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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**AN INSIGHT INTO THE PRACTICE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT METHODS AMONG
ETHIOPIAN EFL TEACHERS**

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ABSTRACT

Alternative assessment methods under proper conditions significantly improve learners' language skills. However, under improper practices alternative assessment methods can be the vehicle of dependency, inequality of individual's contributions to the task and unfair grading. The subjects of the study were 11 teachers and 95 students. The study was designed to see the extent of teachers' use of alternative assessment methods in EFL classrooms; and to examine problems in using alternative assessment methods in Dilla University. To gather data for the study, questionnaire and interview were used. The result showed that EFL teachers use a limited number of alternative assessment methods from many assessment tools that can be made use of in language classes. Teachers reported that class size, teaching different courses in multiple sections, lack of clear guidelines, and other responsibilities and lack of agreement to use similar assessment tools among teachers teaching the same course are the main factors that hindered them from properly practicing alternative assessment methods. Students in their parts listed lack of explicit criteria of assessment, lack of transparency in marking that leads to unfair grading, lack of feedback and excessive tasks that are mainly given in groups for a course as major problems they have perceived in their teachers' use of alternative assessment methods. Lack of organization and commitment of teachers in selecting assessment tools and in assessing students' work were also problems observed by students. As to the students, teachers' use of alternative assessment methods encouraged dependency of students on others' effort and work.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is one of East African countries where diverse students learn in different universities to specialize in different fields of study. Teacher education is among these fields of study whereby students take different pedagogy, psychology and major subject area courses. English has a prominent position in country though it is a foreign language. It serves not only as a medium of instruction in preparatory and tertiary levels of education and as a language of international communication but also as a day today language of communication in some governmental and non-governmental organizations. In spite of such a prestigious position it has in Ethiopia, the quality of the English language used by students at different levels of education is not promising. The unsatisfactory performance of students in English language can be in turn attributed to different factors. Teachers' methodology of teaching, quality of teacher training, quality of curricular materials, the evaluation methods/ process, lack of continuous

professional development (on job training), and attitudes of both teachers and students are some of the factors that affect the performance of students (Cross, 1995). Assessment is an essential tool for verifying that educational goals have been met and modifying instruction by providing instructors and students with the feedback they need to gauge and improve teaching and learning. Experience indicates that the process of evaluation has been misused by the majority of EFL instructors since they substitute them by monthly or regular test selected responses test (multiple- choice, matching and true -false) which are the preferred techniques for instructors for measuring their students performance. However, these tests tend to stress the discrete features of language rather than the overall language proficiency (AL-Muttaw and Kailani, 1989:162).

Besides, these traditional forms of assessment fail to provide the kind of information that the typical classroom instructors are interested in, namely what the students can do in their second or foreign language. Because of this, an alternative to the traditional forms of assessment has been proposed in recent years. This has come to be termed as alternative assessment.

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These new forms of assessment focus more on measuring learners ability to use language holistically in real-life situations. They are tests that also teach. In this way, a more accurate picture of students language profile can be obtained (Richards and Renandya, 2002:330). Alternative assessment methods are concerned with gathering useful information that the teacher can use to support student language learning (Hedge, 2000). Furthermore, Spandel and Stiggins (1990) assert that AAMs could promote learning, build confidence and develop students' understandings of themselves as learners when they are effectively planned and monitored. Spandel and Stiggins (1990) further state that if teachers use alternative assessments, they could collect information about students' language development and growth in speaking, listening, writing and reading abilities.

This new assessment scheme has been in use in Dilla University over the last few years. However, no study has been conducted so far to show the extent to which alternative assessment methods are being used effectively in the English Language Department of the University. Thus, the present study seeks answers to the following questions:

To what extent do English teachers use alternative assessment methods in Dilla University?

What major problems do students perceive while their teachers use alternative assessment methods?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Participants

Dilla University has been training teachers for high schools since 1993. Since its establishment it has graduated many teachers in Social science and Natural science. Among the social science fields, this study focuses on English Language Education. Therefore the participants the study are EFL teachers and students in the department. There were 39 teachers in the department and 11 of them were selected as subject of the study by random sampling technique (2 female and 9 male). Regarding EFL students, second and third year students were used as subjects of the study because it was assumed that first year students might not be adequately familiar with the assessment practice of the EFL classes. There were 210 (21 female and 189 male) second and third year students in the university in the 2014/15 academic year. Fifty percent of the total population was taken for the study based on stratified sampling method. Therefore, among 105 students (50%) 45 students were third year and 60 were second year students. However, 10 students (3 female and 7 male) returned incomplete questionnaire. This reduced the sample population to 95.

