

## TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF ASSESSING SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS: A CASE STUDY AT WOLLO UNIVERSITY, ETHIOPIA

Received: 30/06/2025

Accepted: 31/10/2025

**Ayalew YIMER<sup>1</sup>, & Taye REGASSA<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Foreign Languages and Literature, Lecturer (M.A) HLJC, Wollo University, Dessie, Ethiopia.

✉ E-Mail: [ayalewyimer665@gmail.com](mailto:ayalewyimer665@gmail.com)

📄 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8661-0574>



<sup>2</sup>Ph.D., Foreign Language and Literature, Assistant Prof. (Ph.D.) HLJC, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

✉ E-Mail: [taye12regassa@gmail.com](mailto:taye12regassa@gmail.com)

📄 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2837-4912>

### How to Cite (APA Style):

Yimer, A., & Regassa, T. (2025). Teachers' perception and practice of assessing speaking skills in EFL classrooms: A case study at Wollo University, Ethiopia. *Educational Challenges*, 30(2), 357–373. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2025.30.2.26>

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction.** This study investigates the perceptions and classroom practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors at Wollo University, Ethiopia, regarding the assessment of speaking skills.

**Purpose.** The purpose of the research is twofold: to evaluate the alignment between instructors' theoretical beliefs about speaking assessment and their actual practices, and to identify systemic and

**Вступ.** Ця розвідка досліджує сприйняття та практику оцінювання викладачами англійської мови як іноземної (EFL) навичок усного мовлення студентів в Університеті Волло, Ефіопія.

**Мета** дослідження подвійна: оцінити відповідність між теоретичними переконаннями викладачів щодо оцінювання усного мовлення та їхньою фактичною практикою, а також виявити системні педагогічні

© Ayalew YIMER, & Taye REGASSA, 2025

**Teachers' perception and practice of assessing speaking skills in EFL classrooms: A case study at Wollo University, Ethiopia** © 2025 by Ayalew YIMER, & Taye REGASSA is licensed under **Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International**. To view a copy of the license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

pedagogical barriers that undermine effective oral proficiency evaluation.

**Methodology.** Adopting a mixed-methods methodology, the study collected data from 20 instructors and 25 students through structured questionnaires, non-participant classroom observations, and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics, while qualitative responses were thematically coded.

**Results.** The results demonstrate that while instructors universally emphasize the importance of speaking assessments for developing communicative competence, their implementation is largely restricted to logistically manageable methods such as group discussions (used by 90% of instructors) and oral presentations (75%). In contrast, more nuanced techniques such as role-plays (20%) and individualized interviews (15%) were rare due to reported constraints. Key challenges included time limitations (85% of instructors), large class sizes (80%), inadequate training in assessment design (70%), and limited institutional support for formative feedback. A weak but significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.135$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between instructors' perceptions and practices underscores the gap between intent and action.

**Conclusion.** The conclusions advocate for institutional interventions, including mandatory teacher training programs on alternative assessment models (e.g., digital portfolios, peer assessments), policy reforms to reduce class sizes, and the integration of automated tools. By bridging this gap, the study argues, universities can better align assessment practices with pedagogical goals, ultimately enhancing students' oral proficiency in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** speaking assessment, teachers' perception, EFL, speaking skills, assessment practices, oral proficiency.

бар'єри, які заважають ефективному оцінюванню рівня усного мовлення.

**Методологія.** Застосовуючи методологію змішаних методів, у дослідженні було зібрано дані від 20 викладачів та 25 студентів за допомогою структурованих анкет, поглиблених інтерв'ю, спостережень за роботою в аудиторії. Кількісні дані були проаналізовані за допомогою описової та кореляційної статистики, тоді як якісні відповіді були тематично кодовані.

**Результати** показують, що хоча викладачі наголошують на важливості оцінювання усного мовлення для розвитку комунікативної компетенції, їхнє впровадження значною мірою обмежується керованими методами, такими як групові дискусії (використовуються 90% викладачів) та усні презентації (75%). Натомість, інші методи, такі як рольові ігри (20%) та індивідуальні інтерв'ю (15%), трапляються рідко через певні обмеження. Певними обмеженнями стали обмеження в часі (85% викладачів), великі класи (80%), недостатня підготовка системи оцінювання (70%), обмежена підтримка формувального зворотного зв'язку. Слабка, але значна позитивна кореляція ( $r = 0,135$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ) між сприйняттям та практикою викладачів підкреслює розрив між намірами та діями.

