Continuous Assessment in Higher Education: EFL Teachers' Practices & Challenges

التقييم المستمر في التعليم العالي : ممارسات وتحديات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

L'évaluation continue dans l'enseignement supérieur : pratiques et défis des enseignants d'anglais comme langue étrangère

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Introduction

In an attempt to ameliorate the effectiveness of assessment in Higher Education, institutions, all around the world, struggled to adopt new strategies into the traditional approaches of evaluation. In this regard, Rink (2006) claims that "one of the recent directions of educational reforms has been the emphasis of assessment in the teaching learning process" (p. 57). There must be a "move away from the heavy use of conventional, more judgmental approaches to assessment toward alternative, more inclusive means of determining what learners know and can do" (Asfaw, 2015: 142). Accordingly, assessment modes, which place the student at the center of the learning process and require new pedagogical practices to strengthen professional skills, were opted for. As a result, CA becomes a crucial alternative component for monitoring, guiding and strengthening the teaching/learning process, ensuring the quality of HE and provide reliable data about the competences that are developed in learners (Samson & Allida, 2018: 1 ; Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018: 59). Similarly, in the Algerian context, the adoption of the new educational reforms in HE academic institutions came as a result to the inadequacy of the traditional assessment tools, which were no longer effective to meet the current and future requirements of education. In addition, within the learner- centered approach, students are more responsible of their learning, which requires a shift in educational practices and assessment methods. Consequently, a new perspective of assessment has emerged emphasizing the necessity to achieve a complementary relationship between teaching, learning, and assessment through evaluating students regularly using CA practices.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Definition & Characteristics of Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment is the systematic ongoing process which involves all the different sources and strategies used for collecting, interpreting and synthesizing valuable data about student learning progress. It should be used for decision making about planning and monitoring appropriate instruction (what/how to teach), and meeting students' level and needs through understanding learners progress (how well students have learned) (Airasian, 1997: 229; Nitko, 2004, p. 4 ; Birhanu, 2013: 20 ; Yigzaw, 2013: 4 ; Asfaw, 2015: 142 ; Samson & Allida, 2018: 1). Mohammedseid (2017: 63) adds that CA is much more useful to students since it provides them with ongoing feedback about their performance. This encourages them to become self-critical and make improvements since they work through a course rather than postponing the learning process to the very end of the course.

According to Ezewu and Okoye (1986), continuous assessment refers to the systematic and objective process of determining the extent of student's progress and all the expected changes in his/her behavior. In other words, CA is

1. systematic because it involves a well-designed operational plan that suits students' level, experience and age
2. comprehensive because it makes use of varied assessment strategies and tools in order to determine students' performance
3. cumulative because it gives progressive and cumulative records of students' performance
4. and guidance-oriented because it focuses on monitoring and guiding students' progress throughout the content of the taught material with the help of the data gathered over a period of time.

In addition, Kellaghen & Greaney (2004) summarizes the role of CA as to measure the learners' level of knowledge, skills or understanding, to detect challenges encountered, to make decision and modification about the next instructional and to evaluate the learning occurred in the class (cited in Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018: 59).

1.2. Types of Continuous Assessment

Similar to other modes of assessment, CA has two major types : formative and summative. First, formative CA is defined by Mohammedseid (2017) as the "ongoing process of checking learners' readiness, understanding,

difficulty, effectiveness of approaches. It occurs before and during teaching to guide teachers and learners" (p. 60). Hence, formative assessment requires a cumulative and ongoing record of students' achievement. Another definition for formative CA is provided by Black and William (1998) as the "activities undertaken by teachers and/or by their students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged" (p. 10). In addition, it aims to assess students in order to form their competences and skills and help them continue developing those competences (Brown, 2003). On the other hand, Continuous assessment assists teachers in modifying their programming or adapting their teaching methods (Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018: 60), and provides constructive feedback on learners' strengths and weaknesses (Asale, 2017: 89). Second, summative CA occurs at the end of the unit of study or learning sequence such as the end of the course, project, or semester. It is usually conducted at the end of a teaching unit, a course, or a program. Quizzes are used as the major strategy to determine the degree to which the objectives of the course have been realized by students (Mohammedseid, 2017: 60; Benzehaf, 2017: 2). It is a summary of students' achievement (Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018: 60; Asale, 2017: 89). The differences between FCA & SCA are summarized in the following table:

