

Innovations

Assessing and Developing English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers by Using In-Service Training

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is assessing and developing English Language Proficiency (ELP) of High and Preparatory School Teachers by using In-service Training in Fafan District, Somali Region-Ethiopia. In-service Training was implemented within 3 months(February, 5, 2021-April, 30, 2021) with the purpose of assessing and enhancing Teachers ELP. The data was collected from purposively selected 42 teachers and principals from 4 High and Preparatory Schools in Fafan District, Somali Region, Ethiopia, by conducting Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion. The Descriptive case study research design was used to implement the study. The result indicated that (1) High and Preparatory School teachers' ELP was not satisfactory; (2) In-service training was effective in enhancing teachers' ELP. Based on these findings, it is recommended to launch English Language In-service Training for High and Preparatory School teachers by Federal and Regional government or other stakeholders. Importantly, the teachers must enhance their ELP to provide Professional service effectively and to compete in the education sector. Furthermore, Jigjiga University should continue providing community service by facilitating ELP Enhancement In-Service trainings for Teachers.

Key words: 1.English Language (EL); 2.English Language Proficiency (ELP); 3.Medium of instruction (MI); 4.In-service Training; 5.community service.

1. Introduction

Language has an immense role in the teaching learning process since it is a medium of communication exclusively in classroom environment where teacher and students share knowledge. Wolff (2005: 3) states that "language is not everything in education, but without language, everything is nothing in education". In a sense, language is not a result by itself but it is a means to achieve the aim of education. It is in dispensable

platform for students and teachers to gather and provide knowledge through discussion, reading, writing, and listening. Due to this, it is hardly possible to think of education without a language that is a medium to keep and transfer knowledge, skills and experiences in schools. As Mkwizu (2003), the language that is used in the process of teaching and learning is called “medium of instruction”, and sometimes it referred as instructional language. Similarly, Kersenintet al (2009: 46) defines medium of instruction as it “is not only a means for communicating information; it is also a vehicle for deepening their [students] understanding of important points”. This indicates that medium of instruction influences critical thinking ability of the students. Understanding in turn enhances the students’capacity to contextualize the academic knowledge in the real experience, and solve the societal problem. On the other hand, medium of instruction may impede the teaching learning process and can make it so hard for teachers to communicate properly with their learners. Indeed, teachers and students’ proficiency in the medium of instruction determines the success of education in a process and its results. As result, medium of instruction is one of the major issues of Education Policies to ensure quality education throughout the world(Cummins, 2012; Rivera, 2008;Bogale, 2009).

Perhaps, the medium of instruction have been leveled as one of the major challenges in education system. Especially, the problems have been worse in the countries that use foreign language as a medium of instruction. Julie Dearden has delivered a study entitled “English as a Medium of Instruction-agrowing global phenomena” in 2014 in collaboration with British Council. The study was conducted in 55 countries that the majority of the population is not native English speaker whereas use English language as a medium of instruction in their jurisdiction. The experience of the countries showed the extent of the problem which was caused by English as medium of instruction in teaching and learning. Similarly, various studies have shown the practice and challenges ofEnglish as Medium of instruction in Japan (Steele, D., and Zhang, R , 2016), in Turkey (Onceçay, G., and Onceçay, V, 2010), in Saud Arabia (Sarifa, N, 2020), in Bangladesh (Ashrafuzzaman, M., 2018), in Vietnam(Nhung, P, 2017), in Malaysia (Hisham,B., and Jusoff, K, 2009), and in China (Hu, G., and Lei, J, 2013).

In Africa also, literacy education often suffers from serious communication problems between teachers and pupils. Mlay, N (2010)have addressed the situation as a foreign medium of instruction teachers often face language difficulties and pupils do not have the language competence to understand what the teacher says. Due to these uncertainties oral and written communicative exchange is reduced to safe talk and no longer is active learning possible. Likewise, Ethiopia education quality has been entangled by poor English language proficiency. It is cognizant, Ethiopian New Education and Training Policy (1991) uses English that is a Foreign Language as a medium of instruction from high school all the way up to higher education; in educational program of Ethiopia, course books and instructional materials are written in English (Bantyerga, 1982).

