

## THE USE OF CLASSROOM DATA FOR SELF APPRAISAL IN THE EFL PRACTICUM: A STRATEGY OF OBSERVATION, INQUIRY, REFLECTION AND ACTION

Hailom Banteyerga\*

**1. ABSTRACT:** *This paper is based on the practices implemented in the training of EFL teachers by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. Self appraisal is found to be a central factor in the professional development of teachers. In the absence of self appraisal mechanisms, it is observed that external appraisal would not be of significant help to trainees. Self appraisal mechanisms are trainable. They create the necessary conditions for learning and self development. They also promote self confidence and open mindedness. Moreover, they prepare trainees to accommodate external appraisal as a resource for professional growth. The major role of the trainer is to stimulate the trainee teacher to realise and develop his/her self appraisal mechanisms. This paper briefly describes the attempts made in the 1993-4 practicum to help student-teachers understand themselves and their practices as teachers of English. Observation, Inquiry, Reflection, and Action were the main components of the training programme. The results of the training strategy show that trainees learn different instructional and management skills reasonably well. They also generated teaching skills that are thought to be effective for learning English in the classroom. The trainers and the institutions involved in the training of student teachers also benefited from this strategy of training. They were able to get authentic feedback about the effectiveness of their programmes in teaching English. However, the observations showed that trainees' facility in the use of English was inadequate. This affected their instructional and managerial flexibility. Thus, it is recommended that special attention should be given to language development activities.*

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## 2. Theoretical basis of the strategy

In any teacher training programme, it is generally agreed that there should be a fair balance between theory and practice. Pennington (in Richards, 1990:134) explains: "For successful language teaching, both education and practical training are needed in the 'tools' of the teaching profession: in methods, materials, curriculum, and evaluation." Ellis (1990) explains that any language teacher training programme should have a balance of awareness raising activities and practical experience. However, teacher training programmes in general focus on theoretical courses at the expense of practical skills. Out of all the teacher training components, the practicum is given least attention. Although actual teaching is the most relevant experience for teacher trainees, "typically, candidates do not have actual chances to teach until the end of their programme. In many cases, they have little or no practical experience of any kind...." (Pennington, 1990: 135). In Ethiopia the time allotted to the practicum is about four weeks. It is done basically for awarding grades, not for teacher development. Moreover, it is the most ill managed component in all the degree offering teacher training programmes.

The issue of practicum is of major concern to teacher educators. This could be discussed in terms of purpose(s) and management or supervision practices ( see Fanslow, 1987b; Freeman, 1990; Gebhard 1990). All educators who developed different models of supervision do not show major differences on the purpose of the practicum: to prepare student teachers to be successful and effective teachers. However, they significantly differ when it comes to the method of training and its underpinning assumptions.

### 2.1 The Direct Method

According to Gebhard, different modes of supervision have been tried in the training of teachers. The widely used mode of supervision has been the 'Direct Method'. In this mode of supervision, the teacher trainer directs the activities of the trainees and informs them what to do and what not to do. Candidates are evaluated on the basis of a profile prepared by teacher educators. Richards (1990) says that the validity of such a profile is not supported by evidence. The mode of supervision is judgmental and trainer centred. The trainer decides on the basis of

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what he/she thinks is 'good' teaching (see Fanselow 1987; and Wallace, 1990). It assumes that the trainer is a model teacher: an all knowing person who sets rules and regulations as to what teaching and teacher behaviour in the classroom should look like. Gebhard (1990: 156) thinks this model is problematic. He says:

*There are at least three problems with directive supervision. First, there is the problem of how the supervisor defines 'good' teaching. Second, this model may give rise to feelings of defensiveness and low self-esteem on the part of the teacher. Third, there is the problem of assigning ultimate responsibility for what goes on in the classroom... keeps the responsibility for decision making with the teacher educator instead of shifting it to the teacher.*

This model of supervision inherently is suppressive for it deprives the trainee his/her right to try and learn. The trainee is not encouraged to explore the components of the profession through practice, and reflection on practice. Based on behaviourist mode of thinking, the trainee is rather conditioned to behave according to prescribed modes of behaviour. Reflecting on his experience as a trainee, Gebhard, himself, ( p.158) says, " Although I wanted to fully engage myself in my own ideas of what the students could benefit from, I could not because of the overriding threat that the supervisor would disapprove." Gibb (1964:25 quoted by Freeman ,1990: 106) thinks that supervision could hinder the process of learning to teach if it is based on:

1. *Distrust (fear, punitiveness, defensiveness)*
2. *Teaching ( training, giving advice, indoctrinating)*
3. *Evaluating ( fixing, correcting, providing a remedy)*
4. *Strategy (planning for manoeuvring, manipulation)*
5. *Modelling ( demonstrating, giving information, guiding)*
6. *Coaching ( molding, steering, controlling)*
7. *Patterning (standard, static, fixed).*

Gibb (*ibid.*) on the other hand thinks that supervision could facilitate the process of learning to teach if it is based on:

1. *Reciprocal trust ( confidence, warmth, acceptance)*
2. *Cooperative learning ( Inquiry, exploration, quest)*

