and essays are not treated in detail in the teaching and examination. The nature of the test format is more of objective type, and it does not encourage students to generate their own ideas in expressing themselves in writing or speaking. This is related to large class size in that instructors complain about the burden in marking students' drafts and helping each student to practice speaking. The instructors complained about the time consuming and tiresome task of teaching and evaluating productive skills.

This result is similar to the findings of Yang and Wilson (2006: 364) and Zhao (2008: 3) who concluded that the EFL instruction in china is more of teacher-centred (and test driven, where emphasis is given for grammar, vocabulary, and test-guided writing). As a result, the students were not good at communication, since they did not practice the language in a manner to develop their communication skills.

4.7 Conclusion

The main theme of this study was "How do instructors implement active learning approaches in teaching the productive skills?" In addressing this question in the progress of the study, the sub-questions raised were related to the problems in using active

learning approaches, the perceptions of students and their instructors, the types of active learning techniques employed, and the linkage of assessment practice to productive skills. The findings of the study revealed the following themes in line with the objectives of the study.

The participants of the study mentioned the following problems as identified from the recurring themes:

- Students' poor background exposure to the English language;
- Students' negative associations with language learning;
- EFL instructors' ineffective classroom management;
- The adverse influence of students' external social environments;
- Dependency in group work;
- Irrelevance of English Language support courses;
- Lack of administrative support from Universities.

In relation to Perceptions of EFL Instructors and their Students towards Active Learning Approaches, the participants revealed they are aware of and in favour of the importance of active learning and student-centred approaches although they did not feel they have practiced them effectively in the teaching and learning process.

The respondents confirmed that they did not use a variety of active learning techniques in the teaching of productive skills. The techniques they used are limited to group work, pair work and individual presentation. There were no other innovative techniques used to teach productive skills.

The relationship between assessment and productive skills is also the other concern area. The weight given to productive skills is not proportional to the weight given to other skill areas in Communicative English skills. In the other course (Basic Writing Skills), the tests and examination does not have a positive backwash effect over the development of students' writing skills. Generally, the students and their instructors' rate low the whole process of English language teaching and learning.

The next chapter is the final part of this dissertation, and presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendation based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the findings of the study as well as a completion of the aims of the dissertation as presented in the first chapter. It covers the summary of the study, conclusions made in line with these findings, an assessment of the implications thereof, and recommendations based on these findings.

The research problem was investigated in Chapters 2 and 4, based on the related literature (Chapter 2) and empirical data collection, as described in Chapter 3. Having performed this theoretical analysis, I was able to describe the findings of the study according to the theoretical concepts and practical realities surrounding the study area.

5.2 Summary of the Study

This dissertation was divided into five chapters, as described in Section 1.12 of the introductory chapter. In Chapter 1, the background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, significance of the study, and delimitation were presented according to the relevant theoretical concepts. The issue of active learning in teaching productive skills in English Language support courses in the Ethiopian context was introduced as the focus of the study.

In line with the description of the problem statement, the main question of the study and its sub-components were presented in the following manner:

The main research question of the study was stated as follows:

How do instructors implement active learning approaches in teaching productive skills in English language?

The sub-questions that are related to this general question are presented below:

1. What are the major factors that may affect the practice of active learning approaches in the teaching of productive English language skills?
2. How do students and instructors view active learning approaches in language classrooms?

3. What are the types of active learning approaches most often used in the teaching and learning process for productive English language skills?
4. To what extent are productive skills linked to the assessment practices in use?

After stating the aims and objectives of the study, the significance and scope of the study were described in order to identify the reasons that motivated me to conduct the study. Next, the brief overview of the related literature surrounding active learning and its theoretical foundations was provided before the data-gathering methods used in the study were described. These elements were expounded upon in chapters 2 and 3.

In Chapter 2, a full review of the related literature was presented. This chapter was very important as the basis of the study in that it explained the theoretical foundations of active learning and described the existing practical or empirical data available regarding its use in EFL teaching at national and international levels.

The following core elements were dealt with in chapter 2:

In Section 2.1, as part of the theoretical framework, the nature of the constructive school of thought, cognitive constructivism, and social constructivism were described in connection with active learning and language teaching. These concepts were shown to reflect the paradigm shift that has occurred from the behaviourist model of teacher-centred teaching to the new student-centred approach to language instruction. It also described the subsequent changes that have occurred in the way teachers and students approach language instruction, the ways in which content and materials are used, and the ways in which assessment and evaluation are performed according to lesson objectives.

This chapter also discussed the issue of teaching English as a foreign language the challenges – in particular, affective factors and environmental issues – involved. With regard to the teaching of productive skills, the different techniques used, as well as the micro- and macro-skills involved, were discussed.

Finally, the role of assessment and language teaching were discussed in the chapter as teaching and assessment were shown to be closely related elements of the teaching and learning process. In other words, it was revealed that assessment and evaluation have a major impact on the ways in which students approach their learning and on how their teachers organise and conduct the instructional process.

The review of the related literature also focused on the nature of active learning and its benefits and challenges in the teaching and learning process. In the discussion, it was found out that the advantages of active learning outweigh its disadvantages. All in all, these concepts are very important for enlightening language teachers with a better understanding of the nature of language teaching.

In relation to teachers' practical experience of using active learning at national and international levels, it was found out that the approach is often discussed by key stakeholders but less often effectively implemented in actual school and university settings.

In general, while the use of active learning is gaining prominence in language teaching in the Western world, it continues to struggle to get going in other countries in the face of challenging circumstances like large class sizes and resource shortages. The same problems were observed in attempts at innovation in Ethiopian schooling. These problems are related with the motivation of teachers, resource shortages, inadequate or non-existent training, the negative impact of previous experiences, and prevailing cultural constraints and misconceptions.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology of the study – including the research design (the paradigm and research approach), research methods (participants, tools, and trustworthiness), ethical issues, and piloting – were described in detail with regard to how they guided the research, in terms of practicality and relevance in the data generation and analysis. Then, using this methodology as a guide, the data were collected from different sources and analysed to get the following major findings as presented in the research conclusion.

5.3 Key findings of the study

After the data were collected and analysed (on the basis of the theoretical concepts mentioned), I was able to home in on the ultimate findings of the study. Thus, based on the empirical data generated and the analysis performed, the questions raised as pillars of the study were answered and the specific objectives were similarly met. These findings were grouped according to the main research question and sub-questions underpinning the study.

5.3.1 Major Factors affecting the Practice of Active Learning Approaches in Productive Skills Instruction

In relation to the answer of this question, the major factors identified were the following:

Students' Poor Background Exposure to the English Language

Both the instructors and their students who participated in the study pointed out that the challenges that most freshman students face in using English for academic purposes are related to their limited English language proficiency, as reflected in their everyday speech and their writing. Clearly, the ways in which English learning is being approached both in and out of school (from the primary school through to tertiary levels) are not successfully bringing about significant change in the language skills and communicative competence of undergraduate students in Ethiopia.

Thus, as language learning requires a long-term plan, every effort should be made to help students gain the necessary language skills, knowledge, and attitudes for effective learning, starting as early as primary school. The students also need to be reminded that they should not attempt to employ ineffective rote learning styles when studying the English language.

Students' Negative Associations with Language Learning

As described in the review of the related literature, various affective and environmental factors posed several challenges for students in their language learning. The participants of the study reported the following affective factors: limited motivation to learn the English language, lack of self-confidence in using English, lack of commitment to study, a focus on grades rather than the acquisition of language skills, and a belittling of the importance of English in general. These barriers led students to resist language learning, making it virtually impossible for EFL teachers to successfully engage students in learning English unless these attitudes changed.

The students confirmed that they did not enjoy English language support courses because they saw no benefits in completing them. These factors negatively impact the entire language learning process and, as such, should be addressed by students, instructors, parents and other stakeholders together to create an environment that is more conducive to language learning.

EFL Instructors' Ineffective classroom Management

The participants of the study indicated that classroom management and atmospheres have negative impacts on the teaching and learning process. All of the students also pointed out that the way in which their EFL instructors handled their classrooms, as well as the prevailing atmospheres therein, had led them to lose interest in these classes. To reverse this situation, EFL instructors need to develop the good qualities that language teachers are expected to possess such as being motivating, encouraging, and tolerant.

The Adverse Influence of Students' External Social Environments

The greater social context in which students live also influences their language learning. My discussions with the participants revealed that cost of living, social status, and economic welfare are the primary factors influencing their ability and ambition to learn languages and other subjects. The morale among EFL instructors was also hampered by these factors. It is clear that the external environment that encircles the educational institutions can have a serious impact on the teaching and learning process. This is because the human element in these institutions is the product of that larger social context. For instance, teachers complained that their incomes were insufficient to cover all their expenses at the current cost of living.

Moreover, the tendency in Ethiopian culture to value money and its associated social status very highly also has a significant impact. The participating EFL instructors – who, like most academics, tend to earn rather small salaries – felt that certain members of society and even their students looked down on them. They expressed resentment at being judged by people who, they felt, had achieved their wealth, power and respect via dishonourable means. Their greatest frustration was that academic excellence is not valued by society at large as an indication of success or even as worthy of interest. As a result, they felt unfairly deprived of the respect and status they deserve and even ostracised by their communities.

Dependency in Group Work

Students' tendency to depend too much on each other during group work is another concern that was raised unanimously by both students and instructors, who explained that it hindered students' individual efforts, with shared responsibility obscuring individual responsibility. Instead of interdependence and mutual support emerging, group projects

either fall flat as no one takes responsibility or are not reflective of the entire group's efforts as one or two students end up doing all of the work. As such, the disadvantages of group work outweigh its merits.

Irrelevance of English Language Support Courses

The majority of the participants pointed out that the courses available to students are not effective in improving their language competence, knowledge, and basic language skills. They do not perceive any value in taking these courses, and explained that the contents of the two English Language support courses are not relevant or interesting, and so inspire little motivation in them to learn the language. This is due, in part, to the fact that these courses do not offer practice in writing essays, academic papers, letters, emails, presentations, or reports, despite the fact that the need to perform these tasks effectively is part of the very rationale that underpins these freshman courses. In practice, these skills (which are vital requirements for career success) are not imparted in the courses currently offered.

Students' lack of interest also makes it very difficult for instructors to hold their attention in class. As a result, instructors eventually become disillusioned themselves and appear to approach their work in a detached, mechanical manner.

Lack of Administrative Support from Universities

Within any university, the administration is expected to play a key role in introducing and implementing innovative practices. In the present study, however, EFL instructors complained about the negligence of the administration. Without this administrative support, instructors felt unable to perform their professional duties effectively and efficiently. The problems they mentioned in this regard included inadequate facilities in teaching and learning centres, overcrowded classrooms, poor incentives, bad management, lack of planning for experience sharing, and the absence of relevant capacity-building programmes.

The participants revealed that classrooms are not equipped for innovative teaching and learning practices. This, they explained, makes the shift from a teacher-centred approach to the new student-centred teaching model very difficult. It is important to innovate the teaching and learning environment by introducing new resources, facilities and management systems. This will pave the way for innovation in the teaching and learning

process. When there is no fertile ground for language instruction, it is not logical to expect positive outcomes.

5.3.2 Perceptions of EFL Instructors and their Students regarding Active Learning Approaches

It is clear that people's pre-existing perceptions about a particular environment can either positively or negatively affect the way they think and act in that environment. Both groups of participants (students and instructors) in the study reported that they were aware of the importance of active learning and student-centred approaches; although they did not feel that they practiced them effectively in the teaching and learning process. The successful implementation of active learning in the EFL classroom depends, to a great extent, on attitudinal changes in both instructors and students.

The instructors further added that they felt totally disappointed, and did not feel any sense of achievement in using active learning and student-centred approaches; they did not view the current situation as conducive to the implementation of active learning and a student-centred approach.

5.3.3 Types of Active Learning Approaches most often used in relation to Productive Skills

From the responses of the EFL instructor participants, it was clear that the majority of them did not use any innovative teaching techniques other than group and pair work. The students also shared this view that tasks and assignments involved mostly group and sometimes pair work.

Most of the students depended too much on instructors for correction and they were only concerned with the marks the instructors gave them; not with the actual process of writing as a way of learning. Similarly, the instructors focused on the end-product rather than the process. This emerged as a definite trend in students' academic experiences. However, it was also found that students were required, albeit to a limited extent, to make individual oral presentations for classroom practice and evaluation purposes. Generally, it can be stated that no alternative techniques, which could be utilised for teaching productive skills, were used in the teaching and learning process.

5.3.4 The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Productive Skills Teaching

The participants of the study shared common points of view with regard to the fact that the assessment techniques and productive skills in use at their universities were not closely related to one another. This was despite the fact that such interrelation is desired in lesson objectives or goals of language learning. In this context, the impact of assessment began in advance because students studied based on how they expected to be assessed. This examination-oriented teaching and learning process should be reconsidered to help students learn and use the language for meaningful purposes – not simply in order to pass a test or examination.

The relationship between assessment practices and teaching of productive skills is characterised by the following attributes: teaching for the test, irrelevant and untimely feedback, substandard assessment, unexciting assessment techniques, and loose connections between language competence and necessary skills.