Instruments

Questionnaire was the main tool used in this study to gather data from both teachers and students. Interview data was also used to supplement the data collected through the questionnaire. Eleven 5- point Likert-scale items were prepared for both teachers and students to see the extent to which EFL teachers use alternative assessment methods. The items were

adopted from the American Institute for Research (2003). The scale ranges from always (5) to never (1) for both teachers and students. To see teachers' understanding of the purpose of AAMs, a questionnaire consisting of 15 items was adapted from Hedge (2000). The modes of items were "strongly agree", "agree", "uncertain", "disagree" and "strongly disagree".

To investigate the major problems teachers face in using AAMs, open-ended questionnaire and interview (as follow up tool) were employed. This part of the teachers' questionnaire started by asking whether teachers participated in workshops/conferences concerning assessing students. This was followed by a question designed to elicit data on the impact of that workshop/conference if they had participated. Then, it asked teachers to list the major problems they faced while putting AAMs into practice. They were also asked to suggest solutions they thought to the problems they mentioned. A semi- structured interview was prepared and conducted to elicit data that would support the information obtained through the questionnaire. In order to see the problems students perceive in the assessment process, a questionnaire consisting of 15 items was adapted from Apple and Shimo (2004) and from the available literature. Students' close-ended questionnaire had a 5-point scale. The mode of the questionnaire was "strongly agree", "agree", "uncertain", "disagree" and "strongly disagree". Moreover, questionnaire with open-ended item was developed and used to get data from students. They were asked to list the strength and weaknesses they perceived while their teachers assessed them using AAMs. A semi-structured interview that was conducted in a panel mode was also used as a follow-up tool.

Procedures

Prior to the actual administration of the instruments, the reliability of the students' questionnaire after being subjected to Cronbach Alpha was found to be 0.796 while that of the teachers was commented on by 5 instructors for the appropriateness and validity. This later case was done since the number of teachers in the pilot study was very few. Before administering the questionnaire to teachers and students, a short explanation was given on the purpose of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected one day after the day they were administered. Finally four teachers and ten students were selected and interviewed using a random sampling technique. The interview for teachers was conducted on individual teachers whereas panel (focused group discussion) for students. Since teachers felt unease to be recorded, the mode of an interview was on note-taking base but on recorded bases for students. Students' data were transcribed and analyzed.

Data Analysis

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The data obtained through close-ended questionnaire were quantified. Mean and standard deviation were calculated to see the extent of teachers' use of alternative assessment methods. The expected (ideal) mean was three. Zero standard deviation means there was no variation among teachers in using those particular AAMs whereas the highest variation

would be 2. Hence, If the statically figure for a particular AAM was above the expected mean, it showed that teachers were using that particular method in their assessment process. Percentage was used to see teachers' understanding of the purpose of AAMs and the major problems students perceive while they were assessed using AAMs. In connection with the data gathered through open-ended questionnaire and interview, qualitative method was employed to both teachers and students data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objectives of the study were to see the extent to which EFL teachers in Dilla University use AAMs in assessing their students, and to examine what major problems students perceive while their teachers use AAMs and to see teachers' understanding about the purpose of AAMs.

Teachers' Use of AAMs (as Rated by Teachers)

Mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) of the score was used to see the extent to which teachers use AAMs. The ideal mean and standard deviation are 3 and 0 respectively. So if the mean is above 3, it shows a tendency of using that particular method; and if the mean is below 3, it means teachers do not use that particular kind of alternative assessment method to assess their students. Higher standard deviation shows higher variation among teachers in using that particular AAM.

Table 1. Summary of teachers' Response showing the Extent to which they use AAMs (N= 11)

S/N	Alternative Assessment Methods	Mean(x)	SD
1	Observation (using checklist and rating scale)	3.18	1.27
2	Portfolio	4.18	0.83
3	Self-assessment	2.73	0.62
4	Peer assessment	2.45	1.08
5	Individual Project (assignment)	3.55	0.99
6	Group Projects (assignments)	4.00	0.95
7	Reflective Journal (grid)	2.00	0.74
8	Quizzes (tests)	3.91	1.00
9	Interviews and questionnaire	2.09	0.79
10	Student-teacher conference	1.91	1.00
11	Oral presentation	2.82	1.27