3. *Mutual growth (becoming, actualizing, fulfilling)*
4. *Reciprocal openness (spontaneity, candour, honesty)*
5. *Shared problem solving (defining problems, producing alternative solutions, testing)*
6. *Autonomy (freedom, interdependence, equality)*
7. *Experimentation (play, innovation, provisional try).*

Freeman (1990), nevertheless, thinks that there are teachers who would like to be directed and may benefit from direct supervision. However others ( Fanslow, 1987b; Gebhard, 1990; Stevik 1990) think that student teachers should be allowed to use their creativity and should be treated as responsible human beings. According to Richards (1990), teaching is not a technology and teachers should not be trained as technicians. They argue that teaching is a dynamic process, and teachers should be trained to cope with the fast changing nature of teaching if they are to be effective in their profession. Fanslow (1987) further argues that supervision should be based on carefully collected data where the observer and the observed use observation for his/her better understanding of own teaching. The observer instead of judging the teaching style of the observed teacher, he/she can learn more about his/her style of teaching by observing and focusing on specific teaching behaviours. Fanslow's idea on the use of systematic observation in teaching practice for reflection on action is a step forward. However, he does not clearly define the role of the supervisor in the practicum.

The trainer-centred or direct method of supervision may address those teaching behaviours that are routine in nature. However, it does not prepare trainees to develop higher values and skills of teaching. Teachers should not be trained to depend totally on external evaluation. This is because it promotes dependency and is not readily available when needed. Teachers should be rather trained to develop skills of appraising themselves. For this purpose the practicum is the most appropriate component of any teacher training programme.

In Ethiopia, as has been noted earlier, the practicum is the weakest component in all the degree offering teacher training programmes. In fact, attention has not been given to it even from the research point of view. It is unfortunate to say that there is no literature available. However, complaints come from every corner about the poor quality of teachers and the falling standard of education in Ethiopia. The complaint about the low level of English is a serious one.

In order to tackle the problem of poor quality of instruction in English language, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature has opened a teacher training programme in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language. Although attempts have been made to improve the course offering by giving due attention to the inclusion of methodology courses, the practicum was not well thought of. It was basically done to grade students, and the check list prepared by the Department was judgmental in essence. According to Hailom (1993), if the quality of training of English language teacher training is to improve, trainees should pass through a well organised practicum. He stressed that an extended practicum is necessary to bridge the gap between institutional expectations and school realities.

This study is, therefore, an exploration into how the practicum could be managed and how trainees could be helped to learn how to teach, explore their profession and sustain learning and professional development. A mode of supervision, henceforth, described as 'The Trainee-Centred Self Appraisal Exploratory Strategy' was developed and experimented in the 1993-4 practicum for the training of teachers of English. The nature of the supervision, the observations made and the results obtained are reported in the subsequent sections.

## 2.2 The Trainee-Centred Self Appraisal Exploratory Strategy

The ideas underpinning this mode of supervision have appeared as conceptual frameworks in the last three decades. The attempts made to put them as practical activities is extremely limited ( see works in Richard's and Nunan (eds), 1990). Therefore, as a practical mode of supervision, it is innovative and experimental.

This mode of supervision is based on the following assumptions:

(1) *Teaching is primarily the interpretation of knowledge.* Traditionally, teaching was viewed as the transmission of knowledge. The role of the teacher is to transmit those elements of knowledge itemized in the syllabus to the learner. However, advances made in cognitive psychology (see Hatchinson and Waters, 1987) clearly show that learning takes place not only through imitation but also through hypothesis testing. In fact higher levels of skills such as seeing relationships, making inferences and implications are learnt through the latter. According to Jean Piaget ( quoted in Chauhan, 1992: 88-9) learning takes place as

a process of assimilation and accommodation. When the existing learner's cognitive structures readily grasp new experiences, the process is called assimilation. When the existing cognitive structures are not able to readily grasp new experiences, the learner accommodates the new experiences. Chauhan (*ibid.*, p.89) elaborates Piaget's process change as follows: "The structures ...change from one stage to another by the process of equilibration. Through the process of assimilation and accommodation the organism attempts to adapt to his environment to maintain balance between him and his changing environment."

(2) *There are routines in the teaching profession that every member needs to understand and use them appropriately* (see Widdowson, 1990). Teachers learn to develop when they are able to understand and readily assimilate accepted practices and use appropriate strategies to accommodate and tackle new problems in the profession. Widdowson (1983) thinks that learning is not only a process of adjusting to existing modes of thinking, but also a process of sensing data made readily available from experience. Such data is context bound, and any context is subject to change.

(3) *Self initiated change leads to effective learning and sustainable development.* A learner changes when he/she is willing to change (see Rogers, 1983; Brown 1987). It is important that the learner is engaged in some kind of problem solving, experimenting and explorative activities. It has been observed that learners perform better and enjoy learning when they are involved in searching and self understanding activities. Hailom (1993) described this stage as *the exploratory stage*.

