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## EFL Instructors' Perception of the Implementation of Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) Principles, Practices, and Challenges: South-Western Ethiopia Universities in Focus

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL instructors' perceptions of the implementation of classroom-based assessment principles, practices, and challenges in a university context. The study employed a descriptive survey and correlational research design with mixed research approaches. One hundred seven EFL instructors from four universities participated through a comprehensive and accessibility sampling technique. The questionnaire, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. The quantitative data were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and grand mean. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings of the quantitative data revealed that the participants had very high positive perception of the implementation of CBA principles and high practice of CBA principles from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage. Similarly, instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles and their actual practice significantly and low positively correlated ( $r=.198$ ,  $N= 107$ ,  $p<.001$ ). However, the qualitative data results revealed that there were misconceptions in the understanding of the CBA principles and practices. The findings of classroom observation showed that most of the CBA principles were not implemented in observed classes. Furthermore, the interview results showed that the instructors' implementation of CBA principles was not promising. The findings also indicated that the challenges of the implementation of CBA principles, in the study-targeted universities, were student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related. Therefore, it is recommended that institutional effort should be taken to equip instructors with the current assessment method in general and the CBA in particular.

**Keywords:** /Challenges/Classroom-Based Assessment/Perception/Practices/ Principles/

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In any education system, assessment is one of the essential tools. It is considered a bridge between teaching and learning, and it is the only way to discover whether or not instructional activities bring about the student's intended learning in the instructional process (William, 2013; Akhmedin, 2017). Without assessment, it can be a challenge for policymakers and educators to make better ways about remedial measures, appropriate decisions, and educational practices (Muluken, 2006). Thus, in the present communicative language teaching approach, the issues of assessment design and implementation have gained high attention in the instructional process (Xu & Liu, 2018; Galikyan, et al., 2019).

There has been also a noticeable change in educational assessment where assessment and instruction are viewed as inseparable components and assessment is perceived as a tool for supporting students' learning (Stiggins, 2008). This change in the assessment paradigm has come about due to some reform actions taken in various settings around the world aiming to improve educational planning and practices (Black & William, 1998, Assessment Reform Group, 1999, 2002; OECD, 2005). The paradigm shift is representing the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for learners and their teachers to decide how the learners are doing in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. As the assessment reform group supports Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) practice which is encouraged globally, EFL teachers are called on to apply suitable CBA methods and procedures to monitor and assess their students' progress and achievement in their classrooms (Davison & Leung, 2009).

In the Ethiopian education context, according to the new education and training policy (FDRE, 1994), it is mandatory to learn English as a subject from grade one up to the secondary school level. It is also a medium of instruction in secondary schools and at tertiary levels. Additionally, all first-year university students are given two English courses (Communicative English Language Skills I & II) to equip them with Basic English Skills. However, with all these exposures to instruction, Ethiopian university students often receive complaints from their instructors, parents, and the public in general about their poor performance in English language skills (Mekonnen, 2017). Similarly, Alamrew (2005) found that the level of English is declining in Ethiopia. Thus, schools, training institutions, colleges, and universities are increasingly under criticism from the public and stakeholders because of the deteriorating English language command of students.

Furthermore, many local researchers (Dawit, 2013, Birhanu, 2014; Fasika, 2014) reached a conclusion that Ethiopian university students had still poor performance in English language skills. Regarding this, Richards and Rogers (2001) explain that the poor performance of students in English language skills is attributed to a variety of factors. Teachers' teaching methodology, quality of teacher training, quality of curricular materials, teachers' assessment method/strategy, as well as attitudes of teachers and students, are some of the factors that affect the performance of the students. So, EFL instructors have to be equipped with appropriate knowledge of CBA principles, techniques, and procedures in their instruction to change the existing situation. This is because the proper choice and implementation of the CBA method allow teachers to diagnose problems faced in attaining desirable learning outcomes and in devising appropriate remedial measures to redress the situation (Brown, 2002).

For this, investigating the current status of EFL instructors' perception of the implementation of the basic CBA principles and their working practices in the university context is considered a potential area for research. This is because it is assumed that students' academic failure, in general, is associated with teachers' beliefs of assessment and their actual practices in the classroom (Gipps, 1990, Black & William, 1998; Popham, 2008). Additionally, Abiy (2013) underscores that assessment practices shape the instructional processes, and as a result of this, learning can be improved. This indicates that assessment is the driving force of the instructional process.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) is an assessment method that is carried out by teachers in the classroom to improve classroom instruction and motivate students' learning. It is a comprehensive procedure that teachers and students apply in collecting, evaluating, and using evidence of learning for different purposes. It includes diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, monitoring the student's progress in achieving the desired learning outcomes, collecting information about students' efforts, assigning grades, and providing feedback to other school officials and parents (Rea-Dickens, 2008; Mekonnen, 2017). Although CBA method is considered a crucial component of instruction that facilitates students' learning and improves instruction, regarding the implementation of the principles, techniques, and procedures, people within the educational community i.e., instructors, students, parents, administrators, and policy-makers have different perspectives (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991; Sikka et al. 2007).

According to the policy statement of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (FDRE, 1994), students should mainly be assessed based on CBA methods at various levels of educational institutions to avoid dependence on the mid-term and final examinations. On the other hand, certain studies (e.g., Institution of International Education, 2012) show that EFL assessment methods in Ethiopian schools more focused on term and final exams. Here, it seems that there is a gap between what the assessment policy intends and the instructors' actual practices. Therefore, the instructors' failure to use the intended CBA method could be one of the possible factors for the students' incompetence in language skills.