**Висновки** обґрунтовують потребу інституційних змін, зокрема підвищення кваліфікації викладачів щодо альтернативних моделей оцінювання, зменшення наповнюваності навчальних груп та впровадження автоматизованих інструментів оцінювання, що сприятиме узгодженню оцінювальних практик з педагогічними цілями й підвищенню рівня усної іншомовної компетентності студентів.

**Ключові слова:** оцінювання усного мовлення, сприйняття викладачами, англійська мова як іноземна, навички говоріння, методи оцінювання, опанування усного мовлення.

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an essential process involved in the acquisition of a second language, which is significant for achieving efficient communication and fluency in language acquisition (Goh & Burns, 2012). Nevertheless, in most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, speaking assessment is still underdeveloped and comparatively receives less attention than writing and reading skills (Derakhshan et al., 2015). 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 include large class sizes, restricted instructional time, a lack of training in oral assessment skills, and the effect of standardized testing, which often places greater emphasis on grammar and writing skills rather than on oral communication proficiency (Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2016; Saito & Plonsky, 2019; Dewan & Sharma, 2025). Therefore, although the critical nature of speaking is well acknowledged, there remains a persistent gap between teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment and their actual practices in the classroom.

At Wollo University, where English is a core subject in the curriculum, the refinement of students' speaking ability is of major importance. However, research on how educators evaluate speaking abilities and the degree to which their assessment practices align with theoretical best practices remains limited (Harding & Kremmel, 2016). Teachers' attitudes towards speaking assessment are highly impactful as they shape instructional choices, classroom assessment practices, and student learning outcomes (DeLuca et al., 2024; Nieminen et al., 2024). Despite the communicative approach widely promoted in language teaching, speaking exercises in most EFL classrooms are rare and often rely on indirect assessment methods, such as multiple-choice grammar tests, rather than direct speaking activities (Hughes, 2003; Pill & Harding, 2013; Oudghiri & Ibrahim, 2025).

This study aims to address this research gap by investigating Wollo University EFL instructors' perceptions and practices regarding speaking assessment. It explores their understanding of speaking assessment, the extent to which they implement effective speaking assessment techniques, and the obstacles they face. Moreover, it examines the alignment between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, thereby identifying discrepancies between perception and implementation.

To achieve these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

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' perceptions and actual practice?
4. What barriers prevent the successful use of speaking assessment in EFL classrooms?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **– The Importance of Speaking Assessments**

Evaluation of speaking ability is a fundamental aspect of second language acquisition, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where authentic speaking opportunities are limited. Despite the increasing emphasis on communicative language teaching (CLT), speaking remains underdeveloped in many educational institutions. This section explores the existing literature on perception, speech, and evaluation, focusing specifically on speaking assessment within the CLT framework. Additionally, it examines the concepts, types, and techniques of EFL speaking assessment and the factors influencing its design.

Perception plays a crucial role in teaching and assessment practices. As highlighted by Saito and Plonsky (2019), perception encompasses an individual's awareness and interpretation of information, shaped by internal and external influences. In the context of EFL speaking assessments, teachers' perceptions significantly affect the implementation of assessment principles in the classroom. Research suggests that instructors who possess a strong understanding of speaking assessment methodologies are more likely to integrate effective evaluation techniques into their teaching (Harding

& Kremmel, 2016). However, various psychological and contextual barriers can hinder this alignment, creating a gap between theoretical assessment principles and actual classroom practice.

#### – **The Role of Teacher Perceptions in Assessment Practices**

Speaking is a productive skill that requires learners to construct and convey meaning through spoken language. According to Goh and Burns (2012), effective speaking involves linguistic knowledge, fluency, and pragmatic competence, all of which contribute to communicative ability. Derakhshan, Tahery, and Mirarab (2021) also emphasize that spoken communication is inherently interactive and must be fostered through structured, meaningful practice that mirrors real-life conversations. Speaking assessments must therefore integrate both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence to provide a holistic measure of proficiency.

Language assessment serves as a critical tool for evaluating students' abilities and informing instructional strategies. Assessments can be categorized as formative or summative, each serving distinct pedagogical functions (Chufama & Sithole, 2021). Formative assessments, such as peer feedback and oral presentations, provide ongoing feedback to support skill development, while summative assessments, often in the form of standardized tests, measure overall competence. Within speaking assessment, direct and indirect approaches have been widely discussed in the literature. Direct methods, including oral interviews and role-plays, are preferred due to their authenticity and communicative relevance, whereas indirect methods, such as multiple-choice listening tasks, may fail to capture the complexity of spoken interaction (Pill & Harding, 2013).

