

The Practice of English Language Productive Skills' Continuous Assessment in Preparatory School: The Case of West Wollega Zone, Ethiopia

Fayisa Fikadu Galata

Department of English Language and Literature: ILSJ, Wollega University

Abstract:- This study investigates the practice of English language productive skills' continuous assessment in preparatory schools. Survey research design was used in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Data for this research was gathered from 18 (eighteen) teachers through questionnaire and 9 (nine) students through interview for in relation to speaking Skills. On the other hand, it was gathered from 120 (one hundred twenty) students through questionnaire and 6 (six) EFL teachers through interview regarding writing skills. The internal reliability of the instrument was checked before the questionnaire was actually administered. Moreover, the researcher had also checked the questionnaire items for its validity before it was actually administered. The result obtained showed majority of EFL teachers of preparatory school in West Wollega seem to lack awareness that continuous assessment can provide opportunity for assessing learners' productive skills more effectively than a single terminal exam.. On the other hand, data collected from student respondents shows that various techniques of continuous assessment are not being used for assessing productive skills in selected West Wollega preparatory schools. As the results of data gathered through both the questionnaire and interview illustrate, most of grade eleven EFL teachers at selected preparatory schools of West Wollega did not provide immediate and continuous or frequent feedback to the learners' performance constructively in their writing and speaking classes. This reveals that there is the dominance of the tests in the school. Finally, based on the findings of the study, it was suggested that the concerned bodies in collaboration with zone education office, and the districts education office etc. have to organize continuous training for EFL teachers to create awareness, the teachers themselves should engage in continuous assessment practice which is policy supported directive to improve student language learning and the Students, on the other hand, should be actively engaged in assessing themselves and their peers.

Keywords:- Assessment, continuous Assessment, Language Skills, Productive Skills and Receptive Skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

English Language is the most widely spoken language, and it plays a very important in the major aspects of life in this global era. In Ethiopia the language is used as a medium

of instruction in secondary schools; however, students' performance level in the target language is reported to be declining. According to Teshome (2001), students' English language competence and performance doesn't fit their level of education. According to Cross (1995), quality of curricular materials, the evaluation system, teaching methodology of teachers, lack of continuous (on job) training and attitude of both teachers and students, quality of teachers' training are among the factors which attribute to competence and performance of EFL students. Among the factors which contribute to the inadequacy of EFL students' competence and performance in language classes, teachers' evaluation system can be the one that might be emphasized. Emphasis on assessment is indispensable in striving to assure quality education. In the teaching learning process, one of the recent directions of educational reform has been the emphasis of assessment" (Rink (2006, as cited in Abera, 2012). This shows that careful assessment can be used as a means in developing the learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes integrating assessment and instruction together.

Many scholars agreed that continuous assessment has powerful role in the teaching and learning process because it reveals information regarding the outcomes achieved and the success or failures of learners' academic achievement. It is a form of assessment which takes place over a period of time involving the use of a variety of assessment instruments, assessing various components of learning, not only the thinking processes but including behaviors, personality traits and manual dexterity. Such an approach would be more holistic, representing the learner in his/her entirety.

In line to this, many scholars agreed that continuous assessment has powerful role in the teaching and learning process because it reveals information regarding the outcomes achieved and the success or failures of learners' academic achievement. For instance, research findings by Birhanu (2013) and Desalegn (2014) indicated that continuous assessment plays a vital role in monitoring students' learning progress, grading students' achievement, improving students' performance, and improving methods of teaching. Continuous assessment backs up learners' learning and guides teachers' instructions. Therefore, every teacher should maintain good practice of continuous assessment in order to ensure effective teaching of subject matter and to help students acquire the required knowledge, skill and attitude.

Moreover, the level of learner's development in language skills, knowledge and attitude can be obtained by assessing the teaching and learning process continuously. EFL teacher's practice of continuous assessment in EFL classroom enables them to realize how learners' are progressing in the development of skills, knowledge and values. Therefore, collecting information related to EFL learner's language development and guiding language teachers' instruction are the functions of assessment. English language teachers' are expected to put this mode of assessment into practice in productive skills' (Speaking and writing skills) classes. According to Harrison & Salinger (1998), assessing learners' speaking and writing skills is regarded as one of the most important ways of monitoring educational standards in all over the English-speaking world. Moreover, teachers are needed to give feedback based on the learner's performance and this allows the learners to focus on topics they have not mastered yet. Feedback helps teachers to identify students those who need remedial from those who are ready to begin complex lessons.

