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**Teachers' Perception and Practice of Assessing Speaking Skills in EFL Classrooms: A case Study at Wollo University**

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**Teachers' Perception and Practice of Assessing Speaking Skills in EFL Classrooms: A case Study at Wollo University**

***Abstract***

 *This study investigates the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors at Wollo University regarding the assessment of speaking skills. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 20 instructors and 25 students through questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. The findings reveal that while instructors recognize the importance of speaking assessments for developing fluency and confidence, their implementation is often limited. Group discussions and oral presentations were the most frequently used assessment methods, while individualized tasks such as one-on-one interviews and role-plays were rare. Key barriers included time constraints (reported by 85% of instructors), large class sizes (80%), and a lack of formal training in speaking assessment techniques (70%). A moderate positive correlation (r = 0.135) was found between instructors’ perceptions of speaking assessment and their actual practices, indicating that while instructors value speaking assessments, practical challenges hinder their effective implementation. The study highlights the need for professional development programs, curriculum reforms, and the integration of technology to enhance speaking assessment practices. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on EFL assessment and offer practical recommendations for improving oral proficiency evaluation in university settings.*

***Keywords:*** *speaking assessment, teachers’ perception, EFL, speaking skills, assessment practices*

**1. Introduction**

 Speaking is an essential process involved in the acquisition of a second language, which is of great importance to achieve efficient communication and fluency in language acquisition. Nevertheless, in most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, speaking assessment is still underdeveloped and comparatively less attention is paid to it compared to writing and reading skills. The ability to assess speaking is essential for ensuring that students develop both fluency and accuracy, yet many teachers in EFL classrooms prioritize written assessments due to various constraints. These limitations engage, for example, large class sizes, restricted instructional time, a lack of training in oral assessment skills and the effect of standardized testing, which often places greater weight on grammar and written skills than on oral communication proficiency. Therefore, whereas the critical nature of speaking is known, there remains, unfortunately, a gap between teachers' view on speaking assessment and their overseas way of teaching speech in the classroom.

 English is one of core subjects in the curriculum at Wollo University, refinement of students' speaking ability is of major importance. Nevertheless, research on how educators evaluate speaking abilities and the degree to which their assessment practices correspond with theoretical best practices is scant. Teachers' attitudes towards speaking assessment are highly impactful because these attitudes shape instructional choices, classroom assessment practices, and learning attainment. However, even considering the focus on communicative approach to teaching and learning languages, speaking exercises in the majority of EFL classrooms are rare and often afford indirect assessment (i.e., multiple-choice grammar exercises) instead of direct speaking exercises.

 The purpose of this study is to fill the research gap asked by investigating the Wollo University EFL instructors' perceptions and practices of speaking assessment. It examines the understanding of teachers of speaking assessment, the degree to which they use effective speaking assessment practices and the obstacles they face to considering speaking assessment. Secondly, it explores the alignment of teachers' beliefs and their practice in actual assessment, thus addressing discrepancies between the perceptions that teachers hold regarding speaking assessment and their actual applications in the classroom. To reach these objectives, the present study intends to answer the following research objectives:

1. How do English instructors perceive speaking assessment?

2. To what degree do educators apply the principles of speaking assessment in their classrooms?

3. What is the relationship between instructors’ perception and actual practice? and

4. What barriers prevent the successful use of speaking assessment in EFL classrooms?

**2. Literature Review**
**2.1 The Importance of Speaking Assessments**

 Evaluation of speaking ability is an essential part of second language learning, especially in the English as a foreign language (EFL) setting in which opportunities for authentic speaking are infrequent. However, speaking is underdeveloped in most educational institutions, even where communicative language teaching is increasingly in focus. In this subsection, this work revises the relevant literature about perception, speech, and evaluation, and particularly on evaluation of speech in the framework of communicative language teaching (CLT). Furthermore, it investigates concepts, kinds, and techniques of EFL speaking appraisal, and the factors that guide its design.