In specific relation to feedback, both the students and their instructors pointed out that EFL students valued their grades more highly than the feedback they got on their writing or oral presentations. It is clear that students are concerned not with the acquisition of knowledge, but rather simply with graduating. Moreover, for various reasons (such as large class sizes and students' disinterest) the quality and quantity of feedback given was seen as unsatisfactory by both the students and their instructors.

5.3.5 How do Instructors implement Active Learning Approaches in Productive Skills Instruction?

Based on these findings, the following conclusions can be drawn in answer to the main research question. There is no full-scale reform of the education system underway to move away from the behaviourist model's traditional teacher-centred approach to the new student-centred approach of the constructivist model. What does take place under the banner of active learning and a student-centred approach is, in truth, merely a reflection of that same old teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning. It is clear that the students are not attending EFL classes in an active, reflective and committed manner. They approach language learning in a more mechanical way and attend classes only for

the purposes of completing courses and earning passing grades. They are not ready for learning.

The EFL instructors are confused about what their professional roles and responsibilities are in terms of bringing about changes in their students and are consequently frustrated by their ineffective attempts to introduce active learning to their classrooms. They are not satisfied with what they are able to achieve in their EFL classrooms, and do not feel that they have brought sufficient innovation to the teaching and learning process. The students, meanwhile, engage in rote learning to pass tests and examinations, and so forget everything as soon as these assessments are complete.

Therefore, it is possible to state that the active learning approaches, course contents, and assessment and evaluation techniques in use, in addition to attitudes and other environmental factors, are inappropriate and/or irrelevant to the teaching of productive skills in particular and English language learning in general. There need to be observable reforms in curriculum, instructional material, classroom facilities, the attitudes of students and staff members, EFL teaching, and in EFL learning processes and its assessment if the situation is to improve. The non-implementation scenario is similar with what Freire (1993:72) calls as the banking model of education.

At present, the entire process of language learning fails to bring about changes as desired in the objectives of English language syllabus. Instead, it is merely a reflection and reassertion of old ineffective teaching and learning practices. In short, student-centred approaches, active learning techniques, and other elements of the reform in higher education sector are far from being fully implemented in Ethiopian universities at the present time. As such, it is, for the most part, unlikely that the true objectives of language learning (and education in general) are being met.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the above findings, I am able to offer the following suggestions with regard to the problems currently being encountered in the process of introducing active learning and a student-centred approach to Ethiopian education. These suggestions are specifically intended for those involved in English language teaching in Ethiopia.

Modes of Delivery and Compulsory Courses should be Reconsidered

It is clear that students do not enjoy English Language support courses or understand and value their purpose. It is thus advised that the modes of delivery and compulsory status of these courses be reconsidered. For example, an English language assessment be employed as an exit examination required for graduation, which will encourage students to work on their English skills in their free time. This will prevent students from attending class simply to pass their pencil-and-paper examinations. This makes students to improve their language competence on their own effort.

University administration and English departments can work together with the Ministry of Education to set guidelines to enforce and facilitate this practice. As part of this, the aforementioned psychological barriers to English language learning must be broken down and students and instructors encouraged to become more motivated, committed and interested. It is very difficult to achieve good results unless there is fertile ground for effective teaching and learning.

New Proficiency-Focused Modes of Assessment should be Introduced

Because English language assessment is included in the Ethiopian education system's two primary formal national examinations (i.e. the Ethiopian General School Leaving Certificate Examination and the Ethiopian University Entrance Examination), this assessment can have a negative backwash effect on the language teaching and learning process itself. The apparently life-altering significance of these examinations can cause severe anxiety in students, who consequently prepare themselves based solely on how they expect to be evaluated (for example, in a multiple-choice test format). Moreover, since the weight given to (and coverage of) productive skills in both classroom tests and national examinations is negligible, students hold little to no regard for actually assimilating the skills and information they are taught. By the same token, teachers take a primarily examination-oriented approach to language instruction. All of this has severely affected English language learning in Ethiopia.

It falls to the Ministry of Education to introduce a new assessment system for both classroom tests and national examinations that requires students to be proficient in actually using the English language in their academic and social environments. This would encourage students to develop their language competence, improve their basic language skills, and adopt the language in a more meaningful manner. At the same time, language teachers would be required to give as much weight to productive skills as to receptive

skills in their teaching and assessment, thus engaging students in meaningful tasks to develop practically useful English language skills.

Additional Classroom Supervision should be Offered

It is also advisable to consider options to support instructors in overseeing discipline in their classrooms so that they can get on with their primary roles as educators. This will enable university administrations to obtain more accurate feedback about the implementation of student-centred approaches and active learning techniques in day-to-day classroom operations. The instructors interviewed in the study also felt responsible for implementing the innovations carefully, if this type of supervision were to be introduced. As such, classrooms and the resources should be conducive to learning, relevant and appropriate to the English language teaching and learning process.

Team Teaching should be Introduced

In the future, universities should introduce team teaching to assist in implementing a student-centred approach, and everyone should be resourceful to make the process attractive and effective. To bring about the necessary changes, the Ethiopian Institutional Transformation Office and Institutional Quality Assurance Directorate have to work together with the Universities' Social Sciences and Humanities Colleges and English Language departments.

Intensive Practical EFL Training should be offered to Instructors

For the full-scale implementation of the reforms of the new model of teaching (the student-centred approach), universities should offer intensive training for EFL instructors in more practical ways to employ a variety of active learning techniques and a student-centred approach in their classrooms.

Universities should consider decreasing Class Sizes

In the long term, Universities should also consider decreasing the currently very large class sizes (60-70 students per class). This would help instructors to effectively support students in their practice and use of the English language in their day-to-day classroom activities and beyond. The way in which classrooms are currently organised is a reflection

of the inappropriate behaviourist model of teaching and learning. As such, this should be altered to increase its suitability to a student-centred approach to teaching.

Teaching Aids, Learning Content, Assessment and Evaluation should be made more Relevant

The selection and preparation of teaching materials, as well as the assessment, evaluation and grading system utilised for English Language support courses unfortunately continues primarily to reflect the traditional teacher-centred approach. To remedy this, teaching materials should be prepared in a more careful manner so that they are attractive and relevant to various students, supporting and inspiring them to develop their language competence and basic language skills. For example, more of audio-visual materials should be utilised for the development of speaking and writing skills. Also, assessment and evaluation should begin to place greater emphasis on productive skills than currently exists, thus encouraging language learning.

Based on the aims and goals of the harmonised curriculum, regarding the provision of English language instruction at undergraduate level, students' language competence and basic language skills should be the primary focus of their studies. This would strengthen them academically in addition to better preparing to use English in their careers after graduation. In other words, the sole purpose of language learning should be to enable effective communication. To realise these goals, universities' English Language and Literature departments base the selection, development, preparation, and use of appropriate and relevant contents, tasks and activities for English language instruction designed to facilitate improved communication.

In keeping with this, the contents of English Language support courses should not be haphazardly selected out of old textbooks or other low-quality resources. Materials to support essay and academic paper writing, letter and report preparation, internet and email usage, proper conduct in meetings and seminars, and presentation development should be sourced. This should include relevant learning content, tasks, and exercises. If such learning materials are introduced to language instruction, students would be likelier to understand the importance of these courses and attend class with new interest and motivation. At the same time, EFL instructors' morale would improve, inspiring them to teach the courses with greater dedication.

University Administration should Commit to bringing about the Necessary Changes

To implement the above ideas, university administrations need to be committed to bringing about the necessary changes in collaboration with the EFL instructors. For instance, university management needs to be willing to pay incentives for instructors, cover the costs of preparing the teaching materials, and improve classroom facilities to enable more innovative approaches to instruction.

University Administration and the Department of Education should take Action to Mitigate the Negative Impacts of Students' External Environments

As this study has revealed, the academic community's greater social environment (which is closely intertwined with the rampant corruption that has characterised Ethiopia's democratisation) influences both language learning and the educational process in general. The participants of the study explained that the cost of living, social status, and economic welfare were areas of concern for both students and instructors.

They lamented the fact that academic excellence was not regarded as an indication of success within their communities. As such, they found themselves considering questionable alternative sources of wealth, power and respect.

Once again, it falls to the Ministry of Education, together with university administrations, to investigate these issues and subsequently to educate communities to create a shared understanding about the value of education and knowledge. Out of this, these authorities need to develop both short- and long-term plans for actively solving environment-related problems. The larger social environment in which the academic community lives influences the language learning process in particular and the educational process in general.

From the discussion held with the participants of the study, cost of living, social status and economic welfare were concern areas for both students and instructors. They are considering other alternatives that enable them to get wealth, power and respect in a way that is not decent or deserving. They say that academic excellence is not correlated with these 'success indicators' or interest areas in the larger social environment. Of course, this is related to the democratization process and the struggle against corruption in the whole of the country.

5.5 Contributions of the study

The findings of this study underline the presence of challenges in the teaching and learning process in EFL class that needs attention and intervention. The introduction of constructivism as a paradigm shift away from the traditional behaviorist model of teaching is not realized fully and effectively. Rather the trend is more of the traditional model, i.e., behaviorist or objective model of teaching and learning, in which what Freire (1993:72) describe as the banking model of education. The understanding of this concept helps to create awareness among practitioners to revisit their professional engagement. Thus, this study contributes a lot to the larger body of literature about the implementation of active learning in EFL class in the Ethiopian public universities.

Another contribution of the study is that it gives understanding and awareness about the problem that the students and their instructors consider all the tasks and activities of productive skills as mere drilling exercise with no meaningful purpose for communication. This minimizes the lively nature of language learning experience in the class. Another contribution is the understanding that despite the motivation to introduce reform in the language class in the universities, it is clear from the findings of the study that the enabling conditions to materialize the innovation are not fulfilled.

Again it also creates awareness to stakeholders that although a huge amount of public finance is invested to the language teaching program, its achievement and effectiveness is not realized. The way the innovation is introduced and implemented in the in the EFL class in universities is taken for granted. The rhetoric often heard-that the educational reform has been implemented effectively & efficiently- as reflected in the formal channel of communication in the universities - should be reconsidered carefully and honestly. The study also helps to understand that neither the universities nor the ministry of education does have an organized system to introduce, implement, manage, supervise and control the desired reforms in the teaching and learning process of tertiary education.

As part of the practical contribution, the study also encourages administrators, instructors and students to work hard towards changing the deteriorating situation in the EFL class of the universities. Currently, two English support courses are offered to all undergraduate students in Ethiopian public universities. The general aim is to develop the four language skills of students. However, in realty the achievement of this goal is not satisfactory. This problem is mainly related with students joining universities with poor background of English language skills. Therefore, if a lot is done at the secondary school and preparatory

level, students do not face problems when they join the university. If that is the case, the teaching of Communicative English Skills would be unnecessary in the university. This would save wastage of a lot of resource like time, man power, material, and energy.

If the current prevalent situation in the EFL class is not reversed, it is highly likely that the relevance of English support courses will be questioned by various departments and colleges in the universities. This is because the rationale for the offering of these courses is based primarily on the need assessment the universities conducted and identified that university graduates were poor in their English language skills. Thus, after conducting impact assessment of the English support courses, they may conclude the English language teaching a mere wastage that should be stopped.

5.6 Further Research

Nowadays, innovation in the teaching and learning process of every discipline is indispensable. The introduction of a student-centred approach and active learning techniques is an example of this kind of innovation. In order for learners to derive maximum benefit from these improvements, stakeholders expect the full implementation thereof at all times. I believe that further study in the following areas would be greatly beneficial in facilitating the complete assimilation of such innovations into the Ethiopian education system:

- Classroom observation as a major source of data to obtain detailed information about the actual classroom practices of instructors and their students;
- Identification of the impact of the current English Language support courses on students' academic lives and their careers after graduation;
- Wider-scale studies to create a broader picture of the implementation of student-centred and active learning approaches in most Ethiopian universities.

The potential findings generated by such studies could contribute toward the betterment of the teaching and learning process in Ethiopian higher learning institutions. As part of this, such studies could prove to be invaluable resources in the creation of higher education policies.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

In spite of what is often reported by College of Social Sciences and Humanities department heads and deans regarding the complete and successful implementation of active learning techniques and student-centred approaches in their institutions, no such extensive innovation was present in practice in the English classrooms as part of this study. This reflects the reality that the reform of the education still lags behind the expectations of Ministry of Education policy makers and university management.

The practices observed in the study were still dominated by the old teacher-centred approach of the behaviourist model. It is thus time to rethink the implementation of these proposed reforms for Ethiopian higher education. Indeed, the government itself is calling for the reassessment of the quality of education and for measures to be taken to address these very serious challenges. The findings of this study have shed light on the issue under investigation, facilitating a more accurate understanding of the reality on the ground.

It is important here to emphasise that educational policy and its strategies must be studied intensively using empirical data regarding actual practices in the field. It is essential to reconsider the existing situation of the English language teaching in order to minimise the challenges and improve the teaching and learning process from primary school right through to the tertiary level. This would be best achieved through a collaborative effort involving all stakeholders at all levels because students' previous language backgrounds affect their academic success at university level. The study revealed that language learning is a lengthy, on-going process so there are no short-cuts to solving the problems currently being experienced in this area.

The findings of the study were also very important to me personally in that they confirmed disconcerting rumours, as well as my own and colleagues' day-to-day observations regarding the implementation of active learning in EFL classrooms. Overall, the study has motivated me to further investigate the circumstances surrounding EFL teaching in Ethiopian universities. The improved understanding that I have obtained over the course of my research has inspired me to be more innovative in my own teaching of English Language support courses to freshmen.

REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, D.A. 2008. Approaches to teaching English Composition Writing at Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana: Unpublished PhD thesis. University of South Africa: Pretoria.
- Adula, B. 2008. 'Application of higher diploma training program skill in classroom instruction: The case of education faculty, Jimma university, Ethiopia', *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 4(1): 51-72.
- Agbatogun, A.O. 2014. 'Developing learners' second language communicative competence through active learning: clickers or communicative approach?', *Educational Technology & Society*, 17(2): 257-269.
- Alemayhu, B. and Solomon, M. 2007. 'Instructors' stages of concern and Levels of Use of active Learning Strategies: The case of HDP programs of three higher learning Institutes in Amhara Region', *The Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education*, 4(2): 103-135.
- Amer, A. A. 2003. 'Teaching EFL/ESL literature'. *The Reading Matrix*. Vol.3.No.2. pp.63-73. <http://www.readingmatrix.com/archives/-vol.3-no2.amer/articles/pdf>.
- Akin, Gulden. (2016). 'Evaluation of national foreign language Test in Turkey' *Journal of Educational Research*, vol.4 (3). <http://www.multidisciplinaryjournals.com>
- Al Jarf, R. 2006. 'Large student enrollments in EFL programs: Challenges and consequences', *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 8(4): 8-34.
- Allahyar, N. and Nazari, A. 2012. 'Potentiality of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in exploring the role of teacher perceptions, expectations and interaction strategies', *Working Papers in Language Pedagogy*, 6: 79-92.
- Alvarado, L.J. 2014. 'Identifying factors causing difficulties to productive skills among foreign languages learners', *Journal of Opening Writing Doors*, 11(1): 65-86.
- Amer, A.A. 2003. 'Teaching EFL/ESL literature', *The Reading Matrix*, 3(2): 63-73.
- Araki-Metcalf, N. 2011. 'The whole world communicates in English, Do you? Educational drama as an alternative approach to teaching English language in Japan'. In: Chan,

- W. M., Chin, K.N. & Suthiwan, T. eds. *Foreign Language Teaching in Asia and Beyond: Current Perspectives and Future Directions*. Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter.
- Attard, A., Di Lorio, E., Geven, K. & Santa, R. 2010. *Student Centered Learning: An Insight in to Theory and Practice*. Bucharest: European Students' Union for student-centred learning.
- Aydin, S. 2010. 'EFL writers' perceptions of portfolio keeping'. *Assessing Writing*, 15(3): 193-203.
- Bahadorfar, M. and Omidvar, R. 2014. 'Technology in teaching speaking skill', *Acme International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, II(IV): 9-13.
- Baldauf, R.B. and Moni, K. 2006. 'Learner-centeredness in Teaching English as a Foreign Language'. *Proceedings of Thai TESOL International Conference*, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- Bean, J.C. 2011. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Beck, C. and Kosnik, C. 2006. *Innovations in teacher education: a social constructivist approach* State University of New York: Albany.
- Behabadi, F. and Behfrouz, B. 2013. 'The Relationship between Characteristics of Good Language Learners and the Especial Employed Learning Strategies during Educational Context', *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 14 (3) , 78_90.
- Behizadeh, N. and Engelhard, G. 2011. 'Historical view of the influences of measurement and writing theories on the practice of writing assessment in the United States', *Assessing Writing*, 16, pp.189–211.
- Bello, L. Brown, J. & Kebede, T. 2005. 'Using active learning activities in large class', In: Desta, D. Ed. *Where should Ethiopia's Higher Education be going, and how might it change to meet the Country's Development Needs: Summary of the Proceedings of the National Conference held in the School of Graduate Studies, Addis Ababa*

University, 21-22 October 2005. Addis Ababa University Institute of Educational Research. 165-168.

Bell, D. and Kahrhoff, J. 2006. *Active Learning Handbook*. St Louis, MO: Webster University.

Benjamin, L. 1991. 'Personalization and active learning in the large introductory psychology class', *Teaching of Psychology*, 18(2): 68-74.

Berg, B.L. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 4th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Biggs, J. 1996. 'Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment', *Journal of Higher Education*, 32, pp.347-364.

Birgin, O. and Baki, A. 2007. 'The use of portfolio to assess student's performance', *Journal of Turkish Science Education*, 4(2): 75-90.

Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. 2007. *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Bonwell, C.C. and Eison, J.A. 1991. *Active Learning; Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 1. Washington, DC: The George Washington University School of Education and Human Development.

Boersma, E.J. 2008. Ethiopian instructors experience with accommodating EFL students' learning styles at Bahir Dar University, PhD dissertation, Oklahoma State University, Ann Arbor, OK.

Boonkit, K. 2010. 'Enhancing the development of speaking skills for non-native speakers of English', *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2): 1305-1309.

Boufoy-Bastick, B. 2001. 'Constructivist pedagogy for authentically activating Oral Skills in the foreign language classroom'. In: *Proceedings of the Foreign Language Forum, Cave Hill, Barbados, April 23-25, 2001*. The University of the West Indies.

- Broughton, G., Brumfit, C., Flavell, R., Hill, P. & Pincas, A. 1980. *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brown, H.D. 1994. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Longman.
- Brown, H.D. 2007. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. 5th ed. New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Brutt-Griffler, J. 2009. 'The political perspective'. In: Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. eds. *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Volume 6. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Bullard, L.G. and Felder, R.M. 2007. 'A student-centered approach to teaching material and energy balances: course delivery and assessment', *Chemical Engineering Education*, 41(3): 167-176.
- Bygate, M. 2009. 'Teaching the Spoken Foreign Language'. 2009. In: Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. eds. *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Volume 6. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Byram, M. and Garcia, M.C.M. 2009. 'Communicative language Teaching'. In: Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. eds. *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Volume 6. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Camenson, B. 2007. *Opportunities in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Chan, W.M., Chin, K.N. & Suthiwan, T. 2011. 'Foreign language teaching in Asia and beyond: an introduction to the book'. In: Chan, W.M., Chin, K.N. & Suthiwan, T. eds. *Foreign Language Teaching in Asia and Beyond: Current Perspectives and Future Directions*. Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter.
- Chickering, A. and Gamson, Z. 1987. 'Active learning – seven principles for good practice', *American Association of Higher Education Bulletin*, 39: 3-7.

- Cheewakaroon, R. 2011. Teaching change in response to Thai tertiary English language teaching reform. PhD thesis. University of Wollongong Faculty of Education, Thailand.
- Cheng, L. Andrews, S. & Yu, Y. 2010. 'Impact and consequences of school-based assessment (SBA): students' and parents' views of SBA in Hong Kong', *Language Testing*, 28(2): 221–249.
- Chism, N.V., Douglas, E. & Hilson, W.J. 2008. *Qualitative Research Basics: A Guide for Engineering Educators*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Clark-Carter, D. 2010. *Quantitative Psychological Research: A Student's Handbook*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Cobb, T. 2005. *Foundations of Linguistics – Approaches and Concepts: Constructivism, Applied Linguistics, and Language Education* [online]. Montréal, QC. Available from: <http://www.lexutor.ca/cv/constructivism_entry.htm> [Accessed 18 October 2016]
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2007. *Research Methods in Education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Chuang, Y. 2009. 'Foreign language speaking assessment: Taiwanese college English teachers' scoring performance in the holistic and analytic rating methods', *Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 11(1): 150-173.
- Creswell, J. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among the Five Approaches*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- Davis, M. 2003. 'Barriers to reflective practice: the changing nature of higher education', *Journal of Active Learning in Higher Education*, 4(3): 243–255.
- Dejene, A., Schippers, K. & Ramos, M. 2007. 'Student centred teaching and learning experience from the external world', *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 2(2): 115-150.
- Delanda, B. 2009. *The Belmont Report: History, Principles and Application* [online]. Stanford, CA: Leland Stanford Junior University Research Compliance Office.

Available from <http://humansubjects.stanford.edu/education/2009_05_Belmont.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2016].

- Desta, D. 2004. 'Observations and reflections of the higher education teachers on the quality of teaching and learning in higher education in Ethiopia', *The Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education*, 1(1): 63-81.
- De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2005. *Research at Grassroots: for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Dieu, B., Campbell, A.P. & Amman, R. 2006. 'P2P and learning ecologies in EFL/ESL', *The Journal of Teaching English with Technology*, 6(3): 5-17.
- Dornyei, Z. 2007. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methodologies*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Doyle, T. 2008. *Helping Students learn in a Learner-Centered Environment: A Guide to facilitating Learning in Higher Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Dueraman, B. 2012. 'Teaching EFL writing: understanding and re-thinking the Thai experience', *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 4(1): 255-275.
- Educational Broadcasting Corporation. 2004. *What is Constructivism?* [online]. New York, NY: Educational Broadcasting Corporation. Available from: <<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/constructivism.html>> [Accessed 18 October 2016]
- Esfandiaria, R. and Myford, C.M. 2013. 'Severity differences among self-assessors, peer-assessors, and teacher assessors rating EFL essays', *Assessing Writing*, 18(2): 111-131.
- Eroglu, M.T. 2005. *Constructivist Approach to Developing Academic Writing Skill* [online]. Ankara, Turkey: Atilim University. Available from: <http://kurumsal.data.atilim.edu.tr/pdfs/elt2/meltem_turan_eroглу.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2016]

- Faust, J.L. and Paulson, D.R. 1998. 'Active learning in the college classroom', *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 9(2): 3-24.
- The Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia (FDRGE). 1994. *Education and Training Policy*. 1st ed. Addis Ababa: St. George Printing Press.
- Federal Way Public Schools. 2008. *Exploring Formative Assessment – Assessment for Learning, a Training Manual for Educators, Teachers and Para Educators*. Federal Way, WA: Federal Way Public Schools.
- Felder, R.M. and Brent, R. 1996. 'Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction', *College Teaching*, 44(2): 43-47.
- Felder, R.M. and Brent, R. 2009. 'Active learning: an introduction', *ASQ Higher Education Brief*, 2(4). Available from: <[http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/papers/ALpapers\(ASQ\).pdf](http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/papers/ALpapers(ASQ).pdf)> [Accessed 18 October 2016]
- Felder, R.M. 2007. 'Sermons for grumpy campers', *Journal of Chemical Engineering Education*, 41(3): 183-184.
- Fern, E.F. 2001. *Advanced Focus Group Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ferrer, G. 2006. *Educational Assessment Systems in Latin America: Current Practice and Future Challenges*. Washington, DC: Preal.
- Freire, P. 1993. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum International.
- Firdissa, J.A. 2010. Action research practices in teaching English as a foreign language in Ethiopian universities: implications for quality language teaching. PhD dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Freed, B.F. 1991. 'Current realities and future prospects in foreign language acquisition research'. In: Freed, B.F. ed. *Foreign Language Acquisition Research and the Classroom*. Toronto, ON: DC Heath and Company.
- Gauthama, G. 2008. *Active Learning Methodology*. Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India.

- Getnet, T. 2016. 'Quality of education in the Ethiopian Higher Institutions', *Addis Zemene*. 18 April. 13a.
- Gibbs, G. and Coffey, M. 2004. 'The impact of training of university teachers on their teaching skills, their approach to teaching and the approach to learning of their students', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 5(1): 87-100.
- Golkovaa, D. and Hubackovab, S. 2014. 'Productive skills in second language learning', *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 143: 477 – 481.
- Grabin, L.A. 2007. Alternative assessment in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Israel. D.Ed. Thesis. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Gonzalez, E.F. 2010. 'Impact of teacher/student conferencing and teacher written feedback on EFL revision', *Journal of MEXTESOL*, 34(1): 59-71.
- Gomez, E.L. 1999. *Assessment Portfolios and English Language Learners: Frequently Asked Questions and a Case Study of the Brooklyn International High School*. Providence, RI: The Education Alliance, Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University.
- Grabe, W. and Stoller, F.L. 2009. 'Teaching the written foreign language'. In: Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. eds. *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Volume 6. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Graves, K. 2008. 'The language curriculum: a social contextual perspective', *Journal of Language Teaching*, 41(2): 147-181.
- Griffith, W.I. and Lim, H.Y. 2010. 'Making Student-Centered Teaching Work', *Journal of MEXTESOL*, 34(1): 75-83.
- Gulden, A. 2016. 'Evaluation of national foreign language Test in Turkey', *Journal of Educational Research*, 4(3): 11-22
- Gunduz, N. and Hursen, C. 2015. 'Constructivism in teaching and learning; content analysis evaluation', *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191: 526-533.

Gupitasari, H. 2013. 'The implementation of process-genre approach to teaching writing business letter', *Journal of English and Education*, 1(1): 89-95.

Haddad, C. ed. 2006. *Practical Tips for teaching Large Classes: A Teacher's Guide*. Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.

Harmer, J. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, MA: Longman.

Hayford, S. 2007. Continuous assessment and lower attaining pupils in primary and junior secondary schools in Ghana. PhD dissertation. University of Birmingham School of Education, Birmingham UK.

Hinkel, E. 2006. 'Current perspectives on teaching the four skills', *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1): 109-131.

