

Assessment of Pupils' Achievements in the Teaching of English: Training and Practice in Focus

Teshome Demisse*

Abstract: *This study explores the issue of language testing and evaluation at the primary school level. The literature on language testing and evaluation, the syllabus and the textbooks for the training of primary school teachers have been consulted and studied, and a survey of the testing situation in the schools has been carried out for this purpose. From the literature, a comprehensive form of evaluation composed of formal and informal assessments by teachers, parents and the pupils themselves has transpired as a relatively appropriate and accurate means of judging the progress and success of pupils' achievement in learning English. The idea of monthly tests and the student record chart in the syllabus and the textbooks of the teacher training institutions, as a limited indication of the use of progress tests and continuous assessment, has been found encouraging in terms of the quality of assessment at this level. The survey shows that primary school teachers practice continuous assessment, and share experiences and views with colleagues in preparing tests and examinations, and interpreting scores. However, it has emerged that although most of the teachers are certified for the job, they were not given training in the assessment of learning achievements. Thus, while the results of the survey point to the need for short term refresher courses for primary school teachers, the limited evidence in the syllabus and textbooks examined suggests that the acorn of the quality of assessment has been sown. But it is noted that a great deal more is required to nurture it.*

Introduction

The English Language has long established its usefulness in Ethiopia as a foreign/second language - both as a medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels of modern education and as a language of international communication, for example, as an official language of diplomacy, international organisations, international contacts and/or transactions in some national organisations.

* Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa University.

Thus, the importance attached to English today is greater than ever before. Consequently, we notice increased concern in the teaching of English as a foreign language in response to this increasing demand.

There is some dissatisfaction with the present quality of education in general, and the decline in the quality of English in particular (Tewolde, 1988; Dejene, 1990), notwithstanding this increasing demand for English. Although documented evidence is hard to come by, "Some people believe that the general decline in the quality of education is attributed, directly or indirectly, to the unsatisfactory performance of the students in English" (Teshome, 1995:6).

This concern has given rise to the numerous research investigations in the area of English Language Teaching (ELT). The evidence for this is the huge number of theses and senior essays submitted as partial fulfilments of the requirements for the graduate and undergraduate programmes at the Addis Ababa University, for example. However, research outputs in the testing and evaluation of the English language are few and far between.

This writer, based on his experience and awareness of the place language testing is given in the training of language teachers at the graduate and undergraduate levels at the Addis Ababa University, is of the opinion that the training of teachers in language testing and evaluation is generally a neglected aspect in the training of language teachers - perhaps at all levels.

Thus, the syllabus and the textbooks for the training of primary school teachers are studied. A questionnaire is designed to explore the situation of language testing and evaluation in some primary schools in Addis Ababa.¹ The twenty- item questionnaire is in two parts: the first part (6 items) elicits background information on the sample of teachers whereas the second part (14 items) probes into the teachers training and experience in the assessment of language learning achievements.

¹These are the only schools accessible to my voluntary assistants in gathering the data.

This work initially attempts to focus on studying the literature on language testing with the aim of highlighting insights relevant and pertinent to the primary school level. This is followed by an examination of the syllabus and the textbooks for the training of primary school teachers to assess the adequacy of the training in language testing. Furthermore, it attempts to survey the actual state of affairs in language testing in some primary schools in Addis Ababa.

Review of Literature

Language Teaching and Testing

The view that "... the good test is an obedient servant since it follows and apes the teaching" (Davies, 1968:5) has gradually evolved to the view that "the proper relationship between teaching and testing is surely that of partnership" (Hughes, 1989:2). Since language teaching inevitably includes language testing or evaluation, assessment in language has become a necessary twin to language teaching (Teshome, 1995). In the words of Heaton (1988:5), "both testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other."

Types of Evaluation

Therefore, given the important part the English language plays in the Ethiopian context, especially in the educational system of the country, the concern to study and explore better ways of teaching and/or learning the language as well as the evaluation of the outcome of this clearly becomes relevant.