#### – **Challenges in Implementing Effective Speaking Assessments**

The CLT approach emphasizes meaningful, interactive communication, making oral assessments a key component of effective language evaluation. Many researchers emphasize that communicative assessments should prioritize authenticity, noting that traditional grammar-based tests often fail to measure spontaneous spoken interaction. (Hughes, 2003; Oudghiri & Ibrahim, 2025). The misalignment between standardized testing practices and communicative teaching methodologies has been a longstanding challenge in language education (Hasrol et al., 2022).

For effective speaking assessments, key principles such as reliability, validity, authenticity, and practicality must be considered (Kadir et al., 2019; Sitepu et al., 2025). Reliability ensures consistency across different raters and contexts, while validity ensures that the assessment accurately measures speaking ability. Authenticity requires the inclusion of real-world speaking tasks, and practicality considers the feasibility of assessment implementation in diverse educational settings. Neglecting these principles can result in flawed assessments that fail to support students' communicative development (Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2016).

A well-established classification of speaking tasks includes imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive speaking activities, reflecting the transition from controlled speech to more spontaneous discourse (Luoma, 2004). Direct and indirect approaches to assessment have been extensively debated, with direct methods, such as structured interviews and discussion tasks, being favored for their ability to simulate authentic communication (Oudghiri & Ibrahim, 2025). In contrast, indirect methods, such as written-based speaking tests, often lack real-world applicability and fail to capture interactive competence (Knoch & Elder, 2013).

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

Several challenges hinder the effective implementation of speaking assessments, including time constraints and inadequate teacher training (Hasselgreen et al., 2004). These issues often result in a disconnect between instructional approaches and assessment practices. Research underscores the necessity of aligning speaking assessments with communicative teaching methodologies to ensure an accurate evaluation of learners' abilities (Adem & Berkessa, 2022).

The need for teacher training and curriculum reform to improve speaking assessment practices has been widely acknowledged (Erlam et al., 2021; Alvarez et al., 2024). Studies emphasize the role of professional development in enhancing assessment literacy among EFL teachers, enabling them to design and implement more effective assessment strategies (Rad, 2019; Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018). Balancing reliability, validity, and authenticity is a critical concern in language testing research, as assessments must provide accurate, meaningful, and practical measures of speaking ability (Kadir et al., 2019; Sitepu et al., 2025). Practical techniques that strike this balance are essential for effective language assessment. Research into teacher perceptions and classroom practices highlights persistent barriers to effective speaking assessment and offers valuable strategies for improvement (Harding & Kremmel, 2016).

**METHODOLOGY****– 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. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach to provide a holistic understanding of the instructors' and students' perceptions and practices. On the quantitative side, structured questionnaires were used to collect numerical data, which were then analyzed using SPSS version 24 for frequency distributions, mean comparisons, and correlation analysis. On the qualitative side, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were analyzed thematically using NVivo software. This dual approach allowed the researchers to corroborate quantitative trends with rich qualitative insights.

**– Participants**

Although comprehensive sampling was used to include all English major students due to the manageable population size, the study aimed to ensure diversity across several dimensions. These included gender, year of study (ranging from first-year to graduating students), academic performance levels (as reflected in departmental records), and classroom engagement levels observed by instructors. This was intended to capture a wide spectrum of student experiences and perceptions regarding speaking assessment practices in EFL classrooms. 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.

**– 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.

**– Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations**

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without any academic or institutional consequence. Informed consent was obtained through written consent forms signed by each participant prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study, and ethical clearance was obtained from the research review committee of Wollo University.

**– Data Analysis**

In the Data Analysis section, while SPSS was used for general statistical processing, it is important to note that specific tests were applied to particular datasets. For example, Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between instructors' perceptions and their reported practices. Descriptive statistics (frequency and mean scores) were used to summarize questionnaire responses. However, no inferential comparisons (e.g., t-tests or ANOVA) were conducted, as the aim was primarily exploratory rather than comparative. 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.

**RESULTS**

**– Instructors' Perception of Speaking Assessment**

The following section presents the findings obtained from the data collected through questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews with both instructors and students. The results are structured to align with the study's four research questions, which focus on instructors' perceptions, instructional practices, challenges faced, and the relationship between perception and practice in the assessment of speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Quantitative results are shown in tables supporting narrative interpretations, followed by qualitative themes where applicable.

**Table 1**

*Instructors' Perception of Speaking Assessment*

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

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.