Table1 : Types of Assessment (Mohammedseid, 2017: 2)

FCA	SCA
Occurs before and during instruction for the purposes of guiding learning and teaching	Occurs At the end of instruction for the purpose of evaluating students' achievement of the curriculum objectives
Mostly informal	Mostly formal
Assessment occurs frequently to guide teaching, give practice, and provide feedback	Assessment occurs periodically to determine achievement of the curriculum objectives, assign grades, certify attainment, and in combination with other assessment to place students

Hence, Ellington & Earl (1997) claim that CA entails more assessment for learning (formative assessment of process) than assessment of learning (summative assessment of product). Accordingly, CA should incorporate more formative mode of assessment that uses multiple ways and format. It should combine the scores obtained from paper pencil exams, assignments, discussions and presentations, observations, etc (Asfaw, 2018, p. 141). Summative CA should

be taken as complementary to Formative CA and as one tool to be considered along with other strategies implemented before and during the course to make the assessment process more beneficial for both teachers and students.

1.3. Practices of Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment has a multiple range of practices based on a number of strategies. Self-assessment, peer-assessment, group assessment, observation, take home assignments, oral presentations, interviews, projects, quizzes, tests and portfolios are commonly used (Asale, 2017; Abera, Kedir & Beyabeyin, 20017; Samson & Allida, 2018). In addition, attendance, participation, discipline and extra work/efforts are used sometimes as criteria for CA. The following is a summary of the major strategies for CA practices :

a. Self-Assessment: In this strategy, each student is required to assess his/her work and recognize what he/she knows and what he/she needs to learn to improve his/her performance. According to Black and William (1998), "Students become more committed and more effective as learners: their own assessment become an object discussion with their teachers and with one another" (p.7). In support of this view, Atkin, Black & Coffey (2001: 43) suggest that self-assessment help students take responsibility of their own learning and notice their strengths and weaknesses.

b. Peer-Assessment: It is the process whereby learners are encouraged to give feedback on each other's learning following certain instructions provided by the teacher. Accordingly, Topping (2009) thinks that peer-assessment can be "an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product /performance of other equal status learners" p. 20). Hence, peer-assessment helps students understand the assessment criteria of the module and how they are applied to students' work. In addition, it helps developing students' critical thinking, improving their ability to monitor learning and increasing learner-learner interaction.

c. Take-Home Assignments: Take home assignments are assignments with specific instructions given by the teacher to be accomplished outside the classroom. The objective of the assignment should be explained to students to help them meet the project requirements and practice what they have learnt. In this regard, Emerson and Mencken (2011) claim that exposing students to take home work increases their achievement to improve their performance and practice the independent work to develop their EFL skills.

d. Oral Presentation: Levin and Topping (2009) defined oral presentations as the "planned and practiced speech that is not memorized or read from notes but is introduced by a presenter to an audience" (p. 136). Accordingly, oral presentation is the process in which the student discusses the aspects related to the topic orally trying to attract the attention of the audiences and convey the message. It is a way for students to practice speaking and interact with peers. This CA practice improves critical thinking, the use of authentic language in an interactive context, and self- confidence among students.

e. Portfolios: A portfolio is a collection of students' works which reflects their performance. The portfolio is defined by Paulson, Paulson and Mayer (1991) as a purposeful collection of student's work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievement in one or more areas" (p.60). It provides a longitudinal observation of student progress. Therefore, the portfolio exhibits students' progress in learning and evidence concerning their skills and performance ; and achieves individualized, student-centered assessment.

f. Projects In the assessment process, a project is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002) as "an activity which centers around the completion of a task, which usually requires an extended amount of independent work either by individual students or by a group of students" (p.30). Projects provide students with a context for collaboration and shared learning in addition to creativity and imagination. Therefore, projects, either individual or cooperative, help learners to become more active and independent, develop critical thinking, self-esteem, and provide effective feedback and interaction between members of the group.

g. Quizzes/Tests: They belong to the traditional mode of assessment. They are usually used for assessing students' acquisition of content. However, they can be used for assessing skills and process. Accordingly, quizzes and tests are used as assessment tools in combination with CA strategies (Hayes, 1997). Quizzes help the teacher to have a detailed and reliable background about students and the teaching-learning process.