Studies have been conducted globally and locally to indicate the general link between instructors' perception of the implementation CBA method and their practices at different school levels. For instance, Gan *et. Al.* (2018) explored the prospective of Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions of assessment for learning practices in terms of their learning approaches. They have shown a significant positive correlation between their assessment of learning perceptions and their tendency to employ an in-depth approach to learning. Another study by Rahman, (2018) on secondary science teachers' perception and practices of CBA suggested that teachers perceive CBA as an assessment of learning and that what they claimed to practice was not practiced in the classroom. Shim (2009) also studied EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding CBA in Korean primary education using a questionnaire and interview, revealing that though teachers appeared to be literate, they did not necessarily implement all knowledge of assessment principles into practice. Similarly, Jannati (2015) found that Iranian EFL teachers were aware of the fundamental principles of CBA, but their practice did not reflect this.

Furthermore, local researchers Gemechu and Teklu (2020), in their study finding revealed that teachers have positive perceptions toward continuous assessment and they accepted continuous assessment as important to improve the achievement of learners, but the extent of practicing continuous assessment in the class is low. Their finding also disclosed that a large class size, shortage of time, teachers' workload, the low interest of students, large instructional content, and lack of commitment among teachers, as the major factors, hide the practice of continuous assessment in colleges of teachers' education. Abiy (2013), on his part, studied high school teachers' and students' perceptions, attitudes, and actual practices of continuous assessment and concluded that continuous assessment was not properly implemented and that its function to diagnose students' problems and modify the teaching was very limited, even absent in most cases.

The above studies have attempted to investigate CBA-related issues in different instructional settings, but the instructors' perception of the procedural working principles of CBA and the challenges in the implementation was not emphasized. To promote CBA methods and to find solutions to instructional problems in EFL classes, and to ensure improved quality teaching and learning, understanding the instructors' perception of the implementation of procedural working principles of CBA and their implementation challenges is crucial.

Furthermore, research on EFL instructors' implementation of CBA is relatively scarce (Liu & Xu, 2017). The limited body of research has focused on certain CBA aspects, such as using assessment methods and providing feedback (Gan et al., 2018). Some of them lack a comprehensive understanding of EFL instructors' perceptions and practices of CBA principles (Lee et al., 2019). Hence, to fill this research gap, the present study aims to investigate the EFL instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles, their actual practices, and challenges in the Communicative English Language Skills II course class with particular reference to South-Western Ethiopian universities' context. It is based on Rea-Dickens' (2001) model of personal and procedural working principles of CBA methods from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions are formulated to guide this study.

1. What perception do the instructors hold concerning the procedural working principles of CBA implementation?
2. To what extent do instructors practice the procedural working principles of CBA in EFL classroom context?
3. What is the correlation between the instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles and their actual practice?
4. What challenges do the instructors face in the implementation of procedural working principles of CBA in a university EFL classroom context?

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1 Setting and Participants of the Study**

The study was conducted in South-Western Ethiopian universities. There are four universities in the area: Jimma University, Metu University, Bonga University, and Mizan-Tepi University. The selection of the universities was based on a convenient sampling technique.

### **2.2 Research Design**

The current study employed a descriptive survey and correlational research design. According to Ortho (2004), the descriptive survey design enables the researcher to collect data about people's opinions, attitudes, or any other educational or social issues that affect them, whereas, the correlational design helps to correlate two or more variables. For data collection, the researcher used a mixed research approach which combines quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative method was the dominant method used to collect data through questionnaires while the qualitative data were used to supplement the quantitative data.

### **2.3 Source of Data and Sampling Technique**

A total of 107 EFL instructors from four universities participated in the study through comprehensive and accessibility sampling techniques. A comprehensive sampling technique was used for all EFL instructors to complete the questionnaire and an accessibility sampling technique was used for qualitative data. For this,

Jimma University and Bonga University were selected, and a total of six (five male and one female) instructors were taken (three from each university) for classroom observation and semi-structured interviews.

## 2.4 Instruments of Data Collection

To achieve the objective of the study, the researcher used questionnaire, classroom observation, and interview.

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was adapted from Shim's (2009) survey instrument to collect data on instructors' practice of CBA procedural working principles. The instrument has 80 items for the perception and practice section, but the researcher adapted only 25 items for each perception and practice section based on the suitability and context of this study. Therefore, the instructors' questionnaire, which consists of 58 items, was grouped into three categories that consisted of instructors' perception of the working principles of CBA (1-25), their practices of the principles (26-50), and challenges in the implementation of the principles (51-58). Each category of question items is related to the procedural working principles of CBA and subdivided into four sub-stages from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage. For the perception section question items consisted of (1-7) the planning stage, (8-14) the implementation stage, (15-32) the monitoring stage, and (22-25) the recording and dissemination stage. Likewise, the practice section question items included (26-32) the planning stage, (33-39) the implementation stage, (40-46) the monitoring stage, and (47-50) the recording and dissemination stage. Five-point Likert-scale measurements from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) were used for category one to know whether the instructors agree, disagree, or, are undecided on the items. Similarly, the instructors' practice category items were aimed to determine the frequency to which the listed CBA items were being used. Also, a five-point Likert measurement scale from 1(never) to 5 (always) was used to measure the regularity of the practices. The rest questions (51-58) were related to suggested instructors' challenges in the implementation of the procedural working principles of the CBA in the EFL classroom. A Five-point Likert scale measurement of 1(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to decide on the difficulty level from lower to higher scaling rate. Finally, the questionnaire mainly addressed all research questions and was completed by all study target university EFL instructors.