Hirai, C., Borrego, I., Garza, E. & Kloock, C.D. 2010. *Academic Language Literacy Strategies for Adolescents: A "How To" Manual for Educators*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Iida, A. 2008. 'Poetry writing as expressive pedagogy in an EFL context: Identifying possible assessment Tool for Haiku poetry in EFL freshman college writing', *Assessing Writing*, 13(3): 171-179.

Imane, B. 2015. Difficulties Encountered by students in learning the productive skills in EFL classroom and the relationship between speaking and writing: case of first year LMD students at Abou Bekr-Belkaid. MA English thesis. University of Tlemcen, Algeria.

James, M. 2006. 'Assessment, Teaching and Theories of Learning', *Researchgate publications*, pp.1-15.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271964452_AssessmentTeaching_and_Theoriesof_Learning

- Jamshidnejad, A. 2011. 'An innovative approach to understanding oral problems in foreign language learning and communication', *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 1(1): 3-21.
- Jin, Y. 2010. 'The place of language testing and assessment in the professional preparation of foreign language teachers in China', *Language Testing*, 27(4): 555-584.
- Johnson, B. and Christensen, L. 2008. *Educational Research: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
- Johnston, B. 2003. *Values in English Language Teaching*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Jones, A.M. 1999. 'Active learning in IS education: choosing effective strategies for teaching large classes in higher education', In: Yoong, P. And Hope, B. eds. *Proceedings of 10th Australasian Conference on Information Systems, Sydney, December 1-3, 1999*. Victoria University of Wellington School of Communications and Information Management.
- Jones, L. 2007. *The Student-Centered Classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, L. and Somekh, B. 2005. 'Observation'. In: Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. eds. *Research Methods in the Social Science*. London: Sage. 138-145.
- Jordaan, H. 2011. 'Language teaching is no panacea: a theoretical perspective and critical evaluation of language in education within the South African context', *South African Journal of Communication Disorders*, 58(2): 79-85.
- Kahsay, M.N. 2012. Quality and quality assurance in Ethiopian higher education: critical issues and practical implications. PhD dissertation. University of Twente, The Netherlands.
- Karagiorgi, Y. and Symeou, L. 2005. 'Translating constructivism into instructional design: potential and limitations', *Educational Technology & Society*, 8(1): 17-27.

- Kaufman, D. 2004. 'Constructivist issues in language learning and teaching', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24: .303-319.
- Ke. Li. 2010. 'Project-based college English: an approach to teaching non-English majors', *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(4): 99-112.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. 2006. *Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Postmethod*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Li, J. and Barnard, R. 2011. 'Academic tutors' beliefs about and practices of giving feedback on students' written assignments: a New Zealand case study'. *Assessing Writing*, 16: 137-148.
- Littlemore, J. 2009. *Applying Cognitive Linguistics to Second Language Learning and Teaching*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Liu, C.H. and Matthews, R. 2005. 'Vygotsky's philosophy: constructivism and its criticisms examined', *International Education Journal*, 2005, 6(3): 386-399.
- Lock, A. and Strong, T. 2010. *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Macmillan, J. and Mclean, M.J. 2005. 'Making first-year tutorials count: operationalizing the assessment-learning connection', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 6(2): 94-105.
- Mackey, A. and Gass, S. 2005. *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Matthews, M.R. 2000. 'Constructivism in science and mathematics education'. In: Phillips, D.C. ed. *National Society for the Study of Education, 99th Yearbook*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 161-192.
- McKay, S.L. 2006. *Researching Second Language Classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates .
- McKinney, K. 2009. *Active Learning*. Normal, IL: Illinois State University.

- McNamara, T. 2009. 'Principles of testing and assessment'. In: Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. eds. *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Volume 6. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Melketo, T. A. 2012. 'Exploring tensions between English teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching writing', *The International HETL Review*, 2: 98-114.
- Mengduo, Q. and Xiaoling, J. 2010. 'Jigsaw Strategy as a Cooperative Learning Technique: Focusing on the Language Learners', *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(4): 113-123.
- Meseret, T.R. 2012. Instructors' and students' perceptions and practices of task-based writing in an EFL context. PhD dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Mesfin, A. 2013. An exploratory study on the implementation of the process approach to the teaching & learning of the course basic writing skills: the case of Hawassa University. PhD thesis. Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Meyer, C. and Jones, T.1993. *Promoting Active Learning: Strategies for the College Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Michel, N., Cater, J. & Varela, Otmar. 2009. 'Active versus passive teaching styles: an empirical study of student learning outcomes', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20(4).pp.397-418.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). 2002. *The Education and Training policy and its Implementation*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). 2007. 'A new draft curriculum for the undergraduate program'. In: *Proceedings of the National Curriculum Change Workshop held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 10-17, 2007*.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). 2011. *Higher Diploma Programme for Teacher Educators Handbook*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Ministry of Education.

- Momani, M., Asiri, M.A. & Alatawi, S.M. 2016. 'The impact of implementing active learning strategies in teaching English from the perspective of Tabuk educational region intermediate school teachers', *Asian Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1): 19-35.
- Mutch, A. 2003. 'Exploring the Practice of Feedback to Students', *Journal of Active Learning in Higher Education*, 4(1): 24-38.
- Mvududu, N. and Thiel-Burgess, J. 2012. 'Constructivism in Practice: The Case for English Language Learners', *International Journal of Education*, 4(3) pp.108_118.
- Mynard, J. and Sorflaten, R. 2003. *Independent Learning in Your Classroom* [online]. Available from: <<http://jomynard.tripod.com/ilyourclass.htm>>
- Neuman, W.L. 2007. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*. 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Newstead, S. and Hoskins, S. 2003. 'Encouraging Student Motivation'. In: Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marshall, S. eds. *A Handbook for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education*. 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Nuffic. 2011. *Country Module – Ethiopia. International Recognition Department. Evaluation of Foreign Degrees and Qualifications in the Netherlands*. The Hague: International Recognition Department.
- Oakley, B., Brent, R., Felder, R.M. & Elhadj, I. 2004. 'Turning student groups into effective teams', *Journal of Student Centered Learning*, 2(1): 9-34.
- Olson, C. B. 2007. *The Reading/Writing Connection: Strategies for Teaching and Learning in the Secondary Classroom*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Owens, T. 2007. 'Problem-based learning in higher education', in Campbell, A. & Norton, L. (eds). *Learning, Teaching and Assessing in Higher Education: Developing Reflective Practice*, London: Learning Matters Ltd, pp.31-43.
- Ozer, O. 2004. 'Constructivism in Piaget and Vygotsky', *The Fountain Magazine*. Issue 48, October – December.

- Packer, M.J. and Goicoechea, J. 2000. 'Sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning: ontology, not just epistemology'. *Educational Psychologist*, 35(4): 227-241.
- Palmer, D. 2005. 'A motivational view of constructivist informed teaching', *International Journal of Science Education*, 27(15): 1853-1881.
- Poehener, M.E. 2008. *Dynamic Assessment: A Vygotskian Approach to Understanding and Promoting L2 Development*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University.
- Prabu, H. 2011. 'The importance of including culture in EFL teaching', *Journal of English Teaching*, 1(1): 44-56.
- Prince, M.J. 2004. 'Does active learning work? A review of the research' a summary of research evidence for the effectiveness of active learning, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3): 223-231.
- Pritchard, A. and Woollard, J. 2010. *Psychology for the Classroom: Constructivism and Social Learning*. London: Routledge.
- Pundak, D. and Rozner, S. 2008. 'Empowering engineering college staff to adopt active learning methods', *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 17(2). pp.152-163
- Prince, M.J. and Felder, R.M. 2006. 'Inductive teaching and learning methods: definitions, comparisons, and research bases', *Journal of Engineering Education*, 95(2): 123-138.
- Pundak, D., Herscovitz, O., Shacham, M. & Wisser-Biton, R. 2009. 'Instructors' attitudes toward active learning', *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects*, 5, 215-232.
- Rahman, M.M. 2010. 'Teaching oral communication skills: a task-based approach', *Journal of English for Specific Purposes World*, 1(9): 1-11.
- Rahman, M.M. 2011. 'Genre-based writing instruction: implications in ESP classroom', *Journal of English for Specific Purposes World*, 33(11): 1-9.
- Rajcoomar, R. 2013. Strategies for promoting active learning in large underfunded physics classrooms in Kerala, India. MA dissertation. University of South Africa, Pretoria.

- Reagan, T.G. and Osborn, T.A. 2002. *The Foreign Language Educators in Society: Towards a Critical Pedagogy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Refnaldi. 2013. 'The process-genre based model for teaching essay writing'. In: Lesley Harbon, L., Zaim, M., Indrayuda, Jufrizal, Ardi, H., Al-Hafizh, M. and Sudarman, Y eds. *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Languages and Arts (ISLA) – 2 FBS UNP, Sumatera Barat, October 5-6, 2013*. Universitas Negeri Padang. 479-485.
- Reyes, A. and Vallone, L. 2008. *Constructivist Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin (Sage).
- Riasati, M.J., Allahyar, N. & Tan, K. 2012. 'Technology in language education: benefits and barriers', *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(5): 25-31.
- Richards, J.C. 1995. *The Language Teaching Matrix*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J.C. 2006. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T.S. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Ridenour, C.S. and Newman, I. 2008. *Mixed Methods Research: Exploring the Interactive Continuum*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rismiati, C. 2012. Teachers' Concerns Regarding the implementation of integrated thematic instruction: a study of primary grade teachers in Kanisius catholic schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, PhD thesis. Loyola University, Chicago, MA.
- Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: a Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage
- Ruiz-Funes, M.T. 2002. *On teaching Foreign Languages: Linking Theory to Practice Contemporary Language Education*. London: Greenwood Publishing Group.

- Rusbult, C. 2007. *Teaching Strategies to promote Active Learning: Effective Teaching Methods Based on Active Learning Theories* [online].
<http://www.asa3.org/ASA/education/teach/active.htm>.
- Rusinovci, X. 2015. 'Teaching writing through the process-genre based approach', *US-China Education Review*, 5(10): 699-705.
- Rust, C. 2002. 'The impact of assessment on student learning', *Journal of Active Learning in Higher Education*, 3(2): 145–158.
- Rust, C., O'Donovan, B. & Price, M. 2005. 'A social constructivist assessment process model: how the research literature shows us this could be best practice', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30 (3): 231-240.
- Saint, W. 2004. 'Higher education in Ethiopia: the vision and its challenges', *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 2(3): 83-114.
- Sakale, S. 2012. 'Rethinking speaking skills in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings', *Sino-US English Teaching*, 9(4): 1100-1111.
- Savignon, S.J. 1991. 'Communicative language teaching: the state of the art', *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2): 261–277.
- Saville-Troike, M. 2006. *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Seid, M. 2012. Effects of cooperative learning on reading comprehension achievement in EFL and social skills of Grade 10 students. PhD thesis. Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Serbessa, D.D. 2005. 'Quality of Teaching and Learning in Ethiopian Higher education: Tension between traditional constructivist teaching approaches'. In: *The Proceeding of the National Conference Held in the School of Graduate Studies Addis Ababa University Institute of Educational Research, Addis Ababa, 21-22 October, 2005*. Addis Ababa University. 127-164.

- Serbessa, D.D. 2006. 'Tension between traditional and modern teaching-learning approaches in Ethiopian primary schools', *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 9(1): 123-140.
- Shepard, L.A.2000. 'The Role of Assessment in a Learning Culture', *Educational Researcher*, 29 (7), pp. 4-14.
- Shi, J.2013. 'The application of constructivism: activities for enlivening comprehensive English class', *English Language Teaching*, 6(2).
- Sivan, A., Leung, R.W., Woonm, C. & Kember, D. 2000. 'An implementation of active learning and its effect on the quality of student learning', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 37 (4): 381-389.
- Smith, D. 2004. 'Universities, paradigms, and ontological choices', *The Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education*, 1(2): 61-99.
- Spillane, J.P., Reiser, B.J. & Reimer, T. 2002. 'Policy implementation and cognition: reframing and refocusing implementation research', *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3): 387-431.
- Spolsky, B. 1998. *Conditions for Second Language Learning: Introduction to a General Theory*. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Stanford University Center for Teaching and Learning. 1993. *Speaking of Teaching: Active Learning: Getting Students to work and think in the Classroom*, (5):1.
- Starke, D. 2007. *Professional Development Module on Active Learning* [online]. Corpus Christi, TX: Texas Collaborative for Teaching Excellence. Available from: <http://www.texascollaborative.org/activelearning.html>
- Stiggins, R.2005. From Formative Assessment to Assessment FOR Learning: A Path to Success in Standards-Based Schools, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87 (4), pp. 324-328.
- Stone, K.R. July 2008. Making sense of testing: English language learners and state wide assessment. PhD thesis. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
- Streubert, H.J. and Carpenter, D.R. 2011. *Qualitative Research in Nursing: Advancing the Humanistic Imperative*. 5th ed. New York, NY: Wolters Kluwer Health.