(4) *Self appraisal mechanisms can be instilled when the training methodology is able to bring trainees, trainers and the training and working institutions together in a climate of direct and unhindered interaction.* The trainee functions in a context of self assessment and appraisal and so also the trainer, the training institution and the recipient educational centre-- the school.

(5) *In any kind of appraisal for learning and professional growth, reliable information is needed.* The most reliable and convincing information for an individual is the information that reflects what that individual did or has done. (see Allwright and Bailey, 1991). Therefore, the major task of the trainer is to describe as exactly as possible what the trainee did in the class.

(6) *Conferencing between the trainer and the trainee is essential after each teaching practice.* It helps to (a) make a change of attitude on practice (b) explore new tactics to be followed in subsequent teaching practices (c) understand what has been done and decide on what should be done. It helps the trainee and trainer to tackle three major problems: the problem of not knowing what they want to achieve; the problem of not knowing how to achieve what they want to achieve in the light of prevailing contextual constraints; and the problem of not knowing how to explore alternative ways of dealing with new experiences, and revising objectives.

(7) *Open reflection on a behaviour observed and described leads to a relationship of trust and mutual confidence between the trainee and trainer as well as the institutions involved.* The experience of working together on the basis of empirical data helps the trainee and the trainer to learn from each other--they learn to speak and to listen to each other with an open mind. (see Hailom, 1993). In this process, a relationship of partnership is created where each one of them tackles a common problem in order to achieve a common goal. Teachers trained on the basis of this strategy are expected to develop higher values of professional excellence. Fentstermacher (1988) quotes Shon (1987) saying:

*As the professional moves towards new competencies, he gives up some familiar sources of satisfaction and opens himself to new ones. He gives up the rewards of unquestioned authority, the freedom to practice without challenge to his competence, the comfort of relative invulnerability, the gratification of difference. The new satisfactions open to him are largely those of discovery about the meanings of his advice to clients, about his knowledge and practice, and about himself.*

It is thought that a practicum that reflects these assumptions would yield desirable results. It would facilitate ways of instilling self appraisal mechanisms by giving emphasis to the development of learning skills and abilities through self understanding. Trainees are expected to develop critical understanding of their teaching activities. They would develop affective and cognitive skills. (see Stevick, 1980, 1990).



### 3. Implementation of the Self-Appraisal Exploratory Strategy

The need to give due attention to the practicum has been stressed in a doctoral research experiments made in the academic year 1991-2 (see Hailom, 1993). It was observed that trainees learned more from practice and reflection on practice than from the so called theory biased methodology courses. The findings and observations made in the research led to the use of this strategy for the training of English language teachers in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. The strategy of using classroom data, obtained from lessons observed, for the training of teachers has been practised since the academic year 1993-94. Three schools have been cooperating since then: Yekatit Comprehensive Secondary School; Entoto Comprehensive Secondary School and Menelik comprehensive Secondary School.

MA students have been used as trainers. In this paper, only seven teaching behaviours of trainees that have been observed and studied are considered for the evaluation of the training strategy used in the practicum 1993-4. These are:

- (a) teacher movement
- (b) language of administration
- (c) language of explanation
- (d) lesson timing
- (e) managing individual, class and group work
- (f) use of communicative teaching
- (g) error treatment.

The instruments used for collecting data were borrowed from the Institute of Education, University of London and have been used with some modifications. They were developed for the training of English language teachers to speakers of other languages. (see appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and Appendix H is a common page attached to all the instruments). The personnel involved in the training were oriented in the use of the instruments. They were also given training in classroom observation and the use of descriptive data for training pre service teachers. Moreover, they were observed and randomly checked by the course instructor through out the practicum.

The observations and practices so far have covered a period of three years as an integral part of the course *Teaching Practice and Teaching Assessment (TEFL 603)*. However, this paper is limited to the *reports and observations* made in the academic year 1993-4. In that year, the Department of Foreign Languages managed the ELT practicum. It made use of the opportunity to link the practicum with the other teacher training courses: Skills Methodology I and II. However, since the Academic Year 1994/5, the Faculty of Education has been handling the practicum in cooperation with the teacher training section of the Department of Foreign Languages. The design of the training methodology is still the same--the methodology being discussed in this paper.

### 3.1 The Training Procedures

The first requirement in this methodology is to create a relationship of trust and confidence between the trainers and trainees. ( see Gower and Walters, 1985). The purpose of the practicum and the roles expected from the trainers as well as the trainees are openly discussed in a joint session involving trainers (MA students who participate in the practicum as trainers, and the course instructors), trainees and cooperating school teachers. Significant events observed in the practicum are openly discussed. Such joint conferences are believed to help trainees feel a sense of collegiality and community hood. It also enables them to see their future professional duties with interest and zeal. For the institutions involved and the trainers managing the course, it is a major source of feedback for self and institutional appraisal as to what should be done to improve the *Skills Methodology* courses and the *Practicum*.

The second requirement is that trainers have to discuss the behaviour they would like to focus on with the trainee who would be observed in his/her teaching activities. This should be done before the lesson resumes. The trainee teaches the lesson he/she prepared. But, the trainer focuses on the behaviour he/she planned to observe and describe. The trainer is also required to discuss with the trainee the instrument that he/she plans to use for describing the behaviour identified.

