

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
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(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)

**THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING CONTINUOUS ORAL
ASSESSMENT IN EFL CLASSES WITH REFERENCE TO DEBRE-
BIRHAN TEACHERS' COLLEGE**

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**The Challenges of Implementing Continuous Oral
Assessment in EFL Classes with Reference to
Debre-Birhan Teachers' College**

By

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List of Acronyms

1. AED: Academy for Educational Development
2. CA: Continuous Assessment
3. EFL: English as a Foreign Language
4. FCA: Formative Continuous Assessment
5. SCA: Summative Continuous Assessment
6. TESO: Teacher Education System Over haul
7. TEVTC: Teacher Education and Vocational Training College

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges of implementing continuous oral assessment, to assess how the perceptions of teacher-educators and student-teachers influence the current practices of continuous oral assessment.

To conduct the study, descriptive survey method was employed. The study was conducted in Debre-Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College and the data were collected from 75 student-teachers and 10 teacher-educators of the college. Questionnaire consisting of closed and open-ended questions was used as the main data gathering tool. It was substantiated with in depth and focus group interviews. The findings of the study revealed that both the teacher - educators and student -teachers have positive attitude towards continuous oral assessment. Surprisingly, however, the results of the study indicated that continuous oral assessment is a neglected area of practice.

Among the factors affecting the effective implementation of continuous oral assessment; students' linguistic background, structural constraints, absence of college level assessment policy, in adequacies in the use of informal continuous oral assessment methods, negligence of formative continuous assessment were found to be the major ones. Finally, recommendations were put forward based on the major findings so as to minimize the problems affecting the effective implementation of continuous oral assessment.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The Debre-Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College is one of the higher institutions in the Amhara National Regional State. It runs two major programmes: second cycle teaching and non-teaching vocational training diploma programmes.

The second cycle teaching diploma programme is mainly concerned with training second cycle primary school teachers. It is a three year programme and the course is available to students who have successfully completed grade 10 and met the minimum requirements. Moreover, the programme consists of five academic subject streams: Natural Science, Social Science, Language, Aesthetics and Physical Education and Mathematics.

Student-teachers joining the Language stream are required to take English language development courses organized around the four major language skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing and the sub skills of grammar and vocabulary. Teacher-educators are also required to find ways of helping the student teachers with their learning difficulties. To achieve this, they are required to use a variety of informal diagnostic assessment techniques. This is because the new national assessment policy places more emphasis on continuous assessment. As a result of this shift of focus from summative to formative assessment, continuous assessment is now counting as much as 75% of the total assessment of student teachers (TESO 2003). It is thus clear that most of the assessment of student-teachers' language ability is done through continuous assessment procedures. Moreover, continuous assessment is believed to provide a natural assessment environment for assessing students' oral skills (Heaton 1990). This is to say that oral assessment exercises that

resemble real world tasks can be assessed more effectively using informal continuous assessment procedures than terminal examinations. It is also argued that continuous oral assessment procedures avoid the practical problem of finding the time which is inherent in terminal oral examinations (Teshome 1995 and Underhill 1987).

Moreover, it seems likely that continuous oral assessment procedures minimize the problem of reliability which is a common feature of an end of course formal oral tests. In relation to this, Bachman (1990) also confirms “Individual’s performance may be affected by differences in testing conditions, fatigue, and anxiety and they may thus obtain scores that are inconsistent from one occasion to the next” (1990:24). This is to say that the average scores that the test taker obtains from a set of continuous tests are likely to be more reliable than those obtained from an end of course examination.

In general, as discussed above, the current emphasis on continuous assessment seems to be underpinned by strong pedagogical assumptions.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Although very few studies that investigated the current practices of continuous assessment in language testing in general were carried out, no attempt has been yet made to investigate the difficulties of assessing the productive skills in general and speaking skills in particular by means of continuous assessment. Consequently, it is almost none or little known about the challenges of assessing oral proficiency as an integral part of class room instruction.

Further more, it seems reasonable to summarize that continuous assessment generally offers two main advantages:

1. It addresses the issues pertinent to time constraints
2. It serves as a diagnostic tool.

It is thus clear that continuous assessment is being implemented with the intention of improving learning and guiding teaching in particular and raising the standard of education in general. In addition to this, it is assumed that continuous assessment creates opportunities for classroom teachers to assess their students' oral skills in a gradual and relaxed manner. Many people, however, are still in doubt about the effectiveness of this system. People such as school principals, supervisors, students, parents and teacher-educators seem to have put the blame on continuous assessment for the poor performance of English teachers who have recently graduated from the college. The rumors go even to the extent of saying that new graduate English teachers with the highest grades in EFL course are found to be poor at both oral and written communication. In conclusion, what makes this problem more serious is that it affects not only those new graduate English teachers but also their respective students. It is thus crucial to investigate the real challenges of assessing speaking skills through continuous assessment.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objectives

The current study has been intended to:

- find out the major challenges of continuously assessing the speaking skills as an integral part of classroom oral practice and teaching.
- describe the magnitude of the problems so that priorities can be set for immediate decisions.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

It has been specifically intended to:

- describe teacher-educators and student teachers' views, attitudes and perceptions of continuous assessment, continuous oral assessment, and functions of feedback.
- find out whether teacher-educators are familiar with different continuous oral assessment methods or not

1.4. The Research Questions

The following broad and specific research questions have been the central concern of the study:

1.4.1. Broad Research Questions

- What are the major challenges of continuously assessing the speaking skills?
- How do they affect the various aspects of oral assessment and practice?

1.4.2. Specific Research Questions

- How do teacher-educators and student- teachers perceive continuous assessment in general and continuous oral assessment in particular?
- How do teacher-educators and student-teachers perceive the pedagogical functions of feedback?
- How familiar are teacher-educators with different continuous oral assessment methods?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Most teacher educators would accept that 'if you want to encourage oral ability, then test oral ability' (Hughes 2003:53). But it seems that the problems of assessing oral ability lead teacher educators in to using inadequate oral tests or even not assessing speaking skills at all. This study, therefore, tries to find out the major challenges of assessing the speaking skills through continuous assessment procedures which will in turn make both teacher-educators and student-teachers aware of the different possible ways of tackling the problems.

Moreover, the study will be used as a future reference for those people who may have a similar concern.

In general, the findings of this study are expected to benefit teacher-educators, student teachers and other stake holders.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Many language specialists believe that speaking and listening are naturally integrated (Lindsay and knight, 2006; Mc Donough and Shaw, 2003). People, for example, use words and sounds to show that they are listening and to indicate how they feel about what they are saying. Similarly, oral assessment tasks involve both receptive and productive skills. The focus of attention, however, varies depending on the purpose of the assessment task. If, for example, we focus attention on oral assessment tasks that require the production of utterances, we should only assess those aspects of the task while assessing our students oral performance (Oler 1979).

This study is, therefore, delimited to the current practice of assessing student-teachers' oral communicative skills as an integral part of classroom instruction in a language development course entitled "English in Use" organized around the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing and the sub skills of vocabulary and grammar. It is also delimited to EFL teacher educators and language major student teachers at Debre Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College.

1.7. Definition of Operational Terms

1.7.1. Continuous Assessment: Assessment done formally and informally on a regular and continuous basis. It is integrated with instruction in order to improve learning, help, shape and direct the teaching-learning process.

1.7.2. Formative Continuous Assessment: An ongoing, often daily process by which teacher educators gather and interpret information about aspects of students' learning and their own teaching.

1.7.3. Summative Continuous Assessment: A procedure for gathering information about the students' achievement of the curriculum goals or objectives at the end of instruction or unit.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Assessment and Testing

Many language specialists believe that language assessment is a much more comprehensive term that is concerned with observing learners and collecting information about how they are progressing in their learning. It is a way of finding out what learners process. Language testing, on the other hand, is one of the essential components of assessment mostly used for a summative purpose. It is an instrument or systematic procedure for observing and describing one or more characteristics of a student in the teaching learning process. With respect to the relationship between assessment and testing, Hedge (2000) states:

... assessment is the more inclusive term: It refers to the general process of monitoring or keeping track of the learners' progress. Testing is one kind of assessment, one which is typically used at the end of a stage of instruction to measure student achievement (2000: 376).

Assessment includes testing and other ways of gathering information about the students' language ability in general and their progress in particular. Similarly, Mc Namara (1999) adds:

... assessment is the set of processes through which we make inferences about a learner's learning process, skills, knowledge and achievements. Thus, testing is only one instrument out of several (including port folio assessment, exhibitions, performances, group projects, self and peer assessment, etc.) (1999-220).

Testing is thus one of the various forms of assessment that can be used for gathering information about the students' achievement on the course.

Moreover, testing takes different forms ranging from standardized formal tests to short informal classroom based tests (Brown 1987; Heaton 1990). Doff (1988), for instance, states:

As they progress through the various stages of learning English students are usually given formal tests and examinations from time to time... But in addition to those formal kinds of test, the teacher can also give regular informal tests to measure the students' progress (1988:257).

It seems thus reasonable to regard assessment as a general process that involves using a range of different assessment methods, of which testing is a part, to collect information about the level of attainment of instructional objectives in general and strengths and weaknesses of individual students in particular. Moreover, testing as a component of assessment entails both formal and informal testing procedures.

Further more, It is believed that assessment is undertaken for different purposes. The purpose of an informal classroom based oral test, for example, is quite different from a standardized achievement or proficiency oral test. According to Hedge (2000), assessment is said to be formative if the purpose is pedagogically motivated, whereas it is said to be summative if the purpose is product-oriented. This means that formative assessment is ongoing feedback during the learning. Summative assessment, on the other hand, summarizes the process at the end.

As regards the general distinction between formative and summative assessment, George and Cowan (1999) metaphorically state that “when the cook tastes the soup, it is formative evaluation; when the dinner guest tastes the soup, it is summative evaluation” (1991:1). This implies that the cook would be in a position to improve the quality of the soup if it went wrong. Similarly, formative continuous assessment will provide the classroom practitioner with the opportunity to take decisions for improving learning if things go wrong. The dinner guest, on the other hand, would not have the opportunity to improve the

quality of the soup even if it went wrong. Likewise, summative assessment will hardly give any opportunity for improvement.

According to Hedge (2000), the basic distinguishing characteristics of formative (continuous) and summative assessment can be summarized like this:

Formative (Continuous) Assessment

- is prepared and carried out by the class teacher as a routine part of teaching and learning
- is specifically related to what has been taught, i.e. content is in harmony with what has been taught
- the information from the assessment is used diagnostically; it is focused on the individual learners' specific strengths and weaknesses, needs, etc

Summative Assessment

- is not necessarily prepared and carried out by the class teacher
- does not necessarily relate immediately to what has been taught
- the judgment about a learner's performance is likely to feed in to record- keeping and be used for administrative purposes, e.g. checking standards and targets
- is frequently externally imposed, e.g. by an institution or a ministry of education

(2000: 377).