1.4 Challenges of Implementing Continuous Assessment Practices

The challenges faced by teachers when implementing CA in the EFL are numerous. The following is a summary of the major challenges which may hinder the effectiveness of the CA process and lead to negative effect on the process of assessment and poor results for students.

a. Teachers' Work Overload: The implementation of CA may lead to the increase in teachers' workload as they have to plan, design and administer appropriate tasks constantly. This involves the extensive record of monitoring individual learners since they have to cover many tasks within a short period of time. Hence, teachers are overloaded with various responsibilities and fail to implement CA (Njabili, 1999; Mkimbili & Kitta, 2020-68). Furthermore, it is time consuming to design the different assessment tasks, along with the time constraints imposed by the administration, which is considered as a further challenge for teachers (Bjalde, Jorgenen & Lindberg, 2017: 7).

b. Lack of Reliable CA Instruments: According to Birhanu (2013), an important aspect of CA is the availability of valid and reliable tests that could be used in all institutions. However, as a result of the previous challenge and with inadequacy of teaching and learning materials, teachers fail to design the assessment tool appropriate for measuring and developing competencies (Mkimbili & Kitta, 2020: 68).

c. Lack of Adequate CA Training for Teachers : Another challenge for CA is the lack of knowledge and training about its practices among teachers (Birhanu, 2013: 23). Hence, "with the inadequate skills of teachers on the use of formative assessment, teachers fail to provide effective continuous assessment for their students" (Mkimbili & Kitta, 2020: 68). In this regard, Ellington and Early (1997) insist that teachers need to have adequate knowledge and skills to succeed in their implementation of CA practices. If CA is not well planned and implemented and teachers lack the skills of test construction and test administration, this may have a negative effect on students' performance and results (Asfaw, 2015: 141).

d. Students' Anxiety: Instead of reducing anxiety, CA may actually make students feel anxious (Bjalde, Jorgenen & Lindberg, 2017: 7). Students who are subjected to CA practices may be under pressure since they have to prepare and be always ready for assessment. Accordingly, Nitko (2005) states that students, in this case, may feel that they are under constant surveillance and feel afraid of committing mistakes, which may affect their performance negatively. This, in turn, leads to students' developing negative attitudes towards CA and lack of interest in its practices.

e. Cheating & Plagiarismting & Plagiarism According to Birhanu (2013), some practices of CA may affect the reliability of gained data and results. In this regard, Bjalde Jorgenen & Lindberg, (2017: 7) claim that

when engaging in CA practice, the issue of cheating and plagiarism emerges. For example, projects, take home exams, or assignments that can be done outside the classroom cannot be considered as reliable and valid reflection of students' level. Students may request their parents' assistance or others sources including the Internet to accomplish their assignments. They are not assessed under strictly controlled conditions; they have access to all available resources, which may lead to the unreliability of the corresponding CA scores.

f. Class Size: Class size is another challenge associated with the implementation of CA. Continuous assessment cannot be applied with large classes because it is efforts and time consuming to assess each individual learner constantly using a range of CA practices. Other challenges for CA are lack of feedback, lack of facilities, time constraints, shortage of funds, teachers' and students negative perceptions and attitudes towards CA (Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon , 2018-61. Samson & Allida , 2018: 5)

1.5 Previous Studies on Practices & Challenges of Continuous Assessment

Empirical research focusing on different issues of the practices and challenges of continuous assessment is extensive (Birhanu, 2013; Yigzaw, 2013; Berhe & Embiza, 2015; Asfaw, 2015; Abera, Kedirb & Beyabeying, 2017; Asale, 2017; Benzahaf, 2017; Mohammedseid, 2017; Samson & Allida, 2018; Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018; Oli & Olkaba, 2020). In this section, a summary of the main findings of some studies is presented.

Birhanu (2013) examined the issues and practices of CA in secondary schools. The results reveal that written tests, oral questions, classwork and homework are the most used practices while oral presentations are the least. Another finding indicates that teachers face some issues such as the lack of skills when implementing CA with inadequate manuals and directives of CA. Another study was conducted by Yigzaw (2013) to examine teachers' perceptions, attitudes and practices of CA in high school. The findings reveal that CA is used only for developing students' intellectual skills. The results of the study entail that teacher did not properly practice CA. It is suggested that teachers should be trained on how to use CA effectively.