The third requirement is that the trainer should record the events happening in the class that are pertinent to the behaviour in focus. ( see Allwright and Bailey,

1991). The trainer records what he/she observed happening. The trainer should not record in the data sheet what he/she thinks or feels ought to have been done.

The fourth requirement is that the trainer shows all what he/she has recorded to the observed trainee. Upon the invitation of the trainee, the trainer clarifies data that the trainee finds difficult to understand. Then the trainer invites the trainee to reflect on the lesson executed. Upon the invitation of the trainee, the trainer, too, can reflect on the behaviour observed. At this stage, the trainer has to be careful. He/she first should be supportive and less critical--attention should be given first to the section of the lesson that the trainee did with relative ease. (see Stevick, 1990). Then, the trainer should modestly and suggestively move to the trouble spots of the lesson. Both trainee and trainer are required to underline what they learned from the process and what they think should be done in future. (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, G the instruments used). The trainee is expected to note the teaching activities that he/she thinks need immediate correction and those that need to be developed. The trainer, too, is required to note down the points that the training programme needs to pay attention. This should be done immediately, following the discussion with the observed trainee. It should not be delayed for another day. What the trainee and trainer think after such a discussion is extremely important information. It helps to get a genuine and authentic picture about the training process. The data is used for developing appropriate training tactics and practices. (see McNiff, 1988). For getting reliable and valid reports, the same behaviour should be observed at least three times with the same trainee.

#### **4. Observations and Findings**

The observations made by the course instructor and the MA students indicated that the Self-Appraisal Exploratory Strategy is effective in the training of teachers. The methodology of integrating observation, inquiry, reflection and action in the practicum has brought about major impacts on trainees, trainers as well as the training programme itself.

##### **4.1. Trainees' behavioural changes observed**

The observations made and reported by the trainers show that trainees made

significant changes in giving instructions and managing classes.

#### 4.1.1 The Instructional Skills

Throughout the practicum trainees were observed on their use of classroom language and lesson tasks: use of language of administration, explanation, communicative activities and language learning tasks.

The data on language of administration refer to the language that instructors use to give orders such as telling students to form groups, hand in class works or assignments, clean black board, close or open doors or windows; do tasks in the course book or supplementary tasks prepared by the teacher such as asking students to do fill in the blank space, completion exercises, sentence composition, paragraph writing, doing reading tasks, role play to perform a prepared dialogue or contextualized conversation like simulating language use in a shop, bus station, etc.-- all the language teachers use to deal with classroom procedures. ( see Harmer, 1991).

The data on language of explanation refer to the language that teachers use to explain a language item or concept or skill such as the use of present perfect, types of conditional sentences, topic sentences and details in a paragraph, strategies of reading and listening etc.-- the language teachers use to impart lesson content. Both quantitative and qualitative descriptions were made to evaluate the classroom language of trainees.

In order to quantify teacher language, an utterance has been used as a unit of measurement. An utterance is a unit of speech act that conveys a thought and is equivalent to an independent clause in writing. It is not, however, a grammatical unit as a sentence is in writing, for example 'may be' is an utterance, but it is not a sentence. In order to determine the quality of an utterance, three descriptive units are used: (i) a vague and complex utterance--the idea in the utterance is expressed; the language is too complex to understand what the teacher is trying to say; (ii) an utterance that does not make sense. The following three utterances, for example are vague and complex: " (1)'The impossible condition is used when failed. ' (2) 'The year has the year as Azeb. ' (3) 'The years of the both are the same.' " (ii) an utterance with grammatical error(s)-- the idea in the utterance is comprehensible, but there is/are errors in the utterance that a teacher of English should not make.

For example, the following utterance is included in this category: "There is four students in the picture." (iii) Correct and clear utterance--the utterance is grammatically correct and the idea is clear. The following utterance, for example, is described as correct and clear: "You are going to play another game." Correctness is seen in terms of structural and lexical use.

The lesson descriptions and reports made at various levels of the practicum show that the trainees improved significantly in their use of pedagogic English. In the use of language of administration, 33 observations by focusing on single behaviours on eleven trainees, 3 each, were made. In the first round, 11 lessons were observed. 419 utterances on the use of language of administration were recorded. Out of these, 133 utterances were vague and too complex to understand; 187 had grammatical errors and 99 were clear and grammatically correct. In the second round of observation, 350 utterances were recorded: 72 were vague and complex; 97 had grammatical errors, and 181 were clear and correct. In the third round, 380 utterances were recorded: 98 were vague and complex; 128 had grammatical errors and 154 were clear and correct. In the use of language of explanation similar observations were made. In the first round of observations 512 utterances were recorded-- 167 were vague and complex; 185 had grammatical errors and 160 were clear and correct. In the second round of observations, 474 utterances were recorded -- 115 were vague and complex; 128 had grammatical errors and 231 were clear and correct. In the third round, 338 utterances were recorded -- 77 were vague and complex; 79 had grammatical errors and 182 were clear and correct.