It seems thus vital to recognize that formative assessment is very much concerned with collecting information about the students' progress and finding a way of helping them with their learning difficulties. The focus is, therefore, on the process of learning. With summative assessment, however, the focus of attention is on the final outcome of learning.

2.2. The Need for Continuous Assessment

The new Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO, 2003) programme has emphasized the use of continuous assessment as an integral part of class room instruction that is necessary to improve the quality of education in the country. In relation to this, Shepard (2000) points out that “in order for assessment to play a more useful role in helping students learn it should be moved in to the middle of the teaching and learning process instead of being postponed as only the end point of instruction” (2000: 10).

This is to say that assessment of learning is no longer seen as external examination added at the end of a course but as a continuous process from the very beginning of the course. Similarly, with respect to the need for continuous assessment, Mc Namara (1999) states:

The field of evaluation is undergoing changes and to a large extent moving away from psychometric testing and into educational assessment. The changes have come about as a result of development in how learning is perceived. The learner is active in creating new knowledge, the teacher undertakes the role of tutor, supervisor, and co-learner. Learning and teaching are no longer viewed as two separate processes but as an interactive process. Assessment functions as a link between learning and teaching (1999:220).

As cited above, the shift from traditional language testing procedures to informal classroom based continuous assessment procedure is based on the changes in the roles of teachers and students in the new learner-centered teaching methodology. Shaaban (2001), for example, points out that “communicative language methodology brings with it a considerable emphasis on formative (continuous) evaluation with more use of descriptive records of learner development in language and learning” (2001:17). It is thus clear that the current emphasis on the use of continuous assessment in the process of learning has resulted from the new insights into language teaching and

learning. Moreover, Huerta-Macias (1995) in Shaaban (2001) notes that continuous assessment, unlike traditional tests, can document “a story for every student-and what is the ultimate goal of evaluation but to give us the knowledge to be able to reflect up on, discuss and assist a student’s journey through the learning process” (2001: 22). Similarly, Hedge (2000) confirms that students should view continuous assessment “as an opportunity to reflect upon and celebrate their effort, progress, and improvement” (2000:397).

Therefore, this is to mean that continuous assessment becomes a diagnostic tool that provides feedback to the learner and the teacher about the suitability of the curriculum and instructional materials, the effectiveness of the teaching methods, and the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Furthermore, it helps to demonstrate to learners that they are making progress. This will in turn encourage students to do more and “the teacher to work on refining the process of learning rather than its product” (2001:12). Regarding this, Puhl (1997) also adds that “the new policy of continuous assessment is aimed at bringing out a paradigm shift in educational assessment in several ways. The central characteristics of this shift is the moving of assessment from a judgmental role to a developmental role” (1997: 3).

This is to say that continuous assessment is much more useful to students since it provides them with on-going feedback on their performance which helps them to become more self critical, and encourages them to attempt to make improvement as they actually work through a course rather than leaving the real learning process to the very end.

According to Ellington and Earl (1997), the current need for using continuous assessment fits in well with three current trends in tertiary education. These include:

1. the move to make assessment a more integral part of the learning process (assessment for learning).

2. the shift from assessment of content to assessment of process.
3. the increasing unitization and modularization of courses (1997:3).

Similarly, as evident in TESO (2003) and AED (2006) documents, the need to consider continuous assessment in TEIs' assessment policy seems to be directly related to the current emerging views of education in general and teachers' and students' roles in particular. As defined in the Ethiopian context, continuous assessment includes both formative and summative continuous assessment procedures. According to TESO (2003) and AED (2006), formative continuous assessment refers to any assessment made during the academic year that is meant to improve learning and help shape and direct the teaching learning process. This is to say that formative continuous assessment is informal and meant to collect information about learning during the lesson. Summative continuous assessment, sometimes referred to as selected graded continuous assessment or planned formative assessment, on the other hand, is based on the learning objectives specified in the syllabus and used to assign grades that count towards the final grade.

Although both formative and summative continuous assessment procedures are necessary for good teaching "it is formative continuous assessment that holds more promise for improving teaching and learning" (AED 2006).

In general, Nitko (2004) in AED (2006) provides a summary on the distinction between FCA and SCA like this:

Formative Continuous Assessment	Summative Continuous Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occurs before and during instruction for the purposes of guiding learning and teaching - Mostly informal assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occurs at the end of instruction for the purpose of evaluating students' achievement of the curriculum objectives - Mostly formal assessment

- Assessment occurs frequently to guide teaching, give practice, and provide feedback
- Assessment occurs periodically to determine achievement of curriculum objectives, assign grades, certify attainment, and in combination with other assessments to place students (2003: 24).

This implies that formative continuous assessment requires teachers to use the assessment results to improve student learning and guide teaching. This implies that formative continuous assessment is much more useful to students and teachers than summative continuous assessment.

Moreover, Eliss (2003) points out that continuous assessment is further divided in to two: incidental and planned formative assessment. These seem to be conceptually similar to the terms formative and summative continuous assessment respectively.

Planned formative continuous assessment involves the classroom use of formal tests. Incidental formative continuous assessment, on the other hand, refers to “the ad hoc assessment that teachers (and students) carry out as part of the process of performing a task that has been selected for instructional rather than assessment purposes” (Eliss 2003: 314).

Moreover Eliss (2003) confirms that incidental formative continuous assessment is more useful to both students and teachers than planned formative continuous assessment. Planned formative continuous assessment or summative continuous assessment is, however, found to be useful for minimizing the problems associated with accuracy and fairness of students’

overall assessment which is pertinent in summative final examinations. Regarding the reasons for this, AED (2006) states:

1. *The time limits for examinations are relatively short.*
2. *Only a small group of tasks can be administered during the time of an examination.*
3. *Students may know much more than can be asked on a “one shot” examination.*
4. *Students’ illness and family problems can interfere with their ability to express what they know on the date an examination is administered.*
5. *Achievement can be demonstrated in several ways, not just in the way assessed in an examination.*
6. *Some types of learning can be assessed best through longer term projects, paper or out of school assignments (2006:3).*

The assumption is that summative or planned continuous assessment, as it gathers information at regular intervals in a continuous way, is likely to address the issues mentioned above. This is to say that the grades obtained from a number of summative continuous assessments are more likely to be accurate and fair than an end of course final examination . In relation to this, Brown and Youle (1983) also confirm that terminal examinations seem to be unfair. They go on to say:

There is a tendency to treat assessment as one-term or once a year activity. The student takes the test, such as an “O” level examination or Cambridge proficiency on a particular day, and his performance in that test, on the day, is taken to be a standard measure of the students’ ability. This means that it is a particularly inappropriate method of assessing a student’s spoken language skills. It would be both more informative for the teacher and fairer to the student to have some continuous record of the students’ spoken performance on different occasions and for different purposes (1983: 104).

It seems thus evident that summative oral assessment doesn’t depict the overall oral abilities of learners. One of the reasons for this could be the lack of opportunity for terminal oral examinations to include a variety of oral assessment tasks. Continuous assessment, on the other hand, allows classroom teachers to assess the various aspects of their students’ speaking

skills through different assessment tasks that involve the use of oral English for different purposes and situations. Moreover, planned formative continuous assessment as it is conducted at regular intervals can at least minimize the problems related to the accuracy and fairness of assessment results.

It should, however, be noted that there are some authorities who believe that continuous assessment has some drawbacks. Ellington and Earl (1997), for example, point out the advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment like this:

Advantages of CA

- Provides much more extensive syllabus coverage than terminal assessment.
- Uses a range of different assessment techniques.
- Places more emphasis on worth while learning.
- Encourages regular, systematic study and discourages last minute cramming.
- Provides early warnings of which students are having problems with the course
- Provides early indicators of the likely performance of students
- Provides an on-going picture of how individual students develop and mature as they work their way through a course.

Disadvantages of CA

- May make students feel that every error that they make along the way can count against them
- May make students feel that they are over assessed.
- May affect the relationship between students and tutors.
- May make people feel that it turns out to be nothing more than a series of tests or “mini examinations”.
- May require tutors with a high level of experience in assessment.

However, they go on to argue that continuous assessment is still worth while if it is carefully planned and organized in advance.

In general, Hopkins and Harris (2000) summarize the fundamental principles that underpin continuous assessment. These include:

1. **Diagnosis:** Teachers are required to know what their students are able to do or capable of doing. This will provide them with the opportunity to know the ability of individual learners in their class.
2. **Goals:** Teachers are required to have a clear idea about the learning objectives of the language programme in general and each lesson/activity in particular.
3. **Diversity of assessment:** Continuous assessment requires the use of a range of different assessment methods to gather valid and reliable information about the students' language ability.
4. **Shared criteria:** Teachers are required to share assessment criteria with their students.
5. **Feedback:** Feedback is an essential component of continuous assessment
6. **Self reflection:** Continuous assessment creates opportunity for learners to manage their own learning and reflect back on their performance.

2.3 Continuous Oral Assessment

As stated above, students' oral ability is now expected to be assessed on the basis of continuous assessment either as an integral part of a lesson (formative continuous assessment) or as a form of regular teacher made oral test (summative continuous assessment). With respect to the use of continuous assessment for assessing students' overall communicative ability, Brown and Youle (1983) state:

Naturally, there will continue to be a requirement that students be assessed on their command of the grammar and vocabulary which they have been taught. Teachers may also wish to make informal judgments on the pronunciation and fluency of their students' speech. We suggest that the teacher should continue to assess these features, not in isolation, but as part of his assessment of the students ability to communicate effectively in the spoken mode. We have suggested that one of the main aims of English teachers is to make their students able to communicate information effectively in spoken English. In pursuing this aim, the teacher may wish to be able to assess, at regular intervals how his students are progressing and also to find out if there are areas of performance which are consistently weak and require additional attention (1984: 103).

As stated above, continuous assessment procedures enable teachers to assess the different aspects of oral ability while the students are engaged in purposeful and meaningful oral communicative tasks.

According to Heaton (1990), continuous assessment provides opportunity for the classroom teacher to assess the students' oral skills by observing them while they are engaged in genuine communication. Regarding the difficulties of assessing oral communicative skills through formal tests, he goes on to argue:

Spontaneous conversation- genuine Communication is extremely difficult to examine. In many oral tests examiners ask students questions to which they already know the answer. Often an examiner will still be in a position of asking questions simply for the sake of asking questions. In short the whole situation is artificial; there is too much control and there is nothing spontaneous (1990: 118).