Asfaw (2015) investigated the hindrances of implementing CA in HE. The results show that CA techniques are used improperly by teachers. The study reveal a number of challenges faced by teachers such as large class sizes, lack of manuals, in addition to teachers and students' negative attitudes towards

CA. Berhe & Embiza (2015) examined the prospects of using CA in HE. The findings reveal that teachers neglected CA strategies and very few assessment tools are used. Also, teachers and students are found to have poor knowledge and negative attitudes towards CA.

Abera, Kedir & Beyabeyin (2017) conducted a study to explore the implementation and challenges of CA in HE. The findings indicate a very poor level of implementing CA. Pencil pen made exams and individual works are ranked as the most used tools while group work is ranked last. It is suggested that teachers should implement CA not only for the sake of evaluating and marking students' results but also for learning skills and practices. Another study was conducted by Asale (2017) to investigate teachers' perceptions of CA practices in high school with its corresponding challenges. The findings reveal that the use of CA is hindered with a number of challenges, such as class size, job commitments, and lack of CA training. In addition, teachers have clear perception of CA but they do not apply it effectively as they use tests and examinations as the major assessment tools.

Benzahef (2017) conducted a research to explore the assessment practices and challenges of formative assessment (CA) in high school. Findings reveal that teachers are using a wide range of assessment strategies for summative purposes (homework assignment, in class written tests). It is suggested that teachers should be trained for better implication of formative assessment practices. In addition, Mohammedseid (2017) conducted a research to explore the challenges faced by college teachers when implementing CA strategies. Findings reveal that the greatest challenges of implementing CA include the poor handling of feedback, large classes, teachers' lack of knowledge and skills of CA, teaching overload, and inadequate materials with students' negative attitudes towards CA.

Samson & Allida (2018) conducted a study to explore the meaning of CA, its purpose and challenges of its implementation in addition to solutions for these challenges. The findings indicate that CA gives evidence on how much knowledge a learner has acquired in a particular subject. The findings reveal that teachers' negative attitudes, lack of expertise in CA, lack of adequate training for teachers, course overload and large class size are among the major challenges faced by teachers. Another finding suggests that students' number by class should be minimized and adequate guidelines and materials. A further study by Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon (2018) was conducted to identify the advantages and disadvantages of an intervention to improve CA. The findings reveal that

the CA intervention was very useful for teachers and students to prepare the final examination and it was received positively by them.

Finally, Oli & Olkaba (2020) conducted a study to investigate the practices and challenges of CA in university. The finding of the study revealed that the frequency of practicing CA in class is low. However, teachers seem to have positive perceptions of CA. In addition, the finding disclosed that large class size, shortage of time, teachers' workload, the low interest of students, and lack of commitment among teachers as the major challenges facing college teachers.

According to the above-mentioned studies, no study tackled the issue of CA at the English Department of Moammed Lamine Debaghine University. Therefore, the current study comes to highlight the situation in relation to CA practices and challenges as faced by EFL teachers.

1.6. Statement of the Problem

In the Algerian context, the quality of higher education (HE, henceforth) was no longer achieved and students failed to reach the desirable academic outcomes. There was an urgent need to improve the quality of education and learning. As a result, the ministry of HE implemented CA as a crucial component of the curriculum and the teaching process within the LMD system; and students are assessed throughout the semester using ongoing assessment and at the end of each semester via final exam. This is due to the fact that CA helps measuring learning holistically unlike the traditional judgmental assessment methods, which mainly focus on the superficial outcomes of learning. However, although the subject of CA is becoming central to HE, teachers are still struggling with CA implementation due to the faced challenges, which affect the quality of CA practices However, despite the existence of an extensive amount of research (Birhanu, 2013; Yigzaw, 2013; Berhe & Embiza, 2015; Asfaw, 2015; Abera, Kedirb & Beyabeying, 2017; Asale, 2017; Benzahaf, 2017 ; Mohammedseid, 2017 ; Samson & Allida, 2018 ; Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018 ; Oli & Olkaba, 2020) about teachers' practices and challenges of CA, the Algerian teachers' case is not well investigated. Therefore, this study comes to bridge the gap by exploring the status of implementing CA in the Algerian HE context with EFL teachers, mainly its frequency of use, practices along with the potential challenges.