Tests and examinations are mainly tools or instruments for the assessment of the achievements and the evaluation of the performance of the pupils in English. In this respect, we must be confident of the quality of the instrument, and trust the information thereof regarding the worth of the pupils achievements.

In connection with this, Pilliner (1982) writes about formative and summative evaluation. The latter takes place at the end of a programme whereas the former takes place during the programme. Summative evaluation is 'a single end-of term' examination for Saleemi (1989) and a 'one-off' examination for Johnston (1987). This type of evaluation is discouraged by authorities in the field. For instance, Saleemi (1989:261) argues against using it because "... feedback resulting from such an examination becomes available so late in the process that it is no longer usable with the same set of learners." Infact, such an evaluation gives only one chance to the pupils, and this does not take into consideration the constraints that affect the pupils during the examination (Johnston, 1987). In the words of Johnston (1987:12), end-of term examinations "...do not generally permit the learners to reflect upon their work and improve their performances after the tests are marked for they are usually the final decisions."

Given that formative evaluation takes place during the instructional programme, then it can be said that continuous assessment constitutes formative evaluation. Thus, formative evaluation is advocated as desirable in the assessment of the achievements of pupils in English.

According to Vale (1995:228) assessment "... may include subjective (teacher) opinion of the achievement of a child in terms of attitude, participation, socialisation, general cognitive and physical development, etc."

The advantages of continuous assessment are explicitly stated by Vale (1995:228 & 229) in the following words: "A record of achievement over a longer period is likely to give a more accurate picture of the ability of a child. Ideally, such a record or profile should include copies of class work, ongoing teacher comment, comment from the child and parent - and not merely a list of test marks."

Heaton also reminds us that classroom progress test "... is usually an integral part of a programme of continuous assessment" (1990:11).

So, it can be said, again, that continuous assessment is better suited to primary school pupils than a single end of semester examination to assess their progress and achievement in learning English.

Test Quality

Tests and examinations are designed and constructed as instruments to measure language abilities and skills of our pupils. For this reason, language teachers need to be concerned with the quality of the tests and examinations they set to measure the achievements of the pupils in learning English. These tests and examinations need to yield accurate information about the pupils performance in English. In other words, they must be valid and reliable tests. Test anxiety and practicality are other factors that teachers should be concerned with when writing tests and examinations. Bowen et al (1985:380) comment that "while psychologists note that anxiety can be 'facilitating' as well as 'debilitating', it is advisable to avoid tests that are excessively stressful. Such tests do not provide the best measurement of language ability, particularly of anxiety-prone individuals."

Tests and examinations can be evaluated informally and with (the use of) simple statistical evaluation. Analysing tests helps us remove bad items even before we record the test results so we do not penalize students because of bad questions. Madsen (1983:178) stipulates the importance of evaluating our tests in this way

For one thing, good evaluation of our tests can help us measure student skills more accurately. It also shows that we are concerned about those we teach. ... Students appreciate an extra effort like this, which shows that we are concerned about the quality of our exams. And a better feeling toward our tests can improve class attitude, motivation, and even student performance.

Informal Evaluation

Informal contacts with pupils can result in useful feedback on tests. Pupils can point out bad questions, unfamiliar test technique(s), and questions from material not covered (adequately) in class.

Bowen et al (1985) consider it useful to keep notes on tests and examinations. The note can include the nature of the test, its length, time allocated for it, the class it was used in, the date and scope (whether quiz, mid-term, etc). They go on to list six items which the informal evaluation data might include:

- time it took to prepare the test;
- time it took to score each test;
- whether or not most students were able to complete it in the time provided;
- whether or not the instructions and questions were clear;
- whether or not there was an adequate match of classwork and evaluation; and
- reactions to individual questions should be noted so that defective items can be revised or discarded. The writers also comment that "anecdotal information from students is particularly useful in evaluating items 4 and 5 (p.379).

For Henning (1987:89) "validity in general refers to the appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure of what it is purported to measure. A test is said to be valid to the extent that it measures what it is supposed to measure."