- Tabatabaei, O. and Pourakbari, A. 2012. 'An investigation into the problems of teaching and learning English in the Isfahan Province high schools, Iran', *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(1): 102-111.
- Tesfaye, T. and Kasshune, K. 2009. *Quality Assurance for Enhancement of Higher Education in Ethiopia: Challenges faced and Lessons Learned*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Ministry of Education.
- Tesfaye, T. 2003. Transformations in Higher Education: Experiences with Reform and Expansion in Ethiopian Higher Education System. Unpublished paper presented at Regional Training Conference on Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things that Work! Accra, Ghana, September 23-25.
- Tesera, B., Shumet, A. & Demeke, W. 2010. 'The major factors that affect academic achievement of DMU students: (a mechanism to balance academic quality and quantity)'. In: Addisu, M. and Molla, Y. eds. *Proceedings of the First National Research Symposium on Sustainable Development: A Great Concern in Africa, Debre Markos*, February 13, 2010. Debre Markos University. pp. 25-58.
- Tessema, K.A. 2006. 'Contradictions, challenges, and chaos in Ethiopian teacher education', *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 4(1): 195-224.
- Thornbury, S. 2000. *How to teach Speaking Skill*. Long Beach, CA: California State University.
- Tiangco, J.A.N.Z. 2008. *Project-based Learning (PBL) Assessment for EFL/ESL Instruction: The Philippine Experience and its Implications to Taiwan*. Taiwan: Shu-Te University. Available from:
<http://fllcccu.ccu.edu.tw/conference/2006conference/chinese/download/C39.pdf>
- Tiwari, A. and Tang, C. 2003. 'From process to outcome: the effect of portfolio assessment on student learning', *Nurse Education Today*, 23(4): 269–277.
- Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). 1994. *Education and Training Policy*. Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press.

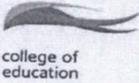
- Trent, J. 2009. 'Enhancing oral participation across the curriculum: some lessons from the EAP classroom', *Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 11(1): 256-270.
- Tuan, L.T.2011. 'Teaching writing through genre based approach', *Theory and Practice in Language Teaching*, 1(11): 1471-1478.
- Tuji, W. 2006. 'Upper primary students' engagement in active learning: the case in Butajira town primary school', *The Ethiopian Journal of Education*, 26(1): 1-30.
- Turnbull, M. and Dailey-O'Cain, J. eds. 2009. *First Language Use in Second and Foreign Language Learning*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Uiseb, I. 2009. the role of teachers in continuous assessment: a model for primary schools in Windhoek. MA dissertation. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- University of Minnesota. 2012. *Recommendations for making Active Learning Work* [online]. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Teaching and Learning. Available from: <https://cei.umn.edu/support-services/tutorials/active-learning-classrooms>
- Vogt, W.P., Gardner, D.C. & Haeffele, L.M. 2012. *When to use What Research Design*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S.1978.*Mind in Society*. M. Cole, John-steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman (eds.). New York: Harvard university press.
- Vygotsky, L.1986. *Thought and Language*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Wahyuni, D. 2012. 'The research design maze: understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies', *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research*, 10(1): 69-80.
- Walters, D. 2007. 'Who do they think they are? Students' perceptions of themselves as Learners'. In: Campbell, A. and Norton, L. eds. *Learning, Teaching and Assessing in Higher Education: Developing Reflective Practice*. London: Learning Matters. 56-67.
- Wilhelm, J., Baker, T. & Dube, J. 2001. *Strategic Reading: Guiding Students to Lifelong Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Wilton, A. 2009. Multilingualism and Foreign Language Learning. Knapp, K. and Seidlhofer, B. eds. *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning*. Volume 6. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Wimer, M. 2002. *Learner-Centered Approach: Five Key Changes to Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wingate, U. 2006. 'Doing away with study skills', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(4): 457-469.
- Wragg, E. C. 1999. *An Introduction to Classroom Observation*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Xamaní, I.M. 2013. 'Practical implications of a constructivist approach to EFL teaching in a higher education context', *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 10(2): 1-18.
- Yan, G. 2005. 'A process-genre model for teaching writing', *English Teaching Forum*, 43(3): 18-26.
- Yang, L. and Wilson, K. 2006. 'Second language classroom reading: a social constructivist approach', *The Reading Matrix*, 6(3): 364-372.
- Yin, R.K. 2011. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Yule, G. 1996. *The Study of Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Yusimah, A. 2014. 'A study of teachers' strategies so develop students' interest towards learning English as a second language', *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 134: 188-192.
- Zhao, H. 2008. 'Using the Internet to improve EFL through reading and writing for communicative purposes', *Polyglossia*, 14: 17-28.

- Zhao, H. 2009. 'Investigating learners' use and understanding of peer and teacher feedback on writing: A comparative study in a Chinese English writing classroom', *Assessing Writing*, 15(1): 3-17.
- Zhou, Y. 2011. 'Development of a foreign language anxiety model'. Chan, W.M., Chin, K.N. & Suthiwan, T. eds. *Foreign Language Teaching in Asia and Beyond: Current Perspectives and Future Directions*. Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter.
- Zohrabi, M. Torabi, M.A. & Baybourdiani, P. 2012. 'Teacher-centered and/or student-centered learning: English language in Iran', *English Language and Literature Studies*, 2(3): 18-30.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNISA | 
college of
education

Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

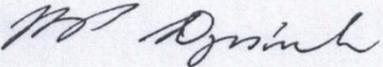
This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

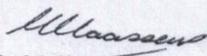
YI Kitaw [47245263]

for a D Ed study entitled

**Active learning in teaching English supportive courses to first year students in
some Ethiopian universities**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two
years from the date of issue.


Prof KP Dzvimbho
Executive Dean : CEDU


Dr M Claassens
CEDU REC (Chairperson)
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Reference number: 2014 AUGUST /47245263/MC 19 AUGUST 2014

Appendix B: Letter of Request for Permission to conduct Study

Name: Kitaw Yoseph Zewdu
e-mail:47245263@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Cell phone: + 251 9 12 08 62 98
Debre Markos University
P.O. Box 269
Debre Markos
Ethiopia
21 March 2014

TO: Bahir Dar University,
Bahir Dar
Debre Markos University
Debre Markos
University of Gonder
North Gonder

Subject: Requesting Permission to Conduct Study at the University

Dear Sir:

I am a doctoral student at the University of South Africa, interested in conducting a study entitled '*The role of Active learning in Teaching English through Supportive classes in three Ethiopian Universities as a strategy to improve learner achievement*'. My supervisor name is Dr. NMM Mbunyuza - de Heer Menlah, in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at University of South Africa. Her e-mail address is mbunynmm@unisa.ac.za and phone number is 012 429 4441.

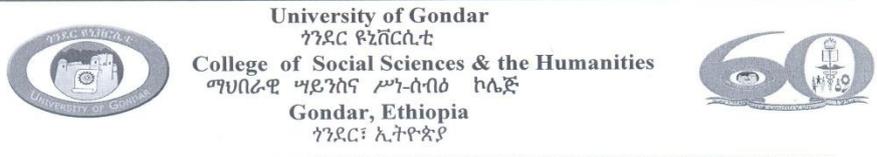
As one of the study sites is your university, I want to conduct interview and observation in order to get information from instructors of the department of English and literature and their students. This will help me in finalizing the research project.

Therefore, I kindly request you to write me permission letter to conduct this study at the University. I thank you in advance.

With regards,

Kitaw Yoseph Zewdu

Appendix C: Letter of Permission to conduct Study – University of Gondar



University of Gondar
ጎንደር ዩኒቨርሲቲ
College of Social Sciences & the Humanities
ማህበራዊ ሳይንስና ሥነ-ሰብዕ ኮሌጅ
Gondar, Ethiopia
ጎንደር፣ ኢትዮጵያ

ቁጥር ማ/ሣ/ሥ/ ከ/12/1058/12/06
Ref.
ቀን 29/12/2006
Date: 04/09/14

Towhom It may Concern

Subject:- Giving Permission to conduct a research

Mr. Yoseph Zewdu Kitaw is a PhD Candidate, who is under taking a problem solving research on *Active learning in Teaching Productive Skills in English Supportive Courses to first Year Students in some Ethiopian Universities*. Thus, the College of Social Science and the Humanities of the University of Gondar permitted the aforementioned candidate to use the available research site in our College.

With Best Regards!

መንበሩ ተሸመ ሠለተ (ዶ/ር)
Dr, Menberu Teshome Zeleke
Vice Dean

✉
ፖ.ሣ.ቁ
P.O.Box 196

☎
Tel 058 -8 11 -9061

መልስ ሲጻፉ ጎንደር ዩኒቨርሲቲን ቁጥር ይጠቀሱ
In Replying, Please Quote our Ref.No

A.N

Gondar ,Ethiopia URL. Address: - www.uog.edu.et

Appendix D: Letter of Permission to conduct Study – Bahir Dar University

ሂዩማኒቲስ ፋኩልቲ

ባሕር ዳር ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ባሕር ዳር- ኢትዮጵያ



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
Bahir Dar University
Bahir Dar – Ethiopia

☒ 79

ፋክስ Fax: 251 (058) 220 74 78
■ 251 (582) 226 65 72

e-mail: bdtc@telecom.net.et
website: www.bdu.edu.et/fh

Ref. No. ሂ/4/ 228/2006

Date . 14/01/2014 G.C

To: Kitaw Joseph Zewdu
Debre Markos University
Debre Markos

Subject: Granting permission to conduct study at Bahir Dar University

You requested to conduct your PhD study entitled ‘Active learning in Teaching Productive Skills in English Supportive Course to First Year Students in Some Ethiopian Universities’ in the university by a letter of application dated on 21/03/2014.

Considering the issue you are going to investigate, I notify that the Faculty has given the permission to conduct your PhD study here at Bahir Dar University.

With best Regards,


በዩኒቨርሲቲ ፋኩልቲ (ዶ/ር)
ሂዩማኒቲስ ፋኩልቲ ዳኛ
Seyoum Teshome Zeleke (PhD)
Humanities Faculty Dean



ጸ.በ/1

መልሱን ሲጻፉን የእኛን ቁጥር ቀን ይጥቡ
IN REPLYING, PLEASE QUOTE OUR REF. NO. & DATE

Appendix E: Letter of Permission to conduct Study – Debre Marko University

በኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ በትምህርት ሚኒስቴር የዶ/ር ማርቆስ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ሶሻል ሳይንስና ህዳሴ ስራ ስራ ኮሌጅ		The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education Debre Markos University College of Social Science and Humanities
---	---	---

Ref No. SS.HC.784-Y-39-00
Date: 21/03/2014

To Kitaw Joseph Zewdu
Debre Markos University
Debre Markos

Subject: Granting permission to conduct study at Debre Markos
University

You requested to conduct your PhD study entitled ‘Active learning in Teaching Productive Skills in English Supportive Course to First Year Students in Some Ethiopian Universities’ in the university by a letter of application dated on 21/03/2014.

Considering the issue you are going to investigate, I notify that the college has given the permission to conduct your PhD study here at Debre Markos Yniversity.

With best Regards,



Fekadie Mengistie
Social science & Humanities College
Dean
Debre Markos University
Ethiopia



Appendix F: Classroom Observation Schedule

Observation for Active Learning to Teach Speaking and Writing Skills

University: _____

Date: _____

Department and section: _____

Class size: _____

Instructor: _____ Course Title: Communicative English skills/ Basic writing skills

Purpose: The purpose of this classroom observation is to get preliminary information on the teaching and learning process. It focuses on the methodology and interaction patterns, and later will be the base for the interview and focus group discussion.

A) Classroom situation/ methodology practices

s/n	Instructional Tasks	yes	no	comments
1	Relevant authentic learning activities (problems)			
2	there is cooperative grouping			
3	tasks motivating and challenging enough			
4	students engage in self-assessment and peer assessment			
5	student-centred, not teacher-centred approach			
6	the time is enough for practicing writing, or speaking activity			
	Instructors' Activity			
1	Uses appropriate verbal and non-verbal feature in the classroom interaction			
2	students get chance to reflect on their response			
3	doesn't interfere while students talk or discuss with friends, to class etc.			
4	creates a democratic environment to foster learning			
5	encourages multiple perspectives of the students			

6	Speaks in class clearly, with appropriate pace and gesture			
7	Calls students by name for questions and other instructions			
8	Clearly informs students about the procedures			
	Students' Activity			
1	Students work with group members, in pairs, etc.			
2	few students do not dominate others			
3	the form and extent of students' participation is good			
4	students interact with each other with motivation			
5	They engage in the process of writing			
	Classroom Facilities and Teaching aids (if any)			
1	the seating arrangement is in groups, not in rows			
2	Classroom size and number of students is appropriate			
3	light, temperature, and sanitation of the classroom is conducive			
4	Instructional materials other than the textbook (newspapers, magazines, books, pictures, audio, video, etc) are available			

General comments: educational climate in the classroom, variety of instructional activities, students' involvement, individualization of instruction (to make it clear),_____

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students in the Freshman Programme

The interview questions are theme-based, i.e. the four areas listed from A to D.

A) problems/challenges

- ✓ how do you complete assignments and tasks in group? do all members contribute ideas/ work hard? do you really feel you will learn something from assignments?
- ✓ what do you know about active learning?
- ✓ what are the problems you face in the teaching and learning process of productive skills?
- ✓ how do you see the course content, and activities in the English supportive courses in relation to speaking and writing skills?
- ✓ how do you evaluate the teaching and learning process of productive skills?
- ✓ How were you taught productive skills at high school and preparatory level?
- ✓ how do you evaluate your background knowledge, interest to use the language, exposure to language use situation, etc in productive skills?