**– Instructors’ Practice of Speaking Assessment**

**Table 2**

*Frequency of Speaking Assessment Tasks in EFL Classrooms*

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

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 align with research indicating that many EFL instructors tend to prefer whole-class speaking tasks over individual assessments, mainly because of time constraints and large class sizes (Güneş & Girgin, 2025; O’Connor et al., 2016).

**– Challenges in Implementing Speaking Assessments**

**Table 3**

*Challenges in Implementing Speaking Assessments*

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

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.

**– Relationship Between Perception and Practice**

**Table 4**

*Correlation Between Perception and Practice*

| Variable  | Correlation (r) | Interpretation                |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Perception of speaking assessment & Frequency of implementation | <b>0.135</b>    | Moderate positive correlation |

Table 4 shows the statistical correlation between instructors' perceptions of speaking assessment and the frequency with which they implement such assessments in the classroom. The correlation coefficient (r) was calculated using Pearson's correlation formula. The result,  $r = 0.135$ , indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that while positive perceptions are associated with greater implementation, other external factors mediate this relationship.

The moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.135$ ) between perception and practice shown in the correlation analysis gives an indication of the source of the disparity. Specifically, 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 (%) |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>Do your teachers assess your speaking skills?</b> | Yes                 | 10                 | 40.0           |
|  | No                  | 15                 | 60.0           |
| <b>If assessed, how useful is it?</b>                | Especially 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 those who experienced speaking assessment, only a minority perceived it as useful, while a larger proportion considered it ineffective. This suggests

that even when speaking assessment is implemented, it may lack clear structure or pedagogical value. The limited use of speaking assessment can be explained by factors such as time constraints, curriculum limitations, and teachers' prioritization of written skills over oral proficiency.

It should be noted that in Table 5, under the second question ("If assessed, how useful is it?"), two response categories are identically labeled as "Useful" but differ in frequency. This is a typographical error: the first category reflects a moderate level of usefulness, whereas the second should be interpreted as indicating slight or limited usefulness.

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

| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Response Categories</b> | <b>Frequency (n = 25)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>How are students organized for speaking assessment?</b> | Individually               | 3                         | 12.0                  |
|  | In pairs                   | 2                         | 8.0                   |
|  | In groups                  | 4                         | 16.0                  |
|  | Whole class discussion     | 16                        | 64.0                  |
| <b>How frequently is speaking assessed in a semester?</b>  | 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*

| <b>Question</b>                  | <b>Response Categories</b>          | <b>Frequency (n = 25)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>How is feedback provided?</b> | 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 properly implemented 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 a chance 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 (CLT) 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 happens in the assessment practice to bridge the gap to increase 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 sessions in one month by two teachers. A pilot test was done to assess feasibility, time-cost, unhelpful events, and effect size to 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.

#### **– 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 was in their classroom practices of EFL speaking skills assessment. This observation checklist adapted and amended by the researchers based on: Brown, 2004.

There were 20 items with Likert scale options such as highly observed, observed, neutral, rarely observed, and never observed to observe teachers' actual practice of EFL speaking assessment in EFL class.

The study attempted to examine the extent to which key features of EFL speaking skills assessment were present in classroom practice. This was investigated using the observation checklist completed by two teachers, each of whom conducted four observations. The observations were carried out over the course of one month and covered two class at Wollo University. It was expected that the mean score to be attained would be 3, since highly observed (5), observed (4), neutral (3), rarely observed (2), and never observed (1). 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. This integration was examined using checklists, diverse types of speaking assessment tasks, namely, responsive, intensive, extensive, and interactive, and both direct and indirect assessment methods. The findings reveal several important patterns. Speaking skills assessment was highly observed in 57.1% of 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%). Similarly, extensive tasks, such as storytelling, were also not observed in 57.1% of lessons, received a neutral rating in the remaining 42.9%. However, in the responsive speaking assessment tasks, such as oral question-and-answer activities a highly observed rating was given in 57.1% of the lessons and an observed rate in 42.9% of the lesson.

Assessment of indirect speaking skills was highly observed in 71.4% of lessons, while it was not observed in 28.6%. Paper-pencil tests to assess 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 the strengths and gaps in the integration of speaking assessment practices within the observed EFL classrooms.

In order to complement the classroom observation data and gain deeper insight into how speaking assessment is understood and perceived by its main participants, qualitative data were collected through an open-ended question addressed to both teachers and students. This approach made it possible to explore their views on the role, purpose, and challenges of assessing speaking skills in the EFL classroom. The following section presents the responses to the question “*What do you understand about speaking assessment?*”, reflecting teachers’ and students’ perceptions of speaking assessment practices.