**Classroom observation.** To observe the instructors' actual practice of CBA principles and procedures in the EFL classroom instruction, the researcher prepared a classroom observation checklist with 12 items from CBA principles of practice which includes observed/not observed and a remark note column. The checklist had four parts that focused on instructors' working principles and their roles in CBA from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage and were adapted from the questionnaire. The selection of instructors for classroom observation was based on the grounds of easy access to the researchers. For this, Jimma University and Bonga university were selected, and a total of six (five male and one female) instructors were taken (three from each university). The selected six instructors were observed twice in two weeks while they were conducting their lessons. The classroom observation answered the first and the second research questions to complement the quantitative data.

**Semi-structured interview.** The study also employed a semi-structured interview which was intended to encourage participants to share their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and challenges in the implementation of CBA working principles. The questions were set based on the objectives and review of related literature of the study. All the selected instructors for classroom observation were involved in the interview session after their classroom observations. The interview questions also answered the first, second, and fourth research questions to complement the quantitative data.

## 2.5 Validity and Reliability of the instruments

To establish the validity of the questionnaire utmost care was taken in adapting appropriate items. It was also given a high emphasis on readability, consistency of style, and clarity of language for the face validity of the tests. Furthermore, the draft of the questionnaire was subjected to colleagues and the researcher's supervisors for comments. Finally, the commented version of the questionnaire was piloted on a similar group of instructors out of the study area to verify whether it could measure what it is intended to measure, and revisions were made accordingly. Similarly, to establish the reliability of this questionnaire, the items of the questionnaire were adapted and designed carefully so that they meant the same thing to all respondents, even at different times. Secondly, the aim of the study was explained clearly to the participants before the questionnaire administration. Finally, the internal consistency of the items was determined by calculating Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. So, it was found to be reliable with Alpha for perception 0.79 (for 25 items), Practice 0.80 (for 25 items), and challenges 0.85 (for 8 items).

## 2.6 Data Analysis

The data from the close-ended questionnaire items were analyzed using statistical techniques. For this, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.0 for windows was used to produce the frequency, percentage, mean, and grand mean values of all items and for inferential statistics (assumptions of Pearson Product-Moment are checked). Then, the results were interpreted based on the research questions. The data collected from classroom observations were analyzed quantitatively in (%) and described. The data from the semi-structured interview was also described and analyzed thematically.

## 2.7 Ethical Consideration

In this study, appropriate steps were taken to meet ethical requirements. The researchers had permission and a letter of cooperation from Jimma University's post-graduate program to conduct the study. After that, the principal investigator explained the purpose of the study to all target university EFL instructors before the data collection. Then, the consent form was prepared and distributed to the instructors to enable them to express their willingness to participate in the study voluntarily. The researcher also assured that anonymity would be kept.

## 3. Result

### 3.1 The Findings of Quantitative Data

This section presents the findings of the quantitative data based on the order of the four specific research questions (Rq1, Rq2, Rq3, and Rq4).

***Instructors' perception concerning the procedural working principles of CBA implementation (Rq1).*** To investigate the perception and belief of the instructors towards the implementation of procedural working principles of CBA from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was implemented. The study participants' responses are summarized in tables. Based on Oxford (1990), the following mean value criterion was formulated to interpret the results shown in the tables. 1.0 - 2.4 or (50%) low (negatively perceived), 2.5-3.4 or (51%- 80%) moderately perceived, 3.5 - 5.00 or above 80% highly (positively) perceived.

Table 1; Instructors' perceptions of CBA principles (Planning stage)

N	Items	1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
1	Instructors should first identify the purpose of CBA when they design the assessment tasks.	f		3	22	82	107	<b>4.73</b>
		%		.8	20.6	76.6	100	
2	Instructors should consider the attainment targets with the curriculum requests when they design the CBA tasks.	f		6	23	78	107	<b>4.67</b>
		%		5.6	21.5	72.9	100	
3	Instructors should consider students' needs when they design CBA tasks.	f	1	10	32	64	107	<b>4.48</b>
		%	.9	9.3	29.9	59.8	100	
4	Instructors should balance the attainment targets with their student's needs when they plan CBA tasks.	f		9	66	32	107	<b>4.21</b>
		%		8.4	61.7	29.9	100	
5	CBA tasks should be planned to obtain information about what students can do at that particular time.	f	1	5	41	60	107	<b>4.49</b>
		%	.9	4.7	38.3	56.1	100	
6	CBA tasks should be related to what students do in real time.	f		4	56	47	107	<b>4.40</b>
		%		3.7	52.3	43.9	100	
7	Instructors should inform the students in advance so that the students will be able to prepare themselves for the assessment.	f		13	37	57	107	<b>4.41</b>
		%		12.1	34.6	53.3	100	

**Grand mean 4.48**

Key-(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4= Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree)

Table 1 shows that each mean score for instructors' perception of the implementation of items under the planning stage was high according to the set criteria. All of the participants (100%) rated the mean score above 4.0. The highest mean score was 4.73 for item 1, and the highest number of participants (97.2%) agreed on that instructors should first identify the purpose of CBA when they design the assessment tasks. Whereas relatively the lowest mean score was 4.21 indicated in item 4, which shows most of the participants (91.6%) agreed on instructors should balance the attainment targets with their student's needs when they plan CBA tasks. The grand mean value of this planning stage is 4.48. This indicates that the participants were very conscious of the items of the CBA principles at the planning stage. So, it is understandable that the instructors perceive positively the implementation of CBA principles at the planning stage.