But at the primary school level, only content validity and face validity are vital for teacher-made classroom progress tests. According to Harrison (1983:11), content validity "is concerned with what goes into the test" and face

validity "is concerned with what teachers and students think of the test." Given that classroom progress tests are administered weekly or monthly, for example, at the end of a unit or a component of instruction, and that the contents of such tests are quite specific in terms of referring back to recent class work to the extent that they appear to be extensions of teaching material, Harrison (1983:49) argues that "it should not be too difficult to establish the validity of the tests, since there is a direct link with known content." Again, content validity can be established with the help of the opinions of colleagues and a table of specifications. The specification, which is a list of the areas to be tested including the test techniques to be used, is useful to draw up a proportional and balanced sample of the areas to be assessed.

Statistical Evaluation

Simple statistical evaluation should also be carried out to check the quality of teacher-made tests and to gain a reasonably accurate information from the assessment instrument. In relation to this, Madsen (1983:179) observes that "while many teachers are too busy to evaluate each item in every test that they give, at least major class tests should be carefully evaluated."

For example, the reliability of the test, ie, that it should measure precisely and consistently whatever it is supposed to measure, must be checked (Heaton, 1990 for example). In this respect, the test, for instance, would be expected to produce the same results if the students took it on two different occasions and the markers should give the same marks if they marked the same tests twice.

Item analysis is a systematic procedure carried out to see how good or appropriate a test or an examination is. It produces information on how each question, item or task functions in the whole test or examination.

More specifically, it tells us how difficult each item is, and whether the item discriminates between high- and low-achieving students, as well as indicates how attractive the distractors are in multiple choice questions.

Item analysis is a useful source of feedback for all concerned in the design and use of tests and examinations.

"Guidelines on evaluating item difficulty suggest that if over 90% get an item right, it is too easy; and if fewer than 30% get it right it is too difficult. ... It is generally felt that a discrimination figure of 0.15 or higher is acceptable" according to Bowen et al (1985:388 & 389).

At this point, I would like to recommend that, as opposed to parallel forms, test-retest and split-half, the use of Kuder Richardson formula (KR-20) or the internal consistency method as a measure of reliability of the test or examination because the necessary data can easily be derived from the item analysis procedure.

Furthermore, other simple calculations can be performed for better and clearer understanding of the results on the tests and examinations. Information on the central tendency (the average, the median and the mode) and the spread (standard deviation and the range) of marks of a given class(es) can help school teachers to evaluate the suitability of the tests and examinations they prepare. For example, a high mean score shows that the test was quite easy; but it can also suggest the adequacy of the instruction the pupils are exposed to. Similarly, a quick look at the middle score (median), ie, before doing any calculation, can suggest the same conclusion. The figure we arrive at for the measure of the spread of scores reflects the variation (difference) in the ability of our students.

Testing and evaluation is a process of discussion, making decisions, and of implementing these decisions at several stages, at least before and after the administration of tests. The ideal test is one which provided dependable measurement (reliability), that measured only what it was supposed to measure (validity), as well as being cheap and easy to use (practical). The tester and the teacher-examiner must strive towards this ideal, however distant it may appear to be.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The Syllabus and the Textbook

What follows is the description and comments based on a study of the syllabus and booklet (the methodology part) for the training of primary school teachers for grades 1-4.

'Evaluation' as a heading of a unit (module) appears once in twenty modules. While the twenty modules are expected to take a minimum of three periods, as per a note on p.3 of the English syllabus, actually four periods are allotted to evaluation in the 'instructor's guide'. The number of allotted periods range from 4 to 5 for the twenty modules.

The stated objectives of the module on 'Evaluation' in this source read:

- The trainees can assess Grade 1- 4 students' oral, reading and writing skills effectively;
- The trainees can prepare Monthly Tests for Grade 1- 4 students;
- The trainees can evaluate and record the students' achievement of the Grade 1- 4 students objectives (p.20).

The topics include "Evaluating students in Grade 1- 4, preparing monthly tests, and The grade 1- 4 student objectives" (p.20).

The activities for the practical also include "Problem solving, Discussion of procedures, Demonstration of techniques, and Materials preparation" (p.20). The trainees themselves are evaluated by written assignment and portfolio materials. Thus, the stated objectives are intended to be accomplished by means of the afore-said topics and practical activities.