1.7. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore EFL teachers' practices of CA and the corresponding faced challenges at the Mohammed Lamine Debaghine Universsity, in which CA was opted for in tutorial sessions' assessment or

courses of continuous evaluation with keeping end semester evaluation through the traditional final exam. This research attempts to identify the frequency of use and practices of implementing CA, in addition to the major challenges of CA implementation faced by teachers in the EFL classroom.

2. Methodology

1.   Research Questions
- This study aims to answer the following research questions:
- How frequently do EFL teachers implement the practices of CA in the classroom?
- What are the practices of CA implemented by EFL teachers in the classroom?
- What are the challenges faced by EFL teachers when implementing CA practices?

2. Participants: This research was conducted with 36 teachers from the department of English language and literature at Mohammed Lamine Debaghine University, Setif2, Algeria. The participants are 29 females and 7 males with teaching experience that varies between 1 to 32 years and educational qualification that ranges from License to Doctorate.

3. Instrument: The instrument used for data collection is an adapted semi-structured questionnaire from Abera, Kedir & Beyabeying (2017) of four major sections. The first section is about the background information of participants concerning gender, highest qualifications and teaching experience respectively. The second section is about the status of the implementation of CA measured on a five-point Likert-scale, structured as "never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, and very frequently". The third section is concerned with the practices of CA implemented by teachers. It consists of 10 options and teachers are requested to tick their practices and mention any other practice. The last section is about the challenges facing teachers when implementing CA. It consists of twelve (12) challenges measured on a five-point Likert scale structured as "strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree". An open-ended question is added at the end to elicit teachers' explanation of the challenges they suffer from the most when implementing CA. Cronbach's alpha for measuring the internal reliability of the questionnaire was at $\square$ =.89 which is superior to .70, which means that the tool is reliable and suitable for the research purposes.

4. Procedures: The participants in this research were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, following a convenience sampling technique. A total of 50 questionnaires were handed to teachers or sent to them via email attachment. Thirty (36) teachers completed and returned the questionnaire.

5. For data analysis procedures, the responses to close-ended questions were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.22 through frequencies, percentages, mean and rank. The answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively through document analysis.

3. Results & Discussion

The findings were organized and analyzed under three sub-headings related to the three research questions: The frequency of using CA, teachers' practices of CA and the challenges of implementing CA.

3.1 The Status of Implementation of Continuous Assessment in the EFL Classroom

This section is to provide the answer to the first research question about the status of implementing CA in EFL classroom. In order to check the status of EFL teachers' implementation of CA practices, they were asked to mention the frequency of using practices for CA.

Table2. The Status of Implementation of CA in the EFL Classroom

Frequency of CA Use	Frequency of Response	Percentages of Response %
Never	0	0
Rarely	8	22.22
Occasionally	25	69.44
Frequently	3	8.33
Very Frequently	0	0
Total	36	100

As indicated in table 2, most teachers (33- 91.66 %) claim that they use CA occasionally (25- 69.44 %) or rarely (8-22.22 %) as part of their assessment practice. No teacher (0 %) replies with 'never' or very 'frequently' with three teachers (8.33 %) replying with 'frequently'.

This finding goes hand in hand with the ones of Birhanu (2013), Asale (2017), Mohammedseid, (2017) and Oli & Olkaba (2020), in which results reveal a low and infrequent use of CA practices among teachers. However, the results disagree with results from Berhe & Embiza (2015), Asfaw (2015), Benzahaf (2017) and Abera, Kedirb & Beyabeying, (2017), in which teachers are found to exhibit frequent use of CA practices.

3.2 Practices of Continuous Assessment Implemented by EFL Teachers

In this section, the second research question, - What are the practices of CA implemented by EFL teachers in the classroom? - will be addressed.