Despite its importance, the practice of continuous assessment in EFL classes is evidenced with tremendous pitfalls. For instance, finding of research conducted in Debub Ethiopia Teachers Education College by Sileshi in 2007 showed that teachers in the college had inadequate understanding about continuous assessment. Habtamu (2009) conducted a research focusing on the implementation of continuous assessment among Dilla University EFL teachers and he found out that EFL teachers lack adequate knowledge of CA, there is limited use of assessment devices and the presence of different challenges during implementation. In connection with this, a research which was conducted by Dagne in 2009 showed that the teachers in Jimma Teachers' College did not always use CA in order to assess students' English language performance.

This study focused on the practice of continuous assessment in productive skills' classes. The particular grade to which this study is limited is grade eleven. In Ethiopia context, it is a grade level where students need scaffolding so as to be prepared for university education. Therefore, this study fundamentally aimed at investigating the Practice of English Language Productive Skills' continuous assessment in West Wollega Zone Preparatory Schools.

Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated and answered.

1. What level of understanding do EFL teachers of grade eleven have regarding purposes & principles of CA in EFL productive skills?
2. How do EFL teachers of grade eleven practice CA in Productive skills' classes?
3. How often do grade eleven EFL teachers Provide feedback for their Students?

English Language Skills

There are four language skills for communicating in any language that one has to learn when one learns a language. Scholars tend to talk about the way we use

language in terms of four skills- reading, writing, speaking and listening. He/she learns to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. Similarly, these are the steps to be followed for learning a second or a foreign language. A person needs a mastery of various elements to use the language to convey thoughts, wishes, intentions, feeling and information in a written form (Pamela, 1991). The four main skills of English language are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. They are divided into two categories such as receptive skills and productive skills. Reading and listening are considered receptive skills whereas speaking and writing are known as productive skills.

Receptive skills

Receptive skills are reading skills and listening skills. When a certain text is read and listened meaning is extracted from the discourse. In other words, we receive the language, understand it and decode the meaning. Learners receive language by reading newspaper, poem, book and they also receive language listening to conversation, music and video.

The productive skills

Productive skills are speaking and writing, because learners need to articulate words and write to produce language. Productive skills is used to refer to skills learners use to produce language themselves (Harmer, 2007). We use the language to produce a message through speech or written text. Learners receive language and then they move on to the next stage where they produce the language to express their thoughts by using productive skills.

Speaking Skills

Speaking is an oral production of language. McDonough and Shaw (2003) stated that speaking involves expressing ideas and opinions, expressing a wish or desire to do something, negotiating or solving problems or establishing and maintaining social relations. Ur (1991) said that, "Speaking is producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning". Therefore, speaking is the oral process to produce language.

Writing Skills

Writing is a specific skill which helps people to put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form through pen and paper. Writing is a productive skill in written mode. According to Grossmann (2009), "Writing can take many forms, including anything from a shopping list, acting as an aide-memoire, through letters, both formal and informal, to academic texts."

Assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Without proper assessment we cannot imagine the task teaching. Assessment in teaching task refers to the process of obtaining information and data about the skills, abilities, knowledge and attitude of the learners particularly in specific area like language skill, aspects, and vocabulary. Heaton (1975) says, "Both teaching and testing are so closely interrelated that is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other." Moreover, many scholars confirm that it is difficult

to achieve the goals of language teaching without language assessment (Heaton, 1988; Hughes, 1989; Taylor, 2006). They also state that Language assessment is an integral part of language teaching. In other words, language teaching and assessment are so closely interrelated that it may be difficult to view them separately. In this way, testing or assessment provides useful inputs to the teachers and chance to improve their learning on the basis of the feedbacks to the students.

Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve students' achievement. It is integral to teaching and learning and teachers are dependent on assessment for the improvement of their practice. Continuous assessment occurs as part of the daily interaction between teachers and students, revealing valuable information about student learning, in terms of knowledge, thinking and reasoning (Ali & Akube, 1988). This shows that the learning process has to be assessed on an ongoing basis informally and formally in order to get a good picture of the learner's development. Continuous assessment is a systematic way that teachers use in order to determine how well their students have mastered what has been taught (Capper, 1996 in Dagne, 2009). According to this scholar CA is used to pinpoint students who have or have not mastered particular skill.

Continuous Assessment in Speaking Skills' Classes

Enhancing the speaking skill as one of the productive skill is very important in the teaching of speaking. The teacher must provide students with opportunities to practice the language orally for the sake of proved his student mastery of the language. The next important step for language teachers is to measure their students' abilities in the speaking performance. Evaluating the speaking ability is not an easy task as it needs much time to administer to a large class. Language teachers are intended to judge their learners oral performance through observing students' interaction and participation in class activities. Continuously assessing speaking skills focus much more on the oral production in which students faced talking tasks and have to speak while the teacher's role is to evaluate the students' level of speech and correct them. According to Brown (2004), when we give a speaking test to the students, normally, we are going to measure the students' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, discourse features (cohesion, sociolinguistic appropriateness, etc.) and task (accomplishing the objective of the task is also closely dependant on comprehension).

Continuous Assessment in Writing Skills' Classes

Regarding in teaching writing skill, Continuous assessment provides areas of writing like spelling, grammar, organization and writing style on the basis of learners' actual performance in writing task to be improved. In this way, from the effective assessment whether it is in oral or written form, the learners as a writer can improve all areas or aspects of writing such as contents coverage, organization, spelling, grammar and punctuation. Thus, this is clear that teaching writing and assessment more particularly continuous assessment is mutually inclusive and

complementary with each other. So, without continuous assessment we cannot fulfill the desired objectives of teaching writing and its others various process like drafting, organization, revising and editing more effectively.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive survey study design was opted for in this research for it serves the purpose of this research, i.e., describing the existing practice. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adapted because the research depended on gathering and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data.

Participants of the Study

The target population of the study is grade eleven students of West Wollega Zone. Three preparatory schools in West Wollega Zone were selected purposively because the researcher wanted to take the nearby preparatory schools of the zone. The total population of the study was 1200 students and 60 EFL teachers in the academic year. Of this population, 120 (10%) students and 18 (30%) classroom teachers were selected using the lottery method of simple random sampling technique.

Data Collection Instrument

Data collecting tools which were used to gather data for the study at hand were questionnaire and interview. They were developed based on the objectives of the study which aimed at investigating the practice of English language productive skills' continuous assessment in West Wollega Zone Preparatory Schools. The questionnaire and interview items were prepared in English, and the items to be distributed to the students were translated into Afaan Oromoo (the students' native and/or first language) in order to make the questions clear for the respondents so that the validity of the responses is insured.

Procedure of Data Analysis

Data gathered from both teachers and students was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The responses of the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed in forms of percentages and mean values using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) tool. However, data collected using the interview was analyzed qualitatively method in order to substantiate data collected using questionnaire.

III. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the result of the data analysis that answers the two research questions: the level of understanding EFL teachers of grade eleven have regarding purposes & principles of CA in EFL productive skills and the way EFL teachers of grade eleven practice continuous assessment in Productive Skills' classes and the frequency of feedback provision by grade eleven EFL teachers. The interpretation was done based on the average of the respondents.

Teachers' awareness of the CA principles and purposes

EFL teachers were asked if they are aware of continuous assessment, its principles and purposes. The interviewee reacted to the interview questions as follows:

Teacher A said that continuous assessment is the method of testing learners in a frequent manner in various ways. It has many purposes in the writing teaching and learning of the English language; simply, it is the method of testing that is used for measuring the learners' achievement. It is considered as product focused as the learners pass and fail to the teaching and learning process.

Teacher B explained that continuous assessment is a mechanism to assess students speaking and writing skill in the EFL classes or continuous assessment is continuous testing & used to identify students' rank in the class room particularly, in the speaking and writing class room.

Teacher C and F replied that continuous assessment is being act of assess something /measure of something, specifically in the teaching of speaking and writing skills. According to them, it is an assessment used to improve learners result in the teaching and learning of speaking and writing.

And, teacher D also responded that continuous assessment is the continual /progressive evaluation/ tests of students of something else in the teaching and learning of the skill of speaking and writing.