Table 2: Instructors' perceptions of CBA principles (Implementation stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
8	Instructors should inform their students why they are assessed in the classroom.	f			13	54	40	107	<b>4.25</b>
		%			12.1	50.5	37.4	100	
9	Instructors should clearly instruct their students on how to do the CBA tasks.	f		1	10	40	56	107	<b>4.41</b>
		%		.9	9.3	37.4	52.3	100	
10	Students should understand the desired outcome of the CBA tasks.	f			9	51	47	107	<b>4.35</b>
		%			8.4	47.7	43.9	100	
11	Students should be supported when they have problems completing THE CBA tasks.	f		3	12	49	43	107	<b>4.23</b>
		%		2.8	11.2	45.8	40.2	100	
12	Instructors should monitor their student's work when the students are performing the CBA tasks.	f		1	8	50	48	107	<b>4.35</b>
		%		.9	7.5	46.7	44.9	100	
13	Instructors should give immediate feedback when the students complete the CBA tasks.	f		2	23	41	41	107	<b>4.13</b>
		%		1.9	21.5	38.3	38.3	100	
14	CBA tasks should be completed within a manageable time.	f			14	50	43	107	<b>4.27</b>
		%			13.1	46.7	40.2	100	
<b>Grand mean 4.28</b>									

Key-(1=StronglyDisagree,2=Disagree,3= Undecided, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 2 indicates that each mean score for instructors' perception of the items under the implementation stage was high according to the set criteria. All of the participants (100%) rated the mean score above 4.0. The highest mean score was 4.41 for item 9, and the highest number of participants (89.7%) agreed that instructors should clearly instruct their students on how to do the CBA tasks. However, relatively the lowest mean score was 4.13 indicated in item 13, where most of the participants (76.6%) agreed that instructors should give immediate feedback when the students complete the CBA tasks. The grand mean of this stage is high (4.28), which shows the instructors are aware of the importance of the procedural working principles of CBA. So, it is clear that the instructors perceive positively the procedural working principles of the CBA at this stage.



Table 3: Instructors' perceptions of CBA principles (Monitoring stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	mean
15	Instructors should construct the marking system of CBA as part of the whole assessment process	f			15	60	32	107	<b>4.15</b>
		%			14.0	56.1	29.9	100	
16	Instructors should let the students have detailed information about the marking criteria of CBA tasks.	f	1		17	35	54	107	<b>4.32</b>
		%	9		15.9	32.7	50.5	100	
17	Instructors should mark the students' performance constantly in CBA tasks	f	4		28	43	32	107	<b>3.96</b>
		%	3.7		26.2	40.2	29.9	100	
18	Instructors should use the results of CBA for revising their instruction	f			17	55	35	107	<b>4.16</b>
		%			15.9	51.4	32.7	100	
19	Instructors should take CBA as part of their instructional process.	f			13	54	40	107	<b>4.25</b>
		%			12.1	50.5	37.5	100	
20	Instructors should share the findings of CBA with other instructors.	f			15	54	38	107	<b>4.21</b>
		%			14.0	50.5	35.5	100	
21	The whole process of CBA should be consistent in terms of procedure and administration.	f	1		21	49	36	107	<b>4.12</b>
		%	.9		19.6	45.8	33.6	100	
<b>Grand mean 4.16</b>									

Key-(1=StronglyDisagree,2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree)

As Table 3 shows, each mean score for instructors' perception of the implementation of items under the monitoring stage was high according to the set criteria. Most of the participants (85.7%) rated the mean score above 4.0. The highest mean score was 4.32 for item 16, and the highest number of participants (83.2%) agreed that instructors should let the students have detailed information about the marking criteria of CBA tasks. But, relatively the lowest mean score was 3.96 indicated in item 17, and most of the participants (70.1%) agreed that instructors should mark the students' performance constantly in CBA tasks. The grand mean of this stage is high (4.16), which shows the good understanding level of the items in this stage. So, it can be concluded that the instructors perceive high positively the implementation of CBA principles at the monitoring stage.

Table4: Instructors' perceptions of CBA principles (Recording and dissemination stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
22	Instructors should be responsible for the output of their CBA tasks.	f			5	20	82	107	<b>4.71</b>
		%			4.7	18.7	76.6	100	
23	Instructors should involve in the development and reporting system of their student's progress and achievement in their institution.	f			8	24	75	107	<b>4.62</b>
		%			7.5	22.4	70.1	100	
24	Instructors should involve in the setting of CBA criteria in their institution.	f			6	25	76	107	<b>4.65</b>
		%			5.6	23.4	71.0	100	
25	Instructors should record and report their students' CBA progress and achievement timely.	f			1	13	93	107	<b>4.85</b>
		%			.9	12.1	86.9	100	

**Grand mean 4.70**

Key-(1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree and 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 4 illustrates that each mean score for instructors' perception of the implementation of items under the recording and dissemination stage was high according to the set criteria. All the participants (100%) rated the mean score above 4.0. The highest mean score was 4.85 for item 25, which indicates almost all of the participants (99%), agreed on the idea that instructors should record and report their students' CBA progress and achievement timely. However, relatively the lowest mean score was 4.62 as indicated in item 23, and most of the participants (92.5%) agreed on the notion that instructors should involve in the development and reporting system of their student's progress and achievement in their institution. The grand mean of this stage is 4.70 which indicates that instructors positively perceive what they do and their responsibilities in the recording and dissemination stage of the procedural working principle of CBA. So, it can be concluded that instructors perceive and believe positively in the implementation of CBA principles at this stage.

Finally, the grand mean summary of each stage of instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles from the planning stage to reporting and dissemination stage is (4.48, 4.28, 4.16, and 4.70) respectively with a total mean of 4.40. Therefore, the instructors perceived positively the procedural working principles of CBA at all stages in the selected universities.