In the use of classroom language, both language of administration and explanation, the trainees tendency to use correct and clear language increased. But still significant number of vague and complex utterances as well as utterances with some sort of grammatical errors prevailed. The other tendency observed was the reduction of teacher language was significant from one round of observation next. Trainees learned to avoid vagueness by reducing teacher language. But still that the trainees and trainers were able to come with better ideas subsequent practices.

The trainees reflected that they were able to see what their teaching looked like. The data they received from the trainers were convincing as they think about their teaching behaviours and what they need to do in

They raised their awareness of the (a) effect of complex language on learning; (b) errors they made and how they obscured learning; (c) effect of too much talk on making -instruction poor. The conferencing with their trainers seems to have helped them to take better actions to overcome the problems observed. The following text taken from the reports made by one of the trainers fairly represents the views of those involved in the training programme:

*The trainee said that the transcript on his language of instruction was informing, convincing, and it enabled him to see the reaction of students to the different components of the lesson. The trainee finally decided to find ways of encouraging students to participate in class so that most of the class talk could be done by students... in the second lesson the trainee was observed trying to shift from the typical teacher dominated class to what is called student centred language instruction. He was observed organizing students in pairs and groups, giving tasks that deal with games, and information exchange. The change in instruction positively influenced the lesson and the students were observed interacting and trying to use English to express their ideas. Some of them used Amharic, of course. In the third lesson, the trainee was observed focusing on the management of the class. He moved and monitored the activities of students. He gave help and feed back to different groups of students. At the end of the lesson the trainee reflected that the use of simple English to give instruction, and the use of varieties of tasks helped him to manage the class, despite its large size.*

Another trainee was observed in the use of language of administration. The following text, taken from the report of the trainer, describes the process:

*The trainee used complex vocabulary and sentences. The students were struggling to understand what he was talking about. The trainee, however, was not aware of the complexity of the language he was using. During reflection on practice, the data helped him to see the complexity of the language. It also stimulated him to think about the language he should use in class if instruction is to be effective.*

The reports of the trainers indicated that the observations and discussions helped the trainees to use a language that students can understand. The trainers, however, agreed that the trainees' use of language was a serious challenge in the practicum. 'Despite all the efforts some of the trainees made, they were observed struggling with the language.'

All the trainers also reported that the trainees showed encouraging changes in their instructional skills: 'willingness to discuss about their lessons,' 'more awareness in what they do,' 'easiness and simplicity,' 'looking more natural and relaxed,' as well as 'eagerness to learn' and 'shifting to more student focused language teaching.'

#### **4.1.2 The Management skills**

The management skills of a teacher are extremely essential for successful language teaching. The teacher must be able to set tasks, use appropriate organizational skills, pace activities, manage feedback and check learning. ( see Wright, 1987). The managerial skills of trainees are described in terms of teacher movement, use of communicative tasks, error treatment, group, pair and class work and timing. Teacher movement was observed by drawing lines as the teacher moved in class. Lines were drawn to show teacher movement in the front and between rows. The contacts made between the trainee and students were also indicated. In the first round of observations, 155 lines were drawn showing the movement of each trainee as the lesson progressed. Out of these, 89 lines showed trainees' movement in the front; 30 in the first row; 13 in the second row and 23 in the third row. 46 contacts were made with students. In the second round of observations, 226 lines were drawn; out of these 76 in the front; 52 in the first row; 51 in the second row and 47 in the third row. During these movement 140 contacts were made with students. In the third round 253 lines were drawn; 61 in the front; 63 in the first row ; 61 in the second row and 68 in the third row. 228 contacts were made with students. The data shows that trainees movement increased and the number of contacts they made with students also increased. This shows positive trend in classroom management.

In the use of communicative activities similar trends were observed. The activities were classified into two categories: those with communicative content and those

without communicative content. Activities with communicative content involved students in the giving and receiving of messages. Activities without communicative content involved students in the learning of language forms at the level of usage. In the first round of observations, 65 activities were observed. Out of these only 24 had communicative content and the rest 41 were without communicative content. In the second round, 60 activities were observed; out of these 45 were with communicative content and 15 without. In the third round of observations, 61 activities were observed; 53 were with communicative content and 8 were without.

The observations indicate two important features of language teaching. The first observation is gradual reduction of activities. This shows that as student participation increased, the number of activities to be done in class decreased. This is because students need more time when doing tasks with communicative content. The other observation is that trainees were able to make their teaching more communicative and participatory by designing tasks with communicative content.

Subsequent observations were made on trainees skills in the management of feedback in terms of soliciting individual, group and class response. The observations in the first round show that 101 responses were recorded for the solicits made by the trainees: 51 individual responses, 11 group responses and 39 whole class responses. In the second round of observations 178 responses were obtained: 93 individual responses, 37 group responses and 48 whole class responses. In the third round 207 responses were obtained: 97 individual responses, 59 group responses and 51 whole class responses. The data shows that the number of responses in all the three categories increased. This shows that the managerial skills of trainees showed considerable improvement. The trainees were able to give attention to individual students, group works and class works. The level of class participation also increased. The first skill that was observed in the practicum was teacher movement. However, one can clearly see that later observations made show considerable progress in classroom management.