The stated objectives, in the instructor's guide, for the four periods allotted to 'Evaluation' read: "1. To practise preparing and conducting a monthly test, 2. To practise using the student achievement chart" (p.59). These are presumed to constitute the objective of assessing students in grade 1- 4, as stated in number one of the syllabus.

The textbook, *Practical English Teaching (Methodology)*, contains eighteen units (modules). It appears that two modules, namely, 'using dialogues and using the Grade 1 - 4 Textbooks' have been left out, when compared with the syllabus. And in this booklet for the training of primary school teachers, 'Evaluation' is the 17th unit out of the eighteen. It is five pages long out of the total of 106 pages for the booklet.

There are awareness raising notes (information) on two of the five pages. The rest of the pages are devoted to activities that involve and promote discussion, the practical writing of tests, and the recording of pupils' achievement of objectives. The teaching and testing of the language appears to be skills-based and integrated with the productive skills being clearly encouraged. The orientation is that the pupils should be tested for what they have learnt to do in English.

In fact, in the first unit of the booklet, 'Teaching English in Grades '1- 4', the aims of the new grade 1- 4 English syllabus are explicitly written. While the general aim is to give 'the students the skills they will need to use English at school and in their everyday lives', the specific ones read as follows:

- listen to and enjoy short passages and stories;
- make sentences and ask questions about themselves and the world around them;
- read and understand short passages about a variety of topics; and
- write snort paragraphs about 2-3 everyday topics (p.1)

So, at the end of Grade four the pupils are expected to be able to perform these in English. It is stated that the emphasis is on communication in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In their own words, "the students must be able to use the English they learn to say, read and write things which are both true and meaningful to them personally" (p.1).

I have found that although 'listening' is listed in the objectives of the new syllabus for the pupils in grades 1- 4 it occurs neither in the quotation above nor in the objectives of evaluation in the trainees' syllabus. This suggests and perhaps confirms the neglect of the teaching and testing of the listening skill at all levels, an issue commonly expressed. Since it appears as one objective in the pupils syllabus, one would also expect it to appear in the trainees' syllabus. As much as pupils, at the end of grade 4, are expected to use the English they have learnt to say, read and write things ... they could be expected to use English to listen to and enjoy things like stories, and the accomplishment of this objective could be informally checked or assessed in integration with speaking or writing.

Generally, it can be said that testing and evaluation exists as a component of the training of primary school teachers; and it exists in a manner consistent (in tune) with recent developments or trends in language testing. However, the fact that evaluation is limited to only one unit and only five pages remains a matter of concern. It does not look adequate to this writer. That the unit on evaluation is one of the last units of the course invites some pessimism. For instance, it may be the case that trainers do not always cover all the units in the time available to them.

The inclusion of the idea of monthly tests is also encouraging as it suggests the use of progress tests, and hence the use of an element of continuous assessment.

The Situation in the Primary Schools

Description of the sample of teachers

The questionnaire which was designed to survey the situation of language testing and the testing practice in schools was completed by 134 teachers in fifteen primary schools in Addis Ababa.² The

²These are the only schools accessible to my voluntary assistants in gathering the data.

representation of teachers in these schools ranges from one teacher (ie, 03 cases) to twenty teachers (ie, 02 cases) in a school (Appendix A). The majority of them teach in grades 4,2,1 and 3; that is, 36, 32, 27 and 26 teachers respectively (Appendix B).

These primary school teachers (129 of them) did their training in twelve Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) in the country; and the distribution of their training centres ranges from as many as 34 to 02 teachers in one institution. The highest number of teachers (34) graduated from the Kotebe College of Teacher Education (KCTE) in Addis Ababa, followed by Harrar (25) and Debre Berhane (24) Teacher Training Institutes. The smallest number (02) goes to the Nazereth TTI (Appendix A).

Their years of graduation date as far back as 1957 and as recently as 1990 E.C. Most of them graduated in the 60s and 70s E.C., ie, 63 and 40 of them respectively (Appendix A).