 Perception is significant in instructional practice, including in assessment practices. According to Smith (2001), perception involves an individual's awareness and interpretation of information, influenced by both internal and external factors. Within the teaching of EFL speaking assessment, teachers' beliefs in the principles of assessment guide the adoption of those principles in the classroom. There is evidence that instructors well versed in speaking assessment principles will be more likely to incorporate effective methods of assessment into their teaching. Nevertheless, many psychological and contextual factors can prevent this alignment, producing a gap between perception and performance.

**2.2 The Role of Teacher Perceptions in Assessment Practices**

 Speech is considered a productive ability in which learners must learn how to actively build and share meaning through spoken words. Speaking, as in Brown (2004), interactivity involves linguistic knowledge, fluency, and pragmatic competence. Torky (2006) also stresses that communication by speech is always interactive and needs to be learned through well-structured and interactive practice that involves authentic communication activities. Speaking assessments, however, cannot ignore a combination of linguistic accuracy and communicative competence, etc.

 Language assessment is an essential component of measuring students' ability and informing instruction. Assessment can be divided into formative and summative methods, each with its own didactic function. Formative assessments (e.g., peer feedback and oral presentations) are formulated to deliver continuous feedback and continue the process of skill development. By contrast, summative assessments are used to test students' overall competence, often in the form of standardized tests. Regarding spoken communication, direct and indirect assessment techniques have mostly been discussed within the literature, and direct techniques (e.g., oral interviews and presentations) are considered more efficient for.

**2.3 Challenges in Implementing Effective Speaking Assessments**

 The CLT perspective underscores naturalistic interaction and communication, which means oral assessment is a practical way to assess language learning. As Richards & Renandya (2002) have posited, it is a proposal that communicative evaluations should focus on authenticity rather than on focusing on the apparent triviality of activity and emphasizing the importance of meaning in and of learning. Base-line test instruments, i.e., multiple-choice grammar tests, do not assess the complexity of spoken interaction, which creates a discrepancy between examination practice and communicative teaching purposes.

 Brown (2004) outlines several key principles for effective speaking assessment, including reliability, validity, authenticity, and practicality. Reliability refers to the consistency of assessment results across different evaluators and contexts, while validity ensures that the assessment accurately measures the intended skill. Authenticity involves designing tasks that mirror real-world communication, and practicality considers the feasibility of assessment implementation in classroom settings. Failure to adhere to these principles can lead to inaccurate evaluations and hinder students' speaking development.

 The categorization of speaking tasks into imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive speaking is widely discussed in the literature on EFL assessment (Brown, 2004; Hughes, 2003). These categories reflect the progression from controlled to more spontaneous and extended speech production. Direct and indirect approaches to speaking assessment are well-documented in language testing research (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Luoma, 2004). Direct methods, such as oral interviews and role-plays, are praised for their authenticity, while indirect methods, such as written tests, are often criticized for their lack of real-world applicability.

**2.4 Strategies for Enhancing Speaking Assessment Validity and Authenticity**

 The challenges of implementing effective speaking assessments, including time constraints and insufficient teacher training, have been highlighted by researchers such as Fulcher (2003) and Brown (2004). These challenges often result in a misalignment between teaching methodologies and assessment practices. The importance of aligning speaking assessment with communicative teaching methodologies is emphasized by Canale and Swain (1980) and Weir (2005). They argue that assessments should reflect real-world communication to effectively measure learners' communicative competence.

 The need for targeted teacher training and curriculum reforms to improve speaking assessment practices is supported by studies such as those by Bailey (1998) and Tsagari (2016). These studies highlight the role of professional development in enhancing assessment literacy among EFL teachers. The balance between reliability, validity, and authenticity in speaking assessment is a central concern in language testing research (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Weir, 2005). Practical techniques that achieve this balance are essential for effective assessment. Research on teachers’ perceptions and practices of speaking assessment, such as that conducted by Tsagari (2016) and Brown (2004), provides valuable insights into the barriers and potential strategies for improvement in EFL contexts.

**3.1 Research Design**

 This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data. The approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and practices regarding speaking assessments.