Table3. Practices of CA Implemented by EFL Teachers

N°	Practices of CA	Frequency	Percentages %
1	Attendance	7	19.44
2	Classroom Participation	9	25
3	Self-Assessment	0	0
4	Peer- Assessment	1	2.77
5	Oral Presentation	15	41.66
6	Quiz/Test	31	86.11
7	Take Home Project Work	17	47.22
8	Portfolios	0	0
9	Discipline	1	2.77
10	Extra Work/ Efforts	2	5.55

Table 3 reveals that the majority of teachers use graded quizzes/tests (86.11 %) followed by project work (47.22 %), oral presentation (41.66 %), and classroom participation (25 %). On the other hand, peer-assessment (3.33 %), peer-assessment (0 %), portfolios (0 %) are mentioned to be the least used practices. This indicates that teachers implementation of CA practices is limited with much focus on graded quizzes/tests as the most dominantly used strategy, which is considered as a summative (assessment of learning) rather than formative technique (assessment for learning). Portfolios, peer and self-assessment are completely neglected.

The findings in this section agree with many of previous related studies (Birhanu, 2013; Berhe & Embiza, 2015; Asfaw, 2015; Abera, Kedirb & Beyabeying, 2017; Asale, 2017; Benzahaf, 2017). They all revealed that graded quizzes, written tests, oral presentations, take home projects are the major CA practices among teachers, with a special emphasis on quizzes and tests. However, this study disagrees with Birhanu's (2013) study in a specific finding about oral presentation, which was found to be used the least by teachers.

Teachers' limited use of CA practices and their focus on quizzes, group home projects and oral presentation can be explained due to teachers' trying to provide a comprehensive assessment to all students in the overcrowded classrooms. On the other hand, teachers may try to avoid the challenging and time-consuming nature of designing and monitoring the CA practices which adds more responsibilities to their already overloaded program. Furthermore, the limited use of CA practices might be the result of teachers' lack of experience

on how to effectively implement CA practices. In addition, the frequent use of quizzes and projects can be in response to the curriculum requirements and the administrative instructions, which highlights those two practices for assessment in tutorial sessions.

Online questions and written assignments were mentioned as further CA practice implemented by teachers.

3.3 The Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers when Implementing CA Practices

Teachers' implementation of CA can be influenced by a number of constraints. In this section, teachers are asked about the challenges they face when implementing CA practices. Their answers will be discussed to answer the third research question.

Table 4 : The Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers when Implementing CA Practices

N°	Item	Mean	Percent	Response Level	Rank
1	Course or Work Overload	4.16	83.2	Strongly Agree	3
2	The Lack of Teachers' Training for Implementing CA	4.02	80.4	Strongly Agree	4
3	The Lack of Reliable CA Instruments	3.13	62.6	Agree	8
4	Students Anxiety When Subjected to CA Practices	3.16	63.2	Agree	7
5	Teachers/ Students Negative Attitudes towards CA	3.02	60.4	Agree	11
6	Large Class Size	4.61	92.2	Strongly Agree	1
7	Time Constraints/ Shortage of time	4.52	90.4	Strongly Agree	2
8	Students' Cheating and Plagiarism in Take Home Exams and Projects	3.05	61.0	Agree	9
9	Lack of Necessary Materials to Implement CA	3.05	61.0	Agree	9
10	The Poor Level of Students	3.5	70.0	Agree	5
11	The Lack of Teachers' Commitment	3.33	66.6	Agree	6
12	Lack of Appropriate Feedback for CA Practices	3.00	60.0	Agree	12
	Total	3.46	70.92	Agree	

As indicated in table 4, in general, teachers seem to face many challenges when implementing CA practices with a total mean value of 3.46 indicating that teachers agree with all the 12 items for challenges. The majority believe that the large number of students per class, time constraints, work overload, and the lack of an appropriate training for teachers are the major potential challenges with mean values of 4.61, 4.52, 4.16 and 4.02 respectively. On the other hand, students' negative attitudes towards CA and the lack of appropriate feedback are found to be the least challenges with mean value of 3.02 and 3.00 respectively.