Researches have shown that teachers English language proficiency level determines the functional role of the medium instruction since teachers are ideal model for students. Also, teacher’s poor English language proficiency is one of the major causes of the problem, so, it could be better to enhance their knowledge and skills (Nhung, P, 2017;Wubshet, H., &Menuta, F, 2015; and Dearden, J, 2014). Precisely, Steele, D., and Zhang, R (2016: 16) argues that in Japan “the lack of qualified teachers is likely responsible for the current undesirable situation and the enhancement of training programs for teachers will function as the key to the solution of this problem”. Referring, teachers’poor proficiency quality has resulted in adverse to the education policy, and suggested the necessity of intervention like In-Service training as the possible solutions. Similarly, Wubshet, H., &Menuta, F (2015), and Dearden, J (2014) have recommended providing In-Service training for teachers. Mainly, In-service training focuses on the need for teachers to adjust themselves

effectively to the rapid changes in the education system. It also helps the processes of improving the quality of teachers' content knowledge and methods of instruction in the classroom.

Accordingly, it is worth giving due attention to enhancing the quality of English language education; poor English language performance must be solved permanently to achieve the development goal in education sector particularly in Somali Region and in Ethiopia in general. Bearing this in mind, Jigjiga University Community Service office accepted the proposal and funded the study to be carried out. The general objective of the study was assessing and developing English Language proficiency of High and preparatory school teachers by providing In-service Training. To elaborate, In-service Training refers the intervention that avails English Language Trainings for teachers while they are exercising their duties or responsibilities. It is designed to improve English Language Skills in High and Preparatory schools leading to greater academic success by empowering teachers. A more fluent teacher likewise provides better teaching and learning conditions for students therefore improving their academic career outcomes. Accordingly, In-service Training was implemented in the Weekend days from February, 5, 2021-April, 30, 2021 in focus with major and minor language skills

Therefore, this study aims to assess and develop English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers by using In-service Training in Fafan district, Somali Region-Ethiopia.

2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is this assessing and developing English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers by using In-service Training in Fafan district, Somali Region-Ethiopia. Specifically, it aims:

- to describe the status of High and Preparatory School Teachers English Language Proficiency
- to examine the effectiveness of In-service Training in developing English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers

3. Methodology

In this study, Descriptive research design was used. The study was implemented in purposively selected Four Secondary and Preparatory Schools in Fafan Zone, Somali region, Ethiopia. Due to the nearness, Hadow High School, Sheik Abduselan High and Preparatory School, Awbere High and Preparatory School and, Jigjiga High and Preparatory School were selected. Also, purposive sampling was used to select the participant teachers. Since the Second Millennium Education Goal has given much emphasis for Natural Science and English teachers in STEM (Science, Technology and Mathematics) program, 34 Natural Science and 4 English teachers, and 4 School principals were selected for the study.

In order to achieve the intended objectives of the study, the researcher employed two data collection instruments: Questionnaires, and Focus Group Discussion. Firstly, questionnaires were prepared in the form of Pre-Training and Post-Training exams that provide an opportunity to assess trainee teachers' English language skills, and evaluate the effect of In-service Training. Both exams were intentionally made similar in their content and questions weight. Specifically, the exams questions were framed as:

Table 1: Exam Frames		
No.	Items	Weight
1	Speaking	10
2	Listening	10
3	Reading	10
4	Writing	10
5	Grammar and Vocabulary	10
Total Weight		50

Secondly, Focus Group Discussions were employed in each school under study. It is used to find out the existing English Language Practice in Teaching-learning process, teachers In-service training need, and identify the available opportunity and constraints for teachers in the school.

Consequently, descriptive analysis was carried out to organize and summarize qualitative and quantitative data and to see the overall results. Quantitative data is tabulated, changed into percentage, cumulative percentage and finally interpreted. Also, Paired-Sample Test is used to infer the effect of In-Service Training on English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers. The qualitative information gathered through Focus Group Discussion was written in explanation form and interpreted to strengthen the quantitative data and give elaborated information.

4. Results and Discussions

In this section, the findings are presented and discussed under 3 sub-sections.