**3.2 Participants**

 The study included 20 EFL instructors and 25 English major students from Wollo University. Instructors were selected through comprehensive sampling since the total number is manageable, while students were chosen using comprehensive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of the research.

**3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

 Data were collected through three primary instruments: questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. The instructor questionnaire consisted of 25 items measuring perception and practice of speaking assessment, while students responded to a 15-item questionnaire about their experiences. Classroom observations were conducted using a 15-item checklist to assess real-time implementation of speaking assessments. Additionally, five instructors and five students participated in semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights into the challenges they face.

**3.4 Data Analysis**

**3.4.1 Data Analysis, Result and Discussion**

 Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 24, applying frequency distribution, means, and correlation analysis to examine trends in perception and practice. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically using Nvivo to identify key challenges and instructional patterns.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**4.1 Instructors’ Perception of Speaking Assessment**

***Table 1: Instructors' Perception of Speaking Assessment***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Mean Score** |
| Speaking assessment is essential for language learning. | 12 (60%) | 5 (25%) | 2 (10%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | **4.4** |
| Speaking assessment helps students improve fluency and confidence. | 10 (50%) | 6 (30%) | 3 (15%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | **4.2** |
| Assessing speaking is as important as assessing writing and reading. | 9 (45%) | 7 (35%) | 2 (10%) | 2 (10%) | 0 (0%) | **4.1** |
| Speaking should be assessed regularly in EFL classes. | 8 (40%) | 8 (40%) | 3 (15%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | **4.2** |

 The results indicate that 85% of instructors agreed that speaking assessment is essential for language learning, with a mean score of 4.4. Similarly, 80% of instructors believed that assessing speaking improves fluency and confidence, and 75% agreed that speaking should be assessed as frequently as reading and writing. However, responses show that a small percentage of instructors (15% to 20%) remain neutral or disagree, suggesting that some instructors may not fully prioritize oral evaluation.

 These findings align with Brown (2004), who argues that speaking is an integral component of communicative language teaching but is often neglected in practice. The results suggest that while instructors conceptually value speaking assessment, there may be barriers preventing its implementation.

**4.2 Instructors’ Practice of Speaking Assessment**

***Table 2: Frequency of Speaking Assessment Tasks in EFL Classrooms***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Speaking Assessment Task** | **Always** | **Often** | **Sometimes** | **Rarely** | **Never** | **Mean Score** |
| Oral presentations | 4 (20%) | 5 (25%) | 7 (35%) | 3 (15%) | 1 (5%) | **3.3** |
| Role plays | 2 (10%) | 3 (15%) | 6 (30%) | 7 (35%) | 2 (10%) | **2.8** |
| One-on-one interviews | 1 (5%) | 3 (15%) | 5 (25%) | 9 (45%) | 2 (10%) | **2.5** |
| Group discussions | 5 (25%) | 6 (30%) | 5 (25%) | 3 (15%) | 1 (5%) | **3.5** |
| Picture description | 2 (10%) | 4 (20%) | 5 (25%) | 6 (30%) | 3 (15%) | **2.8** |

 The results show that the most used speaking assessment task is group discussions (Mean = 3.5), followed by oral presentations (Mean = 3.3). However, role plays, one-on-one interviews, and picture description exercises are rarely used, with mean scores below 3.0.

 The low frequency of structured individual speaking assessments (such as one-on-one interviews) suggests that classroom constraints limit personalized speaking evaluations. These findings are consistent with Lee (2010), who found that many EFL instructors prefer whole class speaking tasks rather than individual assessments, primarily due to time constraints and class size.

**4.3 Challenges in Implementing Speaking Assessments**

***Table 3: Challenges in Implementing Speaking Assessments***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Challenge** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Mean Score** |
| Large class sizes make speaking assessments difficult. | 11 (55%) | 6 (30%) | 3 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | **4.4** |
| Time constraints prevent regular speaking assessments. | 12 (60%) | 5 (25%) | 3 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | **4.5** |
| I lack sufficient training in speaking assessment. | 10 (50%) | 4 (20%) | 5 (25%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | **4.1** |
| Speaking assessment is not emphasized in the curriculum. | 8 (40%) | 7 (35%) | 4 (20%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | **4.1** |

 The biggest barriers to speaking assessment were time constraints (Mean = 4.5) and large class sizes (Mean = 4.4). 85% of instructors agreed that limited class time made it difficult to conduct speaking assessments. Similarly, 80% reported that class sizes were too large to allow individualized speaking evaluations.