These findings are similar to results from (Birhanu, 2013; Yigzaw, 2013; Berhe & Embiza, 2015; Asfaw, 2015; Abera, Kedirb & Beyabeying, 2017; Asale, 2017; Benzahaf, 2017 ; Mohammedseid, 2017; Samson & Allida, 2018; Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon, 2018; Oli & Olkaba, 2020). In all of these studies, the large class size, time shortage, course overload and lack of CA training, are found to be the major challenges facing teachers with the implementation of CA. However, these findings disagree with specific results from Abera, Kedirb & Beyabeying (2017), Kugamoorthy & Weerakoon (2018), in which the lack of appropriate feedback is mentioned as a major challenge for practicing CA; and with Asfaw (2015) and Benzahef (2017), in which teachers' and students' negative attitudes towards CA is among the major challenges facing teachers with CA implementation.

For the answers to the open ended question of this section, teachers explained further the challenges they face. The following are some of their answers in relation to the major challenges:

- The large number of students per class: teachers claimed that practicing CA in large classes is a great challenge. To quote :

> T1 said: "It is sometimes impossible to apply CA techniques with a class of over than 60. The number of students per class should be reduced". T2 claimed : "Trying to use CA techniques and vary assessment tools is challenging when teaching in an overcrowded classroom". T3: "I don't think that practicing CA is feasible in our overcrowded classroom. Correcting a single quiz is a demanding task for me".

- Time constraints : Most teachers reveal that 1hour and a half per week is not sufficient to implement CA as they feel afraid of not being able

to finish the syllabus if they integrate CA techniques, which are time consuming :

> T4 said: "Only quizzes or exams can be practical for evaluating students' achievement with the short time allocated for each module per week". T5 adds: "It is either we explain the material for students or implement CA strategies. In order to finish the program, CA techniques should be implemented with caution".

- Course teaching load : Teachers complain about the course load assigned to them and they claim that it hinders the effective implementation of CA.

> T6 said: "I feel overwhelmed because of my course load. I am assigned to teach three different lectures and two tutorial sessions for both license and master students. How am I supposed to succeed in implementing CA practices?" T7 adds: "The teaching course load is huge for teachers at our department. CA is an additional work load and it requires time and efforts which are consumed with the preparation for the courses assigned".

- Lack of CA training : Teachers believe that they need a professional training for CA implementation.

> T8 claims: "I personally have issues with CA design, implementation and correction. I need instruction". T9 adds: "Most teachers at our department lack training on how to apply CA and design valid tests"

The answers of teachers to the open-ended question give further information about the nature of the challenges they face with CA implementation in the EFL classroom.

Conclusion

In accordance with the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn. First, the study reveals that the frequency of practice of CA by EFL teachers at Mohammed Lamine Debaghine University is limited. Teachers seem to be hesitant with the use of CA to evaluate learners. Furthermore, the findings indicate that CA practices are not varied ; and teachers tend to focus on graded quizzes and projects as their most dominant practices. Another finding reveals that the lack of CA training for teachers, work overload, time constraints, and the large number of students per class are the major hindrances facing EFL teachers when trying to integrate CA. To conclude, EFL teachers frequency of

use and practice of CA is limited due to the huge number of challenges they face when trying to integrate the different CA practices into their assessment system.

Accordingly, the following pedagogical implications are suggested. First, teachers should use CA practices more frequently to assess students' learning progress. Second, teachers should vary their CA practices as much as possible and take into consideration other neglected strategies such as self-assessment, peer assessment and portfolios. Using self and peer-assessment help teachers with the process of assessment since students will take some responsibility to assess themselves or each other. This, in turn, encourages students to be life-long and self-regulated learners. Third, teachers need to receive an adequate training or workshops on the design, implementation, administration and monitoring of CA practices. A guide should be provided for teachers as an aid and reference for CA practices in the EFL classroom. Finally, the large class size and course overload should be revised through reducing the number of students per class to be manageable and making more teachers' recruitment to minimize the workload for the teachers at the English department.

Future Researchers may replicate the study with EFL students to explore their teachers' practices of CA along with the challenges they face when subjected to these practices. In addition, researchers may deal with teachers and students perceptions of CA and the solutions to the faced challenges. Finally, further research may tackle the effect of CA practices on students' achievement through an experimental design.