As shown above, formal oral tests are defective in assessing the students' overall communicative ability. They fail to provide natural assessment environment. Continuous assessment, on the other hand, provides both the students and teachers with the opportunity to use and assess oral skills in natural assessment environment. Similarly, Brown and Youle (1984) hold the same view:

They clearly state like this:

In normal life, we generally do not ask questions which have patently obvious answers. By the same taken, we do not normally tell people what they quite obviously know already;... If we incorporate these normal behavior principles into our assessment procedures, then we clearly do not want the student to be recorded talking (describing, instructing, story telling, etc.) to his teacher. The established status of the teacher is that he knows more than the student about most things encountered in the learning situation. If the teacher gives the student an object to describe, then the student has to create, for himself, an artificial information gap between his knowledge and the teacher's . He has to behave as if the teacher doesn't know what the object looks like. Why should we require this additional, and highly artificial, dimension in the students' behavior, when it is only his ability to use spoken English which we wish to assess (1984:111).

It is thus clear that formal oral tests are not suitable to assess students' oral communicative skills. One of the reasons for this could be that oral communicative skills can be best assessed through authentic communicative tasks rather than artificial oral testing procedures. Continuous assessment as it creates natural assessment environment can be the best tool for assessing communicative competence. Such assessment procedures as they are carried out as part of the classroom learning activities can help students perform the tasks in a natural and relaxed manner (Brown and Youle 1984, Heaton 1990).

Doff (1988), on the other hand, suggests that continuous assessment procedures could also be used for assessing students' general willingness and ability to speak in all the lessons. This is to say that teachers can assess the students' oral ability in English lesson which is not primarily designed to promote oral skills.

2.3.1. Continuous oral Assessment Methods

Heaton (1990) points out that observation and self assessment are the major components of formative continuous oral assessment. Moreover, TESO (2003)

states that oral question and answer, role play and drama, story telling and reporting provide more opportunity for comprehensive assessment. Puhl (1997) and Shaaban (2001) also add oral interview, logs and peer and group assessment to their list of continuous assessment methods.

2.3.1.1. Observation (Using Rating Scales, Checklist, etc)

As regards class room based observation, Hedge (2000) points out that with an increase in focus on communicative activities in the classroom such as “information –transfer tasks, role play and tasks designed to promote oral interaction” (2000:388), it can be argued that observation is a valid means of collecting information about the development of language skills. Similarly, Heaton (1990) confirms that observation is the best method of assessing. “those aspects of communicative language performance that are less easy to capture in a traditional paper and pencil format” (1990:116).

Regarding the procedures, he suggests that teachers should go round the class from group to group and observe them and jot down one or two notes discretely about certain students while the oral activity is taking place. While observing the students, he advises teachers to use a card or small note pad. His actual words run like this:

Use a card or small note pad. Never make it obvious that you are assessing the students in any way. And don't try to observe every student. Restrict your observation to a handful of students in each lesson-say, six or seven. When supervising and assessing such activities, it is not necessary for you to remain aloof and provide no help at all. Your active involvement in an activity from time to time can be very useful provided that you take care not to dominate the entire activity (1990:118).

As can be shown above, observation as a continuous oral assessment method provides opportunity for classroom teachers to assess their students' oral skills in a non-threatening atmosphere. As it is carried out while the students are performing classroom learning tasks, it is likely that it shows the true pictures

of students' oral performance. This will in turn help teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their students for further decision.

Similarly Shaaban (2001) points out that observation is the best method of assessing the following sub skills of speaking:

1. Understanding by other
2. Providing information needed by the listener
3. Absence of hesitation
4. Willingness to participate in conversation
5. Self-initiated utterances
6. Accuracy (in grammar, usage and vocabulary)
7. Topic development (2001: 20).

This implies that teachers can assess their students oral skills by observing them while performing oral activities as part of a lesson. As students of English are required to develop such sub skills of speaking, teachers can use them as criteria for assessing students oral performance.

In general, as Hedge (2000) underlines, classroom based observation is found to be of paramount importance although it requires an investment of time to plan and run it. One of the reasons for this could be that observation-driven assessment "has the potential to provide the level of detail that teacher, learner, or parent can use as a basis for constructive action" (2000:389). This is, therefore, one of the underlying principles of formative continuous assessment. In other words, this is to say that the descriptions of learners' performance obtained from classroom-based observation is so informative and qualitative that teachers, learners, parents and other stake holders can use them as a quick reference for future actions. It should, however, be noted that observation can achieve this if it is systematic and planned in advance. According to Genesee and Upshur (1996) in Hedge (2000), classroom teachers need to consider the answer to each of the following questions as a general frame work for planning class room observation:

1. *Why do you want to observe and what decisions do you want to make as a result of your observation?*
2. *What aspects of teaching or learning that are appropriate to these decisions do you want to observe?*
3. *Do you want to observe individual students, small groups of students, or the whole class?*
4. *Will you observe students engaged in specific, pre arranged activities or during routine classroom activities?*
5. *Will you observe on one occasion or repeatedly?*
6. *Will you incorporate non-linguistic content from the students' other classes or from outside class?*
7. *How will you record your observation? (2000:389).*

Although observation of learners on specific oral assessment tasks can be included into routine class schedules, it needs to be well managed in order to monitor progress in a principled, systematic and comprehensive way over time.

2.3.1.2. Self and Peer Assessment

With respect to self assessment, Heaton (1990), Hedge (2000) and Eliss (2003) suggest that teachers should use self assessment as an alternative way of assessing their students' oral ability. Heaton (1990), for example, states:

An important means of continuous assessment takes the form of student self-evaluation. Students are asked to assess themselves each week according to the most appropriate grades listed on a simple form. The students then show you their forms at the end of the week and briefly discuss their results individually with you (1990:122).

This implies that teachers need to encourage their students to assess themselves. This will in turn make them feel a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

Moreover, according to Brown and knight (1994) self and peer assessment provide learners with the opportunity to learn each other. Regarding this, they say "using self-and peer assessment makes the process much more one of learning because learners are able to share with one another the experiences

they have undertaken” (1994:52). This is to say that self and peer assessment require learners to actively participate in the process which will in turn help them gain learning experience.

Although it is felt that self assessment seems to be much more difficult to organize, Harris (1997) argues:

If some students can bring cassette recorders to class, they can be used to record group role plays. Then, having a greed on the criteria, students can listen to their own performance and assess them. (1997: 16).

This means that using cassette recorders for oral self assessment procedures provides opportunity for the students to listen to their own recordings and assess them based on shared criteria with the group members. Hedge (2000), however, suggests that simple oral self assessment checklist with the expression “I can ...” could effectively serve this purpose.

2.3.1.3. Teacher-Student Conference

Teacher-student conferences including structured interviews can be regarded as effective ways of assessing a student’s progress in language learning. Conferences and interviews, according to Smith (1996) and Allerson and Grabe (1986) in Shaaban (2001), provide opportunities for one on – one interactions where the teacher can learn about a student’s communicative abilities.

Moreover, according to Tombini (1991) in Shaaban (2001), conferences will be more effective if they follow focused observations and concentrate directly on the learning processes and strategies employed by the student. For assessing oral skills, he suggests that students be assessed on their ability to communicate with teachers and class mates.

2.3.1.4. Oral Interview

Pierce and O'Malley (1992) in Shaaban (2001) point out that using visual cues in oral interviews is the best method of assessing the students' speaking skills in a continuous way. This type of assessment may provide opportunity for the students to choose pictures to talk about. Unlike the traditional oral interview procedures, teachers role may be restricted to guiding the students by asking questions that require the use of related structure and vocabulary.

2.3.1.5. Role Play

This informal continuous assessment technique combines oral performance and physical activity. Shaaban (2001) notes that children of all ages, when assessed through these techniques, feel comfortable and motivated, especially "when the activity lends itself to cooperative learning and is seen as a fun of learning" (2001:18). Similarly, Lindsay and Knight (2006) confirm that role play that involves information gap activities can provide students with the real purpose for using English in class. In relation to this, Heaton (1990) points out that "since it is always essential to give students a reason for speaking, we should devise suitable activities with this in mind" (1990:118). Moreover, he goes on to add:

It is important at the outset to give students in a role play a clear idea of who they are, what they are like and what they should do. Avoid letting them spend a long time preparing for the role play. Students should have the opportunity to speak spontaneously and to react to something un expected (1990:118).

This means that students should have the opportunity to use English in a meaningful way when they are assessed on their oral communicative ability. Teachers are required to design appropriate and purposeful oral assessment tasks that encourage the spontaneous use of oral English for genuine communication.

2.3.1.6. Presentations

Shaaban (2001) states that “presentations are important for assessment because they can provide a comprehensive record of students’ abilities in both oral and written performance” (2001:18). This implies that classroom presentations provide opportunities for the classroom teacher to assess the various aspects of oral English. Moreover, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate a range of different oral abilities. This is because presentations “cover a wide range of meaningful activities, including poetry reading, plays, role plays, dramatizations and interviews” (Shaabon 2001:18).

Finally, as regards the fundamental features of continuous oral assessment techniques, Shaaban (2001) states:

they are performance based, requiring students to perform authentic tasks using oral communication skills. These techniques can include traditional classroom activities such as giving oral reports... but they may also involve non traditional tasks such as cooperative group work and problem solving (2001: 17).

As stated above, classroom based continuous oral assessment procedures require students to perform authentic tasks as an integral part of routine classroom oral activities. Moreover, they include both traditional and non-traditional classroom oral activities that demand students to perform tasks.

In conclusion, Doff (1988) points out that teaching techniques are similar with assessment techniques, but with a different purpose. This implies that classroom oral teaching techniques can be used for assessing the students’ oral skills.

2.3.2 The Measurement of Oral Performance in Continuous Assessment

According to AED (2006), continuous assessment requires the use of criterion-referenced grading scale for assessing students' performance. As evident in this document (AED 2006), the underlying philosophy for criterion referenced and norm-referenced grading models can be summarized like this:

Criterion-referenced grading

model

- Focused on standards, learning objectives, quality performance
- High achievement means meeting the standards, achieving the learning objectives
- Self-esteem comes from internal motivation that results from meeting the goals and standards

Norm-referenced grading model

- High achievement means learning more than one's peers
- Education should make one competitive
- Self-esteem is achieved by being better than one's peers.

As can be shown above, the underlying principles for criterion-referenced model seem to be convincing. This is, in fact, conceptually identical to the rating scales used for assessing oral proficiency in most standardized oral examinations.