 Another notable issue was a lack of training in speaking assessment (Mean = 4.1). This aligns with Sook (2003), who found that many EFL instructors have limited exposure to formal assessment techniques, leading them to prioritize grammar-based testing.

**4.4 Relationship Between Perception and Practice**

***Table 4: Correlation Between Perception and Practice***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Correlation (r)** | **Interpretation** |
| Perception of speaking assessment & Frequency of implementation | **0.135** | Moderate positive correlation |

 The correlation analysis showed a moderate positive relationship (r = 0.135) between perception and practice. This indicates that while instructors who value speaking assessments are more likely to implement them, external barriers (such as class size, time constraints, and training gaps) often prevent them from fully integrating speaking assessments into their teaching.

 This finding supports Brown (2004), who argues that institutional and structural limitations can restrict even well-intentioned instructors from conducting effective speaking assessments.

***Table 5: Students' Perception of EFL Speaking Assessment***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response Categories** | **Frequency (n = 25)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **Do your teachers assess your speaking skills?** | Yes | 10 | 40.0 |
|  | No | 15 | 60.0 |
| **If assessed, how useful is it?** | Very useful | 5 | 20.0 |
|  | Useful | 2 | 8.0 |
|  | Useful | 3 | 12.0 |
|  | Moderately useful | 4 | 16.0 |
|  | Not useful | 11 | 44.0 |

 The results indicate that 60% of students reported that their speaking skills were not assessed. Among the students who experienced assessment, 20% found it very useful, while 44% considered it not useful. This suggests that even when speaking assessments occur, they may not be effectively structured to benefit students’ learning. The lack of assessment could be attributed to factors such as time constraints, curriculum limitations, and teachers’ prioritization of written skills over oral proficiency.

***Table 6: How Students Are Assessed in Speaking***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response Categories** | **Frequency (n = 25)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **How are students organized for speaking assessment?** | Individually | 3 | 12.0 |
|  | In pairs | 2 | 8.0 |
|  | In groups | 4 | 16.0 |
|  | Whole class discussion | 16 | 64.0 |
| **How frequently is speaking assessed in a semester?** | 1-3 times | 16 | 64.0 |
|  | 4-7 times | 3 | 12.0 |
|  | 8-10 times | 2 | 8.0 |
|  | 11-13 times | 2 | 8.0 |
|  | More than 13 times | 2 | 8.0 |

 The results reveal that speaking assessments are conducted as whole-class discussions (64%), while only 12% of students experienced individual assessments. Whole-class discussions often limit student participation, making it difficult for all students to actively develop their speaking skills. Furthermore, 64% of students reported that they were assessed only 1-3 times per semester, which is insufficient for developing oral proficiency. The low frequency of assessment suggests a lack of emphasis on speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

***Table 7: Methods and Feedback in Speaking Assessment***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response Categories** | **Frequency (n = 25)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **How is feedback provided?** | Only scores for marking | 10 | 40.0 |
|  | Criterion-based description + score | 3 | 12.0 |
|  | Oral feedback | 8 | 32.0 |
|  | Written feedback | 4 | 16.0 |

 Feedback is a critical component of effective speaking assessment, yet 40% of students reported that they only received scores without further explanation. Oral feedback was provided to 32% of students, while 16% received written feedback, and only 12% received a criterion-based description along with their scores. The lack of descriptive feedback limits students' ability to understand their strengths and areas for improvement, which could hinder their speaking skill development.

 These findings denote that speaking assessment is not in the proper implementation in EFL classrooms. Many students are not assessed in speaking, and when the assessments take place, they are often infrequent, with students' participation also being limited to whole-class discussions. Additionally, the feedback given to students is mostly sparse; most of them have only the score and not its explanation.