4.1 Trainee Teachers Background Information

The distribution of Trainee teachers' background features are analyzed, and discussed. To start, the trainee teachers' sex and school names distribution is indicated in Table 2. In terms of sex, 27(64.3%) male, and 15(35.7%) female trainee teachers have participated in the study from purposively selected four High and preparatory schools. When we see from schools name, equally 12, 12 and 12trainees from Sheik Abdulselan, Jijiga, and Awbere High and Preparatory Schools have participated in the study. Whereas, 6 trainees have involved from Hadow High School since the school had not have Preparatory level.

Table 2: Trainee Teachers' Sex and School Name							
School Name		Sex					
		Male		Female		Total	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Hadow High School		5	83.3%	1	16.7%	6	100.0%
Sheik Abdulselan High and Preparatory school		6	50.0%	6	50.0%	12	100.0%
Jijiga High and Preparatory School		8	66.7%	4	33.3%	12	100.0%
Awbere High and Preparatory School		8	66.7%	4	33.3%	12	100.0%

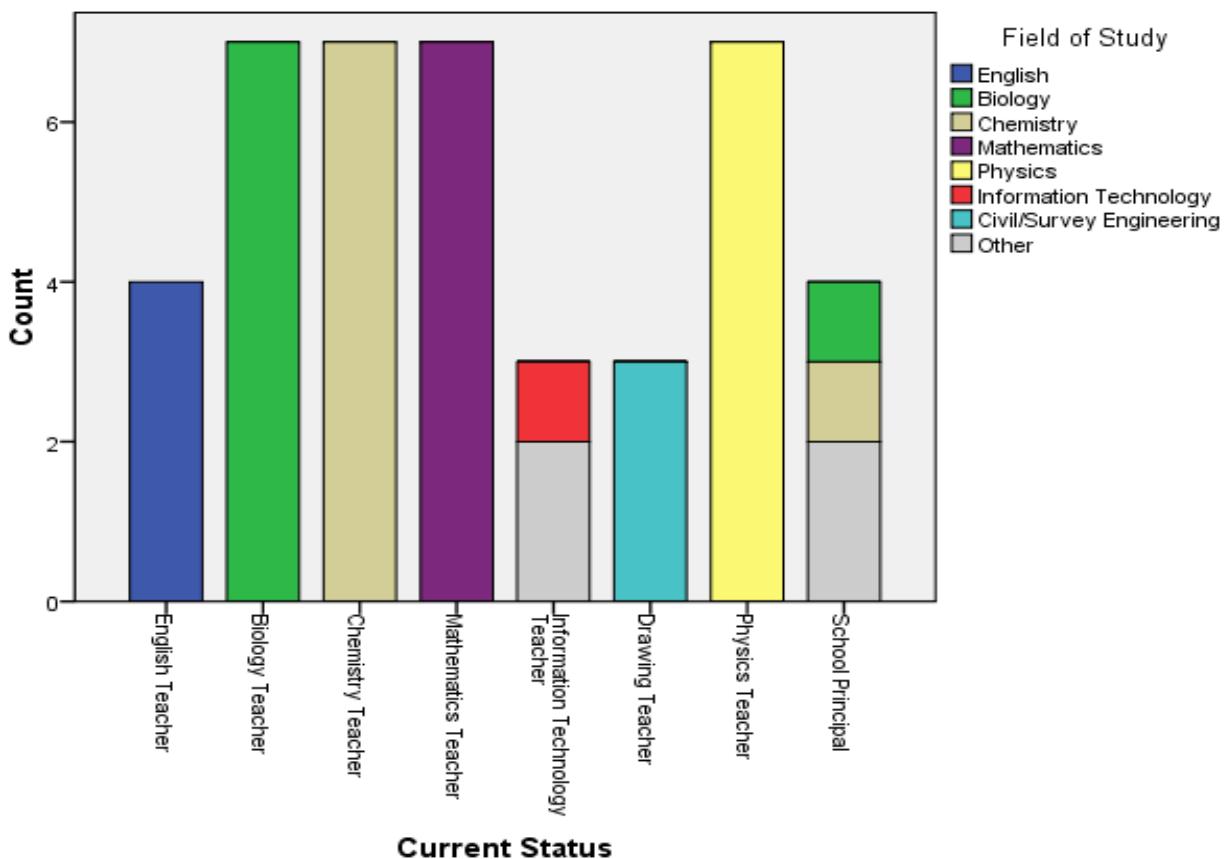
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	Jijiga High and Preparatory School	8	66.7%	4	33.3%	12	100.0%
	Awbere High and Preparatory School	8	66.7%	4	33.3%	12	100.0%
	Total	27	64.3%	15	35.7%	42	100.0%