Lastly, teacher E was asked similar question and said continuous assessment is the type of assessment which is going to assess students' speaking and writings in the teaching and learning way; it is an ongoing tests. Concerning its purposes and principles, she said she use it to assess learners in general.

The respondents think CA as it is an assessment type that is used to improve students result rather than assisting learners to learn. CA is continuous testing used to assess and measure the students in an ongoing way. This shows that the EFL teachers use learners result for condition of pass and fail of learners at the end of semester or year than using the result to improve students' learning. However, this idea did not tend to agree with the purposes and principles of continuous assessment since the main purpose of CA is to improve learning and to shape the instructional process. The Respondents' response is contradicted with that of the purposes and principles of continuous assessment. From the response of the teacher, it is possible to understand that the EFL teachers have skill gap in relation to the principles and purposes of continuous assessment in EFL productive skills' classes. It also implies that EFL teachers are unaware that continuous assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. This has a negative impact on their practice of CA in the EFL classroom particularly in Productive skills' classes.

Teachers' Practices of Speaking Skills' Continuous Assessment

The informants' knowledge and actual classroom practices of speaking skills' continuous assessment is discussed in this section of data analysis.

Table 1: The informants' major reasons for conducting speaking skills' Continuous assessment

Alternatives	Informants' number	Informants' percentage
Improve students' learning	6	33.33
Assign grades	3	16.66
Enhance the students' future oral performances	8	44.44
Test the efficiency of the instructors' teaching pedagogies	1	5.55

As it is indicated in the table above, 5.55% of the informants opt for the assessment of speaking for testing the efficiency of their own teaching pedagogy. Another weak percentage of informants (16.66%) refer to the assessment for the sake of providing their learners with marks.

The two highest percentages indicate the rate of informants who utilize speaking assessment in order to improve students' learning (33.33%) and more importantly to support them enhance their verbal performances in the future (44.44%).

On the other hand, the result of interview data gathered from the students also show that the major reasons for conducting speaking assessment according to them are to enhance their future oral performances and to enhance their learning.

Based on the findings indicated above, the majority of EFL teachers accord a great importance to their students' learning process and progress. This shows that the teachers' interest in using assessment is to excel their learners' speaking capabilities and boost high levels of learning.

Table 2: Type/s of speaking skills' continuous assessment used by teachers

Alternatives	Informants' number	Informants' percentage
Formal assessment	3	16.66
Informal assessment	4	22.22
Both formal and informal assessment	11	61.11

As it is depicted in the table above, the findings reveal that the overall majority of teachers (61.11%) show their inclination and interest in the implementation of both types of assessment: the formal and the informal one. The informants' choices can be justified by the merits that they gain when applying each type.

On the other hand, the result of interview data gathered from the students in relation to types of speaking assessment used by teachers also show that their teachers use both formal and informal assessment in speaking classes.

Therefore, the assessments of speaking skills in a number of west Wollega preparatory schools have both summative and formative aspects. In short, it should be noted that the main objective of informal oral assessment is to support and sustain the learners' speaking development while the aim of formal assessment is to articulate the learners' oral proficiency into grades.

Table 3: The major source/s of speaking skills' continuous assessment

Alternatives	Informants' number	Informants' percentage
Teacher	3	16.66
Students	5	27.77
Both the teacher and students	10	55.55

The findings indicate that a number of teachers consider themselves as the sole providers of assessment, others believe in the potentials of their learners in assessing themselves and their peers efficiently, while another group of teachers admit that the assessment of speaking is a mutual responsibility of both the teacher and their learners.

Based on the statistics mentioned in the table above, 55.5% of informants consider that the assessment process is a shared responsibility between them and their students. Other 35% of informants believe that classroom assessment should emanate from learners and only 27.77% of informants admit that they are the ones who ensure classroom assessment.

The result of interview also shows that the assessment of speaking is a mutual responsibility of both the teacher and their learners.

According to Huerta-Macías, 1995, cited in Richards & Renandya, (2002), the assessment of speaking skills is viewed as “an ongoing process that involves the student and teacher in making judgments about the student’s progress in language using by non-conventional strategies”. Based on the achieved findings, the majority of teachers collaborate with their learners in the construction of classroom assessment during the oral expression sessions.