While fourteen of the schools are government owned one is a public school. In this latter school there are three teachers who are not trained for the job, ie, two are high school completes and one is 12 + 2. This is not surprising as such since schools are known to employ teachers without considering training qualifications. However, it is rather difficult to fully explain the case of two teachers without training in one of the government schools; one is a high school complete and the other a 12 + 1.

The teachers themselves mention a one-year teacher training they had at Addis Ababa University which they called an emergency course. Crash and/or emergency training programmes are known to have been organised by the Ministry of Education, and their participation in these could have helped in their employment in government schools. But further details related to time, place, requirements, certification and etc. proved to be hard to come by.

Incidentally, when responding to the training institutions they had graduated from, Fasiledas and Kokebe Tsibah High Schools, Haile Selassie I and Addis Ababa Teacher Training Institutes were mentioned once each. These remind us that we have had crash programme(s),

teacher training streams in some high schools, change of name(s) and site(s) respectively.³

In response to the subjects the teachers are teaching, almost all of them stated that they teach in self-contained classrooms (ie, teach all subjects). Only six teach just English.

Teachers' Response

The teachers were required to respond to three questions in order to elicit information on the extent of training they had in the testing and evaluation of English (Appendix B, Items 7,8 and 9). In this connection, 26% of them indicated that they had taken a full course whereas about 69% said they had not. Of those who responded 'No', 70% did not have training in language testing and evaluation even as a sub-component of another course. But 30% of them said they had such short term training. Of these latter ones, a total of 85% said that they had training for about one week or less (32%), for about half a semester (32%), and for between 2-4 weeks (21%) in assessment as a sub-component of another course. Another 14% of the respondents specified other situations that involved some kind of training. For example, they cited summer courses, a two-month short course, and a three-day workshop on the new educational policy.

Thus, it can be said that most of the teachers did not have training in the testing and evaluation of English. For those who stated that they had the training, it appears that the treatment of the issue was probably general and limited in scope. For instance, one can imagine the limited level of awareness raising treatment of the issue in a three-day workshop. Even when the topic is accommodated in another course or in the training

³It may be interesting and revealing to investigate further and document past teacher training endeavours in the country.

programme as part and parcel of the training package in the teaching of English, one can suspect how limited it could be in raising awareness and providing practice in the assessment of learning achievements.

There were two questions which aimed at exploring what teachers did or resorted to as a fresh English teacher, and during their long (for most) career in teaching to help them prepare 'good' tests and examinations (Appendix B, Items 10 and 11). As fresh English teachers, 47% sought help from other experienced teachers, and 72% resorted to informal discussion with other teachers during their long career in teaching. This is followed by 20% who studied and consulted previous (old) tests and examinations as guides when they were fresh employees and, by 12% who said attending seminars/workshops on testing and assessment helped them prepare tests and examinations during their stay in teaching. Only about 10% read books or publications on testing and assessment when they first started teaching (11%) and since then (9%). Twenty-one percent specified the following as having resorted to and used as guides when they were beginners. They prepared tests and examinations based on their teaching, exercises in the textbook, their own school learning experience, and classroom and homework exercises, including the taking of questions from the textbook and the gaining of awareness/help from a husband teaching in a high school. And 7% of the teachers specified (for item 11) as having resorted to most of the above during their teaching experience in addition to giving model tests before the actual ones and using supplementary readers when setting questions.

Three other questions were posed to find out whether teachers showed and discussed their tests and examinations, the results/marks in these, and if so with whom (Appendix B, Items 12, 13 and 18). A good majority of the teachers (96%) confirmed the existence of the practice. They showed and discussed the tests and examinations with other colleagues (50%), testing committee (30%), and the department head (20%); the results/marks were discussed with colleagues (60%), department head (21%), and the testing committee (13%). A limited number of teachers also specified discussion with supervisors, parents and pupils.