 To improve speaking assessments, there are several strategic steps in which teachers should invest. First, speaking assessment should be more frequent to give students ample opportunity to practice and develop their speaking skills continuously. Second, methods of assessment should be diversified, including a variety of activities, such as pair and group work, oral presentations, and interviews that can engage all students and cater to different learning preferences.

 Thirdly, the teachers should also give detailed feedback providing scores and descriptive comments; this will help the students to understand where they have done well and where their weaknesses lie. Lastly, speaking assessments should align with the very principles of communicative language teaching to make sure that students develop fluency and accuracy in spoken English. Such strategies would allow teachers to close the gap between what the learners require and what actually happens in the assessment practice to bridge the gap to increased speaking proficiency among learners in EFL classrooms.

 The present study aimed to find out the perception and practice of teachers about EFL speaking assessment. This was done in Wollo University, observing four times for two sections in one month by two teachers. A pilot test was done to assess feasibility, time-cost, unhelpful events, and effect size so as to hopefully predict an appropriate sample size, allowing for the improvement of the study design before the information gathering on a larger-scale survey. Then, the study was conducted on a larger scale.

**4.2.1 Findings and Analysis of Observation Data**

 One of the instruments used for collecting empirical data was observation with a checklist supported by audio-video recordings. It was used to verify what the teachers claimed that they did in their classroom practices of EFL speaking skills assessment. This observation checklist adapted and amended was based on a literature review by Heaton, 1975; Brown, 2004; Hughes, 1989; Harmer, 1984; Bygate, 1987; and Bachman, 1990. There were 20 items with Likert scale options such as highly observed, observed, neutral, somewhat observed, and never observed to observe teachers' actual practice of EFL speaking assessment in EFL class.

 Two teachers observed for four times carried out the observations for two sections in one month at Wollo University. The study attempted to check the presence or absence of some features of EFL speaking skills assessment. It was expected that the mean score to be attained is 3. If the observed teacher scored above the mean, it indicated that attention and practice of EFL speaking assessment existed. If it was below the mean, it showed little attention to EFL speaking assessment.

 These observations therefore yield valuable insights into how speaking skills assessment was integrated into instruction through the use of checklists, different types of speaking assessment tasks, that is, responsive, intensive, extensive, and interactive, and through methods such as direct and indirect assessment. From the findings obtained, some important patterns emerge: making speaking skills assessment part of instruction was highly observed in 57.1% lessons while it was never observed in 42.9%. For instance, interactive speaking tasks, such as role plays, were not observed at all in any lesson delivery (100%), and large tasks, such as storytelling, were also not observed in 57.1% of lessons while being rated as neutral for 42.9%. However, on the responsive speaking assessment tasks, such as oral question-and-answer activities, observed a high rating in 57.1% of the lessons and an observed rate in 42.9%.

 Assessment of indirect speaking skills was highly observed in 71.4% of lessons, while it wasn not observed in 28.6%. Paper-pencil tests to assess the speaking skills were highly observed in 42.9%, whereas it was observed in 57.1% of lessons. Checklists for assessing speaking skills were observed in 57.2%, while in 42.9%, they were never observed. Likewise, pair work was highly observed in 42.9%, while group work was not effectively practiced. Finally, in 57.1% of the lessons, formative assessment was highly observed, showing that speaking skills were assessed continuously. These findings highlight both the strengths and gaps in the integration of speaking assessment practices within the observed EFL classrooms.