The treatment of errors was considered in the practicum as an important behaviour in the training of English language teachers. In the first round of observations, 108 errors were observed. Out of these, only 51 were treated and the treatment strategy used was teacher correction: 46 out of 51 treated. There were 3 errors



self corrected and 2 peer corrected. In the second round, 133 errors were recorded; 85 treated -- 46 teacher corrected, 15 self corrected and 24 peer corrected. The other 48 errors were untreated. In the third round, 139 errors were observed; 99 treated--34 teacher corrected, 34 self and 31 peer. The increase of errors shows the level of student participation; and the relative increase in the number of errors self and peer corrected shows the trainees' ability to use different error correction techniques. Encouraging learners to correct their errors helps them to develop confidence and self esteem. (Norish, 1986; Stevick, 1990). Peer correction also creates more opportunities for students to develop skills of cooperating and learning from each other. (Long and Porter, 1985).

The other behaviour observed was time management. In order to calculate the efficiency in the management of time according to lesson plan, two categories were used: *time allocated* and *actual time used* for an activity in a lesson. The differences between *time allocated* and *actual time used* to implement the activity was computed and summed for the eleven observations in each round. For example if a trainee allocates 10 minutes to an activity and if he/she spends 30 minutes, the difference is 20; if on the other hand a trainee allocates 15 minutes to do an activity and finished it in 10 minutes, the difference is 5; if a trainee allocates say 10 minutes to an activity but fails to do the activity, the difference is 10. On the basis of the examples given above, time difference between allocated and actual time on an activity was computed. In the first round of observation, time differences between time allocated and actual time used to accomplish the activities set in the lesson plans in 11 teaching practices were summed to be 292 minutes. The number of activities planned for each lesson ranged from 3 to 6; the maximum time allocated for an activity was 15 minutes and the minimum 5. The maximum time spent on an activity was 30 minutes and the minimum 0 (the activity was not done). In the first round, the time management of trainees was generally poor. In the second round, the sum of the time differences was 120 minutes. The maximum time allocated to an activity was 15 minutes and the minimum 5; the maximum time used on an activity was 20 minutes and the minimum 2. The data shows the trainees showed a very significant change in time management. In the third round a major change was observed. The sum of the time differences between allocated and actual time was 71 minutes. The maximum time allocated for an activity was 15 minutes and the minimum 5; the maximum time used on an activity was 18 minutes and the minimum 3.

The reports and discussions made with trainees show that classroom management was a serious problem to many trainees at the initial stage of the practicum. The problems were observed in the management of communicative tasks, group works, timing of lesson activities, error treatment. In order to describe the process as reported by trainers and trainees, texts that are felt to be representative are quoted in the subsequent actions. One of the trainers reports (which is shared by almost all the other trainers):

*The trainee had to prepare a lesson that involves communicative activities. According to her lesson plan, the activities were to be done in groups. The roles of the teacher and the students were pre specified. However, the problem with her was how to implement the plan. Instead of letting students do the activities in groups, she was observed giving the answers, herself; and the class became teacher centered. It was the teacher not the students who made the language practice.*

It was also observed that lack of adequate lesson preparation and proper timing of tasks contributed to poor management of lessons. The distribution of tasks to individuals, pairs and groups, and the management of such activities were observed to be unsatisfactory. Trainees who were observed for timing class activities were reported showing wide discrepancy between planned and actual time spent on task ( see figures of the first round above). Teacher movement was observed lacking relation between lesson purpose and lesson task, and between class organization and feedback. ( Such observations were reported by Zerihun, Alemu, Geremew, Genene, Kifle, Mekasha and Girma). One of the trainers reports about the timing of tasks: 'The student teacher I observed planned four activities to be done in one lesson. But, he did only two. He spent thirty minutes on an activity that he had earlier planned to do in ten minutes.' Similar observations were reported by Geremew, Mekasha, Zerihun and Genene.

The reflection on practice, however, improved the trainees' skills in classroom management. In the lessons that were executed after successive reflections on their management skills, the trainees were able to execute their lessons according to their lesson plans. In other words, they were able to implement what they had planned to do. One of the trainers observes:

*This time the trainee worked according to the allocated time in the lesson plan. He looked to have realized that he should thoroughly plan his lesson and clearly know the tasks he should do. When compared to the previous lesson, the trainee reduced the number of activities to be covered in the subsequent lesson he delivered. Consequently, the lesson was realistic and fairly managed.*

The effectiveness in the use of time is an indicator of efficiency in the management of learning tasks. And this skill seems to be reasonably developed through practice and reflection on practice. One of the trainees who was observed consecutively for three sessions achieved a remarkable level of efficiency in timing lesson activities. She says:

*The discussions I had with the trainers enabled me to consider a number of factors. Understanding of students' linguistic level and the complexity of the learning tasks to be used enabled me to manage my lesson as I planned it to be. I think the class was well managed and the students looked happy.*

The trainees, moreover, learned to integrate the skills of instruction and management. One of the trainers reported that the trainees he observed showed considerable improvement in the use of classroom language. In the post lesson reflections, the trainees realized that the use of simple, clear language enabled them to manage the classes they taught. Students were able to understand the lesson activities they were expected to do. This promoted better rapport with the students, which in turn facilitated class management. They realized that teachers could contribute to poor classroom discipline when they fail to be understood by students. In the management of individual, class, group work; and the use of tasks for communicative language teaching, all the trainees observed showed significant changes.