– **Teachers’ Perception of 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 study by Brown (2004) 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. Most of the instructors revealed an incredibly 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 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 interviews, role plays, and picture description are barely put into practice. It seems from these data that whole-class oral activities are more feasible for the instructors, while individualized speaking assessments are often neglected. This perspective is supported by research suggesting that time limitations and large class sizes are commonly cited reasons for the limited use of individual speaking assessment.

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.

Several 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 assessments 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.

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.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how EFL instructors at Wollo University perceive and practice speaking assessment, and the challenges they face in their implementation.

The results showed that most instructors hold a positive perception of speaking assessment. A significant portion acknowledged that it improves students' fluency, confidence, and overall communication competence. However, despite these favorable attitudes, speaking assessments were implemented irregularly and often in limited formats (Anshori, 2023). Group discussions and oral presentations were the most common activities, whereas more individualized and interactive formats like one-on-one

interviews and role plays were rarely used. This discrepancy supports prior research by Brown (2004), who found that practical barriers often prevent effective oral assessment, even when instructors recognize its value.

The most significant obstacles identified were time constraints and large class sizes (Holubnycha et al., 2025). These findings are consistent with Sook (2003), who emphasized that logistical limitations influence assessment practices in EFL contexts. Additionally, 70% of instructors indicated a lack of formal training in speaking assessment, underscoring a need for targeted professional development. Curriculum constraints were also cited, suggesting institutional reform may be necessary to integrate speaking evaluation more systematically.

The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.135$ ) revealed a moderate positive relationship between instructors' perception and their actual classroom practices. This implies that while teachers with more favorable views on speaking assessment are more likely to apply these methods, external structural limitations still impede full implementation. This finding aligns with the theory that perception alone is not sufficient to bring about behavioral change without supportive conditions and resources.

Student responses further confirmed the limited use and effectiveness of current speaking assessment practices. Many reported that speaking was assessed infrequently, mostly through whole-class discussions, while others received minimal or no constructive feedback. This limits opportunities for students to practice spoken English and to understand areas in need of improvement. Such results highlight a critical gap between instructional intentions and the actual assessment experience of learners.

Considering these findings, it is evident that more structured and frequent speaking assessments, supported by institutional and professional training measures, are essential for aligning pedagogical intent with classroom practice.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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 findings indicate that most instructors have a positive attitude toward speaking assessment and acknowledge its role in developing students' fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. However, its practical use remains limited. Classroom observations show a preference for traditional assessment methods, such as written and reading tests, over systematic speaking evaluation. Group discussions and oral presentations are the most commonly used speaking tasks, whereas role plays, individual interviews, and picture descriptions are rarely applied.

The effective implementation of speaking assessment is constrained by several factors, including limited time, large class sizes, insufficient teacher training, and minimal curricular focus on oral skills. Most instructors reported that time constraints and overcrowded classes hinder individual assessment, while the lack of professional training and curriculum emphasis further reduces the use of speaking assessment 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 Sook (2003), who 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.

---

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all those who supported and guided us throughout this study. Our sincere thanks go to Wollo University for providing the necessary resources and flexibility, which enabled us to carry out this research. Their contribution was crucial in achieving the objectives of this research. Lastly, we acknowledge the support of our colleagues and friends for their encouragement and guidance throughout this journey.

---

#### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding this paper's publication.

#### **FUNDING**

The authors declare that this study received no specific financial support.

---

#### **REFERENCES**

- Adem, H., & Berkessa, M. (2022). A case study of EFL teachers' practice of teaching speaking skills vis-à-vis the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). *Cogent Education*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2022.2087458>
- Alvarez, C. L., Tamayo, M. R., & Santos, J. C. D. (2024). Factors influencing the development of speaking skills among Ecuadorian EFL learners: Teachers' perspectives. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), 319–331. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v14i2.74889>