Many language specialists, however, recommend rating scales to be used for measuring teacher-made informal class room oral tests, too. Heaton (1990), for example, advises teachers to produce their own rating scales for assessing their students' oral performance. Eliss (2003), unlike Heaton, however, argues that the use of standardized rating scales for class room based oral assessment fills

the gap created by teachers' deficiency in producing valid and reliable rating scales. However, for informal formative continuous oral assessment, Heaton (1990) suggests that teachers should make notes about individual students' oral performance by using either a small card or note pad. Doff (1988), on the other hand, suggests the use of a simple marking grid for measuring students' oral performance. In general, as stated elsewhere, it should be noted that teachers should share the assessment criteria with their students.

2.3.3. Feedback as an Essential Component of Continuous Oral Assessment

Feedback is regarded as the principal component of formative continuous assessment. For Eliss (2003) feed back is "a major goal of formative assessment" (2003: 313). Similarly, Shepard (2000) confirms that "providing feed back to the learner about performance will lead to self correction and improvement" (2000:11). This is to say that the teachers' comments on students' oral performance not only indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the students' speaking but they may also assist students in monitoring their own progress and identifying specific sub skills to develop further. They may highlight for a teacher priorities in terms of future teaching, or recycling of points already covered. The information is also useful to parents.

Furthermore, Hedge (2000) points out that the feed back from class room based continuous assessment has an important role to play.

More over, she goes on to note that some forms of assessment are explicitly intended to provide feed back to learners. A student knowing that performance has been good in a previous assessment can be a very positive motivator for further study. Specific feed back on strengths and weaknesses can aid study and help direct effort. The most useful (to the learners) forms of feed back comprise descriptive comments arising from diagnostic analysis of performance.

It is just as important for teachers to obtain feed back from assessment as it is for students.

Brown and Yule (1994) also believe that feed back has a motivating effect on students' class room performance. They go on to state that "Receiving feed back can be an excellent motivator, especially when valid criticism is supported by appropriate praise and commentary" (1994:33). This is to mean that students will be motivated if they are given fair and constructive feed back. This implies that while giving feed back to students' oral performance, teachers should begin with the positive sides of performance and proceed to the things that they feel the students need to improve.

More over, according to AED (2006), the most effective teachers do not routinely correct students errors directly. It goes on to add:

Instead they ignore errors when they are in consequential to the solution process and forestall errors that the students has made previously by offering hints or leading questions. Only when the forstalling tactic fails do expert tutors intervene with a direct question intended to force the student to self-correct or they may engage in debugging, using a series of increasingly direct questions to guide the student through the solution process (2006:10).

As stated above, this seems to be a balancing act that new teachers will learn to perform well. This is to say that teachers need to directly correct the students' error only when the indirect method of giving correction fails to achieve the desired purpose.

In general, Race, Brown and Smith (2005) in Baye (1998) summarize the basic features and functions of feed back in continuous assessment like this:

1. Timely: students should receive feed back on their performance based on the principle of providing opportunity for students to make improvement before proceeding to the next performance.
2. Personal and individual: Feed back in continuous assessment should indicate each students' strength and weakness.
3. Articulate: Feed back given to students should be simple and easy for the students to understand.
4. Empowering: Feed back should help students make progress
5. Manageable: Teachers need to make the necessary preparation before the delivery of feed back to students so that they can manage it easily
6. Developmental: Feed back should be detailed and informative so that both students and teachers can use it as an input for further decisions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Subjects of the Study

As the primary concern of this study is to find out the real challenges of continuously assessing the speaking skills mostly through qualitative data gathering tools, the subjects include all EFL teacher-educators and third year language major student teachers at Debre Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational training College.

3.2. Instruments

The choice of data collection methods is determined by the needs of a given research project and, in particular by the research questions confronted. Broadly, data collection techniques can be classified as quantitative and qualitative. These methods are complementary rather than mutually exclusive approaches. Each set of techniques has particular strengths and weaknesses (Patton 1990). Having this in mind, an attempt was made to include both quantitative and qualitative data gathering tools.

3.2.1. Quantitative Survey (Closed Questionnaire)

This method was used to obtain information about the general views and perceptions of teacher-educators and student-teachers regarding the current practice of implementing continuous assessment for assessing the speaking skills and functions of feedback for improving performance. To achieve this, a twenty-four item survey was developed by the researcher. It was designed by using a 1-5 likert scale, where 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 indicates

disagree, 3 stands for uncertain, 4 indicates agree and, 5 is for strongly agree. The items are based entirely on the literature. Moreover, to obtain information about teacher educators' familiarity with different continuous oral assessment methods, questionnaires were developed by using a binary yes/no checklist. According to Kumar (1996), this technique is appropriate for gathering information about facts.

3.2.2. Open-ended Questionnaire

It is believed that open-ended questions are very useful for small scale research and for producing honest and personal comments from the respondents (Cohen and et al 2000). Moreover, according to Kumar (1996), open ended questions are extremely useful for "seeking opinions, attitudes, and perceptions" (1996:111). So, using this technique was found to be of paramount importance in generating data on issues related to the subjects' perceptions, views and opinions about the importance and challenges of assessing the speaking skills through continuous assessment. Hence, open-ended questions were developed by the researcher and attached to the closed questionnaires in order to supplement the information obtained from the quantitative survey.

3.2.3. In-depth Interview

When deciding up on this technique, it was considered that in depth interviews seek to understand the issues as seen by the respondents (Patton 1990). This is to say that the purpose of open-ended interview approach is to capture the points of view of other people. The approach seeks to avoid predetermining other people's views through prior selection of questionnaire categories. Having considered this, an attempt was made to complement the written information by collecting data from teacher-educators with the help of interview.

3.2.4. Focus Group Interview

It is argued that the focus group interview approach produces a wealth of detailed information allowing the researcher to gain insight into the thinking of individuals (Patton 1990). Similarly, this is to mean that this technique provides a means for in depth study without the categorization constraints of quantitative surveys. Considering this, the focus group interview was conducted with student teachers.

3.3. Procedures

Prior to the actual research, the student-teachers' questionnaires were distributed to 20 student teachers attending their study in the department of social science at Debre- Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College. This is because students in the social science stream are also required to take English language development courses (English in Use I and II). Following this, each respondent's response for each item was carefully analyzed and those items which were found to be non discriminative were replaced by other items developed by the researcher.

The teacher educator questionnaire (part II), on the other hand, was given to teacher educators teaching professional courses at the college. The objective was to get feedback on the teacher educators surface judgment of the items (face validity).

During the actual research, the questionnaires were administered to 11 English language teacher-educators and 120 language major student-teachers at Debre-Birhan Teacher-Education and Vocational Training College at the same time. The student-teachers' questionnaires were translated in to Amharic in order to make the burden of responding easier.

Following this, the interview was conducted with teacher-educators. Five teacher-educators with a relatively higher experience in conducting English in Use I and II were selected for the interview based on the principle of purposive sampling technique. The interviews of the first three teacher-educators were recorded based on their permission. The remaining two teacher-educators felt uncomfortable with the recording. So, the researcher was forced to take notes while the interviews were conducted. The interview questions were general in nature. (See Appendix C)

Finally, for the focus group interview seven-student teachers were selected out of 75 student-teachers based on a random sampling technique. This was done by using the lottery system. Numbers from 1 up to 7 were written on pieces of paper, i.e. each number on a piece of paper. Then, blank pieces of paper were mixed with numbered pieces of paper whose sum was equal to the total number of students. Finally, the students were invited to make a draw until all numbered pieces of paper were drawn. The focus group comprised of seven student-teachers because seven is considered to be the optimum number for focus group interview (Patton 1990). The questions for the focus group interview were also general in nature and intended to stimulate debate. While the interview was taking place, the researcher acted as a facilitator and chair person. Moreover, the interview was conducted in Amharic and was recorded.

3.4. Data Analysis

As stated above the study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative data gathering tools. Consequently, mean values and percentages were calculated to analyze the raw data yielded by the closed questionnaires. The objective was to see how teacher-educators and student-teachers generally perceive the importance of implementing continuous assessment for assessing the speaking skills and functions of feedback in continuous oral assessment. As a respondent may rate either the maximum point 5 or the minimum point 1 for a certain item, the ideal mean is expected to be 3 (five plus one, divided by 2). Thus, the mean value above 3 indicates that the subjects have adequate

knowledge about the issue under consideration. Where as the mean value below 3 indicates that the respondents wrongly perceive the issue considered. Moreover, percentage was used to see what portion of the respondents' agree or disagree on a particular issue. It was also used to show what percent of the respondents use a particular continuous oral assessment method.

Further more, the raw data resulting from the open ended questions were also read and reread in order to gain a sense of the content. Then a set of topics that describe the ideas stated in the responses were identified. A coded form of the topic headings were added to the related material in each questionnaire. Moreover, a separate complete list of topic headings were kept in order to prevent redundancy or duplication of topic headings emerging from different questionnaires. Then copies of the questionnaire material were reorganized into topic heading groups. In other words, material from different questionnaires but relating to the same topic heading was brought together. This made it possible to contrast the views of different respondents on a given issue. Similarly, the raw data obtained from interviews were in the form of the tape recording itself and verbatim interview transcript. Hear again, the transcripts were read and re-read in order to have a full understanding of the issue. This was accompanied by listening to the tape recording. Then a set of topic headings that describe the issues discussed in the interview were identified. The topic headings were coded and added to all the related material in each transcript. A separate complete list of topic headings was used in order to prevent redundancy emerging from the different interview transcripts. Then, copies of the transcript material were reorganized into topic heading groups. The analysis was made by directly quoting the respondents. This is because Patton (1990) points out that direct quotation is the source of data in qualitative research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study is to find out the major challenges of continuously assessing the speaking skills as an integral part of classroom oral practice and teaching. To achieve this, questionnaires consisting of closed and open-ended questions were distributed to all English language teacher-educators and language major student-teachers at Debre-Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College. Moreover, these were supplemented by in depth and focus group interviews with teacher-educators and student-teachers respectively.

Following the date on which the questionnaires were administered, an attempt was made to collect them. Finally, it was found that 10 questionnaires from teacher-educators and 75 from student teachers were collected.

4.1. Teacher-Educators and Student-Teaches' Responses to the Closed Questionnaire

4.1.1. There is a Widely Shared Perception that Continuous Assessment is More Useful than Terminal Examinations towards Improving Teaching and Learning

The Table below demonstrates the importance teacher educators place on continuous assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning.

Table 1: Teacher-educators' perceptions of continuous assessment

S.No	Item	Mean	Rank
1	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for assessing students' communicative ability more effectively than terminal examinations	4.9	1
7	Continuous assessment provides early indicators of the likely performance of students	4	3
15	Continuous assessment reduces the intense stress that many students experience when preparing for and sitting terminal examinations	4.2	2
24	Continuous assessment provides a much more natural assessment environment	3.8	4

The results in Table 1 show that the mean values for the four aspects of continuous assessment are above the expected ideal mean 3. This indicates that the respondents seem to have adequate knowledge about the importance of implementing continuous assessment for assessing the students communicative ability. The highest mean value for item 1, for example, clearly shows the importance teacher-educators place on continuous assessment as a means for assessing the students oral communicative ability.