This is encouraging because writing a test and interpreting the scores is not a one-person and a one-off affair. The preparation of a test should be considered a process that involves discussion with all those concerned. This is supported by Ward (1982) and Harrison (1983) as they advocate informal consultation with peers and pupils. For example, Ward (1982:37) asserts that when the test preparation is complete it should be double checked by a colleague because "a second opinion will often see flaws that the first writer cannot see until they are pointed out." And discussing face validity, Harrison (1983:11) indicates that "the only way to find out about face validity is to ask the teachers and students concerned for their opinions, either formally by means of a questionnaire or informally by discussion in class or staff room." The idea of involving all concerned is again mentioned as Bowen et al (1985) discuss test anxiety and test bias, for example in terms of gender, topic, unfamiliarity of test technique and etc. They say "such information can be solicited from students informally, or ... a questionnaire can be administered" (P.380).

Vale (1995) too, recommends conferencing with children, keeping a profile folder and discussion of the course and the children's progress with parents. For Vale the learning/teaching process involves children as partners, and thus they should be provided with information about the purpose of and the progress in their learning as well as being encouraged to set realistic learning targets.

Teachers were also asked to respond to three items to see whether there is continuous assessment and/or whether the pupils' achievement is determined on a single end-of-semester examination (Appendix B, Items 14, 15 and 16). While 98% confirmed that continuous assessment is prevalent in the schools, 92% of the respondents showed that tests and end-of-term results are combined in determining the childrens' success in learning English. The pupils take 2-3 (48%), 4-5 (39%) and other (13%) tests before the final examination. The 13% in the 'other' option specified the number of tests ranging between six to ten. Some mentioned that marks for homeworks and notebooks are also counted. So it can be seen that the children take more than four tests according to 52% of the teachers.

It is encouraging to find continuous assessment as a testing practice in the schools. This is so because continuous assessment documents the progress and the achievement of the pupils in learning English over a longer period like a term or a semester or a year, administered several times in various forms (Heaton, 1990). To this effect, Saleemi (1989:261) writes that "testing should be built into a program of instruction in such a way that it becomes inseparable from learning" Heaton (1990:121) supports and adds to this:

continuous assessment should be regarded as an integral part of your teaching and your students' learning. Above all, it should be designed and administered so that it forms a pleasant component of your teaching programme. Often students will be quite unaware of any kind of assessment taking place since the whole situation will be informal and relaxed.

Furthermore, it is pointed out that continuous assessment, as a procedure which takes place over a period of weeks or months, is useful to measure pupils' work in groups and their general progress in class as it includes marks for homework and classroom tests (Heaton, 1990). The same writer (1990:116) goes on to say that "continuous assessment enables us to take into account certain qualities which cannot be assessed in any other way: namely, effort, persistence and attitude." School teachers are encouraged to give quizzes as part of continuous assessment (Bowen et al, 1985); in addition, Hughes (1989:13) says "... teachers should feel free to set their own 'pop quizzes'".

This procedure of testing and evaluating the progress and achievement the pupils are making in learning English is believed to be of great help both to the pupil and the teacher (Bowen et al, 1985; Hughes, 1989; Heaton, 1990). More specifically, Bowen et al (1985: 357) say that short quizzes "... have even been known to help improve attendance, punctuality of arrival and discipline at the outset of the class period." In addition, Hughes (1989:13) says that pop quizzes "... serve both to make a rough check on students' progress and to keep students on their toes." Heaton (1990:10) also stresses the fact that classroom tests "... would

be used for the purpose of increasing motivation."

From the foregoing discussion, it looks clear that continuous assessment by way of classroom tests, homework, interviews, self- and group-assessments, and etc. is better suited to our purpose.

Respondents were required to indicate the grade level(s) at which tests and examinations were given orally (Appendix B, Item 17:p.27). Eighty-one percent of them reported that tests and examinations were given orally in grade one. Another 14% specified that it was given to the visually impaired, that it used to be given up to grade three before the new educational policy, and that it was given during the first semester followed by written test in the second semester after some practice (especially in grades one and two). In view of the circumstances, 98% of the teachers expressed their belief that they needed some kind of training in the testing and assessment of their pupils' achievements (Appendix B, Item 19).