Teaching practice effectiveness as well as English Language Proficiency is highly affected by teachers' education level and experience. As we can see fromtable 3, in terms of education level,34(81%) of trainee teachers have BA/BSc degree, and 5(11.9%) of the trainee teachers have MA/MSc. The remaining 3(7.1%) of the trainee teachers have Diploma certificate. When we look service year, 17(40.5%) of the trainee teachers have worked for 6-10 Years. Those who have worked for '11-15 Years, and 1-5 Years have covered 10(23.8%) in each. Also, 92.9% cumulative percent of the trainee teachers have BA/BSc and above degree academic level and76.2 % cumulative percent of them have 6 years and above teaching experiences. Therefore, the trainee teachers have reasonable academic preparation and teaching experience.

Table 3: Education Level and Service Year						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Education Level	MA/MSc	5	11.9	11.9	11.9	
	BA/BSc	34	81.0	81.0	92.9	
	Diploma	3	7.1	7.1	100.0	
	Total	42	100.0	100.0		
Service Year	21 & Above Years	1	2.4	2.4	2.4	
	16-20 Years	4	9.5	9.5	11.9	
	11-15 Years	10	23.8	23.8	35.7	
	6-10 Years	17	40.5	40.5	76.2	
	1-5 Years	10	23.8	23.8	100.0	
	Total	42	100.0	100.0		

The relationship between teachers' field of study and the subjects currently teaching also affects the teaching practice effectiveness and English Language Proficiency. Accordingly, the below bar graph shows the trainee teachers' field of study and the subject they are teaching. From the total trainee teachers' each of Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics teacher distribution is seven, 28 totally. And, four participants are English teacher, and the other participants are School Principal. The remaining three participants are drawing and three participants are Information Technology Teachers. When we look the relationship

between the trainee teachers' field of study and the subject they are teaching, almost all trainee teachers are teaching the subjects that they have specialized in College or University. Thus, the trainee teachers have thought the subjects that they have studied in the schools.



Bar Graph 1: Field of Study and Currently Teaching Subjects

4.2 Pre-Training and Post-Training Exam Results

Paired Sample t-test is used to compare the mean or average values of two variables: Pre-Training and Post-Training Exam results in focus with Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, and Grammar and Vocabulary.

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Training: Speaking	3.6071	42	1.96474	.30317
	Post-Training: Speaking	5.1548	42	1.96459	.30314
Pair 2	Pre-Training Listening	4.5595	42	1.71863	.26519
	Post-Training: Listening	5.3810	42	1.31969	.20363
Pair 3	Pre-Training :Reading	5.1667	42	1.80672	.27878
	Post-Training: Reading	5.9286	42	1.21259	.18711
Pair 4	Pre-Training: Writing	6.1071	42	1.79272	.27662
	Post-Training: Writing	7.1905	42	1.39665	.21551
Pair 5	Pre-Training: Grammar and Vocabulary	4.6905	42	1.72483	.26615
	Post Training: Grammar and Vocabulary	5.4881	42	1.34567	.20764

As indicated in Table 3, Paired sample statistics have shown that the trainee teachers have scored the highest mean value (6.1071 and 7.1905) in writing skills and the lowest mean value(3.6071 and 5.1548) in Speaking skill. In pre-training exam, also, they have scored half of the allotted ten marks in reading (Mean value 5.1667) and writing (Mean Value 6.1071) skills only. However, in the Post-Training exam they have scored five and above marks in all skills. Moreover, Paired-Sample Test was made to infer the effect of In-Service Training on English Language Proficiency of Secondary and Preparatory School Teachers.