Table 4: The measures used in the continuous assessment of EFL learners' speaking performance

Alternatives	Informants' number	Informants' percentage
Verbal feedback	5	27.77
Rubrics-analytic ones	13	72.22
Technology based assessment	0	0.00

As it is depicted in the table above, the teachers' distribution along the various measures differ. No percentage of teachers acknowledges the use of technology mediated assessment for the measurement of the learners' speaking. The respondents didn't report to have used digital chats, recordings of the learners' speaking performance, and video scripts commentary.

Another group of informants (27.77%) believes in the use of verbal feedback as an assessment strategy that is employed to help learners' monitor their oral language progress.

According to the table above, analytic rubrics is used for the detailed assessment of learners output by majority of teachers (72.22%). However, Nagata (1995), the teachers' use of equipment as measurement instruments for the assessment of EFL learners' oral proficiency is very necessary.

On the other hand, the result of interview data gathered from the students in relation to the measures used in the continuous assessment of the EFL learners' speaking performance also show that their teachers use rubrics-analytic ones and verbal feed back in speaking classes.

The frequent contact between EFL teachers and their learners renders the assessment of speaking an ongoing process that thrives through the use of English as a medium of communication. Through the implementation of sufficient practice and opportunities to speak in the classroom, the reliance on oral feedback strengthens classroom interactions, develops communicative strategies and sustains thereby informal oral language assessment.

Teachers' Practices of Writing Skills' Continuous Assessment

All the interviewed teachers were asked about continuous assessment techniques they employ in their writing classes and they tried to list down one by one as follows:

Teacher A replied that he used group work and sometimes pair work are the continuous writing assessment techniques that he employ in his own writing classes to assess learners writing skills in particular.

Teacher B also replied that the continuous writing assessment technique that he employed in the writing classes is peer assessment. He added that he sometimes employed individual work.

Teacher C, D and F replied that group work was their continuous assessment technique stating that the technique used may vary from teacher to teacher. They elaborated that they employed this technique of assessment in the EFL writing classes because through group work many learners' achievement can be assessed in a short period of time.

Concerning this teachers’ interview, teacher E, responded saying she employed different continuous assessment techniques in her writing classes, such as; pair work, individual work, written exams, group work and the like. However, she said group work and written exams are the only continuous writing assessment techniques that she mostly practiced in the writing classes.

According to these interviewees, the continuous assessment techniques that they frequently practiced in writing classes are written tests/exams, quizzes and group work. The result shows that EFL teachers use limited

number of writing assessment techniques in the EFL writing classes and there was no any attempt to use different writing assessment techniques.

However, the use of various assessment techniques in the writing classes enables the EFL teachers to assure learners achievement in different directions, using fewer techniques could affect EFL learners’ writings performance. In other words, the more different techniques of assessments are used in the writing classes, the better students master writing skills.

Table 5: EFL Students’ Response about teachers’ employment of continuous assessment techniques in writing classes

No	Items	Scales										Mean (X)
		5		4		3		2		1		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1.	Self-assessment	14	11.7	11	9.2	59	49.2	36	30.0	-	-	3.02
2.	Peer assessment	27	22.5	25	20.8	-	-	8	6.7	60	50.0	2.59
3.	Home work	27	22.5	10	8.3	10	8.3	64	53.3	9	7.5	2.85
4.	Class work	26	21.7	11	9.2	21	17.5	41	34.2	21	17.5	2.83
5.	Written Tests, quizzes or exams	66	55.0	36	30.0	6	5.0	6	5.0	6	5.0	4.25
6.	Group projects	52	43.3	25	20.8	19	15.8	16	13.3	8	6.7	3.80
7.	Question & Answers	23	19.2	23	19.2	37	30.8	12	10	25	20.8	3.05
8.	Observation	10	8.3	19	15.8	50	41.7	26	21.7	15	12.5	2.85
9.	Presentation	21	17.5	13	10.8	31	25.8	40	33.3	15	12.5	2.87
10.	Individual projects or Assignments	24	20	16	13.3	8	6.7	61	50.8	11	9.2	2.84
11.	Writing portfolio	13	10.8	12	10	61	50.8	17	14.2	17	14.2	2.89
12.	Strategy checklist	12	10	25	20.8	18	15	44	34.2	21	20	2.66
13.	Interview	-	-	-	-	-	-	41	34.2	79	65.8	1.34
14.	Teacher-student conference	16	13.3	15	12.5	28	23.3	19	15.8	42	35	2.53