***The extent to which instructors practice the procedural working principles of CBA in the EFL classroom context (Rq2).*** To measure the extent to which EFL instructors practice the procedural working principles of CBA, from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage, the researcher employed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire (from never to always) to measure the frequency of the practice's items from lower to a higher scale. Based on Oxford (1990), the following mean value criterion was formulated to interpret the results shown in the tables: 1.0 - 2.4 or (50%) low (negatively perceived), 2.5-3.4 or (51%- 80%) moderately perceived, and 3.5 - 5.00 or above 80% high (positively) perceived.

Table 5; Instructors' practices of CBA principles (Planning stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
26	I first identify the purpose of the assessment when I provide CBA tasks	f	1	6	19	81	107	107	<b>4.68</b>
		%	.9	5.6	17.8	75.7			
27	I plan the CBA tasks to attain the targets of the curriculum.	f	1	6	19	81	107	107	<b>4.48</b>
		%	.9	6.5	17.8	75.7			
28	I consider the students' needs when I design the CBA tasks.	f	3	14	45	45	107	107	<b>4.23</b>
		%	2.8	13.1	42.1	42.1			
29	I balance the attainment targets with the student's needs when I design the assessment task	f	3	13	58	33	107	107	<b>4.13</b>
		%	2.8	12.1	54.2	30.8			
30	I plan CBA tasks to obtain information about what my students know at that particular time.	f	1	17	64	25	107	107	<b>4.05</b>
		%	.9	15.9	59.8	23.4			
31	I relate my CBA tasks to what the students do in real class time.	f	1	33	48	25	107	107	<b>3.90</b>
		%	.9	30.8	44.9	23.4			
32	I explain to my students why they are assessed in CBA tasks.	f	1	27	44	35	107	107	<b>4.05</b>
		%	.9	25.2	41.1	32.5			
<b>Grand mean 4.22</b>									

Key- (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often and 5= Always)

As shown in Table 5, each mean score for the items under the planning stage of practice was high according to the set criteria. Most of the participants (85.7%) rated the mean score above 4.0. The highest mean score was 4.68 for item 26. It indicates that the highest number of participants (93.5%) identified why they provided assessment tasks in the EFL classroom. However, relatively the lowest mean score of 3.90 was indicated by item 31 which shows some of the participants (68.9%) provided tasks that are not managed in the classroom. The grand mean value of the planning stage is 4.22, which shows a high level of practice in the planning stage. So, it can be understood that the instructors implemented the basic elements of working principles of CBA to a high extent at the planning stage.

Table 6: Instructors' practices of CBA principles (Implementation stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
33	I inform my students why their CBA task is assessed in the classroom.	f	7	29	53	18	107		<b>3.76</b>
		%	6.5	27.1	49.5	16.5	100		
34	I clearly instruct my students on how to do the CBA tasks.	f	2	18	46	41	107		<b>4.17</b>
		%	1.9	16.8	43.0	38.3	100		
35	I make the students know the desired outcome of the CBA tasks.	f	4	37	49	17	107		<b>3.73</b>
		%	3.7	34.6	45.8	15.9	100		
36	I support my students when they have problems completing their CBA tasks.	f	5	41	40	21	107		<b>3.71</b>
		%	4.7	38.3	37.4	19.6	100		
37	I construct the marking system of CBA as part of the whole assessment	f	1	49	39	18	107		<b>3.69</b>
		%	.9	45.8	36.4	16.8	100		
38	I give immediate feedback to my students when they complete each CBA task.	f	9	51	30	17	107		<b>3.51</b>
		%	8.4	47.7	28.0	15.9	100		
39	I give CBA tasks that will be completed within a manageable time.	f	1	46	37	23	107		<b>3.76</b>
		%	.9	43.0	34.6	21.5	100		
			<b>Grand mean 3.76</b>						

Key- (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often and 5= Always)

Table 6 indicates that each mean score for items under the principles of the implementation stage was relatively high according to the set criteria. But most of the participants (85.7%) rated the mean score below 4.0. The highest mean score was 4.17 for item 34. It indicates the highest number of participants (81.0%) instruct clearly their students on how to do CBA tasks. Moderately the lowest mean score of 3.51 was indicated by item 38, which shows less than half of the participants (43.9%) did not give immediate feedback to their students when the students complete the CBA tasks. The grand mean value of this stage is 3.76, and it can be understood that the instructors implemented the common items of working principles of the CBA to a high extent at this stage.

Table 7: Instructors' practices of CBA principles (Monitoring stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
40	I monitor my students' work when students are performing the CBA tasks.	f	9	36	47	15	107		<b>3.63</b>
		%	8.4	33.6	43.9	14.0	100		
41	I let students have detailed information about the CBA tasks marking criteria	f	8	18	55	26	107		<b>3.92</b>
		%	7.5	16.8	51.4	24.3	100		
42	I mark the students' performance constantly in CBA tasks.	f	14	41	37	15	107		<b>3.49</b>
		%	13.1	38.3	34.6	14.0	100		
43	I use CBA results for revising my classroom instruction.	f	4	35	53	15	107		<b>3.73</b>
		%	3.7	32.7	49.5	14.0	100		
44	I take CBA tasks as part of my classroom instructional process.	f	5	41	46	15	107		<b>3.66</b>
		%	4.7	38.3	43.0	14.0	100		
45	I share the findings of CBA results with other instructors	f	10	35	51	11	107		<b>3.58</b>
		%	9.3	32.7	47.7	10.3	100		
46	I make the whole process of CBA tasks consistent in terms of procedure and administration.	f	2	41	36	28	107		<b>3.84</b>
		%	1.9	38.3	33.6	26.2	100		

**Grand mean 3.69**

Key - (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often and 5= Always)

Table 7 displays that each mean score for the items under the principles of the monitoring stage was relatively high according to the set criteria. But all of the participants (100%) rated the mean score below 4.0. The highest mean score was 3.92 for item 41. Most of the participants (75.7%) gave detailed information about the CBA task marking criteria for their students. However, moderately the lowest mean score of 3.49 was indicated by item 42, which showed less than half of the participants (48.6%) mark their student's performance constantly in CBA tasks. Finally, the grand mean value of this stage is 3.69 according to the set criteria. One can understand that the instructors implemented the basic elements of working principles of the CBA to a high extent at this stage.