The data revealed that the two most frequently used AAMs by teachers are portfolio (X=4.18) and group projects (X=4.00) with little variation among them (SD=0.83 and 0.95 respectively). They also used quizzes/ tests (X=3.91) and individual projects (X=3.55) in a significant way though not as frequently as they used portfolio and group projects. However, the variation among teachers in using quizzes is relatively high (SD=1.00). Teachers sometimes use observation to assess their students (X=3.18) with high variation (SD=1.27) among them. To some extent teachers also tend to use presentation and self-assessment (X=2.82 and X=2.73 respectively), of course, with high variation in using oral presentation (SD=1.27). However, teachers do not tend to use student-teacher conference (X=1.91) and reflective journal (X=2.00). Interviews and questionnaire and peer assessment are also used very rarely (X=2.09 and 2.45 respectively).

Students questionnaire data revealed that the two most frequently used AAMs are group projects (X=4.14) and quizzes (X=3.71) with little variation in using group projects (SD=0.87) and relatively high variation in using quizzes (SD=1.04). Portfolio and individual projects are also used to assess the students to some extent with an average score of 3.27 for each as perceived by students. However, the variations among teachers in using portfolio and individual projects are high (SD=1.23 and 1.11 respectively).

Table 2. Summary of Students' Responses showing the Extent to Which Teachers Use AAMs (N=95)

S/N	Alternative Assessment Methods	Mean(x)	SD
1	Observation (using checklist and rating scale)	2.83	1.17
2	Portfolio	3.27	1.23
3	Self-assessment	2.75	1.33
4	Peer assessment	2.48	1.17
5	Individual Project (assignment)	3.27	1.11
6	Group Projects (assignments)	4.14	0.87
7	Reflective Journal (grid)	1.51	0.86
8	Quizzes (tests)	3.71	1.04
9	Interviews and questionnaire	2.24	1.15
10	Student-teacher conference	1.71	0.84
11	Oral presentation	3.07	1.12

Oral presentation was rated the fourth frequently used AAM (X=3.07) that was rated the sixth by teachers (X=2.82). Students also rated observation and self-assessment as AAMs that were infrequently used methods by their teachers with average scores of 2.83 and 2.75 respectively. The above results indicated that the AAMs that are used frequently to assess the students in Dilla University (group projects, quizzes, portfolio and individual projects) are easier to assign grades or numerical scores whereas student-teacher conferences, interviews, self and peer assessment are techniques used while the teaching learning process is going on. The latter assessment tools require teachers to see every student while they listen, speak and do actions either with students or the teacher. Teachers may be unlikely to get sufficient time to do all these in the classroom; and may prefer to assess the products of students' work that can be corrected in their spare time.

Focusing on few assessment methods leads to focusing on one or two language skills. In relation to this Dejene (1994) states that written assignments are useful in enhancing students writing skills. In the FGD, students complained that various written assignments given by their teachers benefited only few students-only those who feel responsibility and accountability to their learning. Students tried to justify that many of the tasks were given in groups. One or two of the group members completed the task while the other members wanted their names to be written on the assignment paper as if they were participated. From the students' point of view, AAMs used by teachers did not help the students develop their writing skills though teachers during interview claimed their assessment would help the students' language skills as well as the culture of working cooperatively. However, students claimed their teachers' way of assessment leads to chaotic conditions such as an inability to work together and conflicts that wastes their time.

Teachers and students in the open-ended questionnaire and in the interview or in the focus group discussion also ascertained that group projects, quizzes, portfolio and individual projects are the most commonly used assessment: methods in every course. Many students in the focus group discussion stated that their teachers give them group projects/assignments very frequently and this makes them feel bored. Teachers in open-ended questionnaire and interview also admitted that they use few assessment methods because of various constraints such as large class size, and teaching different courses in multiple sections. Almost all teachers, in the open-ended questionnaire and interview, felt that their workloads prevented them from effectively using a variety of assessment techniques. The phrase "we do not have time to use various AAMs" was the repeatedly heard reason for not using different assessment methods.

In general, the alternative assessment methods used frequently by teachers help to address the summative aspects of continuous assessment (CA). These assessment methods (various written assignments) tend not to help much in improving student learning and instructional process. According to AED/BESO II (2005), this may mean passing an incomplete view of assessment to students in the college/University, who in turn, will take the responsibility of assessing their students in secondary schools. The assessment trend has been on formal assessment techniques that help teachers use to record students' achievements accurately. Moreover, University teachers' use of limited AAMs (mostly those used for summative purposes) seem to have immediate and future effects. The immediate one is, for example, students have been denied the opportunity to improve their language skills while the future effect might be the students will practice a similar unhelpful assessment technique to assess their students when they begin teaching.