N.B: F=Frequency, %= Percentage, and Rating scales: Always=5, usually=4, Sometimes=3, rarely=2, Never=1, X=Mean

Regarding table 5, the researcher requested the students how often their EFL teachers practice continuous writing assessment techniques in their EFL writing classes. The realizations of CA in writing classes can be accomplished using various techniques. As pointed out in table 5, item 2, 60 (50%) of the respondents responded that their EFL teachers never practice peer writing assessment technique in their own writing classes. As opposed to these students’ response, 6.7% of the respondents reported that their EFL teachers rarely apply peer writing assessment in their writing classes (Table 5, item 2).

However, one of the teachers from the interview pointed out that the continuous writing assessment technique that he always employed in the writing classes is peer writing assessment technique. He added that he sometimes employed individual work. This contradicts with the data obtained from students’ questionnaire in table 5, item 2. This is because most of the student respondents responded that their EFL teachers never practice peer assessment in their writing classes to enhance their own writing skill performance. However, as it is indicated from the interview, the data obtained from majority of the teachers (i.e. teachers

A, C, D, E and F) tend to agree with the data obtained from students.

Furthermore, as it can be observed from table 5, item 5, (X= 4.25), the written tests/exams adequately practiced by preparatory school EFL teachers in the writing teaching and learning of the English language. This is parallel with the data obtained from interview which shows that written tests/exams was used frequently as one aspect of continuous assessment in assessing learners in EFL writing classes.

In the same way, as to the student respondents, in table 5, item 6, (X= 3.80) implies that 43.3% (57 of 120) of them confirm that most of their EFL teachers always practice group work writing assessment technique in their writing classes. In line to this, majority of the interviewee replied that group work is the continuous assessment techniques that they employ in their own writing classes to assess learners writing skills in general.

From all these results, it is possible to deduce that the written tests /examination, quizzes and group work were dominantly practiced continuously to assess students’ writings in EFL writing classes; whereas, most types of

writing assessment techniques were neglected. As the result indicated most of grade eleven EFL teachers gave less concern to using various writing assessment techniques in their writing classes. The reason why they employed these continuous assessment techniques in writing skills is due to large class size and time constraints /work load/.

Feedback provided in Productive Skills’ Continuous Assessment

Concerning this, all the six EFL teachers were interviewed the frequency of feedback provision to their students in productive skills’ classes and all of them replied that they sometimes provided feedback to their students regarding productive skills’ performance in teaching and learning of the English language, particularly in speaking

and writing classes. They further mentioned that the number of students and time allotted were not parallel in their school and they had to run to cover the whole lesson because they could be asked if the topics were not covered. They stated that it was difficult to provide frequent/continuous feedback because there are so many learners in the class and it was tiresome to reach every student.

The result reveals that most of the EFL teachers did not give frequent/timely feedback to their students in productive skills’ classes. Their main target was to cover the topics within the given time. However, in teaching and learning of productive skills providing frequent feedback to the learners leads them to self-correction and improvement.

Table 6: EFL learners’ responses about how often their teachers give them feedback in productive skills’ classes

No	Items	Scales										Mean (X)
		5		4		3		2		1		
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1.	My English teacher provides me feedback on my writing and speaking performances frequently	7	5.8	25	20.8	58	48.3	30	25.0	-	-	3.07
2.	My English teacher gives me constructive feedback indicating my strengths and weaknesses.	3	2.5	2	1.7	81	67.5	33	27.5	1	0.8	0.83

N.B (F=Frequency, %=Percentage and (Rating scales: 5= Always, 4= usually, 3= Sometimes, 2=rarely, 1= Never, X= Mean

According to the above table, the students were asked to give their response in relation to the frequency of feedback they receive during teachers’ practice of continuous assessment in the teaching and learning of productive skills.

As pointed out in table 6, item 1, 48.3% of the respondents replied that their EFL teachers sometimes provided feedback to their writing and speaking performances. In other words, for this aspect in which feedback can be practiced sometimes, the mean score was in an intermediate point (3.00) which is 3.07.