Table 8: Instructors' practices of CBA principles (Recording and dissemination stage)

No	Items		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean
47	I take the responsibility for the output of my CBA tasks.	f			5	14	88	107	<b>4.77</b>
		%			4.7	13.1	82.2	100	
48	I provide immediate feedback to my students when they complete their CBA tasks.	f		1	10	19	77	107	<b>4.60</b>
		%		.9	9.3	17.8	72.0	100	
49	I take part in the setting of CBA criteria in my institution.	f		2	10	18	77	107	<b>4.58</b>
		%		1.9	9.3	16.8	72.0	100	
50	I record and report my students' CBA progress and achievement timely	f		1	5	9	92	107	<b>4.79</b>
		%		.9	4.7	8.4	86.0	100	
<b>Grand mean 4.68</b>									

Key- (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often and 5= Always)

As Table 8 shows, each mean score for the items under the principles of the recording and dissemination stage was very high as to the set criteria. The highest mean score was 4.79 for item 50, where nearly all of the participants (94.4%) recorded and reported their students' CBA progress and achievement timely. Whereas comparatively the lowest mean score was 4.58 for item 49 which shows most of the participants (88.8%) involved in the setting of CBA criteria in their institution. The grand mean value of this stage is 4.68, which indicates high practice of recording and reporting of students' CBA progress and achievement timely, according to the set criteria. So, it can be inferred that the instructors implemented the common elements of working principles of CBA to a high extent at this recording and dissemination stage.

Finally, the grand mean value summary of each stage of CBA principles from the planning stage to the reporting and dissemination stage is (4.21, 3.76, 3.69, and 4.69) respectively. Therefore, the instructors had a high practice of the items of CBA principles in the EFL classes of the studied university.

*The correlation between the instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles and their actual practice (Rq3).* To examine a linear relationship that exists between EFL instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles and their classroom practices, Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient was used for the analysis, and details of the result were presented as follows.

Table 9: The correlation of instructor's perception of the procedural working principles of CBA and their classroom Practices

		x2per	x3pr
x2per	Pearson Correlation	1	.198*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	107	107
x3pr	Pearson Correlation	.198*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	1
	N	107	107

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Key- X2= Instructors' Perception, X3 = Instructors' Practice

To examine the relationship between teachers' perception of the implementation of CBA principles and their actual practices, a Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was calculated (Table 9). Accordingly, the relationship between perception of the implementation of CBA variables and the actual practice of CBA variables were significant, but low positively correlated ( $r=.198$ ,  $N= 107$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Hence, we can conclude that instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles helps the instructors to enhance the actual practice.

The challenges instructors face in the implementation of CBA principles at University EFL classroom context. To investigate the instructor's challenges in the implementation of the procedural working principles of CBA, the participants' responses to suggested challenges from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stages were analyzed as follows.

Table 10: The Instructors' challenges in the implementation of CBA principles

No	Item		1	2	3	4	5	T	Mean	Rank
51	The instructors' insufficient knowledge and understanding of CBA techniques and procedures have an impact on the implementation of the method.	f			3	35	69	107	4.61	2 <sup>nd</sup>
		%			2.8	32.7	64.5	100		
52	Implementing different CBA methods, techniques, and procedures in EFL classes is time-consuming.	f			11	52	44	107	4.30	5 <sup>th</sup>
		%			10.3	48.6	41.1	100		
53	The marking and grading system of CBA is subjective	f			16	56	35	107	4.17	8 <sup>th</sup>
		%			15	52.3	32.7	100		
54	CBA tasks increase the instructor's workload.	f	1		10	52	44	107	4.29	6 <sup>th</sup>
		%	.9		.3	48.6	41.1	100		
55	Students have no interest to take part in CBA tasks.	f	1		20	35	51	107	4.27	7 <sup>th</sup>
		%	.9		8.7	32.7	47.7	100		
56	In a large class, it is difficult to give CBA tasks.	f			9	45	53	107	4.41	4 <sup>th</sup>
		%			8.4	42.1	49.5	100		
57	Students prefer their instructors' feedback rather than their peers during the CBA tasks.	f	1		10	34	62	107	4.64	1 <sup>st</sup>
		%	.9		9.3	31.8	57.9	100		
58	The students have poor linguistic and communicative skills that hinder their involvement in CBA activities.	f			10	34	62	107	4.53	3 <sup>rd</sup>
		%			9.3	31.8	57.9	100		

Grand mean 4.38

Key- (1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4=Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree)