- Anshori, M. I. (2023). Improving Students' Speaking Ability through Morning English Program Extracurricular Activities in Indonesia. *Educational Challenges*, 28(2), 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2023.28.2.02>
- Ashraf, H., & Zolfaghari, S. (2018). EFL teachers' assessment literacy and their reflective teaching. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(1), 425–436. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1165237>
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. Pearson Education.
- Chufama, M., & Sithole, F. (2021). The pivotal role of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment in higher education institutions' teaching and student learning. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications*, 4(5), 5–15. <https://ijmrmap.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/IJMRAP-V4N4P107Y21.pdf>
- DeLuca, C., Holden, M., & Rickey, N. (2024). From challenge to innovation: A grassroots study of teachers' classroom assessment innovations. *British Educational Research Journal*, 51(1), 93–114. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.4065>
- Derakhshan, A., Tahery, F., & Mirarab, N. (2015). Helping Adult and Young Learners to Communicate in Speaking Classes with Confidence. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 520–524. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2p520>
- Dewan, M. S., & Sharma, B. D. (2025). Enhancing Oral Communication in English as a Second Language. *Journal of Tikapur Multiple Campus*, 8(8), 18–41. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jotmc.v8i8.75949>
- Erlam, R., Philp, J., & Feick, D. (2021). Teaching languages to adolescent learners. In *Cambridge University Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108869812>
- Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Güneş, D., & Girgin, U. (2025). When extending wait-time is not enough for student participation: Eliciting student responses during L2 whole-class speaking. *System*, 135, 103841. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103841>
- Harding, L. & Kremmel, B. (2016). 25. Teacher assessment literacy and professional development. In D. Tsagari & J. Banerjee (Ed.), *Handbook of Second Language Assessment* (pp. 413-428). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614513827-027>
- Hasrol, S. B., Zakaria, A., & Aryadoust, V. (2022). A systematic review of authenticity in second language assessment. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 1(3), 100023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmal.2022.100023>
- Hasselgreen, A., Carlsen, C., & Helness, H. (2004). *European survey of language testing and assessment needs report: Part one – General findings*. European Association for Language Testing and Assessment. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:202695479>
- Holubnycha, L., Kostikova, I., Besarab, T., & Koshechkina, T. (2025). Teaching methods for large student groups at a Chinese university. *Educational Challenges*, 30(1). <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2025.30.1.02>
- Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511732980>
- Isaacs, T., & Trofimovich, P. (2016). Key Themes, Constructs and Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Second Language Pronunciation Assessment. In T. Isaacs, & P.

- Trofimovich (Eds.), *Second language pronunciation assessment: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 3-11). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/ISAACS6848>
- Kadir, J. S., Zaim, M., & Refnaldi, R. (2019). Developing instruments for evaluating validity, practicality, and effectiveness of the authentic assessment for speaking skill at junior high school. *Proceedings of the Sixth of International Conference on English Language and Teaching (ICOELT 2018)* (pp. 98–105). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icoelt-18.2019.14>
- Knoch, U., & Elder, C. (2013). A framework for validating post-entry language assessments (PELAs). *Studies in Language Assessment*, 48–66. <https://doi.org/10.58379/yzlq8816>
- Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing speaking*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511733017>
- Nieminen, J. H., Atjonen, P., & Tolvanen, A. (2024). Diversity of assessment practices and student perceptions of assessment in Finland. *The Curriculum Journal*, 36(2), 216–235. <https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.288>
- O'Connor, C., Michaels, S., Chapin, S., & Harbaugh, A. G. (2016). The silent and the vocal: Participation and learning in whole-class discussion. *Learning and Instruction*, 48, 5–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.11.003>
- Oudghiri, A., & Ibrahim, A. (2025). The Assessment of Language Skills: Tools and Methods. In *Supporting Personalized Learning and Students' Skill Development with AI* (pp. 369-388). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
- Pill, J., & Harding, L. (2013). Defining the language assessment literacy gap: Evidence from a parliamentary inquiry. *Language Testing*, 30(3), 381–402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532213480337>
- Rad, M. R. (2019). The impact of EFL teachers' assessment literacy on their assessment efficiency in classroom. *Britain International of Linguistics Arts and Education (BioLAE) Journal*, 1(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.33258/biolae.v1i1.14>
- Saito, K., & Plonsky, L. (2019). Effects of Second Language Pronunciation Teaching Revisited: A proposed Measurement Framework and Meta-Analysis. *Language Learning*, 69(3), 652–708. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12345>
- Sitepu, D. N., Situmeang, S. L., Sembiring, R. V., Saragih, D. C., & Silalahi, D. E. (2025). Effectiveness of Language Assessment Tests: An Observation Based on Reliability, Validity, Authenticity, Practicality, and Washback Principles in Class 7a at SMP Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 5(4), 4711–4722. <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v5i4.20752>
- Sook, K. H. (2003). The types of speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers. *Asian EFL Journal*, 5(4), 1–11.