B) Linking Assessment and teaching

- ✓ What assessment techniques are used by your teacher for your speaking and writing skills?
- ✓ what challenges do you face during assessment?
- ✓ what do you suggest as a solution for these problems?
- ✓ do you get regular feedback from your friends and the teacher to get good score for next time? if so how?
- ✓ is the classroom lesson and the assessment related? how?
- ✓ how does your instructor give you feedback in the teaching and learning process of productive skills?
- ✓ do you conduct self-evaluation and peer evaluation of your productive skills? how often?
- ✓ what type of tests do you take in your basic writing course?

C) Types of Active Learning Techniques used

Questions on Writing skill activity

- ✓ Do you like writing and how do you evaluate your motivation to attend this course and engage in basic writing skill?

- ✓ what are some of the active learning approaches used in teaching productive skills?
- ✓ does your teacher ask you open-ended questions, how? why? etc
- ✓ have you ever attempted writing tasks such as research, reports, projects, journals, portfolio etc. and how are these evaluated?
- ✓ how do you start your drafts? how many times do you revise?
- ✓ Do your instructor help you to work on planning, discussion, revising your drafts etc, pre-writing stages? if yes, how?
- ✓ how do you evaluate your background skill of writing skill at high school?
- ✓ how do you revise and edit your drafts? do you help each other, self-correction or is it the teacher who corrects it? whose comments do you prefer most often? why?

Questions on speaking skills activity

- ✓ what are the activities you engage in learning speaking skills
- ✓ what do you feel when you work with your friends/group activity?
- ✓ how do you practice speaking in the class? are there any forms of discussions, role-play, Simulations, Picture describing etc.
- ✓ do you practice often before the classroom presentation?
- ✓ what problems do you face in learning speaking skills?
- ✓ how do you evaluate your speaking skill?

D) Beliefs/ perception of Students

- ✓ do you think the way students are assessed is the best way, esp. speaking and writing? why?
- ✓ who are the most popular teachers in the teaching of productive skills? why?
- ✓ who are the disliked ones? why? don't mention their names.
- ✓ what do you think of your teachers in the teaching and learning process of productive skills?
- ✓ How do you evaluate your motivation for learning English supportive courses?
- ✓ do you really need to attend these courses? Why/ why not? is it relevant to your professional development or knowledge?
- ✓ would you prefer to attend to register for this course/ attend this class if it were optional/based on interest?
- ✓ how is the beginning and end of the courses thought of by students?
- ✓ do students mock instructors during class discussion or activity? why?
- ✓ do you think/feel/ in your belief you are motivated, committed to learn the course?

Appendix H: Interview Guide for EFL Instructors who teach English Support Courses

Background information: Field of study _____ year of experience in teaching,
i.e. tertiary level _____ others/ secondary school _____

A) problems/challenges

- ✓ how do you set the tasks and assignments to students/ is there a negotiation/do you involve students comments and feedback in teaching and learning process?
- ✓ do you have the relevant knowledge, skill, and attitude in the training of HDP about active learning and assessment?
- ✓ how do you evaluate students' effectiveness in group assignments and as a way of learning?
- ✓ what are the major challenges you faced in the teaching and learning process of productive skills?
- ✓ do students take their own responsibility for their learning? i.e. learner autonomy, e.g. set their goals and work on it, request support, etc.
- ✓ what do you say about students' background, motivation for language learning, contents, syllabus, class size, other resources, etc?
- ✓ what are the main issues students are concerned with in the teaching and learning process of productive skills?
- ✓ How do you rate the effectiveness of the training you got about new ways of teaching methods, including HDP?
- ✓ Do you get enough support from the college, departments, the administration etc
- ✓ do you negotiate with your students about the instructional goals and objectives?

B) Types of Active Learning techniques used

- ✓ what types of active learning techniques most often you use in your teaching of speaking and writing skill?
- ✓ which type of teaching method do you prefer in your teaching? why?
- ✓ are you satisfied, personally, with the way the teaching and learning process goes on? why?
- ✓ do you ask open-ended questions in the class discussion, presentation, or test, assignments?
- ✓ how do you evaluate the implementation of active learning in teaching supportive courses?
- ✓ how far do you think you are teaching speaking using active learning approaches?
- ✓ what is your idea of teaching writing skills using active learning approaches?
- ✓ do you apply group work or pair work in teaching speaking and writing skills? why? why not?
- ✓ what opportunities do you give your students to engage in producing pieces of writing and practise speaking?

C) beliefs/ perception of instructors

- ✓ How far do you think that speaking or writing skills should be the focus in the teaching and learning process?
- ✓ what would you feel if you were a student now?
- ✓ to what extent, if any, students ignore the course? so, what do you feel?
- ✓ in your beliefs, what should be the role of the teacher & the students in the English language teaching? esp. in speaking and writing, active learning, etc, i.e. student-centred or teacher centred?
- ✓ According to your beliefs, how should students engage in to learn productive skills? and how should teachers help or teach them?
- ✓ what do you feel about active learning and student-centred approach teaching?
- ✓ do you think you are implementing student-centred approach/active learning in your class?
- ✓ what is your educational and teaching, learning philosophy/ beliefs, i.e. how should anyone approach the teaching and learning process for a maximum benefit?

D) Linking Assessment and Teaching

- ✓ how do you conduct assessment/evaluation?
- ✓ is there any link between assessment and teaching? if so, how?
- ✓ do many students volunteer for answers in class discussion? if no, why?
- ✓ What do you say about the types of assessment techniques for productive skills?

Appendix I: Sample Transcription of the Interview with EFL Instructor

This interview was conducted at University –B with an EFL instructor. This interview took 1 ½ hr. I transcribed the data within a week after conducting the interview.

In order to conduct this interview, I informed the instructor about the ethical clearance and other related things. We agreed to assign the schedule –date, time and place to meet. Finally, I arrived on time and reminded the instructor to come early. He came and I greeted him, and we continued our discussion taking coffee at the nearby lounge in the campus.

Question. How do you evaluate students' effectiveness in groups' assignments as a way of learning, are they effective? Are they really interested to work hard? And do they focus on the common courses?

Ans. I can say that most students have their own learning styles and preferences, and there are factors that directly fit into group activities, and there are tasks that cannot be entirely done by group work, but if I have to apply a group work activity or a cooperative activity in my classroom, I have to design a task that will be suitable for the students to engage in the task to work on the kind of thing they have to work. But some students do not like to work or engage in cooperative or group work.

This is because the majority of students depend too much on few able or good students to complete assignments. Who are considered to be better performer in the English language skills. So all the group members and the class students clever ones who can handle the assignments, due to that I can say that they are not effective, so they do not take their own role as active learner. We do not have this type of tradition to work cooperative, may be this is one case.

Many of the students prefer to work in group, they pretend they have completed it but actually they may not be involved in doing anything. This is true in the English classroom. They will not be involved in actual learning.

Q. Are the students really motivated to learn in the English class?

Ans. Like I said before the motivation of students to learn English is very low. Currently there is a new group assignment that is being applied in all classes (one to five group structures). It is prescribed by the university at national level, but we cannot push people

together to do tasks in groups forcefully to come together to solve problems. If students prefer to work individually that has to be left for students. If for example, some students are left in a group they plan to leave the task for others who can work /are better achievers and this imply that students do not have the ability and motivation to work in group.

Q. What is the main concern of students in the teaching and learning process?

Ans. It is a very general question. what do you mean?

Q. I mean the students focus for knowledge and grade?

Well the students' major concern is not learning but earning grade! They focus on scoring better, and not the learning. This is the problem in the English classroom. Because we gave them continuous assessment that is true and helpful for students. It is believed to be helpful, but still students have a competition feeling, that is very bad. They do not rush to learn something out of the lesson, but they rush to get good grade.

Q. Any other challenge in class teaching related to class size, assessment, resources, etc.?

Ans. Challenges are multidirectional

- There are high number of students in a single classroom
- Administrative problems are also prevalent
- The department/ university has to limit the number of students below the present figure
- Some departments in the university are pushing/ forcing English language instructors to teach 60-70 students in a class. This is practically impossible.\
- Shortage of some resources such as LCD projectors in the department, videos, audio records, tape recorders, clean classrooms, chairs, seats, in each room, no appropriate seats in each room, sometimes students move/ take seats from one to another room. So
- We spend 10-15 minutes from the periods.
- Had all these things were improved, there is no reason to improve/ we would improve practice cooperative learning, group work and other activities of the active learning strategies. For example, you may use audio records to engage students in a more active learning of speaking and writing in an integrated way so that they can interview someone and present that in a written form in the classroom in an integrated way. But these sources must be there in the classroom.

Q. how do you see the training given for instructors like HDP, active learning for those who do not have education/ teaching background?

Ans. I understand the question; I like this question you raised. Thank you for raising this important question. Personally I don't believe that I don't believe, may be you may be surprised, the education training will significantly contribute to the language classroom. Particularly the general education training is it is wastage, for those who are graduated with TEFL, but it contributed very little to my skill of teaching English, this was because language teaching is a specific field that emerged 100 year ago as a unique discipline. ELT- That is why globally it is branded ELT. That is why it is studied as independent field of study; there are no fields like teaching geography, mathematics, etc. Because teaching language has its own characteristics features and unique thing that we have to deal with.

I learned those things from my undergraduate and masters' programme. I have read many articles, I watched some videos, w/c are relevant/pertinent to language teaching.

For example, If I have to teach rewarding passage to my students, so the kind of task I have to create, can not necessarily guided by general education principles, b/c I have to follow specific procedures that I was injected on. For example, in the rereading stage in communicative English skills, it has a lot in that regard. And they may not be necessary as we had expected in the lesson objective, but b/c it was *prescribed from the top managers/c* is considered as a remedy to our classroom problems, I just watched many class, curriculum teachers were trained just like that, but they are not good teachers, I am a professional English teacher b/c I am a graduate of TEFL. That is an independent field of study, that took theoretical concepts or backgrounds of its own, from different fields like psychology, sociology in connection with learning, but it does not mean that it is worthless at all.

Qn. Are you personally satisfied in the way the teaching and learning process goes on in the EFL class?

Ans. Do you mean In my classroom or in others?

Qn. In both of them or in general?

Ans. I use my own personal effort to make the classroom attractive, to make the learning in the classroom as meaningful as possible. The things I say to now are from my readings in TEFL, not from my HDP training/c I took some courses from the language, the teaching and learning process has got problems and is deteriorating from time to time. The remedies are in there in TEFL, communicating in different language teaching approach, not in the

policy of HDP ... etc or 1 to 5 group structure. The classes are not effective in my opinion. This is b/c of the challenges I raised earlier. Those things which are considered educational policies like HDP, and others are not helpful. Students come with little or no background with English skills. When I begin teaching paragraph level, speaking and listening sections, w/c are based on audio resources, but students may be unable to listen or speak about.

Qn. Do you use other tasks/ activities out of the textbook? This is because the majority of instructors use the text only.

Ans. Fortunately, you are interviewing an English teacher who is best satisfied with his language teaching techniques, who is using his skills of teaching English. I just used a number of active learning tasks. By the way active learning means a new brand just for an old thing.

Active learning is taken from CLT. I just believed my theories embedded in CLT, not in active learning, may be active learning is taken from CLT or vice versa. Psychologists say CLT was based on active learning. Active learning is just learning. We are talking about English language learning ability. It has very unique nature. I just watched some videos, read articles, books, research findings; my teaching is just guided by those things. I try to help myself by reading and try to benefit my students out of my classroom.

Qn. Do you have some active learning approaches you follow?

Yes, I have but I do not list one by one. I will not mention them. The goal of language teaching is one. We have one central goal of language teaching in the Ethiopian case. That is to help students to be able to communicate using the language.

I just used all the strategies and innovative strategies to make the classroom good. As long as I believe I have to use to improve their speaking or listening, I have to use audio records. This is not because I am prescribed to do that but I believe that could help students. I can see / evaluate myself every time, and reflect on that and see the weakness and strengths and learn something from that, and another time I will come up with something new.

Qn. How should the language teachers should fill this gap / innovate themselves in order to help students to improve productive skills?

ANS. Surprisingly many EFL teachers are desperate b/c of their life, desperate b/c they believe they are underpaid, desperate because they have no interest to the profession, and b/c of multiple of other reasons. Other external factors. Due to these reasons, most teachers go to classroom with this and go to teaching to teach something. They rush, not teaching assessing students /testing a number of times, not teaching. For example, one colleague told me 'how many times did you give test?' I gave them 5 times.' But students do not get any feedback.

What are those scores/numbers of test? Meaningful learning does not seemingly exist in the classroom. The English teachers have no unique to use to fill the gap of students learning. Teachers give assignments, tests, again and again but students are not clear with the lesson/course, do not know what the course is about. There are courses in which students score A's and B's but with no proper introduction to the course lesson or objective. It is just a pity!

Qn. Some of the students tell this story, did you have any?

Ans.

Yes, there are some advisees who say we have got A's and B's, but we do not know what these courses are about. If you ask me the same question, I don't know what it is one student said. Instructors give good grades so that students do not complain. That was students wanted. You know, what students want is good grade, not the knowledge. The learning is forgotten.

Qn. To what extent students ignore English supportive courses in your personal observations? For example, some say common course is common cold.