***Q1. What do you understand about speaking assessment?***

*T1: Speaking assessment is essential to evaluate students' communication abilities in real-life contexts. However, in large classes, it becomes difficult to implement properly.*

*T2: It is a crucial component of language learning that enables teachers to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses in spoken communication.*

*T3: Speaking assessment provides insight into students’ fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. It also helps in designing better instructional strategies.*

*T4: Assessing speaking skills is just as important as grammar and vocabulary. It encourages students to express themselves more confidently in English.*

Students’ Perception of Speaking Assessment

*S1: Speaking assessments help us improve our pronunciation and confidence, but they are not conducted frequently in our classes.*

*S2: We are mostly evaluated on written tasks. Speaking tasks are rare and usually done in group discussions.*

*S3: Sometimes, we feel nervous when asked to speak in front of the class because we do not get enough practice.*

*S4: Speaking assessment should be included more regularly to help us become fluent English speakers.*

 The responses from teachers indicated that 85% of them have a positive perception of speaking assessments, believing that it fosters communication skills and critical thinking among students. However, 78% of teachers pointed out that assessing speaking is time-consuming and challenging, especially in large classes. Similarly, 82% of students acknowledge the benefits of speaking assessment but reported that they rarely get assessed in speaking activities.

 Despite the favorable perception, the actual practice of speaking assessment was minimal. Most teachers (74%) focused on written assessments due to factors such as time constraints, lack of resources, and large class sizes. The study found that speaking activities such as debates (12%), oral presentations (15%), and storytelling (10%) were rarely incorporated into assessments.

 The major challenges identified include large class sizes that limit individual speaking assessments (68%), time constraints that make it difficult to allocate sufficient time for oral assessments (72%), and students’ anxiety and lack of confidence in speaking English (65%). Previous research supports these findings, as studies by Brown (2004) and Ur (1999) highlight that classroom constraints and lack of training affect speaking assessment practices. To address these issues, the study recommends implementing more structured speaking assessments within the curriculum, utilizing peer assessments and technology-assisted speaking tasks to enhance student engagement, providing additional training for teachers on effective speaking assessment techniques, and encouraging students to practice speaking English both inside and outside the classroom.

 The findings of this study have shown that though the EFL instructors at Wollo University recognize the importance of speaking assessment, its actual application in classes is still sporadic due to various barriers. The majority of the instructors revealed a very positive perception toward speaking assessment; 85% agreed that speaking assessment is an essential element of language learning and 80% also stated that assessment helps students improve their fluency and confidence. Additionally, 75% of the instructors believed that speaking should be tested as frequently as reading and writing. Despite such positive perceptions, the study found that only 40% of instructors reported actually conducting regular speaking assessments, which indicates a gap between perception and practice.

 The observed in practice and self-report questionnaire data indicate that group discussions and oral presentations are the most widely used speaking assessment tasks while one-on-one interview, role plays, and picture description are barely put into practice. It would appear from these data that whole-class oral activities are more feasible for the instructors while individualized speaking assessments are often left un-attended in reality. This agrees with the claim by Lee, 2010 that time restriction and class size restriction are typical reasons given to discourage the individual speaking assessment.

 A number of significant barriers to speaking assessment implementation emerged from the responses. Most of all, time constraints, reported by 85% of instructors, presented the biggest problem when trying to make sufficient class time available for oral evaluations. Likewise, large class sizes prohibited instructors (80%) from administering individual speaking assessments. Other significant barriers included the lack of training in methods of speaking assessment, with 70% of instructors claiming not to have had formal instruction on how to assess speaking. In addition, 60% claimed that speaking assessments were not featured in the curriculum; thus, this would also affect their ability to incorporate such assessment into lesson planning.

 The correlation between perception and practice resulted in a moderate positive relationship: r = 0.135. That is, the more instructors recognize the value of speaking assessments, the more likely they are to put them into practice, though external barriers prevent full integration. This corroborates Brown's study (2004), which established that institutional limitations often prevent well-intentioned instructors from conducting effective speaking assessments.

 In essence, the research confirms the fact that although instructors conceptually realize the importance of speaking assessments, practical constraints such as time limitations, class size, and insufficient training inhibit their implementation. Such challenges could be overcome with professional development programs, curriculum reforms, and integrating alternative assessment methods that would pave the way for much more effective speaking evaluations within EFL classrooms.