Finally, they were asked to specify any other comment/remarks for item 20, and 50% of the respondents offered some general comments. Among the general comments the following stand out clearly. First, they pointed out that they would need training not just in language testing but also in language teaching by way of refresher courses, seminars, workshops and/or inductions. This they said was necessary to develop their own competence in using and teaching English and whenever new textbooks were prepared and issued. Second, they expressed their reservation about self-contained classroom teaching as they believed that no one person could be good⁴ in all the subjects. Third, as arising from the second concern, they suggested that the assignment of a teacher to a subject or grade level should be based on individual interest and talent of the staff in a school.

⁴ The frequently used word was "perfect"

Summary

Given that English plays an important role in the Ethiopian context and that the teaching and testing of English are so interrelated, the training of primary school English teachers needs to put more emphasis on training teachers in the testing and evaluation of the achievements of their pupils. The literature shows the need for the familiarisation of primary school teachers with methods of checking the validity and reliability of the tests they prepare, and with the use of continuous assessment which includes classroom quizzes, progress tests, self-and group-assessments, homework and etc. The need for awareness and confidence in the use of informal evaluation and simple statistical evaluation methods are pointed out as well. Also the importance of formal and informal discussions with colleagues and pupils on tests and test results is clearly suggested.

The importance attached to testing and evaluation, especially in recent times, has transpired from the review of the literature in terms of feedback - both to the pupils and the teachers, motivation, the quality of and fairness in assessment.

The study of the syllabus and the booklet for the training of primary school teachers shows that there is a limited but good beginning. The suggestion gained from the study of these sources, i.e. that the teaching and testing of English is skills-based and integrated, as in the communicative approach to language teaching/learning, indicates that we are facing and progressing in the right direction.

The results of the questionnaire survey show that

- The majority of the sample teachers (96%) have the necessary training and qualification for the teaching job they are engaged in. However, most of the teachers (about 70%) have not had training in the testing and evaluation of English either as a full course or as a sub-component of another course in the teaching of English;
- A good number of teachers fall back on the experience and knowledge of their colleagues when necessary in preparing tests

and examinations. For example, 47% did this when they first began teaching, and 72% said they did it whenever they prepared tests and examinations in their long experience as teachers;

- Most of the teachers conferred with their colleagues regarding their tests and examinations (50%), and the results/marks on these (60%); this practice was followed with the testing committee (30%) for the former and the department head (21%) for the latter;
- A great majority of the sample teachers practiced continuous assessment (98%), and that the children's success in learning English was determined by combining results on several tests and final examinations (92%). The children took between 4-5 tests before final examinations on the average;
- Grade one pupils took oral tests and examinations (81%);
- A clear majority of the teachers (98%) felt the need for some training in the assessment of the learning achievements of their pupils;
- Half of the respondents (50%) were concerned about self-contained classroom teaching and the need for short term refresher training;
- The majority of the teachers did not benefit from the 1995 published syllabus and textbooks for the training of primary school teachers, ie, the number of recent graduates was very limited as more than 80% of them graduated in the 70s E.C. and earlier.

While it is encouraging to find that some of the findings (indications) from the survey are consistent with what is advocated in the review of literature, it is disheartening to see a clear gap between what transpires from the survey and the study of the syllabus and the textbooks for the training of primary school teachers.

It is, therefore, clear that primary school teachers would benefit from short term training endeavours in the teaching and testing of English until such time as the number of graduates who have passed through the syllabus and textbooks examined herein gains significance. The syllabus and the textbooks too, will eventually need to put more emphasis on the testing and evaluation of English.

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APPENDIX A

Distribution of Schools, Grade Levels, Teacher Training Institutions and Years of Graduation.