Table 10 displays the suggested challenges that EFL instructors encounter in their implementation of CBA tasks. The mean score for each item was above 4.0. Thus, all suggested challenges were considered serious in the implementation of CBA principles in the EFL classroom. The major challenge was item 57, with a mean score of 4.64 which indicates that students prefer their instructors' feedback rather than their peers during the CBA tasks. The highest number of participants (89.7%) ranked it as a very serious problem. The lowest considered challenge was item 53 with a mean score of 4.17, which shows most of the participants (85%), agreed on the subjectivity of marking and grading of CBA tasks. Based on the mean scores, items 51(4.61), item 58 (4.53), item 56 (4.41), item 52 (4.30), item 54 (4.29), and item 55 (4.27) were the rest challenges that were ranked by the participants from higher difficulty level to lower in the implementation of CBA principles in EFL classroom instruction. Generally, based on the study result, we can conclude that the CBA implementation challenges were student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related. For instance, 'Students' preference for their instructors' feedback rather than their peers during the CBA tasks' was related to students; the instructors' insufficient understanding and knowledge of CBA techniques were related to instructors, and large class size and instructor's workload were related to the institution- related challenges.



### 3.2 The Qualitative Data Findings

*The findings of classroom observation.* The purpose of the classroom observation was to triangulate the results of the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The findings showed that 10/12(83.3%) of the CBA principle items were not implemented by the instructors in the observed classes. As indicated on remark notes of the checklist, the instructors implemented the common CBA techniques such as giving class tasks, asking and questioning repeatedly, and giving assignments. In this context, the tools instructors implemented were mostly for obtaining data about students' performance, and not for improving students' learning. This is not enough to promote CBA and to see the competence and performance of students because of the weakness they have. Generally, the classroom observation results showed that most of the procedural stages of CBA principles were not fully implemented in EFL course instruction in the selected universities. This could be the reason for the low or weak statistical relationship between the two variables which was mentioned earlier under research question three.

*The findings of the semi-structured interview.* The instructors who were selected for classroom observation also participated in the semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were framed under three themes: the instructors' knowledge and understanding of the CBA principles, their practices, and challenges in the implementation<sup>1</sup>.

*The instructors' knowledge and understanding of the CBA principles.* Concerning the instructors' knowledge and understanding of the assessment method in general and CBA in particular, almost all instructors had good knowledge and understanding of CBA principles based on the general definition of assessment forms. One of the interviewees explained as follows,

*Assessment is a measurement that the instructors do [are expected] to know whether the learners understood [understand] or not what they have[been] taught, whereas CBA is a task-oriented activity in the classroom that helps to measure the student's progress and achievement in that particular task (I<sub>2</sub>BU).*

Another interviewee replied:

*Assessment is the whole instructional process from the beginning of the instruction to the end of [the] educational term and CBA is process-based which is included under assessment method that helps students and teachers to identify gaps and take appropriate measures in the instructional process in a particular time (I<sub>3</sub>BU).*

The third interviewee defined assessment as "Assessment is the continuous measuring of students' ability in the instructional process, but CBA is an assessment that measures students' performance in the class at a particular time" (I<sub>5</sub>JU).

It can be summarized that almost all the participants have defined and explained assessment in general and CBA in particular similarly. This knowledge and understanding level of the two assessment forms indicate that they have a positive perception of the importance of CBA principles.

Regarding the practice of CBA principles, the interviewees had various responses; one of the interviewees explained, "I think I implement principles of CBA in classroom instruction. I design CBA tasks,

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<sup>1</sup> For this analysis, I<sub>1</sub>BU means instructor one from Bonga university; likewise, I<sub>5</sub>JU means instructor five from Jimma University.

guide my students on how to perform them, monitor the students during the task, and record the results timely” (I<sub>4</sub> JU).

The second interviewee replied,

*To be frank, I do not apply the CBA principles in my class, because it is time-consuming to implement all the procedures. I know such assessment systems are very good to improve learning if I have time to employ them, [and] for this matter I prefer providing assignments, presentations, and project work after some highlights instead of CBA tasks (I<sub>6</sub> BU).*

The third interviewee also replied that some factors hinder him from implementing the CBA in his class. He narrates:

*I have an interest to implement the principles of CBA in my class instruction, and sometimes I do it. But a large class size, the workload, and the need for quick content coverage by the institution hindered me from implementing the method (I<sub>1</sub> JU).*

As indicated above, the instructors' interview responses show that there is a gap between CBA understanding and implementation of the principles in the classroom. The findings from the observation also showed that most of the items of CBA principles were not fully implemented by the instructors in the observed classes. This indicates that most of the instructors in the study target universities seem knowledgeable and implementers of CBA principles but practically they did not fully implement the principles in their EFL class instruction.

*The challenges instructors face in the implementation of procedural working principles of CBA in a university EFL classroom context (Rq4).* Regarding the challenges in the implementation of CBA principles, half of the participants explained that a large class size (60-65 students in one class), workload, and the students' poor linguistic and communicative skills were the major challenges in their implementation of CBA principles in their EFL instruction. Two of them said that students have no interest to take part in CBA tasks (probably their poor language skills) which hindered them from participating in CBA tasks. For this mostly they focus on mid and final tests. The rest interviewee said that he has no sufficient knowledge and understanding of the current CBA techniques to assess in the classroom. Here most of the interview responses had similarities with the suggested CBA implementation challenges in the literature review of this study. Based on this we can conclude that the challenges of the implementation of CBA principles are related to students, instructors, and the institution. To improve the situation, the interviewed instructors suggested that for students-related challenges, they have to get language skill-based tutorial classes to fill their knowledge gaps and motivate them in the instructional process. For instructor-related challenges, the interviewed participants said that they should up-to-date themselves with current assessment reforms, and for this, they have to get timely professional training on current CBA techniques with the support of their institution. Minimizing instructors' workload and adjusting sufficient time for CBA tasks are expected to be overcome by the institution.