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Abstract

The present paper aims to explore teachers' practices and faced challenges of continuous assessment (CA, henceforth) in the English department at Mohammed Lamine Debaghine-Setif-2 University. To achieve the purpose of this study, an exploratory design is followed. For data collection, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 36 EFL teachers who were selected based on a convenience sampling technique. The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings indicate that the implementation of CA by teachers is limited; and teachers tend to focus on quizzes, take home projects and group oral presentation as the major strategies for their CA practice. Another finding reveals that teachers are facing a number of challenges when implementing CA among which are: large class size, course overload, time constraints, and teachers' lack of training with CA implementation. Accordingly, a number of pedagogical implications is offered. First, the number of students per class should be revised and reduced. Second, teachers should receive training on the use of CA strategies in the EFL classroom and should be equipped by a well-designed manual of CA practices. Finally, learners should be encouraged to actively engage in the process of assessment through peer and self-assessment.

Keywords

continuous assessment, Higher Education, practices, challenges, EFL teachers.

مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ممارسات الاساتذة وتحديات التقييم المستمر التي تواجههم في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد لمين دباغين سطيف 2. لتحقيق الغرض من هذه الدراسة، تم اتباع المنهجية الاستكشافية. لجمع البيانات، تم توزيع استبيان شبه منظم على 63 استاذا من اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الذين تم اختيارهم بناءً على تقنية أخذ العينات الملائمة. تم تحليل البيانات كميا ونوعيا. تشير النتائج إلى أن تطبيق التقييم المستمر من قبل الاساتذة محدود. ويميل الاساتذة إلى التركيز على الاختبارات القصيرة، والمشاريع المنزلية والعرض الشفوي الجماعي كاستراتيجيات رئيسية لممارسات

التقييم المستمر. تكشف نتيجة اخرى أن الاساتذة يواجهون عددًا من التحديات عند تطبيق التقييم المستمر من بينها : حجم الفصل الكبير، وعبء التدرس الزائد، ونقص الوقت ونقص تدريب الاساتذة على تطبيق التقييم المستمر. وفقًا لذلك، يتم تقديم عدد من التوصيات التربوية. أولاً، يجب مراجعة تعداد الطلاب في الفصل الدراسي وتقليله. ثانيًا، يجب أن يتلقى المعلمون تدريبًا على استخدام استراتيجيات التقييم المستمر في الفصل الدراسي للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ويجب أن يكونوا مجهزين بدليل جيد التصميم لممارسات التقييم المستمر. أخيرًا، يجب تشجيع الطلبة على الانخراط بفاعلية في عملية التقييم من خلال التقييم الثنائي والتقييم الذاتي.

كلمات مفتاحيّة

التقييم المستمر، التعليم العالي، الممارسات، التحديات، اساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

Résumé

Le présent article vise à explorer les pratiques et les défis de l'évaluation continue rencontrés par les enseignants dans le département d'anglais de l'Université Mohammed Lamine Debaghine Sétif-2. Pour atteindre l'objectif de cette étude, un devis exploratoire est suivi. Pour la collecte de données, un questionnaire semi-structuré a été administré à 36 enseignants EFL qui ont été sélectionnés sur la base d'une technique d'échantillonnage de commodité. Les données ont été analysées quantitativement et qualitativement. Les résultats indiquent que la pratique de l'évaluation continue par les enseignants est limitée ; et les enseignants ont tendance à se concentrer sur les quiz, les projets à faire à la maison et les présentations orales de groupe comme principales stratégies pour leur pratique de l'évaluation continue. Une autre constatation révèle que les enseignants sont confrontés à un certain nombre de défis lors de la pratique de l'évaluation continue, parmi lesquels : la grande taille des classes, la surcharge de cours, les contraintes de temps et le manque de formation des enseignants à l'implémentation de l'évaluation continue. En conséquence, un certain nombre d'implications pédagogiques sont proposées. Premièrement, le nombre d'élèves par classe devrait être revu et réduit. Deuxièmement, les enseignants devraient recevoir une formation sur l'utilisation des stratégies de l'évaluation continue dans la classe EFL et devraient être équipés par un manuel bien conçu des pratiques de l'évaluation continue. Enfin, les apprenants doivent être encouragés à s'engager activement dans le processus d'évaluation par le biais de l'évaluation par les pairs et de l'auto-évaluation.

Mots-clés

évaluation continue, enseignement supérieur, pratiques, défis, enseignants EFL.