Teachers' Practice of AAMs as Perceived by Students

Fifteen close-ended items, followed by open-ended questionnaire, were administered to students to see the major problems observed in their teachers' use of AAMs in EFL classroom. A follow up interview was also conducted.

For the purpose of discussion, the 15 items were grouped under three categories. Table 3 deals with students' responses to feedback and students' involvement in AAMs. Table 4 is concerned with students' response to establishing negotiated criteria of assessment and transparency in grading/scoring in AAMs. Table 5 deals with students' responsibility, developing autonomy; and motivation or anxiety in AAMs.

Students' Responses to Feedback and their Involvement in AAMs

Table 3 above indicates students' response to feedback, their involvement in assessment methods and the focus of their teachers' assessment.

The table depicts that most students (63.1%) claimed that they do not assess their own work in AAMs (item 1). Furthermore, 66.3% of the respondents replied that they have not been given feedback by their teachers and friends in AAMs (items 2). Nearly three-fourth of students (71.5% in item 3) answered that their teachers' assessment focuses on the products of their work rather than the process.

This item is supported by item 4 where 67.3% of the respondents claimed that their teachers use AAMs to assign grades/scores rather than to see their improvement in the language. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (67.4%) replied that AAMs did not help them to see what they should improve in the course of their training (item 5). As can be observed from the above findings, students' involvement in assessing their own progress and that of their peers is minimal. This result is also similar with teachers and students' responses in Tables 1 and 2, which indicate that teachers use peer- and self-assessment rarely in the assessment process.

According to du Plessis (2003), few self-assessment and peer-assessment are related to traditional assessment methods where only teachers are considered as the right individuals to assess students, du Plessis (2003) argues that self-assessment is an ideal way to include students in the assessment process and help them to understand the criteria for quality work. More importantly, self-assessment helps students think about how they learn. Wilson (2002) pointed out that peer and self-assessment encourage learning through feedback, emphasize the process rather than the product.

Moreover, peer-and self-assessments encourage intrinsic motivation and challenge the role of the teacher as the sole arbiter of assessment. Students' response on item 3 is directly related to teachers' in item 5 Table 6. Most teachers (63.64%) believe that assessment should focus on the products of students' final work. Similarly, 71.5% of the students responded that their teachers' assessments (item 3) focus on what they do rather than how they do the tasks. So it is not surprising to see 67.3% of students in item 4 who believed that their teachers use AAMs for grading functions. If teachers do not involve students in peer and self-assessment, if students are given inadequate feedback, and if teachers focus on assessing the product of students' work for grading/scoring purposes, it is unlikely for students to get chances to identify their strengths and weaknesses. When seen from this perspective, students seem to have grounds to say AAMs have not helped them to identify what they should improve next in the course (item 5).

In support of the above idea, AED/BESO II (2005) stated that teachers in Ethiopian colleges focus on quizzes and written assignments that help them to grade their students. Teachers use the summative aspects of continuous assessment, which may not help students to identify what they should improve next in the course.

Table 3. Students Responses to Feedback and Students Involvement in Alternative Assessment methods (n=95)

S/N	Questionnaire item	Agreement		Uncertain		Disagreement	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	My teachers give me the opportunity of assessing my own work in AAM	30	31.6	5	5.3	60	63.1
2	I feel that my teachers and peers give me feedback on my progress AAMs	24	25.2	8	8.4	63	66.3
3	My teachers' assessment in alternative assessment methods focuses on what I do rather than on how I do	68	71.5	5	5.3	22	23.1
4	I feel that my teachers use AAMs to label or grade us, not to see our language learning progress	64	67.3	3	3.2	28	29.5
5	Alternative assessment methods helped me in understanding what I should improve next	27	28.4	4	4.2	64	67.4

Students' Responses to Explicit Criteria and Transparency (Fairness) of Teachers' Assessment Using AAMs

Table 4 below shows students' response to criteria of assessment, fairness of assessment and whether or not AAMs are used for improvement of students' language learning.

S/N	Questionnaire item	Agreement		Uncertain		Disagreement	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
6	My teachers and we (I) negotiate how our assignments are going to be scored/assessed	21	22.2	10	10.5	64	67.3
7	I believe that the grades my works are awarded in AAMs are fair	28	29.4	9	9.6	58	61
8	If I fail in AAMs, I believe that I'll get another chance to improve it	36	37.9	12	12.6	46	48.5

Students' Responses to Responsibility, Autonomy, Motivation and Anxiety

Table 5 below depicts the students' responses concerning benefits that they have got from AAMs.