Ans. By the way, it is very difficult to say like that. We have to be honest to the profession. The profession is being abused like I said before. We are teaching here and there in our teaching and research. We do not come directly to meaningful teaching of English in the classroom. That is what I have read from research work.

The students lack interest because they do not see any significant improvement in their skill of language after taking the course. Because that course is given as a tradition, found in the curriculum, but it does not mean that students do not like to learn English. Surprisingly, all students would like /love to learn English because it is related to their

survival In the academic area and professional world. They cannot learn their course unless they can use English, different industries require English as a mandatory issue and students know this very well. But due to all those problems, they may not have the interest to learn. If it is given in meaningful way, they love to learn it. For example, if you call students for training using technology supported way, e.g. using audio recorder, the students will come. I have some experience in the ELIC. They come to the centre b/c they know new things every time.

Qn. What is your educational philosophy in relation to approaches of EFL teaching and student-centeredness, etc.?

Ans. My idea is let's be innovative; we do not have to be restricted to a few ideas of strategies and techniques. We do not have to worship some philosophies of education, or psychology. We have to see different doors dealing with the problems of language teaching to enhance English language proficiency level. So if we continue worshipping a few methods or prescribed techniques at national level like active teaching and learning, HDP, and so on they are written in bold, but the realities on the ground may be different. So we have to see the realities, my suggestion is a pragmatic one. Do what is workable.

Qn. What are the challenges you observe in the teaching speaking or writing in EFL class?

Ans. If you ask many teachers, they like to teach courses in relation to theory. E.g. communication theory courses. But we have to worry 'about communication in action. Students need to be effective communicators; assessment method has to be in line with this goal. But there are still problems the assessment are predictable tests, assignments, final exams are predictable. Once students see some tests and exam papers, they can predict that the next is the same.

There is no innovation practice interesting as well. Dynamism is missing. The assessment is done to fulfil what is written in the course guide, syllabus, or course outline. It is not to help learners learn language. The syllabus requires you to collect marks regardless of students learning from that course. Many assignments are done like this. I expect this will be highlighted in your study.

Many assessments are these days shifted from a subjective way to an objective and controlled way. For example, gap filling, multiple choices, true/false, etc. It is difficult for

language teachers to see students change in the language in the communicative context. So, the kind of assessment or test and exam should be closely related to the kind of communicative competence we want students to develop. There is no alignment between the two. Most of the tests are loosely connected to the skills we have to stick to language teaching methodologies and narrow down to specific activities in language learning. It is not because you declared active learning in class. You practice language learning effectively. It does not work. Focus on the nature of language and develop specific techniques to achieve it. The general theory of active learning may work in general education, but language classroom needs its own specific procedures. We have to find solution for language teaching problems within TEFL, not from outside. So, that is what I believe in.

Appendix J: Sample Transcription of Student Focus Group Interviews

The groups of students who participated in the focus group discussion were pre-engineering department students. It took almost two hours for conducting the focus group discussion, and the transcription was done during the evenings of the following days.

The following is a transcription of their discussion.

Q. What are the major problems in the teaching and learning process of English supportive courses, in general and productive skills in particular?

Ans. We know about student- centred approach and active learning.

We have poor background of English at the preparatory level (grade 11 & 12) in productive skills. We used to focus on other skills for preparation of University Entrance examination such as grammar, vocabulary, passage and some forms of other questions. When we come to university, we are in problem in speaking and writing.

Some of our friends come from private schools and are better in their language skills in contrast to other students who come from government schools.

- ✓ In this university also we did not get a good knowledge of English to use in speaking and writing skills. The type of English we learn is similar with the high school English. The tests and examinations also are not helping to practice the language. We use them to get marks.
- ✓ We finished the two courses using our background knowledge; we did not get anything new in learning these English supportive courses.
- ✓ The teachers focus on grammar and sentence level writing in lecturing and testing. We do not get time to practice essay or paragraphs. The teachers will not get time to work or teach on other topics speaking or essay writing. They are fed up with marking or correcting papers.
- ✓ They set paragraphs & essay tests to produce in groups and finish the course. In speaking and writing skills they do not focus too much on these skills. We practice one paragraph and then write one or two essay/paragraph for grading purpose.
- ✓ When we were in preparatory and secondary schools, the large number of students was a problem. In each government school, there were 50-60 students and most of the time was dominated by plasma TV, and we did not have the chance to practice English in speaking and writing. We prepare for tests and examination. The teachers also prepare us in such a way, not to use the language in context.
- ✓ Some of the students also reported that they attended private schools, and the teaching and learning process was very different from the government schools.

They stated that they have two teachers one the main and the other assistant. More focus was also given to productive skills, and argued that they are better than most of the students in using English in the university. The other subject teachers also use the productive skills to make students good at.

- ✓ They also reported that the teachers give comment to the drafts of the students more on spelling, punctuation marks, and topic sentences.
- ✓ They also reported the feedback was not good to learn more.
- ✓ Teachers simply conduct class just to collect marks for grading purpose, not to help students develop their knowledge.
- ✓ When we write in groups the paragraphs and essays, only the good students will finish, not everybody is active in generating ideas. We write our names on the back of the paper and submit for grading.
- ✓ It seems that some teachers do not like other departmental students. They also complain and threaten us that we are showing negligence to the subject. They tell us they would award poor grade for bad behaviors as punishment. They are not committed to teach, and are not happy teachers.

Q. What solutions do you suggest for the problems you observed in English Language Classrooms?

Ans. First we should be free to choose to learn language. It is based on freedom or interest we have to learn to be successful. If we are forced to register and attend class, we do so for the sake of formality, but we will not be successful. If it is possible, we have to register for the courses with no scores like sport science. We practice to develop our skills. It is not also possible to develop language skills only attending one or two courses. We have to use the language for day to day practice. For instance we have to listen to the radio, music, news etc. the teaching method also has to be attractive to the students.

When teachers mark or evaluate students in marks, there should be clear criteria. For example, paragraph marking, it is good to hint students what is going to be evaluated. In speaking also it is good to inform us how to present.

It is also good to give timely feedback on time. We should be informed about our marks and what is left. It is also good to practice peer feedback and give credit for this.

We have to also read a lot in order to write something well. They are related skills. But we do not have the experience to read a lot. Those who do not read a lot will be unable to write well. In our school in American school (one of the private schools in Addis Ababa), we used to read a lot, and write something on that to express to our class members.

The time given for the courses is little. It is not possible to develop skills in a short period of time. It is good to add more time.

Q. What do you say about assessment and teaching in relation to productive skills?

It is also essential to change the way the teaching and learning process is done at the lower grade level. More attention should be given for productive skills (speaking and writing skills). As we observed from our experience at high school and preparatory level, English language teachers give more focus for grammar and reading. This is in line with the national examination preparation and for classroom tests and examination preparation. Students also work towards it like this. They do not focus on the skills, but the score or grade they earn in the tests and examinations. This is a great challenge for language learning.

Teachers also do not give credit for productive skills, they do not give much marks for these skills in their assessment. They also skip the given activities in the textbook and go to other tasks like reading and grammar to memorize and sit for examination.

We did not get a lot of practice in speaking and writing skills in Communicative English skill. We engaged in self-introduction -10%, and one paragraph out of 10%. The rest was grammar and passage + vocabulary. In Basic writing skills, we produced paragraph and essay in groups out of 10% each. And the rest was more on sentence level writing, topic sentence and paragraph rearrangement. The students were not active participants in producing the drafts. So we became dependent on other good achiever students.

Young teacher focus more on communication, while old teachers focus on grammar. In their evaluation, they focus on grammar errors. The course content also should be changed more to productive skills and communication. The present course content is not good, and the evaluation is also more on grammar and passage. It is not about communication skills. It is just similar with the high school English. We did not use the grammar, passage and vocabulary in our day to day practice.

Sophomore English/ Basic writing skills also need revision. Teachers spend a lot of time on sentence level writing. We have got enough of it in the preparatory and high school program. It is good to give more focus on other advanced forms of writing like paragraph, essays, reports and others. It is difficult to improve the skills to write advanced forms in a short period of time in two or three week's time.

Q. How do you revise your drafts/paragraphs and essays?

Ans. Most of the time we revise the grammar and punctuation marks. The teachers also focus on it. We do not follow the process of writing to write paragraphs. It is more of product oriented writing. It is more of timed writing and do not have time to revise our drafts.

Most of the students are poor in their writing and speaking skills. They did not get a good lesson at the secondary and preparatory level. We did not get a good practice to use productive skills.

Q. how do you work in the given assignments with your group members?

We did not work actively with our group members. Only those who are good students engage or attempt it. We focus only on the mark, not on the skills or knowledge. As we do not present it in the class we do not work. The classroom is large class size and teachers do not make us present it due to lack of time.

The teachers used group work and tests, and examination. Oral presentation was limited to 10%, and paragraph writing also in group. This is for Communicative English Skills. In Basic writing it was also limited to group and the rest test and examination.

We did not get anything new after taking the writing course or speaking course. It is not different from high school level. If we did not take the course, there could be nothing we lose. It was just for the sake of formality we take the course, not to get knowledge.

Q. Do you take the course if it was optional to be registered?

If it were optional course, we would not register. We are obliged to take and attend class. We do not think it is relevant course. It is English language that makes most of us score low grade. We do not like it. Students' interest to take the course and their motivation is very low. At the beginning some students were interested to take the course to improve their English Skills, but finally they found nothing new and offended by the whole system.

Q. What are the good qualities of English language teachers?

A good language teacher is one who encourages us, does not scold, threaten or say anything wrong to us. One who teaches us to love the subject and who is committed to make us know relevant points. Those who do not consider their teaching profession as

obligation; they pretend as if they are forced to teach. They like their profession. Good teachers do not punish students by deducting marks in their evaluation. For example, our teacher recorded '0' to some of our friends for taking the test paper unknowingly. It was forbidden to take test papers home. They do not demoralize students. Good teachers are those who are ready to teach us in extra class to help weak students. But even if there are some teachers who like to help students to improve their skills, students always focus on examination or tests.

Q. What do you feel when you start the course and finally when you finish the course?

Ans. When we start the course we feel offended, threatened, and dislike. When we finish it, we feel relief. But some students started the course with good expectation, but finally they felt resentment.

Appendix K: Sample of Basic Writing Skills Test 1

Department of English
Basic Writing Skills Quiz II for First Year Chemistry Students (20%)
Time given: 30 '

Name: _____ ID: _____

I- Choose the correct conjunction to combine the given pairs of sentences and write it on the space provided.

both ...and , Whether...or , either...or, neither... nor

1. It is unclear _____ the cable bill will come on time _____ I will have to go to the office to pay it.
2. She has _____ six _____ seven years of service with us. I am sure it's more than five.
3. You have to _____ read the book _____ go for shopping. You can't do both before you finish washing the clothes.
4. We went to the park to enjoy ourselves. There we watched _____ lions _____ tigers. They were interesting to see.

II- Choose the correct conjunction to combine the given pairs of sentences.

so but or nor for

5. Last week's weather was rainy, _____ the forecast is calling for sunny skies this week.
6. Belaynesh wanted to go back to finish her degree in nursing, _____ she freed up three evenings a week for her classes.
7. Do you write letters to your friends, _____ do you use only the phone?
8. The technician did not read the instructions. _____ did he assemble the machine properly.

III- Choose the correct adverb conjunction to combine the given pairs of sentences.

however besides then therefore otherwise instead

9. The flight has been cancelled due to technical problems; _____, the weather forecast calls rain.
10. First, we will go for shopping; _____ we will have some dinner.
11. The young should inherit many cultural values from the elders of the society; _____, there will be generation gap that hampers the self-development of the future generation.

12. Almwaw decided to cancel the visit to monasteries in Lake Tana; _____, he wanted to visit his parents.

IV- Choose the correct conjunction and combine the given pairs of sentences.

Whenever , though , because, if , wherever before

13. You should stay away from mad dogs. They are dangerous.

14. Swimming is fun. It can be dangerous.

15. You lock the door. The horse won't get out of its stall.

16. He ate his breakfast. He washed his hands.

V- Choose the correct relative pronoun and combine the given pairs of sentences.

Who whom whose which

17. W/ro Abebech is an experienced teacher. Her students are active participants.

18. The merchant has built a school for the community. The villagers appreciate the merchant for his contribution.

19. The man was disappointed. His daughter went abroad without his knowledge.

20. The organization has built a referral hospital for the community. The citizens of the town appreciate the organization for its contribution.

Appendix L: Sample of Basic Writing Skills Test 2

Department Of English

Basic Writing Skills Test- III For First Year Regular Students

Time Allowed: 30 Minutes

Name of the Group Members:

Id.No

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

Write the correct version of each of the following sentences on the space provided (1 pt each).