A) Schools (Item 1)	No	C) T.T. Institutions (Item 4)	No
1. Abiot Fana	08	1. Asmara	06
2. Arbegnoch	06	2. Awassa	05
3. Balcha Abanefso	05	3. Bahar Dar	05
4. Biherawe Betemengist	05	4. Debre Berhane	24
5. Dagmawe Menlik	14	5. Dessie	05
6. Entoto Amba	05	6. Gondar	07
7. Gerjie (Bole)	11	7. Harrar	25
8. Kalitie	05	8. Jimma	07
9. Kokebe Tsibah	20	9. KCTE (AA)	34
10. Medahinalem	14	10. Nazereth	02
11. Sibstie Negasie	01	11. Nekemte	05
12. Sululta	01	12. Robe (Bale)	04
13. Tsehy Chora	20	Total	129
14. Worha Yekatit	18		
15. Yeka Terara	01	Note: 5 are not trained	
Total	134.		
B) Grade Levels (Item 3)	No.	D) Year of Graduation (Item 5)	No
Grade 1	27	1957 - 1959	11
Grade 2	32	1960 - 1969	63
Grade 3	26	1970 - 1978	40
Grade 4	36	1980 - 1983	08
Grades 1 & 4	02	1987 & 1989	06
Grades 3 & 4	01	1990	01
Grades 3 & 6	01	Total	129
Grades 1- 4	06		
Grades 1- 6	02		
Grades 1- 8	01		
Total	134		

APPENDIX B

Summary of Primary School Teachers' Response (N = 134)

No	Questionnaire Item (Stem)	Response in	
		No.	%
7	Whether teachers had taken a course on English language testing and evaluation ...		
	A. Yes	35	26.12
	B. No	93	69.40
	Total	128*	95.52
8	If 'No', whether teachers had training in language testing and evaluation as a sub-component of another course...		
	A. Yes	28	30.11
	B. No	65	69.89
	Total	93	100.00
9	If 'yes', extent of coverage/duration as a component...		
	A. About one week or less	9	32.14
	B. Between 2 - 4 weeks	6	21.43
	C. About half a semester	9	32.14
	D. Other	4	14.29
	Total	28	100.00
10	What teachers did before/when they first prepared a test/exam as a fresh teacher...		
	A. Studied previous test/exam papers	28	20.44
	B. Read books on testing and assessment	15	10.95
	C. Sought help from other experienced teachers	65	47.44
	D. Other	29	21.17
	Total	137*	100.00
11	What helped teachers prepare good tests/exams in their career in teaching...		
	A. Reading books and/or journals on testing and assessment	12	8.70
	B. Attending seminars/workshops on testing and assessment	16	11.59
	C. Informal discussion with other teachers	100	72.46
	D. Other	10	7.25
	Total	138*	100.00
12	Whether teachers show/discuss the tests/exams they prepare...		
	A. Yes	128	95.52
	B. No	5	3.73
	Total	133*	99.25
13	If 'yes', teachers show/discuss tests/exams with....		
	A. Testing committee	42	29.79
	B. Department head	28	19.86
	C. Other teachers	71	50.35
	D. Other	0	0
	Total	141*	100.00
14	Whether pupils take only one end-of-term English exam		
	A. Yes	0	0
	B. No	131	97.76
	Total	131*	97.76
	If 'No', number of tests pupils take before final exam...		

Cont'd.....

No	Questionnaire Item (Stem)	Response in	
		No.	%
15	A. One test	0	0
	B. Two - three tests	64	47.76
	C. Four - five tests	52	38.80
	D. Other	17	12.69
	Total	133	99.25
16	Whether test marks are added to end-of-term exam results...		
	A. Yes	123	91.79
	B. No	6	4.48
	Total	129*	96.27
17	Grade levels for which tests/exams are given orally...		
	A. Grade-one	117	80.69
	B. Grade-two	6	4.14
	C. Grade-three	1	0.69
	D. Grade-four	0	0
	E. Other	21	14.48
	Total	145*	100.00
18	Teachers discuss test/exam results/marks with...		
	A. Testing committee	18	12.86
	B. Department head	29	20.71
	C. Other teachers	84	60.00
	D. Other	9	6.43
	Total	140*	100.00
19	Whether teachers believe they need some kind of training in the testing and assessment of pupils' achievements...		
	A. Yes	131	97.76
	B. No	3	2.24
	Total	134	100.00
20	Any other comments (given)	67	50.00

* The total is less than 134 because not all have responded to the item; and the total exceeds 134 because respondents have marked on more than one of the options.