Table 5. Students' Responses to Responsibility, Autonomy, Motivation and Anxiety in AAMs

S/N	Questionnaire item	Agreement		Uncertain		Disagreement	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
9	AAMs have given me the opportunity to establish my own study programme	28	29.5	7	7.4	60	63.1
10	AAMs have given me the opportunities to consider my strong and weak sides in my language learning	42	44.2	5	5.3	48	50.5
11	AAMs improved my training in English better than a conventional ones	30	31.5	6	6.4	59	62.1
12	AAMs make me be an autonomous learner more than the conventional assessment	24	25.3	4	4.2	67	70.5
13	AAMs have given me the chance to work on tasks cooperatively with my peers	68	71.6	6	6.4	21	22
14	I do not worry when my teachers give me AAMs as I do in conventional assessment	22	23.2	7	7.4	66	69.4
15	Individual students' accountability in AAMs does not exist; students depend on the work of others	70	73.7	8	8.4	17	17.9

The above table shows a great deal of students in item 6 (67.3%) claimed that they do not negotiate with their teachers the way their assignments are assessed/scored. In relation to the fairness of assessment, most of the students (61%) claimed that the grades they were awarded were unfair (item 7). Moreover, slightly more than half of (48.5%) the students in item 8 perceived that they could not get another chance for improvement in AAMs if they once failed. From the above description, it can be said that teachers have problems in making the criteria of assessment clear to students; and establishing shared marking criteria to make the grade fair in the eyes of the learner.

As Brown and Knight (1994: 113) state "the biggest problem is likely to be that tutors typically have multiple criteria that are often poorly articulated." According to Sadler (1989) in Brown and Knight (1994: 113), teachers held the criteria of assessment in unarticulated form "inside their heads as tacit knowledge" Race, Brown and Smith (2005) also advised that students should not be made to play a guessing game while they are given tasks that are going to be assessed. They stated that students will spend their time doing things which may not be in the teachers' mind if the criteria of doing the tasks and how the tasks will be assessed are hidden. Everything needs to be explicit to make the grade/score fair. Almost all students in the open-ended questionnaire stated that their teachers' assessments are unfair. They said they were not informed the criteria of doing the tasks and the criteria of grading. Most students stated such sentences as: teachers gave good marks to those who wrote many pages; to those who made the appearance of the assignment attractive; to those who were active in classroom; to those who have good handwriting. A few students also complained that teachers give high marks to female students. However, all these may come as a result of unclear criteria for grading and absence of feedback during lessons in the classroom and to written assignments students do.

This means, the table shows how much AAMs helped students to be independent learners, how much AAMs helped students do tasks cooperatively and how much students felt accountability to their own task.

Table 5 shows that over half of the respondents (63.1%) claimed that AAMs could not help them to have their own program (item 9). Moreover, 50.5% in item 10 replied that they have not got chances to consider their strengths and weaknesses though 44.2% of them ascertained that they have got the opportunities to consider their strong and weak sides in their language learning. In item 11, more than half of the respondents (62.1%) reported that AAMs did not make a difference in their language development during the training program. Moreover, several of the respondents (70.5%) in item 12 claimed that AAMs could not help them in being autonomous/ independent learner. Most students in item 13 (71.6%) also claimed that AAMs did not help them to do tasks cooperatively.

In item 14, 69.4% of the students responded that they are worried while tasks or assignments are given. Finally, quite a large number of students in item 15 (73.7%) confirmed that there is lack of individual accountability in AAMs. This result supports the results found in items 12 and 13 in which students claimed that AAMs did not help them to be independent learner and to work with their friends cooperatively. From the above data, it can be seen that teachers' way of using AAMs did not help students sufficiently. Teachers' way of assessment did not help the students much in identifying their weaknesses and strengths; to be independent learners and to do tasks cooperatively with their friends.

This result may come as a result of neglecting students' participation in the assessment process. By the same token, students reported that AAMs did not improve their training as

compared to conventional assessment methods. According to the American Institute for Research (AIR, 2003: 16), "including them [students] in developing assessment criteria and assessing peers and courses gives them the opportunities to learn by doing rather than to be passive receivers of knowledge about assessment". This will lead them to carry responsibility in their future career. Inappropriate use of AAMs may lead students to develop assessment phobia. AED/BESO II (2005: 7) pointed out that assessment techniques have to be planned and controlled very carefully so that students "do not get fatigued or develop phobia of assessment".