H0: Average mark of trainee teachers in Pre and Post In-Service Training intervention are the same (i.e. In-Service Training intervention has no effect on English Language Proficiency of Secondary and Preparatory School Teachers)

H1: Average mark of trainee teachers in Pre and Post In-Service Training intervention are the significantly different (i.e In-Service Training intervention has either positive or negative effect on English Language Proficiency of Secondary and Preparatory School Teachers)

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Training Total	24.1548	42	8.36987	1.29150
	Post-Training Total	29.0595	42	6.64354	1.02512

Table 6: Paired Samples Test												
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
					Lower	Upper						
Pair 1	Pre-Training Total - Post-Training Total	-4.90476	4.83665	.74631	-6.41197	-3.39756	-6.572	41	.000			

As indicated in table 6, Paired Samples Test result of Sig.(0.00) is small, so H0 that states In-Service Training has no any effect on English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers is rejected. It is concluded that In-Service Training has positive effect on English Language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers. This reveals if the high and preparatory level teachers could have been given English Language Proficiency In-service training they could have used the language effectively as medium of instruction, and this enhances the quality of education.

4.3. FGD Result

In addition, the trainee teachers have reflected the major constraints in English language practice as a medium of instruction in particular as well as in teaching learning process in general. As FGD result indicates that an English language skill is becoming a constraint which is supposed to be an opportunity in teaching and learning process. The problem arises from both teachers and students; some teachers fail to speak English even for classroom purpose. And students are not capable to communicate in English, as result they push to be thought in Somali or Amharic language. Besides, the unavailability and inaccessibility of books in library and the absence of functional English language club made the problem more difficult. Moreover, most students' primary and secondary level poor academic preparation was seen as a major constraint in High and Preparatory schools. In the discussion, one trainee said that "most students are well educated even to write their name in English in the lower grades. Thus, we are obliged to dictate them about elementary writing and arithmetic skills in the everyday class routine". Some other constraints like managerial, social and economic problems were also raised in the discussion. Moreover, FGD result indicated that the dire need of In-Service training continuity; it revealed the strength and weakness of the In-Service training implementation.

To solve the stated constraints, they have suggested the solution from their experience. They proposed that it is better to train teachers weekly or monthly; this may assist teachers to enhance English language skills while they are working. Also, they mesmerized that education quality at primary and secondary level must be considered; the regional education office must intensively monitor and evaluate teachers' preparation, evaluation system, and so on .Moreover, they indicated that schools should be equipped with materials like book, audio visual equipment, computer etc to practice in the established English language clubs.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In Ethiopia, English language skill is believed as one of major factors which determine the quality of education beginning from High school up to higher institution level since it is medium of instruction. As result, to reach student it is better to enhance teachers' capacity in various ways. Considering this, the study entitled Assessing and Developing English Language Proficiency (ELP) of High and Preparatory School Teachers (HPS) by using In-service Training was implemented, and findings were drawn. The analyses was done based

on the inputs that are collected from purposively selected Four High and Preparatory School Teachers and 42 teachers and School Principals. Therefore, based on the analysis, three findings are concluded. First of all, trainee teachers' English Language Proficiency was not satisfactory. They have scored below 5 out of ten marks in Speaking, Listening, and Grammar and Vocabulary skills. As result, most of them are poor in English language which is medium of instruction. Second, In-service Training was effective in enhancing English language Proficiency of High and Preparatory School Teachers (HPS). To substantiate, after the intervention, Pre-Training exam mean value (24.1548) has exceeded in the Post-Training mean value (29.0595). Final, In-service Training was required by High and Preparatory School Teachers (HPS). Accordingly, the following recommendations are given:

- High and Preparatory school teachers must enhance their English Language Proficiency to provide Professional service effectively and to compete in the education sector.
- Jigjiga University should continue providing community service role by facilitating English Language Proficiency Enhancement trainings for Teachers, and by donating different materials like manuals, books, computers, charts, and others.
- The Federal and Regional government bodies should consider the effect of English Language as a medium Instruction on Education quality, and facilitate In-Service Training for High and Preparatory School Teachers (HPS) to curb the possible consequences.

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