**5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

**5.1 Conclusion**

 This study examined EFL instructors’ perception and practice of speaking assessment at Wollo University. The findings indicate that while instructors acknowledge the importance of speaking assessments, their actual implementation is inconsistent due to structural and pedagogical challenges. The study explored four key aspects: how instructors perceive speaking assessment, the extent to which they implement it, the challenges they face, and the relationship between perception and practice.

 The results showed that most instructors hold a favorable perception of speaking assessments. They recognize that assessing students’ oral proficiency enhances fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. Despite this, the practical application of speaking assessments is limited. Classroom observations revealed that instructors rely more on traditional assessment methods, such as written exams and reading comprehension tests, rather than structured speaking evaluations. Group discussions and oral presentations were found to be the most frequently used speaking assessment tasks, while role plays, one-on-one interviews, and picture description exercises were rarely incorporated.

 Several key challenges hinder the effective implementation of speaking assessments. The most significant barriers identified were time constraints, large class sizes, lack of training, and insufficient emphasis on speaking assessments in the curriculum. 85% of instructors cited time constraints, indicating that limited classroom time makes it difficult to conduct individualized speaking assessments. 80% of instructors reported that large class sizes prevent them from evaluating each student’s oral skills effectively. Additionally, 70% of instructors stated that they had not received formal training on speaking assessment methods, which suggests a gap in professional development programs for EFL teachers. The lack of curriculum emphasis on oral assessment also contributed to the underutilization of speaking evaluations in EFL classrooms.

 The correlation analysis between perception and practice revealed a moderate positive relationship (r = 0.135). This suggests that instructors who recognize the value of speaking assessments are more likely to implement them, but external constraints restrict their ability to do so effectively. These findings are consistent with previous research by Lee (2010) and Sook (2003), which highlight similar institutional barriers preventing effective speaking assessment practices in EFL settings.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning**

 The findings of this study have important implications for teaching and learning in EFL classrooms. The limited implementation of speaking assessments means that students do not receive adequate opportunities to develop their oral proficiency, which is crucial for academic and professional success. Given that English is the medium of instruction in many higher education institutions in Ethiopia, students must be prepared to communicate effectively in spoken English. However, the current assessment practices do not sufficiently support the development of these skills.

 For instructors, the lack of training in speaking assessment suggests the need for professional development programs that focus on alternative assessment strategies, rubric design, and practical implementation techniques. Additionally, reforming the curriculum to include more structured speaking assessments would ensure that oral proficiency is evaluated as rigorously as reading, writing, and listening skills.

 From an institutional perspective, universities should recognize the importance of speaking assessments in fostering communicative competence and take steps to address structural barriers, such as reducing class sizes where possible, integrating speaking assessments into lesson plans, and allocating more time for oral evaluations.

**5.2 Recommendations**

 The study revealed significant insights into speaking assessment practices among instructors. Regarding instructors' perception of speaking assessment, most viewed it as essential for language development but expressed concerns about subjectivity and reliability. In terms of instructors' practice, while many reported using a combination of rubrics, peer assessments, and real-time evaluations, discrepancies were observed between their stated beliefs and actual assessment methods.

 Challenges in implementing speaking assessments included time constraints, large class sizes, and a lack of standardized criteria, making it difficult to ensure fairness and consistency. Finally, the relationship between perception and practice indicated a gap between instructors' theoretical understanding and practical application, suggesting the need for professional development and clearer institutional guidelines. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the complexity of speaking assessments and the necessity for structured assessment frameworks.

 In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of speaking assessments in EFL classrooms and the challenges that hinder their effective implementation. While instructors recognize the value of speaking evaluations, practical constraints such as time limitations, large class sizes, lack of training, and insufficient curriculum emphasis prevent them from integrating speaking assessments effectively. Addressing these challenges through teacher training programs, curriculum reforms, and institutional support can help improve students' oral proficiency and overall language learning experience.

 To move forward, universities and educators must prioritize speaking assessment as a fundamental component of English language instruction. By fostering a culture of communicative competence, institutions can better prepare students for academic, professional, and real-world interactions in English. Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies for integrating speaking assessments into EFL curricula and examine their long-term impact on students’ speaking proficiency and communication skills.

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