Similarly, student-teachers perceive the importance of continuous assessment in the same way as teacher-educators do. The following Table presents the mean values for the various issues of continuous assessment.

Table 2: Student-teachers' perceptions of continuous assessment

S.No	Item	Mean	Rank
1	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for the students to demonstrate their communicative ability	3.586	4
7	Continuous assessment provides early indicators of the likely performance of students	4.026	1
15	Continuous assessment reduces anxiety that most students undergo during formal examinations	3.826	2
24	Continuous assessment provides a much more natural assessment environment than terminal examination	3.8	3

As clear from the Table above, the mean values for the different issues of continuous assessment are also above the ideal mean 3. This shows that the subjects (student-teachers) seem to put more values on continuous assessment than an end of course examination. Moreover, the first two highest mean values for item 7 and 15 demonstrate the most preferred roles of continuous assessment: diagnostic and motivational roles.

4.1.2. There is a General Consensus on the Importance of Continuously Assessing the Speaking Skills.

The following Table shows that teacher-educators emphasize the importance of continuously assessing the speaking skills.

Table 3: Teacher-educators' perceptions of continuous oral assessment.

S.No	Item	Mean	Rank
11	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for the students to practice the speaking skills	3.9	4
13	Continuous oral assessment is synonymous with good teaching	4	3
16	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for teachers to assess the various aspects of oral English	4.2	2
19	Continuous oral assessment provides teachers and students with the opportunity to reflect back on their practice	4.5	1

As can be seen in Table 3, the mean values for the various aspects of continuous oral assessment are still above the expected ideal mean 3. This denotes that the respondents (teacher-educators) generally perceive continuous oral assessment as an essential device for measuring students oral communicative ability. Besides, the highest mean values for item 19 and 16 demonstrate the most favored functions of continuous oral assessment: providing the opportunity for assessing the various aspects of oral English and the opportunity to reflect back on previous practice.

Furthermore, student-teachers share with teacher educators' perceptions of continuous oral assessment. The table below presents the mean values for the different issues of continuous oral assessment.

Table 4: Student-Teachers' perceptions of continuous oral assessment

S.No	Item	Mean	Rank
11	Students enjoy practicing classroom oral activities if they are regularly assessed on their ability to speak	4.413	1
12	Continuous oral assessment is in separable from good teaching	4.173	2
16	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for students to use oral English in different occasions and for various purposes	4.013	4
19	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for the students to reflect back on their practice	4.106	3

As can be illustrated in Table 4, the mean values for the various aspects of continuous oral assessment are found to be above the ideal mean 3. This indicates that the respondents perceive continuous oral assessment as a useful pedagogical tool. More over, the highest mean values for item 11 and 12 clearly show that the subjects (student-teachers) place more importance on the pedagogical proposes of continuous oral assessment.

4.1.3. There is a Common Understanding about the Pedagogical Functions of Feed Back

It is found that both teacher-educators and student-teachers value constructive and specific comments directing improvement. The following Table shows how teacher-educators perceive the function of feedback in improving learning and guiding teaching.

Table 5: Teacher-educators' perceptions of functions of feedback

S.No	Item	Mean	Rank
5	Feedback in continuous oral assessment should indicate individual students' strengths and weaknesses	4.3	2
8	Immediate feedback should be an essential component of continuous oral assessment	3.9	4
10	Full and constructive feedback is an essential feature of continuous oral assessment	4.6	1
17	Qualitative feedback (comments) is more useful to students than quantitative feedback (marks)	4.2	3

As can be seen in Table 5, the respondents (teacher-educators) seem to have a strong belief in the functions of feedback for improving performance and directing teaching. This is because the mean values for the various features and functions of feedback are still above the ideal mean 3. In addition to this, the highest mean values for item 10 and 5 reveal the fact that the respondents (teacher-educators) place more importance on the need for personal, constructive, informative and specific feedback.

Similarly, student-teachers value the pedagogical functions of feedback as can be observed in the following Table.

Table 6: Student teachers' perceptions of feedback

S.No	Item	Mean	Rank
5	Feedback in continuous oral assessment should provide each student with the opportunity to identify his/her strengths and weaknesses	4.2	3
8	Feedback in continuous oral assessment should be immediate and timely	3.64	4
10	Students should receive constructive and complete feedback on their oral performance	4.413	1
17	Students benefit more from detailed comments than marks	4.293	2

As shown in Table 6, the mean values for the different aspects of feedback are above the ideal mean 3. This denotes that the subjects (student-teachers) perceive feedback as an essential component of continuous oral assessment. Furthermore, the highest mean values for item 10 and 17 demonstrate the importance the respondents place on constructive, full and specific feedback on students' oral performance.

4.2 Teacher Educators' Responses to the Questionnaire on the use of Continuous oral Assessment Methods

4.2.1. Student-Teachers' Participation in Continuous Oral Assessment is found to be Neglected

The Table below presents a summary of the use of continuous oral assessment methods.

Table 7: Continuous oral assessment methods used by teacher educators

S.No	Method	Number of teachers using method	Percentage
1	Oral question and answer	10	100%
2	Role-play and drama	1	0.1%
3	Story telling and reporting	1	0.1%
4	Oral interview	5	50%
5	Presentation	9	90%
6	Student-teacher conference	0	0%
7	Self assessment	1	0.1%
8	Peer and group assessment	1	0.1%
9	Observation (using rating scales, checklist)	0	0%
10	Problem solving tasks	8	80%
11	Tasks involving description, instruction, information exchange etc	9	90%
12	Short oral tests	9	90%

As can be seen in Table 7, the most commonly used continuous oral assessment methods are oral question and answer, presentation, tasks and short oral tests. However, continuous oral assessment methods that engage the students in the assessment process seem to be ignored. The results in Table 7 indicate that only 0.1% of the respondents, that is to say one out of 10 teacher educators, use self assessment, peer and group assessment methods for assessing students' oral performance.

4.2.2 Some Useful Continuous Oral Assessment Methods Seem to be Neglected

The results in Table 7 show that no one uses observation (using rating scales, checklist) for assessment purpose. This method, according to Heaton (1990), is the most effective ways of assessing oral communicative ability which cannot be easily assessed by formal oral tests. Other useful continuous oral assessment methods such as role play and drama, story telling and reporting are also found to be ignored. Moreover, student-teacher conference, though it is recommended to be used for assessing oral ability, no one is found to use it for oral assessment purposes.

4.3 Summary of Results Obtained from Open-ended Questions, in-depth and Focus Group Interviews

Although the findings of the study reveal that teacher-educators have adequate knowledge about the principles underlying continuous oral assessment, many of them exhibit a willingness to admit that continuous oral assessment is a neglected area of practice and that there should be greater emphasis on it. Some teacher-educators, for example, note that there are some challenges that they face when trying to assess their students' oral ability in a continuous way.

4.3.1. There is a widely Shared Perception that Student-Teachers Lack Confidence in Oral English

Although many teacher educators speak of the need to continuously assess their students oral performance, they feel inhibited by the student teachers' oral proficiency. One teacher educator, for instance, states:

Most of the students are very shy. They are not confident enough in using English in class. When they are asked to perform a task in English, most of them use Amharic. This is, really a great problem that teachers encounter when trying to assess the students' oral ability.

Another teacher-educator also adds:

There is no need for teacher-educators to spend time on continuous oral assessment. Most of the students feel uncomfortable with oral assessment tasks. Even some students go to the extent of missing classes if they know that oral assessment will take place. All these happen because most of the students feel that they are very poor at oral English.

As stated above, some teacher-educators feel that one of the major challenges that teacher-educators encounter while trying to assess their students' oral performance is related to students' poor linguistic back ground. Similarly, some student-teachers admit that they lack confidence in using English in front of their classmates and teachers. During the focus group interview, for example, one student-teacher states that "Many students are afraid of speaking English while taking part in oral assessment tasks because they lack the required knowledge of vocabulary and structure". Another student teacher also comments that some teacher educators make no attempt to assess their students' oral ability because they seem disappointed with their students oral performance.

It is thus clear that the overwhelming majority of both teacher-educators and student teachers find the students' linguistic back ground problematic. In addition to the personal accounts of the respondents, it is also found that 60%

of teacher-educators agree and 30% of the teachers strongly agree with the statement: *Assessing the speaking skills on a continuous basis is a waste of time*. Similarly, 40% of teacher educators agree and 30% of them strongly agree with the statement: *Continuous oral assessment procedures are not suitable to students with poor linguistic back ground* (See item 4 and 9, Appendix, D). Like wise, 30.6% of the student-teachers agree and 21.3% of them strongly agree with the statement: *An attempt to assess the students' oral skills through continuous assessment is a waste of time*. Moreover, 26.2% of student teachers agree and 52% of them strongly agree with the statement: *It is difficult to implement continuous oral assessment as many students have difficulties in performing tasks in English* (see item 4 and 9, Appendix E).

4.3.2. There are Structural Constraints to Implementing Effective Continuous Oral Assessment

Some teacher-educators express the concern about the need for reducing some of the structural constraints to effective continuous oral assessment. One teacher educator, for example, states:

There are a large number of students in a class. Besides, a teacher educator is required to teach about 400 students in a semester. I feel it is very difficult, in a situation like this, for teacher-educators to continuously assess individual students' oral performance and give detailed comments.

As stated above, large class size and the number of students a teacher-educator teaches in a semester are perceived as one of the major challenges of implementing effective continuous oral assessment. Moreover, another teacher-educator expresses this sentiment about the structural constraints to implementing continuous oral assessment as follows:

Teacher-educators often teach more than one course in more than one level of study (i.e. years 1,2,3). In addition to this, teacher educators have additional responsibility of supervising practicum (teaching practice) in the field while classes are going on at college. All these prevent teacher educators from implementing effective continuous oral assessment.

As can be shown above, teacher-educators feel that the heavy work loads influence their performance. Some student-teachers also indicate that teacher-educators hardly give them opportunity to practice the speaking skills because of the large number of students they teach. Moreover, they comment that most teacher-educators rely on teacher-centered methodology. They rush to cover the course contents. Most of the time they use short quizzes to assess their students' progress. They even assess their students' oral ability in the written mode. They go on to add that "They do so because they don't have time to assess each student's oral performance." It seems thus clear that some of the structural constraints such as large class size, number of students a teacher educator teaches in a semester, additional responsibilities of teacher-educators, number of courses a teacher educator teaches in a semester are considered to be one of the major challenges of implementing continuous oral assessment.