In the treatment of errors, the observations made show that trainees used teacher correction very much at the initial stage of the practicum. As they progressed in their teaching practices, they were observed shifting to the use of self correction and peer correction techniques. In the teaching of foreign languages like English, the treatment of errors is of particular importance in teacher training, for it involves both the cognitive and affective features of learning. (see Norish, 1983)

for details on the pedagogic significance of error treatment techniques).

In the joint conferences held throughout the practicum, the trainees reported that the practicum enabled them to understand themselves and the tasks awaiting them as regular teachers. They said that they benefited immensely from the observations and discussions they had had with their trainers. The cooperation between training institutions and schools enabled them to explore school realities. This gave them the opportunity to practice communicative language teaching in real classroom situation in the presence of school teachers.

#### 4.2 Effect of the Training Methodology on Trainers.

The MA students who were trained to do the training of teachers at the undergraduate level reported that they learned to understand teaching from different perspectives.

The trainers said that they were able to question their teaching strategies. The teaching activities of the trainees they observed enabled them to see which teacher behaviour facilitated or hindered the learning of English. This supports Fanselow's notion of observation as a mirror of one's teaching style. (Fanselow, 1990). The following text quoted from one of the trainers' reports summarizes the process:

*The benefit gained is immense. First I was able to observe different behaviours which enabled me to understand teaching from different angles. Second, I was able to use the instruments of observation with relative ease. Third the observations enabled me to think in depth about my teaching style. All in all the observation and discussion with the trainees and the course instructor enabled me to think about my style of teaching.*

*(Genene Mekonen)*

The trainers also learnt more on the role of the teacher and how she/he can influence a lesson. In connection to teacher movement one of the trainers reflects the following:

*The observation has taught me how the teaching learning process could be affected due to the kind of movement a teacher makes in class.... Since the trainee's movement was limited to the front position of the class during the whole period, many student who were sitting at the back were inattentive. Some were disturbing, making the learning of other students difficult. In all the activities observed, the trainee occupied the same position making classroom management ineffective. I realized that different activities require language teachers to be in different position if class management is to be effective. I also learnt that communicative materials may not work if a teacher does not have skills of classroom management.*

*(Geremew Semu)*

The treatment of errors in the language class was of particular interest to all the trainers. They realized that as teachers they should treat errors effectively. Teachers should see error treatment as a process. Instead of focusing on the quality of language that students produce, they should give due attention to the way students learn language. The practicum helped them to understand the pedagogic value of using different techniques of error treatment in the EFL class. (Kifle, Alemu, Zerihun, Genene).

#### **4.3 The Effect of the Training Methodology on the Programme**

The various reports, discussions made in the conferences of trainers, trainees, and cooperating teachers became important sources of feedback to the programme to introduce considerable changes in the Methodology Courses--Skills Development Methodology I and II (Flen 305 and 306).

Following the practicum of the academic year of 1993-4, a significant shift was made in the strategy of training and type of tasks to be used in the training methodology courses. A chapter on beliefs and strategies of learning language was incorporated. This chapter is believed to help teachers understand students' learning behaviours in relation to the background knowledge that they bring to the classroom (see Atkins, Hailom and Nuru--Skills Development Methodology I& II).

An attempt has also been made to balance awareness raising activities with practical teaching skills. The micro and peer teaching practices have been given due emphasis. (see Atkins, Hailom and Nuru, *Ibid.*)

The programme also thought of re-designing the Subject Area Methodology course (Educ 411) as a full semester practicum. The intention was to make it a school based course so that trainees would have satisfactory amount of practice in real classroom teaching and other school related experiences, such as leadership, before their official certification as professional EFL teachers. However, this could not be implemented since the course is under the jurisdiction of the Faculty of Education. What is being done now is trying to make the Skills Methodology Development courses as practical as possible and to work as closely as possible with the Faculty of Education in the management of the practicum.

#### **4.4 General Remarks**

Although the data of the last three years obtained from the practicum needs detailed analysis, trainees' classroom management skills and use of supplementary class activities have steadily shown qualitative growth. What seems to be a bottle neck is trainees' command of English. This is because proficiency in a foreign language can not be achieved within a short period of time. To overcome this problem an attempt is being done to sensitize trainees to the effect of language deficiency on instruction and what they need to do to develop their linguistic abilities. They are given training in self help language development practices in the methodology courses. One of the aims of the portfolio used in the methodology courses is to give trainees intensive practice in language use. To verify this, a follow up study on the performance of graduates is needed.