#### 4. Discussions

The study aimed to investigate EFL instructors' perceptions of the implementation of CBA principles, their actual practices, and challenges in a university context. The discussions of key points are presented as follows.

Based on the analysis of this study, the following major findings are made in relation to the first research question. The findings of the quantitative data revealed that most of the participants had a generally positive perception of the implementation of the procedural principles of CBA from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage in their EFL classroom. This indicates that most of them had positive conceptions about the implementation of CBA principles and believed that it could help in improving students' learning. The interview results also showed that the instructors' implementation of CBA was not promising. They might not have clear knowledge and understanding of the procedural working principles of the CBA method in EFL instruction. This clear inconsistency might happen because of insufficient knowledge and understanding of CBA principles and their role in instruction. This finding is supported by earlier CBA-related findings (Shim, 2009; Abiy, 2013; Rahman, 2018; Gemechu & Teklu, 2020) which indicate the mismatch between instructor's perception of CBA implementation and the actual practices in EFL classrooms. Generally, the above findings of quantitative data were not fully supplemented by the qualitative data.

Concerning research question two, the findings of the quantitative data revealed that the participants of the study had generally high practice of CBA principles from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stage in their EFL classroom. This means the instructors were implementing what they know and believe about the CBA principles in the study target universities. However, there is a discrepancy in the qualitative data results. The findings of the observation showed that most of the CBA principle-related items were not implemented by the instructors in the EFL instruction classes. As indicated on remark notes, the instructors implemented the common CBA techniques such as giving classwork, asking and questioning repeatedly, and giving assignments. As to Luyegu (2009), the tools instructors implemented were mostly for marking purposes and not for improving students' learning. This is not enough to promote CBA and to see the competence and performance of students because of the weakness they have. The instructors' interview results also indicated the gap in the theoretical knowledge and understanding of CBA principles and their actual practices. This finding is similar to some previous studies, in which teachers were found to be knowingly or unknowingly did not put their knowledge of CBA into practice (DeLuca, Klinger, 2010; Jannati, 2015). The finding also shares the research investigation that suggests the instructor's potential for CBA has not been realized in the secondary school and tertiary EFL contexts (Guo & Xu, 2020). Finally, the findings of quantitative data results were not fully supplemented by qualitative data results.

The third research question was about the correlation between the instructors' perception of the implementation of CBA principles and their actual practice. To examine this, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated, and it is found that the perception of the implementation of CBA variables and the actual practice of CBA variables were significant, but low and positively correlated. The underlining factor for the weak correlation could be that, as the classroom observation results witnessed, most of the procedural working principles of CBA were not fully implemented in EFL course instruction in the selected universities.

The findings of the study also showed that all the suggested challenges from the planning stage to the recording and dissemination stages were considered serious in the implementation of CBA principles in the EFL classroom because the mean value for each item was above 4.0. Based on the study results, we can summarize that the challenges instructors face in the implementation of CBA principles can be categorized into

three: student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related in the selected universities. This is supported by the earlier related studies (Gemechu & Teklu, 2020; Yan, et. al., 2021) whose findings indicate that teachers' CBA practices faced complex challenges related to teacher, student, context, and system factors. To reduce the challenges and to motivate them in the instructional process the participants suggested that for student-related challenges they have to get language skill-based tutorial classes. For instructor-related challenges, they suggested that instructors should up-to-date themselves with current assessment reforms, and for this, they have to get timely professional training on current CBA techniques. For institution-related problems, they recommended that the institution has to minimize the workload of the instructors and adjust the adequate time for CBA tasks in EFL instruction.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

Based on the above findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The findings of the quantitative data revealed that the participants had very high positive perception of the implementation of CBA principles and high practice of the method. The result of correlation was also significant but low and positively correlated. However, the qualitative data results revealed that there were misconceptions in the understanding of the CBA principles and its practices. The findings of the classroom observation showed that most of the CBA principle items were not implemented in the observed classes. The interview results also showed that the implementation of CBA principles was not promising. Nevertheless, the qualitative data results did not fully supplement the quantitative data results. This indicates that there is a gap between instructors' understanding and the implementation of the CBA principles in EFL instruction. The study findings also identified the implementation of CBA challenges as student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related in the selected universities. For instance, students' preference for their instructor's feedback rather than their peers in the CBA tasks seems to be attributed to the instructors' insufficient knowledge of CBA principles, the students' poor language performance, and the large class size, which were the major challenges in the implementation of the CBA principles in the study target universities' context.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- ❖ Some instructors still have lacked clear theoretical knowledge and understanding of the procedural working principles of the CBA method in EFL instruction. Therefore, institutional effort should be exerted to equip the instructors with the current assessment method through different pedagogical pieces of training on language assessment in general and CBA in particular.
- ❖ Instructors also need to be willing to update themselves in timely knowledge and skills of assessment methods and evaluate and adjust their teaching and assessment practices.
- ❖ It is also recommended that students have to take part actively in CBA tasks for the improvement of their learning.
- ❖ The limited size of the study, the sampling method, and the limited number of populations may make it difficult to generalize the results of this study, but interested researchers can use the study as a stepping board to extend or replicate it.

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**Authors' contributions:**

- 1 Wondimu, K.<sup>1</sup>: Corresponding author; collected data, developed the proposal, transcribed the interview data, interpreted the data, wrote the manuscript, submitted to the journal (EJSSLS).
2. Yohannes T.<sup>2</sup>; revised and edited the manuscript.
3. Dr. Tewodros Z.<sup>3</sup>: Validated the manuscript.

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