1. Correcting the exam papers, students were informed about their marks. (**Dangling modifier**)

Revised: _____

2. We are first year students this year, but we were going to be second year students after two months. (**Shift in point of view**)

Revised: _____

3. We have learnt a number of sentence faults in this course did you understand how each type of fault can be corrected? (**run-on**)

Revised: -----

4. You may go to your dormitory. When you finish doing this test. (**sentence fragment**)

Revised: -----

5. If people practice speaking in English, the language can be spoken fluently by them. (Shift in point of view)

Revised: -----

6. Asmamaw has just become a bank manager who was my class mate in primary school. (**misplaced modifier**)

Revised: -----

7. The company admits that cigarettes are expensive, smelly and have dangers. (**Faulty Parallelism**)

Revised: -----

8. The President along with his ministers have gone for Australia for a three day visit. (**Faulty agreement**)

Revised: -----

9. One has to observe the rules and the regulations of the school if you want to learn more from teachers. (**Shift in point of view**)

Revised: -----

10. Sleeping in the surgical room, the doctor helped the sick man. (**Dangling modifier**)

Revised: -----

Appendix M: Sample of Final Communicative English Skills Examination

Department of English Language and Literature

Communicative English Skills (EnLa 1011) Final Exam for 1st year Regular Students

weight: 50%

Time allowed 1: 40 hours

Name _____ Id No _____ dep. _____
sec _____

Note: Write your answers ONLY on the provided shaded spaces

- I. Complete the following dialogues using appropriate answers (1 pt each).

Abebe: Good evening

Alemu: Good evening

Abebe: It is a pleasure to meet you.

Alemu: _____

Abebe: I have come here to make an interview with.

Alemu: That is great.

Abebe: _____

Alemu: I am almost 60 years old.

Abebe: _____

Alemu: I am an elementary school teacher.

Abebe: _____

Alemu: I have 32 years of teaching experience.

Abebe: It is really amazing! When did you start doing sport?

Alemu: I started doing sport when I was a child.

Abebe: That is why you are still energetic.

Alemu: I am very happy to have had an interview with you. Thank you.

Abebe: _____

Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

It is not uncommon for close synonyms to be understood to share the same meaning. The difference between words like "hard" and "difficult", for example, goes tragically unnoticed. One may employ one or the other with complete indifference, postulating no

discrepancy between them. In general this is well and good; most people lack the scrupulous pedanticness to quibble over such trifles. Nevertheless, for those of us with ample compulsiveness (and time), it is of significant value to comprehend such nuances.

Take for example the following sentences: 1) The test was hard. 2) The test was difficult. Is the difference between these synonyms readily apparent? Is there a noticeable difference between them at all? Indeed, these questions are valid and warrant answer. For, what would be the point to having multiple words with the exact same meaning? No, that would be **superfluous**; the English language being far too economical. While many close synonyms share similar, if not the same, dictionary definitions, the feeling, or *mood*, they convey is utterly singular. Although a dictionary can provide information about word meanings, pronunciations, etymologies, inflected forms, derived forms, et cetera, it cannot communicate how it *feels* to use a word.

So, if there is indeed a difference between words like "hard" and "difficult", what is it? To begin, "hard" is pragmatic and realistic, firmly grounded in reality. It is a **utilitarian** word that gets the job done and doesn't apologize for its brusque, uncouth nature. On the other hand, "difficult" is eloquent and refined. It is civilized, willing to expend the effort necessary to appear urbane. Why, the mere difference in sonic quality between them is striking enough. "Hard" makes a quick, unassuming sound, having but a single syllable (voiced under certain inflections, it can even come across as harsh), while "difficult" is more lengthy and melodic, its number of syllables totaling three times that of its counterpart. Furthermore, "hard" is more likely to be used in casual, informal circumstances, or to communicate an idea "on the go" or simply to "get it out" as the sayings go. It is used without pretence, and does not maintain a feeling of being overly concerned. In terms of daily usage, "hard" may be employed by an exhausted brick mason when posed with the question, "How was your day?" Conversely, "difficult" may be used by a military general upon explaining to his or her superior the progression of a particularly taxing campaign.

Similar to "hard" and "difficult", the words "weird" and "strange" too are close synonyms, and may seemingly be used interchangeably. Take for instance the following sentences: 1) Sea monkeys are weird. 2) Sea monkeys are strange. Contrary to popular belief, these sentences are **not tautologous**. So how do they differ? Their dictionary definitions are nearly identical, so the difference does not lie there. Rather, the difference involves the feeling, or *mood*, that these words convey. Notice that while "weird" and "strange" both have but one syllable, the latter has a remarkably distinguished feel. Similar to "hard", "weird" conveys a more basic, a more *crude*, sentiment. Something "weird" is crass or gross, and is typically undesirable. No one wants to be associated with something "weird". If trying to impress someone, one probably doesn't want to be categorized among the "weird". On the other hand, if something is labeled as "strange", it is not necessarily bad. Rather, something "strange" is simply abnormal, or unusual—a deviation from what is expected. This distinction between "weird" and "strange" is so pronounced that the latter can be used as a euphemism for the former in certain situations. For example, notice how a

simple substitution is able to make the following sentence less offensive: "Your mother's cookies taste weird" compared to "Your mother's cookies taste strange". In the former sentence, the speaker sounds as though he or she is insulting your mother's cookies, stating that they taste bad. In the latter sentence, however, the speaker sounds as though the cookies simply taste different, or unusual, compared to what he or she is used to—the difference owing to the innocuous addition of too much flour, perhaps.

Finally, let's look at the synonyms, "happy" and "glad". As in the aforementioned cases, these words seem to have little or no discernible difference between them. Take for example the following sentences: 1) Tommy is happy because he got a new bike. 2) Tommy is glad because he got a new bike.

Most understand these sentences to have the same meaning. And again, upon consulting a dictionary, one will find highly similar, if not the same, definitions. But these definitions lack the feeling, the unique emotional charge that these words convey. The word "happy" conveys a sense of **levity**, or a carefree attitude. The thought of someone who is "happy" conjures the image of a bright-eyed, ruddy, smiling face. One is "happy" on the morning of his birthday, discovering a new puppy bounding into his bedroom. On the other hand, the word "glad" conveys a sense of relief or contentment. The thought of someone who is "glad" conjures the image of a man standing crossed-armed, nodding gently, a stoic grin crossing his face. One is "glad" when he sees that the child's lost puppy has been found, and was merely frolicking too far from home.

Granted, the notion that close synonyms can be used interchangeably is prevalent among English speakers. And alas, the dictionary—the text purported to be responsible for clarifying such issues—is of little assistance. In the end, it is left to us, the speakers of the language, those actively responsible for maintaining its sustenance and generation, to understand how these words make us feel and what mood we are inclined to attach to them. Using the examples and insights described above, one may come to recognize these subtle, yet **crucial**, differences.

II. Based on the above text, say *True* if the statement is correct or *False* if the statement is incorrect. (each 1 pt)

- 6. According to the passage the words **hard** and **difficult** can be used interchangeably.
- 7. Dictionary provides lonely the meaning of words.
- 8. It is common for close synonyms to be understood to share the same meaning.
- 9. Dictionary cannot communicate how it feels to use a word even if it defines words.

III. Choose the best answer for the following questions based on the passage (each 2 pts).

10) According to the passage, which one of the following is true?

- A. synonyms have exactly the same meaning.
- B. to know the meaning of unfamiliar words, dictionary definition is the only way.
- C. close synonyms can be used interchangeably.
- D. B and C

11) As used in paragraph 1, what is most likely meant by "**scrupulous pedanticness**"?

- A. mild curiosity
- B. wry skepticism of
- C. passionate indignation
- D. excessive concern

12) It can be inferred that the author believes there to exist a relationship between the vulgarity of a word and the

- A. number of syllables it has
- B. way it sounds
- C. way it is commonly used
- D. all

13) Which of the following sentences from the passage represents a fact, rather than an opinion?

- A. One may employ one or the other with complete indifference, postulating no discrepancy between them.
- B. Although a dictionary can provide information about word meanings, pronunciations, etymologies, inflected forms, derived forms, et cetera, it cannot communicate how it feels to use a word.
- C. No one wants to be associated with something "weird".
- D. The thought of someone who is "happy" conjures the image of a bright-eyed, ruddy, smiling face.

14) Which of the following statements best describes the main idea of this passage?

- A. Close synonyms are difficult to comprehend, and are commonly used interchangeably.
- B. Contrary to popular belief, close synonyms do not share the same meaning.
- C. The difference between the words "hard" and "difficult" is indiscernible to most.
- D. Absent a dictionary definition, the difference between close synonyms is difficult.

IV. Choose the appropriate meaning of the words written in bold based on the text (each 1 pt).

15. One may employ one or the other with complete indifference, postulating **no discrepancy** between them. **No discrepancy** means

- A. Consistent
- B. inconsistent
- C. disagreement

16. Superfluous in paragraph 2 means:

- A. needed B. more than wanted C. required D. essential

17. Contrary to popular belief, these sentences are **not tautologous** (par. 4). The meaning of the bold phrase is

- A. related B. dissimilar C. alike D. analogous

V. Using context clues in the reading text, write the meanings of the following words (each 1 pt)

18. Utilitarian (paragraph 3) _____

19. Levity (paragraph 6) _____

20. Crucial (paragraph 7) _____

VI. Find words in the above passage that are close in meaning to the following expressions (each 1 pt).

21. A word that means the same as another word (paragraph 1)

22. expressive (paragraph 3) _____

23. pleasant-sounding (paragraph 3) _____

24. basic (paragraph 4) _____

25. substituted for harsh words (paragraph 5) _____

VII. Read the following text. Then underline the appropriate answer from the given active or passive forms of verbs written in italics (each 1 pt).

Water (26) *covers/is covered* 70% of the surface of the earth, but 98% of this is undrinkable salt water. However, for centuries man has experienced with different methods of converting salt water into fresh water in a process called desalination, whereby salt and contaminants (27) *removed/are removed* from the water.

One place which has used desalination for many years is United Arab Emirates. It (28) *is installed/installed* the first desalination plants in 1972, and nowadays most of the drinking water in the country (29) *is supplied/supplied* by this process. New filtration systems (30) *have developed/ have been developed* to replace the traditional methods, which used a heating process. Another example is Saudi Arabia, whose desalination plants (31) *are produced/produce* almost about 25% of the world's desalinated water. One of the largest plants in the world (32) *has been constructed/ has constructed* there, producing 300 billion liters annually.

China, with its rapid industrial growth, has also experienced an increased demand for water as well as energy. To overcome the shortage of both, China (33) *built/was built* a combined power and desalination plant in

Zhejiang province in 1970s. Since then, salt water (34) *has taken/has been taken* from the East China Sea and converted into fresh water. Some of this water is then sold to industry; some (35) *is used/used* in the production of energy and the remainder is sold as drinking water.

VIII. Complete the following short text with *who, whom, which* or *whose* (1 pt each).

Mekdes is feeling homesick today because she is thinking about her wonderful family. Mekdes comes from a small town (35) _____ is near Bahir Dar. She especially misses her parents. They own a small store (36) _____ sells food and cookware. Mekdes always liked working in a place (37) _____ is near her family's home. After school and on weekends, Mekdes enjoyed talking to friends and relatives (38) _____ came into the store to buy food, tell stories, and bring news about the people (39) _____ she knew in Bahir Dar. Mekdes's older brother, Getnet, also worked at the store. Getnet was a person (40) _____ worked fourteen hours a day and almost never took a day off. On the weekends, Getnet and Mekdes's good friend, Fikirte, helped at the store too. She was a woman (41) _____ friendly personality made everyone feel comfortable. Fikirte enjoyed working at the store because it was such a happy place to work. Mekdes and Fikirte used to laugh together at the funny stories about the people (42) _____ friends and relatives came into the store.

Now, Mekedes is living in Debre Markos, (43) _____ is the capital city of East Gojjam Administrative Zone. When Mekdes arrived in Debre Markos, she met a single woman with whom she is now living. On Sundays, Mekdes and her roommate like to go sightseeing and then have dinner at a local restaurant (44) _____ serves 'shiro wot' and pasta. Mekdes likes her new home and her new roommate but she misses her family living at the town of Woreta.

Appendix N: Sample of First Communicative English Skills Test

Department of English Language and Literature

Communicative English Skills First Test (10%), for Regular Students in 2007

Time Allocated: 25 Minutes

Name: _____ ID. No _____ Section: _____

I. Fill the blank spaces with the appropriate expressions. (½ point each blank space)

Ellen: This is Ellen, 1) ----- you.

John: My name is John, 2) ----- too. How are things?

Ellen: Fine. 3) ----- here; the climate is nice, and the people are friendly.

John: Yes, life is great here, 4) ----- is a bit cold for me.

Ellen: I enjoyed talking with you, but 5) ----- because I have an appointment with somebody now. 6) -----.

John: See you.

Wick: Welcome to our party! Julia.

Julia: 7) -----

Wick: Thank you very much for sending the decoration for the party.

Julia: 8) -----

II. Write the appropriate form of the verb in each bracket (in the blank spaces below). (1 point each)

1-----2-----3-----4-----

5-----6-----.

In market leading economy, prices of things 1) (change) every time. But the nature of the change is different in developed and developing countries. In developed

countries, the price of an item 2) (fluctuate) depending on objective reality. On the contrary, in developing countries if the price of an item gets high for some reason, it will be there for long unreasonably. We can consider what 3) (happen) to the prices of cooking oil and sugar five years ago in our country, Ethiopia. At that time, merchants undeniably cost the burden of the real confusion the market system brought, but now some merchants do things wrongly not because they don't have the knowledge but because they are inconsiderate. Realizing the problem, our government 4) (take) alternative and remedial measures since the time the prices 5) (get) irregular, Generally, prices of items 6) (be) unpredictable since five years ago.