4.3.3. Absence of College Level Course Specific Assessment Policy

Most teacher-educators feel that course specific assessment polices developed at the college level provide teacher-educators and student teachers with guidelines for classroom implementation of continuous assessment.

One teacher-educator, during the interview, for instance states:

There is a tendency to depend on the general assessment frame work proposed by TESO. For example, all teacher educators, in spite of the nature of the courses they teach, are required to assess their students based on the general assessment scheme: knowledge 25%, practical skills 25%, project 25%, and final written exam 25%. This is, I feel one of the problems that make teacher educators divert their focus of attention.

As stated above, some teacher-educators show the concern about the need to develop college level course specific assessment policy. In other words, this is to say that absence of college level course specific policy is viewed as one of the

major challenges of continuous assessment of language skills in general and speaking skills in particular.

4.3.4 Lack of Opportunity for Making Oral Assessment Criteria Transparent

Some student- teachers express the need for knowing the assessment criteria before performing oral assessment tasks. They indicate that some teacher educators do not make their students aware of the criteria while trying to assess their students oral performance. One student-teacher states that “Although some teacher-educators occasionally try to assess their students’ oral performance, they never let their students know what they are expected of.” Moreover, a concern is raised by a number of student- teachers that the expectations or criteria for performance on particular oral assessment tasks are not explicit. They comment that the assessment criteria for each oral assessment task should be known at the beginning of the course to plan ahead for the performance of the tasks.

It is, therefore, clear that some student- teachers feel that absence of explicit oral assessment criteria makes it difficult to effectively implement continuous oral assessment.

4.3.5. There is a General Agreement on the Negligence of Formative Continuous Oral Assessment

Most teacher-educators indicate that they assess their students’ oral performance to meet the official requirements of the college. In relation to this, one teacher-educator clearly states:

Nearly at the end of the semester, teacher-educators are required to keep and submit a record of students’ achievement in the course. To do this, teacher-educators mostly invite students to talk about some general topics and give marks based on their subjective judgment.

Many teacher-educators also admit that they assess their students' performance to keep a record of their progress for further judgmental purposes. Moreover, some student-teachers express that teacher-educators assess students' oral ability almost at the end of the semester. One student-teacher, for example, points out that "They often do this to complete the mark list".

It is thus apparent that continuous assessment in general and continuous oral assessment in particular don't seem to be implemented according to the principles underlying them. As stated elsewhere in this paper, it is the formative aspect of continuous oral assessment that improves student-learning and guides classroom-teaching practice.

4.3.6. There is a Need for Further Professional Development in the Area of Assessment

Most teacher-educators express the need for continuous professional development in the area of assessment. Some of the areas in which teacher-educators request support include:

- Designing oral assessment tasks
- Developing and using observation check list and rating scales
- Oral assessment methods for large classes
- Ways of assessing student-teachers' prior knowledge and experience and how to use those assessments.

Moreover, the results obtained from the closed questionnaires seem to support this. For example, it is found that 20% of teacher-educators agree and 40% of them strongly agree with the statement: *Teachers must have a high level of experience in assessment to enable them make creative and effective use of continuous assessment* (see Item 21 Appendix D). This indicates teacher-educators' concern about the need for continuous professional development in the area of assessment.

In general, the findings of the study indicate that both teacher-educators and student-teachers show a common understanding of the underlying principles of continuous assessment, continuous oral assessment and functions of feed back in assessment. In other words, they have adequate knowledge about the importance of implementing continuous assessment for assessing the students' oral communicative ability. Surprisingly, however, it is found that continuous oral assessment is a neglected area of practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

The intention of this study was to find out the major challenges of continuously assessing the speaking skills as an integral part of classroom oral practice and teaching. Moreover, it was intended to make a general survey on teacher-educators' and student-teachers' perceptions of continuous assessment, continuous oral assessment and functions of feedback. To answer these broad and specific research questions, the study was conducted with 10 teacher-educators and 75 student-teachers at Debre-Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College.

The results obtained from the quantitative surveys (closed questionnaires) administered to both teacher educators and student-teachers reveal that the subjects of the study generally perceive continuous assessment, continuous oral assessment and feed back as useful educational tools for improving learning and guiding teaching. As evident in the study, the mean values for the various aspects of continuous assessment, continuous oral assessment and feedback are generally found to be above the expected ideal mean 3 (Table 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). The qualitative data gathering instruments (open ended questions, in-depth and focus group interviews,) on the other hand, demonstrate that the actual practice of continuous oral assessment is almost neglected. This is also supported by the results obtained from the closed questionnaires on the use of continuous oral assessment methods. The results indicate that the most useful continuous oral assessment methods are neglected. This is because the percentages of teacher educators using those methods were found to be 0% and 0.1% (Table 7). As can be shown in the

results of the study, the major challenges of implementing continuous oral assessment include:

- Student-teachers' linguistic background
- Structural constraints including large class size and work loads
- Absence of college level course specific assessment policy
- Inadequacies in the use of informal continuous oral assessment methods
- Lack of opportunity for student-teachers' participation in continuous oral assessment
- Lack of opportunity for sharing assessment criteria with student-teachers.
- Negligence of formative continuous oral assessment

5.2 Conclusion

Although uncertainties remain and there seems to be a number of continuous assessment areas for the future researcher to explore, evidence shows that the use of continuous assessment in ways appropriate to the context has a beneficial effect on improving learning and guiding teaching. TESO (2003), for example, states that a major shift away from an emphasis on exam-oriented assessment is vital to wards improving teaching and learning. Apart from the general educational advantages of continuous assessment, it is also believed that continuous assessment provides an opportunity for the assessment of oral communicative skills (Heation 1990).

This study was, therefore, conducted with the intention of finding the major challenges of continuously assessing the students' oral skills. Consequently, the study presented in this paper has brought to light that, on the one hand, both teacher-educators and student-teachers perceive continuous assessment

in general and continuous oral assessment in particular as essential educational tools. On the other hand, the actual practice of implementing continuous oral assessment seems to be neglected.

Although the nature and the scope of the study do not seem to allow drawing any far-reaching conclusions or generalizing the results, it seems to be clear that good perceptions alone are not indicators of good practice. As evident in this study, there are a number of other factors that affect the practicality of continuous oral assessment.

In general, as stated in the summary section of this chapter, two major conclusions to draw from this study seem to include:

- Both teacher-educators and student-teachers perceive continuous assessment, continuous oral assessment and feedback as vital towards improving teaching and learning.
- Continuous oral assessment is found to be a neglected area of practice

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended. Moreover the suggestions presented here are generally based on the surveys, interviews, open-ended questions and reviews of literature. It is also equally important to note that the recommendations described below are meant to be informative rather than authoritative.

5.3.1 Assessment of Students Prior Knowledge of Language

Serious consideration should be given to the assessment of students' prior knowledge and experience. Particular attention should be paid to gathering valuable information about the students' level of proficiency in English in general and oral communicative skills in particular. College entrance

examination should incorporate assessment tasks that demonstrate students' over all communicative ability in English.

5.3.2 Finding Ways of Reducing Structural Constraints

Actions should be taken to reduce some of the structural constraints to effective continuous oral assessment. Different ways should be found to reduce class size, the number of students a teacher-educator teaches in a semester, and limiting the number of preparations a teacher-educator has per semester as well as the number of grade levels in which a teacher-educator teaches. Some of these actions may include:

- Employment of new teacher-educators
- Admitting a reasonable number of student teachers
- Effective use of student-centered and cooperative learning methodologies
- Integration of continuous oral assessment procedures with classroom oral practice and teaching
- Providing special support for students with very poor linguistic background

5.3.3 Development of College Level Course Specific Assessment Policy

Course specific assessment policy developed at the college level can be used as a quick reference for effective implementation of continuous oral assessment. The policy should not be in conflict with the general assessment frame work proposed by TESO (2003) but support it at the college level. The policy should suggest an orientation for assessment practices as well as specific guide lines on the areas of assessment: the skills and sub skills.

5.3.4 Professional Development through Reading, Research and Training

The results of the study reveal that teacher-educators do not make effective use of informal continuous oral assessment methods. In addition to this, they express the need for training on some specific areas of assessment. So, teacher-educators should have the opportunity to develop their skills of continuous oral assessment through personal reading, internet, conducting small scale action research and workshop.

5.3.5 Finding Ways of Increasing Student - Teacher Participation Oral Assessment

Student-teachers should be actively engaged in assessing themselves and their peers. By making oral self assessment more explicit and systematic, student teachers become deeply engaged in the assessment process. It is important that teacher-educators find ways of increasing student-teacher participation that are appropriate for their context. One way could be letting students know that self and peer assessment do not directly affect the final grade as they are formative in nature.

5.3.6 Transparency of Assessment Criteria

Teacher-educators should make the assessment criteria for a particular oral assessment task explicit. As continuous assessment is fundamentally criterion referenced (AED 2006), students should be a ware of the fact that they are assessed not in terms of other students' performance but against specific assessment criteria. So, students should know what they are expected of before performing a particular oral assessment task.

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Appendix A

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate studies

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

A Questionnaire to be filled by Teacher Educators

This questionnaire is designed to collect information regarding the current practice of using continuous assessment for assessing the speaking skills on language development courses (English in Use I /II) at Debre-Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training college. So, you are here kindly requested to respond to all statements or requests based on the instruction given.

In responding to the questions or statements, please note the following:

1. All the questions/ statements raised here are equally important to attain the objectives of the study. Failure to complete any of them will affect the overall study.
2. All your responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purpose.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

Part I. Background Information

Direction put a tick (✓) in the appropriate box

1. Sex: Male Female
2. Level of education: Diploma First degree Second degree
3. Total number of service in teaching English
 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15years 16-20
4. Total number of service in teaching English in the college.
 1-5 years 6-10 years 10 years and above

Part II.

Direction. For each of the following statements, please indicate your agreement by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate column according to the following scales:

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Undecided

2= Disagree

1= strongly Disagree

No	Items	5	4	3	2	1
1	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for assessing students' communicative ability more effectively than terminal examination					
2	Giving quantitative feedback (marks) is more useful than qualitative feedback (comments)					
3	Continuous assessment can adversely affect the relationship between students and their teachers					
4	Assessing the speaking skills on a continuous basis is a waste of time					
5	Feed back in continuous assessment should indicate individual students' strengths and weaknesses					
6	Authentic and meaningful tasks are not appropriate for assessment purpose					
7	Continuous assessment can provide early indicators of the likely performance of students					
8	Immediate feed back should be an essential component of continuous oral assessment					
9	Continuous task based oral assessment procedures are not suitable to students with poor linguistic background					
10	Full and constructive feedback is an essential feature of continuous oral assessment					
11	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for the students to practice the speaking skills					
12	Continuous assessment may turnout to be nothing more than a series of tests					
13	Continuous oral assessment is synonymous with good teaching					

14	Giving feedback to individual students' oral performance is a waste of time					
15	Continuous assessment reduces the intense stress that many students experience when preparing for and sitting terminal examinations					
16	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for teachers to assess the various aspects of oral English					
17	Qualitative feedback (comments) provides opportunity for improvement.					
18	Continuous oral assessment is not as useful as terminal examination because it makes students feel a sense of being over assessed					
19	Continuous oral assessment provides teachers and students with the opportunity to reflect back on their practice					
20	Giving continuous feedback affect the relationship between students and their teachers					
21	Teachers must have a high level of experience and training in assessment to enable them make creative and effective use of continuous assessment					
22	Giving frequent feedback on students' oral performance is discouraging					
23	Students undergoing continuous oral assessment may feel that every error that they make along the way can count against them					
24	Continuous assessment provides a more natural assessment environment					

Part III.