As pointed out in the above table, item 2 also indicates that 67.5% (81 of 120) of the EFL teachers sometimes provided constructive feedback indicating their strengths and weaknesses in productive skills’ classes to their students. The mean value of this item is below the expected mean score (X=0.83). It implies that the grade eleven EFL students had less opportunity to receive feedback in a constructively way from their EFL teachers in the teaching and learning of English language productive skills.

On the other hand, the data which was obtained from the teachers’ interview shows that most of the EFL teachers did not give frequent feedback to their students as it is expected in the practice of continuous assessment in the EFL speaking and writing classes.

Based on the above analysis, regarding the practice of CA in productive skills’ classes, it is possible to deduce that the way feedback is given to grade eleven EFL students is

not continuous and constructive even though it is considered as one basic component of continuously assessing speaking and writing skills. This implies that there was less chance of giving and receiving feedback in the EFL productive skills’ classes.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study aimed at investigating the EFL teachers’ practices of continuous assessment in productive skills’ classes. The awareness of EFL teachers’ continuous assessment focuses on the purpose and principles of continuous assessment in teaching productive skills. On the other hand, the practice also explores the techniques, frequency of their practice and the feedback EFL teachers employ in continuously assessing students productive skills. The results of data gathered through interview and questionnaire were discussed in line with some empirical findings of other research works.

The result of data gathered through interview revealed that most of grade Eleven EFL teachers of West Wollega zone seem to have doubt that continuous assessment can provide opportunity for assessing learners’ productive skills more effectively than a single terminal exam. This shows that the EFL teachers have less knowledge of the principles and purposes of productive skills’ continuous assessment. However, Jandris (2001) cited in Desalegn (2014) argues that “the heart of assessment is a continuing process in which the teacher, in collaboration with the student, uses information to guide the next steps in learning”.

Data collected from student respondents showed that various techniques of continuous assessment were not considered in assessing productive skills' classes of selected west Wollega preparatory schools. The result indicated that majority of EFL teachers believe as continuous assessment has less importance to their students' learning process and progress. Accordingly, EFL teachers of West Wollega preparatory schools lack interest in using continuous assessment to excel their learners' speaking capabilities and boost high levels of learning opposes results obtained from other researches (Sparks, 2005; Black & William, 1998; Murray, 2006; Vardar, 2010; Bennet & Gitomer, 2009).

Moreover, as the results of the data gathered from both the questionnaire and interview illustrates that most grade eleven EFL teachers at selected west Wollega preparatory schools did not provide continuous/frequent feedback to the learners' performance in their writing and speaking classes. Besides, they reported that they do not give immediate feedback to the learners. This reveals that there is the dominance of the traditional tests in the school. Nevertheless, Angelo & Cross (1993) argue that the feedback should be provided within minute's time interval in EFL classrooms.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study which set out to find out the practice of English language productive skills' continuous assessment in preparatory schools of West Wollega zone has a number of implications. It gives a clear picture about what teachers think of productive skills' assessment and how they deal with it practically in preparatory schools of West Wollega Zone.

Regarding to the understanding and practice of continuous assessment in productive skills' classes, the EFL teachers of preparatory school have less knowledge of the principles, purposes and practice of continuous productive skills' assessment. With regard to the practice of continuous assessment of productive skills, various techniques of continuous assessment were nearly ignored from assessing productive skills in west Wollega preparatory schools. The result of analyzed data showed the practice of productive skills' continuous assessment in EFL classes did not meet to the expectations at the selected west Wollega preparatory schools. Moreover, the result revealed that most grade eleven EFL teachers did not provide immediate and continuous/frequent feedback to the learners' performance in their writing and speaking classes.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that grade eleven EFL teachers of West Wollega have less knowledge of the principles and purposes of productive skills' continuous assessment and they do not properly practice continuous assessment in productive skills' classes based on the results and discussions of the findings of the study. Teachers use learners result for condition of pass and fail of learners at the end of the year/semester than to enhance the learners learning in teaching and learning of productive skills. Furthermore, the analysis and discussion of data from all

sources showed that grade eleven EFL teachers do not provide immediate and continuous feedback for their learners constructively in productive skills' classes.

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