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are given. As can be observed from both teachers and students' responses, teachers have been using few assessment techniques from among the many AAMs that can be used in language classes. Group projects, quizzes/tests, portfolios and individual projects were the most commonly used AAMs by the subjects of this study. The kinds of AAMs used in Dilla University (the various written assignments) are the ones that help students to develop mainly their writing skills although the focus of the research is not to see the impact of the assessment tool" to different language skills. That means, the purposeful assessment of (their language skills was very limited in the university. Students claimed that their teachers were using different written assignments for grading functions or to label them rather than using the assessment tools to see their progress and the success of instruction.

Although EFL teachers exhibited a 'good* range of knowledge about the purpose of AAMs, there were inadequacies on some of the concepts of AAMs. Teachers thought giving feedback is showing what was right and wrong in the students' work. Teachers also mistakenly understood that assessing only the final product of students' work is the main focus of AAMs. They focused on assessing the products of students' work. This cannot help teachers identify individual student's contribution or effort in the work. Another shortcoming of teachers was that they could not see the role of students' involvement in the assessment process; in fact, involving students in the assessment process will help them in the assessment process in their future career. Lack of involvement of students in the assessment process would make students have an incomplete view of assessment of students. Moreover, teachers mistrusted students' work. This may result from lack of using other assessment tools such as oral or written presentation and interviews as checking mechanisms.

Teachers also did not consider the necessity of aligning assessments with objectives of the course or the lesson. Teachers explained that using various AAMs appropriately was not an easy task. They listed many difficulties they faced in trying to use AAMs to assess students. Teaching large number of students, time issues, lack of assessment guidelines (materials), lack of understanding about each AAMs, lack of awareness about AAMs on the part of the students, lack of students' responsibility, students' previous assessment experience and lack of agreement among teachers to use

similar AAMs when teaching the same course were some of the problems that teachers mentioned. In addition to believing their teachers assessment to be a mere tool for labeling them (not helping them to improve), they also complained that their teachers gave marks using criteria that do not have direct connections to the work. Students did not believe their teachers that they gave marks based on the quality of work. Such complaints might come as a result of lack of transparency on assessment criteria, which should be given through written or oral medium prior to giving the assignments.

Students also viewed AAMs as unhelpful for the improvement of their language skills. They stated that AAMs could not help them to see their strengths and weaknesses; could not support them to be independent learners; and could not support them to do works cooperatively. In general, for the students, the practice of AAMs in Dilla University had many problems. Though some students accepted alternative assessment tools as helpful to their language development, most students complained that their teachers did not use the assessment tools properly and fairly. As a result, AAMs that were used frequently by teachers cultivated dependent learners. AAMs could not help teachers know individual's skills and knowledge of the language. Students also stated that AAMs exposed teachers to different sorts of biases.

Recommendation

Getting training only when fund is available may not be enough to reduce the constraints in implementing assessments effectively. Teachers could benefit from sharing ideas among themselves. Therefore, I recommend that the University, particularly the EFL department should arrange programs concerning ways of using a range of assessment tools that can be used in EFL classrooms. There are fewer opportunities for student participation in self- and peer assessments. Hence, it appears to be wise to find ways of increasing students' participation. This will in turn help students to have a good understanding of assessment while they become EFL teachers in secondary schools. While teachers try to involve students in peer and self-assessments, they may worry about the inflated/deflated grades given by students. But as American Institute for Research (AIR, 2003) states, teachers have to take it as part of the process of dealing with students. So teachers need to arrange strategies for including students in the assessment process if improvement is sought to come. Otherwise, students will miss important opportunities for the development of assessment skills in their future career.

Reducing class size, reducing the number of students a teacher teaches in a term and balancing the contact hours of a teacher with other responsibilities could also contribute to the improvement of assessment practices. Hence, the department as well as the university needs to strive, to reduce such structural constraints. Teachers should develop the criteria for doing assessment tasks and the criteria of marking as explicit as possible to their students. This will increase-teachers' transparency in grading/markings so that complains from students will be highly reduced. Therefore, teachers have to communicate with students the criteria of doing the tasks and how they are going to grade the students' work at the

beginning. Moreover, teachers should take feedbacks as one important facet of assessment. So they need give simple and explicit comments either orally or in written form Teachers especially those who teach the same course need to negotiate on selecting the assessment tools that in turn reduces disparity among teachers in their way of assessment.

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