Direction: For each of the following continuous assessment method indicate whether you use it or not for assessing your students' oral skills by putting a tick (√)in the “Yes” or “No” column respectively

No	Continuous oral assessment methods	Yes	NO
1	Oral question and answer		
2	Role play and drama		
3	Story telling and reporting		
4	Oral interview		
5	Presentation		
6	Student teacher conference		
7	Self assessment		
8	Peer and group assessment		
9	Observation (using rating scales, check list)		
10	Problem solving tasks		
11	Tasks involving description instruction, information exchange, etc.		
12	Short- oral tests		

Part IV. Open ended questionnaire

Direction: Answer the following questions

1. What do you think are the major challenges that you face while trying to assess your students' oral communicative ability as an integral part of classroom instruction?

2. What solutions do you suggest to the problems you have mentioned above (if any)?

3. What continuous oral assessment methods (other than those mentioned in part III) do you use to assess your students' oral communicative ability?

4. How do you feel about sharing oral assessment criteria with student-teachers for measuring oral performance?

5. For what purposes do you use the information obtained from formative continuous oral assessment?

6. What kind of oral assessment tasks do you use to assess your students' oral performance in a continuous way?

7. How do you give frequent feedback to your students' oral performance?

8. How do you feel about students' involvement in self and peer assessment?

9. What areas of assessment do you think teacher-educators need special support and training?

Appendix B

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate studies

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

A Questionnaire to be filled by student teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about the current practice of using continuous assessment for assessing oral communicative skills on English language development courses (English in Use I /II) at Debre-Birhan Teacher Education and Vocational Training College. You are kindly requested to respond to all the questions/ statements according to the instruction given. Your information is used only for the research purpose and is, thus, kept confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation

Part I. Background information

***Direction:* put a tick (✓) in the appropriate box**

1. Sex: Male Female
2. Age 15-20 21-25 25-30 30 and above
3. Last grade attended at high school 10 12

Part II.

***Direction:* For each of the following statements, please indicate your agreement by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate column according to the following scales:**

5: Strongly Agree

4: Agree

3: Undecided

2: Disagree

1: Strongly Disagree

No	Items	5	4	3	2	1
1	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for the students to demonstrate their communicative ability					
2	Giving detailed comments on students' classroom oral performance is a waste of time					
3	Continuous assessment causes conflict between students and their teachers					
4	An attempt to assess the students' oral skills through continuous assessment is a waste of time					
5	Feed back in continuous oral assessment should provide each student with the opportunity to identify his/ her strengths and weaknesses					
6	Authentic and meaningful tasks are not appropriate for assessment purpose					
7	Continuous assessment provides early indicators of the likely performance of students					
8	Feed back in continuous oral assessment should be immediate and timely					
9	Most students face challenges in performing oral assessment tasks in English					
10	It is difficult to implement continuous oral assessment in performing tasks in English					
11	Students enjoy practicing classroom oral activities if they are regularly assessed on their ability to speak					
12	Continuous oral assessment is inseparable from good teaching					
13	Continuous assessment may turn out to be nothing more than a series of tests					

14	Giving feed back to individual students' oral performance affects the teaching-learning process					
15	Continuous assessment reduces anxiety that most students undergo during formal examinations					
16	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for students to use oral English in different occasions and for various purposes					
17	Students can benefit more from detailed comments than marks					
18	Continuous assessment is not as useful as terminal examination because it makes students feel that they are over assessed					
19	Continuous oral assessment helps students to reflect back on their practice					
20	Giving frequent feed back on students performance will have a negative impact on the relationship between students and teachers					
21	Continuous assessment is not applicable in our context as it requires teachers with a high level of experience and training in assessment					
22	Students will be discouraged if they are given frequent feed back on their oral performance					
23	If students are continuously assessed on their oral performance, they feel that every error that they make can count against them					
24	Continuous assessment provides a much more natural assessment environment than terminal examination					

Part III. Open Ended Questionnaire

Direction: Answer the following questions

1. What are the major challenges of continuously assessing the speaking skills?

2. What should be done in order to overcome the problems you have mentioned above (if any)?

3. For what purposes do you use the information obtained from formative continuous oral assessment?

4. How do you receive feedback on your oral performance?

5. How do you feel about students' involvement in self and peer assessment?

6. How do you feel about using explicit oral assessment criteria for measuring oral performance?

Appendix C

Initial discussion questions to student-teachers.

1. What major challenges do you often face when you are continuously assessed on your oral performance?
2. What do you think are the solutions to the problems you have mentioned above? (if any)
3. Which continuous oral assessment methods do you think students enjoy most?
4. What do you feel about the students' involvement in self and peer assessment?
5. How do students receive feedback on their classroom oral performance?

ተቀጽላ ለ

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

ድህረ ምረቃ ት/ቤት

የውጭ ቋንቋዎችና ሥነ ፅሁፍ ትምህርት ክፍል

በተማሪዎች የሚሞላ የጽሁፍ መጠይቅ

የዚህ መጠይቅ አቢይ አላማ በአጠቃላይ የእንግሊዝኛ ቋንቋ ክህሎት ማዳበሪያ ኮርሶች (Language Development Courses English in Use I/II) ውስጥ የንግግር ክህሎት (speaking skills) የተከታታይ ምዘና አፈፃፀም ስልትና ሂደቱን በተመለከተ የኮሌጁ የቋንቋ ትምህርት ክፍል እጩ መምህራን ያላቸውን አመለካከት ለማየትና ችግሮችን በመለየት የመፍትሔ ሃሳብ ለማቅረብ ነው። የምትሰጡት መረጃ ለጥናትና ምርምር ብቻ እንደሚውል በመገንዘብ በትክክልና በትእግስት ሁሉንም መጠይቅ በትዕዛዙ መሠረት እንድትመልሱ ስጠይቅ ለሚደረግልኝ ትብብር ከወዲሁ በማመስገን ነው።

ክፍል አንድ:- ዳራዊ መረጃ

መመሪያ: በተገቢው ሳጥን ውስጥ የ “√” ምልክት ያድርጉ

- 1. ዕድሜ ከ15-20 ከ21-25 ከ26-30 ከ30 በላይ
- 2. ፆታ: ወንድ ሴት
- 3. የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርትን ያጠናቀቁበት የክፍል ደረጃ
 10ኛ 12ኛ

ክፍል ሁለት

መመሪያ: በሚከተለው ሠንጠረዥ ውስጥ በስተግራ በኩል ለቀረቡት ጥያቄዎች በቀኝ በኩል ከተሰጡት አማራጮች የእኔን አመለካከት ይወክላል የምትሉትን ከምርጫዎቹ በአንደኛው ፊት ለፊት ወይም ስራ ባለው ክፍት ቦታ የ “√” ምልክት በማድረግ መልሱ።

በሰንጠረዥ ውስጥ የተመለከቱት ምርጫዎች የሚወክሉት፡-

5 = በጣም እስማማለሁ

4 = እስማማለሁ

3 = መወሰን ያቅተኛል

2 = አልስማማም

1 = በጭራሽ አልስማማም

ተ.ቁ	ጥያቄ	5	4	3	2	1
1	የተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓት ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት ያላቸውን የመግባባት ችሎታ (oral communicative ability) ለማሳየት ያስችላል					
2	ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት በሚያከናውኑት ድርጊት (oral performance) ላይ ዝርዝር ግብረ መልስ (feedback) መስጠት ጊዜ ማባከን ነው					
3	ተከታታይ ምዘና በተማሪዎችና በመምህራን መካከል ለሚፈጠር ግጭት መንስኤ ይሆናል					
4	በተከታታይ ምዘና አማካኝነት የተማሪዎችን የንግግር ክህሎት (speaking skills) ለመመዘን መሞከር ጊዜ ማባከን ነው					
5	በተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓት ውስጥ ግብረ መልስ (feedback) የእያንዳንዱን ተማሪ ጠንካራና ደካማ ጎኖች ማመልከት አለበት					
6	ትክክለኛ (authentic) እና ትርጉም ያላቸው (meaningful) ተግባራት(tasks) ለምዘና ተግባር ተስማሚ አይደሉም					
7	የተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓት የተማሪዎችን የወደፊት ሁኔታ ጠቋሚ ነው					

8	በተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓት ውስጥ ግብረ መልስ (feedback) በአጭር እና በተገቢው ጊዜ ውስጥ መሰጠት አለበት					
9	ተማሪዎች በእንግሊዝኛ ቋንቋ የመግባባት ችሎታቸው ደካማ ስለሆነ የከታታይ የንግግር ችሎታን ምዘና ተግባራዊ ማድረግ አስቸጋሪ ነው					
10	ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት ለሚያከናውኑት ድርጊት (oral performance) የተሟላና ገንቢ ግብረ መልስ (feedback) ማግኘት አለባቸው					
11	ተማሪዎች በንግግር ችሎታቸው ላይ የሚያሳዩት ለውጥ በየጊዜው እንደሚመዘን ከተገነዘቡ በክፍል ውስጥ ለመማር ማስተማሩ ሂደት በሚዘጋጁ የንግግር ተግባራት ውስጥ በንቃት ይሳተፋሉ					
12	በተከታታይ የሚከናወን የንግግር ችሎታ ምዘና ከውጤታማ የመማር ማስተማር ሂደት ተነጥሎ አይታይም					
13	ተከታታይ ምዘና የተለያዩ መከራዎች (tests) ጥርቅም ከመሆን ያለፈ የተለየ ፋይዳ የለውም					
14	እያንዳንዱ ተማሪ በንግግር አማካኝነት በሚያከናውነው ድርጊት ላይ ግብረ መልስ (oral performance) መስጠት የመማር ማስተማሩን ሂደት ይጎዳል					
15	ተከታታይ ምዘና ብዙ ተማሪዎች በመደበኛ ፈተናዎች ወቅት ሊያጋጥማቸው የሚችለውን የጭንቀት ስሜት ይቀንሳል					
16	የተከታታይ የንግግር ችሎታ ምዘና ስርዓት ተማሪዎች የእንግሊዝኛ ቋንቋን በተለያዩ ሁኔታዎች (indifferent occasions) ውስጥና ለተለያዩ ዓላማዎች (for different purposes) እንዲጠቀሙበት ምቹ ሁኔታን ይፈጥራል					
17	ተማሪዎች በቁጥር አማካኝነት ከሚነገራቸው ማርክ ይልቅ በዝርዝር የሚሰጣቸው አስተያየት የበለጠ ተጠቃሚ ያደርጋቸዋል					

18	የተከታታይ ምዘና የማጠቃለያ ፈተናን ያህል ጠቀሜታ የማይኖረው ተማሪዎች ከመጠን በላይ የተገመገሙ ስለሚመስላቸው ነው፡፡					
19	የተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓት ተማሪዎች ወደኋላ ተመልሰው ያከናወኗቸውን ተግባራት እንዲፈትሹ ይረዳቸዋል					
20	በተማሪዎች ድርጊት (performance) ላይ ተከታታይ ግብረ መልስ (feedback) መስጠት የመምህራን እና የተማሪዎችን ግንኙነት ይጎዳል					
21	ውጤታማና ፈጠራ የታከለበት የተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓትን ተግባራዊ ለማድረግ በምዘና ላይ ከፍተኛ ልምድ ያዳበሩ መምህራን ያስፈልጋሉ					
22	ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት በሚያከናውኑት ድርጊት ላይ ተከታታይ ግብረ መልስ (feedback) የሚሰጣቸው ከሆነ ተስፋ ይቆርጣሉ					
23	ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት በሚያከናውኑት ድርጊት (oral performance) ላይ ተከታታይ ምዘና የሚካሄድ ከሆነ በሂደቱ ውስጥ የሚፈፀሙት እያንዳንዱ ስህተት ይቆጠርብናል የሚል ስጋት ያድርገዋል					
24	የተከታታይ ምዘና ስርዓት ከማጠቃለያ ፈተናዎች የተሻለና የገሀዱ ዓለም ነፀብራቅ የሆነ የምዘና አካባቢን ይፈጥራል (natural assessment environment)					

ክፍል ሦስት ፡ ሐተታዊ መጠይቅ

መመሪያ ፡- ለሚከተሉት ጥያቄዎች መልስ ይስጡ

1. የንግግር ችሎታን በተከታታይ መንገድ ለመመዘን የሚያጋጥሙ ዋናዎና ችግሮች ምንድን ናቸው?

2. በተራ ቁጥር 1 ላይ በቀረበው ጥያቄ መሠረት የተዘረዘሩ ችግሮች ካሉ ችግሮቹን ለማቃለል ምን መደረግ አለበት?

3. በተከታታይ የንግግር ችሎታ ምዘና መሠረት የሚገኝ መረጃን ለምን ዓላማ ይጠቀሙበታል?

4. ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት ለሚያከናውኑት ድርጊት (Oral performance) ግብረ መልስ (feed back) የሚሰጣቸው እንዴት ነው?

5. እራስን በራስ መመዘን እና የአቻ ለአቻ ምዘናን በሚመለከት ያለዎት አስተያየት ምን ይመስላል?

6. ተማሪዎች በንግግር አማካኝነት የሚያከናውኑትን ድርጊት (oral performance) ለመለካት የሚያገለግሉትን መስፈርቶች ግልፅ ማድረግን በሚመለከት ያለዎትን አስተያየት ምን ይመስላል?

Appendix D

A summary of teacher-educators' responses to the closed questionnaire
(Quantitative survey)

No	Item	f	SD	f	D	f	U	f	A	f	SA
1	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for assessing students' communicative ability more effectively than terminal examination	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%	1	10%	9	90%
2	Giving quantitative feed back (marks) is more useful than qualitative feedback (comments)	2	20%	4	40%	-	0%	3	30%	1	10%
3	Continuous assessment can adversely affect the relationship between students and teachers	5	50%	2	20%	-	0%	2	20%	1	10%
4	Assessing the speaking skills on a continuous basis is a waster of time	1	10%	0	0%	-	0%	6	60%	3	30%
5	Feedback in continuous assessment should indicate individual students' strengths and weaknesses	0	%	0	0%	1	10%	5	50%	4	40%
6	Authentic and meaning full tasks are not appropriate for assessment purpose	3	30%	4	40%	1	10%	2	20%	0	%

7	Continuous assessment can provide early indicators of the likely performance of students	1	10%	0	0%	1	10%	4	40%	4	40%
8	Immediate feedback should be an essential component of continuous oral assessment	0	0%	3	30%	0	0%	2	20%	5	50%
9	Continuous task based oral assessment procedures are not suitable to students with poor linguistic background	0	0%	1	10%	2	20%	4	40%	3	30%
10	Full and constructive feedback is an essential feature of continuous oral assessment	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	40%	6	60%
11	Continuous oral assessment provides opportunity for students to practice the speaking skill itself	1	10%	0	0%	3	30%	5	50%	3	30%
12	Continuous assessment may turn out to be nothing more than a series of tests	1	10%	4	40%	2	20%	3	30%	0	0%
13	Continuous oral assessment is synonymous with good teaching	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%	4	40%	4	40%
14	Giving feedback to individual students' oral performance is a waste of time	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%	5	50%	3	30%
15	Continuous assessment reduces the intense stress that many students experience when preparing for and sitting terminal examinations	0	0%	1	10%	0	0%	5	50%	4	40%

16	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for teachers to assess the various aspects of oral English	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	5	50%	5	50%
17	Qualitative feedback (comments) provides opportunity for improvement	0	0%	0	0%	2	20%	4	40%	4	40%
18	Continuous assessment is not as use full as terminal examination because it makes students feel a sense of being over assessed	1	10%	5	50%	3	30%	1	10%	0	0%
19	Continuous oral assessment provides teachers and students with the opportunity to reflect back on their practice	0	0%	0	0%	1	10%	3	30%	6	60%
20	Giving continuous feedback affects the relationship b/n students and teachers	2	20%	3	30%	2	20%	3	30%	0	0%
21	Teachers must have a high level of experience and training in assessment to enable them make creative and effective use of continuous assessment	1	10%	1	10%	2	20%	2	20%	4	40%
22	Giving frequent feedback on students oral performance is discouraging	2	20%	6	60%	0	0%	1	10%	1	10%
23	Students undergoing continuous oral assessment feel that every error that they make a long the way can count against them	1	10%	1	10%	2	20%	5	50%	1	10%

24	Continuous assessment provides a much more natural assessment environment	1	10%	0	0%	1	10%	6	60%	2	20%
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f = frequency, SD= Strongly Disagree,

DA= Disagree, U= Uncertain,

A= Agree,

SA= Strongly Agree

Appendix E

A summary of student-teachers' responses to the closed questionnaire
(Quantitative survey)

No	Item	f	SD	f	DA	f	U	f	A	f	SA
1	Continuous assessment provides opportunity for the students to demonstrate their communicative ability	6	8%	8	10.6%	11	14.6%	37	49.3%	13	17.3%
2	Giving detailed comments on students oral performance is a waste of time	9	12%	28	37.3%	10	13.3%	23	30.6%	5	6.6%
3	Continuous assessment causes conflict between students and their teachers	25	33.3%	20	26.6%	15	20%	12	16%	3	4%
4	An attempt to assess the students' oral skills through continuous assessment is a waste of time	12	16%	12	16%	12	16%	23	30.6%	16	21.3%
5	Feedback in continuous oral assessment should provide each student with the opportunity to identify his/her strengths and weaknesses	2	2.6	1	1.3%	12	16%	24	32%	36	48%

6	Authentic and meaningful tasks are not appropriate for assessment purpose	30	40%	31	41.3%	7	9.3%	4	5.3%	3	4%
7	Continuous assessment provides early indicators of the likely performance of students	2	2.6%	4	5.3%	12	16%	24	38.6%	28	37.3%
8	Feedback in continuous oral assessment should be immediate and timely	4	5.3%	8	10.6 %	16	21.3 %	26	34.6%	21	28%
9	It is difficult to implement continuous oral assessment as many students face difficulties in performing tasks in English	6	8%	5	6.6%	5	6.6%	20	26.6%	39	52%
10	Students should receive constructive and complete feedback on their oral performance	0	0%	3	4%	3	4%	29	38.6%	40	53.3%

11	Students enjoy practicing class room oral activities if they are regularly assessed on their ability to speak	1	1.3%	3	4%	7	9.3%	33	44%	31	41.3 %
12	Continuous assessment is inseparable from good teaching	1	1.3%	6	4%	7	9.3%	26	34.6 %	35	46.6 %
13	Continuous oral assessment may turn out to be nothing more than a series of tests	26	34.6%	31	41.3%	9	12%	3	4%	5	6.6%
14	Giving feedback to individual students' oral performance affects the teaching learning process	33	44%	26	34.6 %	9	12%	3	4%	4	5.3%
15	Continuous assessment reduces anxiety that most students under go during formal examination	2	2.6%	8	10.6 %	13	17.3%	28	37.39%	24	32%
16	Continuous assessment allows students to use oral English in different occasions and for different purposes	2	2.6%	4	5.3%	4	5.3%	46	61.3%	19	25.3

17	Students can benefit more from detailed comments than marks	13	17.3%	18	24%	26	34.6%	15	20%	3	4%
18	Continuous assessment is not as useful as terminal examination because it makes students feel that they are over assessed	0	0%	4	5.3%	7	9.3%	27	36%	37	49.3%
19	Continuous oral assessment helps students to reflect back on their practice	0	0%	5	6.6%	5	6.6%	46	61.3%	19	25.3%
20	Giving frequent feedback on students' performance will have a negative impact on the relationship between students and teachers	29	38.6	24	32 %	13	17.3 %	8	10.6%	1	1.3 %
21	Continuous assessment is not applicable in our content as it requires teachers with a high level of experience and training	2	2.6%	11	14.6%	6	8%	21	28%	35	46.6%

22	Students will be discouraged if they are given frequent feed back on their performance	21	28%	30	40%	10	13%	8	10.6%	6	8%
23	It students are continuously assessed on their oral performance they feel that every error that they make can count against them	8	10.6%	24	32%	8	10.6%	29	38.6%	6	8%
24	Continuous oral assessment provides a much more natural assessment environment than terminal examination	0	0%	12	16%	9	12%	36	48%	18	24%

f= frequency

A= Agree

SD= Strongly Disagree SA= Strongly Agree

DA= Disagree

U= Uncertain