It is also believed that our trainees need an intensive training in pedagogic English. (see Hicks and Woods, 1984). A practical step which is now being taken is to describe the English that teachers need in the classroom. This is hoped to lead to the development of a training course in Classroom Language. Some of the MA and Ph.D research works are geared toward classroom discourse, for this purpose.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to describe briefly what is being done to improve the training programme of teachers of English in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature in the Institute of Language Studies. The training methodology discussed is in its embryonic stage. Nevertheless, it is envisaged that it would continue to develop by lending itself to change and by withstanding all contextual constraints. Because it helps the trainee teacher to understand himself/herself as a teacher, as stimulated by empirical data drawn from self performance, it is believed that it can motivate the teacher to engage in sustainable professional development activities. Because 'self' appraisal accommodates 'external' appraisal as a resource for professional development, it also prepares the trainee to develop social skills. In this respect, it is holistic in essence and integrative in methodology.

The use of empirical data for training teachers to understand what they actually have done in the classroom and what they need to do if their lessons are to be effective is found to be a valid practice in teacher training. The integration of data obtained from direct observation with inquiry, understanding, reflection helps to take reasoned action. ( see Fish, 1989). The process makes authentic classroom data readily available for reflection on practice. It breaks defensive barriers, for the observed trainee and the trainer reflects on a lesson by using fresh data and descriptive scenarios of the lesson, itself. The scenarios engage trainees and trainers in thinking about possible alternative strategies they need to try in future.

All in all, the strategy makes the practicum a mirror for better visualization of the training process for all: the trainees, the trainers, the course coordinator, the training and co-operating institutions.

Teacher education should explore ways of enhancing self discovery. Many training programmes, irrespective of the social systems they are in, tend to suppress the 'self', however. This is a great danger in teacher education. Teachers who are not helped to grow as human beings in their training practices can not be expected to help their students grow as fellow human beings. (see Rogers 1983, and Stevick, 1990). Education is a process of capacity building. This can not be

achieved by suppressing the 'self', knowingly or unknowingly. In the practicum, priority should be given to 'self' understanding and appraisal. External appraisal should be used as a facilitator and resource for 'self' appraisal.

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**APPENDIX A: TEACHER MOVEMENT**

1. Before the lesson ask the FLEN trainee for a copy of the lesson plan. Identify the different activities in the lesson, for example, listening. Allocate different colours to each of these activities.
2. As soon as you are in the classroom, or preferably, before the observation lesson, make a quick plan of the classroom and its furniture. Mark in the position of the students, numbering them from 1 upwards.
3. Draw a continuous line to represent the movement of the teacher during each segment of the lesson, changing colours of your markers as you go. Alternatively, you can make a separate plan for each activities

**APPENDIX B: TIMING**

1. Best before the lesson ask the FLEN trainee for a copy of the lesson plan.
2. check the timing allocated to each activity.
3. Make a copy of the lesson plan.
4. Time each activity.
5. complete the following form.

**OUTLINE LESSON PLAN**

Copy the main points of the lesson plan into this grid.

Activity	Teacher	Student	Aid
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

Timing: Note planned and actual time spent on these activities

Activity	Time allocated	Time actual
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

**APPENDIX C: LANGUAGE OF ADMINISTRATION - DESCRIPTION**

Listen carefully to the FLEN Trainee's language of classroom administration ('telling them what to do and how to do it'). This may well also incorporate some examples of Genuine communication (could you go to the staff-room and get me some chalk, please?). You may wish to use a tape recorder for this; if not, be prepared to write very fast at certain stages of the lesson! When discussing this data with the FLEN teacher, note such things as the length of utterances, their complexity, choice of difficult or easy vocabulary items, etc. You will need a lot of paper for this exercise.

**APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE OF EXPLANATION - DESCRIPTION**

Listen carefully to the FLEN Trainee Language of Classroom Explanation (Explaining items concerned with the teaching points of the lesson - do not confuse this with the previous Exercise which dealt with administrative issues). As in exercise C you may wish to use a cassette recorder here. As in C note the complexity of the language being used and compare it with the point being taught. (eg Is the explanation actually more 'difficult' than the point being taught?)

**APPENDIX E: CLASS, GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE**

1. Ask the FLEN trainee for a copy of the lesson plan.
2. Complete the lesson plan form below.
3. Make a plan of the classroom, marking in the position of each student with a circle.
4. Choose different coloured makers for each segment of the lesson.
5. During the lesson mark each individual student response with a tick inside the circle and a cross for each individual student question.
6. Mark any class response with a C in the box provided, a group response in the appropriate box with a G.
7. Change coloured markers at the end of each activity.
8. Complete the chart below after the end of the lesson.

Classroom Plan

Class Responses

Lesson Plan

	Activities	Individual Response	Individual Question	class Response	Group Response
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

**APPENDIX F: COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING**

1. Before the lesson ask the FLEN trainee for a copy of the lesson plan.
2. Identify any communicative teaching/learning element in the lesson plan. Focus your attention on these elements in the lesson.
3. Complete the chart below.

	Description of activity	Communication content
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

NB: Try to arrive at some mutually agreed definition of 'Communicative' and then allow Time for this discussion: