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# Implementing Competency-Based Language Teaching Assessment and Achievement of Competency in Speaking Skills at Grade Four

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**Abstract:**

***Introduction:*** The study aimed to investigate the implementation of Competency-Based Language Teaching assessment and proficiency in English speaking skills.

***Methods:*** The study adopted a mixed methods approach and descriptive survey design. A random sample of 97 grade four English teachers and 56 grade four students were selected. The study utilized various methods to collect data, including a questionnaire, observation, interview, and oral test. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods.

***Results:*** The result showed that there was limited implementation of Competency-Based Language Teaching assessment in speaking skills. The findings also showed that the teachers' awareness of the purpose of the speaking skills assessment in Competency-Based Language Teaching was below average. The study also found that students scored below satisfactory in speaking skills competencies, indicating that they did not achieve the intended level of mastery.

***Discussion:*** Teachers' awareness of the assessment's aim must be ensured to guarantee the implementation of the Competency-Based Language Teaching assessment. Competency-Based Language Teaching assessment also should ensure the achievement of learners' speaking competency.

***Limitations:*** The number of schools selected as the sample was only four for the questionnaire and achievement test.

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***Conclusions:*** The study recommends that teachers implement Competency-Based Language Teaching assessments practically in spoken language instruction, be aware of the purpose of Competency-Based Language Teaching assessments in speaking skills, and promote learners based on the mastery of competency at each level.

**Key words:** assessment, speaking skills, competency, achievement, mastery.

## Introduction

Competency-Based Education (CBE) has different models and elements peculiar to each model. McClarty and Gaertner (2015) demonstrated that CBE models can take different forms, but most programs include two common elements: a competency framework and competency assessments. The competency framework describes the "skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task" (McClarty & Gaertner, 2015, p. 2). Competencies must be clearly defined, measurable, and related to the knowledge or skills needed for future endeavors, such as additional education or employment. The second common element of CBE models is competency assessment. Wang and Maa (2022) also stated that the two key components of CBE models are meaningful learning outcomes and performance-based assessment. They asserted that assessment is one of the critical components that marked CBE. Assessors and students can make objective judgments based on clearly stated outcomes to certify students' progress (Wolf, 1995). Competency assessments are used to determine mastery. Hence, teachers use CBE assessment to communicate with students regarding progress toward competency and advance students to other competencies (Sutherland & Strunk, 2021).

Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) is the application of CBE in teaching and assessment of language instruction. Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) assessment involves testing competencies consisting of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for effective performance of a real-life activity in language instruction (Tabe, 2019). It puts all the qualities of CBE assessment to measure skills of language. When testing for CBLT, an assessment is conducted to evaluate if learners can perform effectively in real-life scenarios.

Ethiopia developed 'The Minimum Learning Competency (MLC)' by the syllabus of each subject, and set competencies based on its framework. The new curriculum framework, which is based on the Competency-Based Approach, indicates that assessment must measure students' competency in the specified skills (Ministry of Education, 2009). The framework stated that assessment "should ensure that students at all levels can genuinely achieve the competencies expected of them" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 35). It is directed at

monitoring competency and is thus indispensable. Concerning oral assessment, the framework puts clearly that assessing oral work "is important since it helps the students to develop their listening and speaking skills, which are important in the development of reading, writing and mathematical concepts, life skills and values" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 35). Thus, Competency-Based Language Teaching assessment in speaking skills instruction is administered to evaluate competency in oral communication skills. The goal is to test whether learners achieved the speaking competency specified in the syllabus.

However, assessment as an important element of Competency-Based Education lacks sufficient rigorous data at lower grades where the focus of learning language is mainly oral skills. In addition, there is a lack of information regarding students' competency levels in speaking proficiency in comparison to the Minimum Learning Competency (MLC) set for speaking skills. It is not widely known how the CBLT assessment can support the improvement of students' speaking skills performance. Although a new curriculum that follows a Competency-Based Approach has been implemented for more than a decade, there is little research conducted on the implementation to build competency-based learning that provides clear, valid, and defendable assessments.

Some studies on the assessment of speaking skills in competency-based language teaching (CBLT) have been conducted worldwide. For instance, Iwikotan (2021) conducted a study to design tests under the CBLT approach, revealing that teachers found it challenging to frame task directions. Akongoh (2021) conducted another study that examined the contribution of teacher training to the assessment of speaking within the principles of CBLT. The result showed that teacher training significantly influenced the neglect of speaking in assessments. Tabe's (2019) study aimed to examine the assessment tactics of junior secondary school teachers to check if they aligned with the principles of competency-based assessment. The finding indicated that the assessment tactics used by teachers were not consistent with the required competency-based assessment. Osman's (2018) study aimed to investigate the practices and challenges of assessing EFL-speaking skills among teachers. The study revealed that teachers provided enough time for assessing speaking skills and were careful to differentiate speaking assessment tasks. However, teachers faced practicality issues when assessing EFL-speaking skills.

In addition, there are several limitations to the previous studies conducted so far. Previous studies on implementing CBLT assessment have focused on teachers' knowledge of competency and assessment principles (Tabe, 2019). However, it sounds relevant to consider the components of assessment relevant to evaluate mastery of the competency. The new paradigm in assessment practices informs that multiple measures and performance in authentic tasks and oral assessments as content should be the focus (Griffith et al., 2014)). Classroom assessment

practices were studied more at the secondary school level than at the primary level (Marks, 2014; Meskerem, 2017; Tulu, Tolosa, & J-F, 2018). These studies did not aim to measure students' speaking skills competency and practice competency-based assessment. CBLT assessment practices have little data on primary school speaking skills, despite primary education being the foundation. It is important to investigate the implementation of CBLT assessment and the proficiency of learners' competency in speaking skills.

Thus, this study aimed to look into the implementation of CBLT assessment and investigate learners' competency level in speaking skills. To achieve our objectives, the study has focused on answering the following research queries.

1. To what extent are different CBLT assessment techniques implemented in assessing speaking skills?
2. What is the awareness level of teachers on what CBLT components of assessment measure?
3. What is the student's competency level of speaking skills?

## 1 Literature review

### *1.1 Competency-based assessment*

There are several components in the CBLT model. Assessment is one of the core components of the CBLT framework and is related to mastery of competency. Competency-based assessment is defined as the assessment of a person's competence against prescribed standards of performance (Tabe, 2019). It must include evidence to demonstrate student assessment of knowledge and skills associated with specified competencies (McClarty & Gaertner, 2015). Each assignment must be directly aligned to measure lesson competencies.

CBLT establishes a direct link to criterion-based assessment. In this case, performance criteria are the basis for the assessment of language competencies defined as essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes, required for the effective performance of a real-world task (Richards & Rogers, 2014). He also asserts that teachers are required to change from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced judgment of learners' capabilities or competencies. Criteria are often given in the form of rubrics that can be either analytic (specification of parts) or holistic (looking at overall performance).

Assessment in CBLT takes the form that is known as Authentic Assessment. Authentic assessments engage students in tasks similar in form to the tasks in which learners will engage in their lives outside the classroom. Black and William (1998) stated that authentic assessment probes for learners' higher-order skills, such as critical reasoning and problem-solving, rather than simply checking for memorized information. It is done in the form of portfolios, projects, oral presentations, self and peer assessments, interviews and conferencing, tests, and examinations. The emphasis is mostly on formative

assessments as opposed to summative assessments. Kouwenhoven (2003) argues that authentic assessment methods are more useful for a competency-based curriculum than other forms of assessment because they provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate the competencies they have mastered in real life. He noted that in competency-based education, performance assessment is carried out by giving the learner a clearly defined task and a list of explicit criteria for assessing the performance or product. Hence, competency-based education emphasizes the application of knowledge to integrate theory and practice in real or analogous life situations.

### *1.2 Assessment of speaking in the context of CBLT*

Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives is the major principle of CBLT. Thus, CBLT lessons are developed around competencies and the skills necessary for mastery (Griffith & Lim, 2014). In connection with speaking skills, effective instruction must ensure that the learners achieve adequate speaking skills. To this end, speaking should be assessed through oral tests that genuinely measure speaking performance and not just speaking knowledge (Allison, 1999). Moreover, in a CBLT model, students are expected to develop their speaking skills which will enable them to actively engage in communications and problem-solving situations inside the classroom or in their everyday situations. So, to strengthen the learners' speaking skills and make the criterion of "adequate skills" attainable, it is necessary to assess the learners through formative and summative tests. More specifically, learners should be evaluated through various activities regularly, as well as through class tests so that the teacher can understand the strengths and weaknesses of students about speaking skills and respond appropriately by remediation.

In competency-based practice, to move to the next level, learners need to adequately display mastery. The assessment practice allows students to retake assessments if they failed to master a course competency, or did not perform well through reassessment and recovery (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Reassessment had many forms, including alternative versions of the previous assessment and new forms of assessment. Students who fail a course can opt for various recovery options, such as online learning and summer school programs. In both reassessment and recovery, the onus was on the student to take responsibility for developing a plan to relearn the material.

### *1.3 Components of assessment in speaking skills*

Assessors use several tools for the assessment of speaking skills as a part of instruction. Most of the tools used in assessing speaking skills should be different from paper and pencil tests. Competency assessment gives priority to the tools that can display learners' oral skills through oral performance. This

kind of assessment discourages paper-and-pencil testing because they are only able to show a learner's knowledge. Paper-and-pencil testing may be able to show a learner's knowledge, but such testing could not show a learner's ability to use language in context (performance) (Griffith & Lim, 2014). They rarely show a learner's ability to use language in context. Instead, they should be tools that can display learners' oral skills through oral performance. CBLT assessment uses tools like interviews, role play, discussion, presentation, explanation, picture description, narrative, and instruction tasks in speaking skills tests.

### *1.4 Purposes of assessment in the revised curriculum framework*

Assessment has several purposes. It provides feedback on learners' strengths and weaknesses, students' progress, evidence of the achievement of course goals, records of achievement, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning, and information for accountability purposes (Nunan, 2015). Assessment of the speaking skills is carried out in the framework of the general purpose mentioned here. However, experts in the subject have established certain objectives for speaking abilities. This includes assigning pupils to study groups, ascertaining about the student's current skills and competencies (Goh & Burns, 2012).

Similarly, the new curriculum framework of Ethiopia puts much emphasis on the assessment and attributes a significant place for it. Parents and education experts are dissatisfied with the assessment of the students' language skills and their competency. So, the government has serious concerns about the purpose of the assessment. The new curriculum framework states that "assessment should ensure that students at all levels are genuinely able to achieve the competencies expected of them" (MoE, 2009, p. 35). This suggests that assessment is the channel through which teachers confirm students' mastery of the competency. This method allows daily tracking of students' progress in achieving their competencies.

### *1.5 Scoring procedure*

There are three main methods for scoring students' speaking skills. These are objective scoring, analytic scoring, and holistic scoring. Objective scoring is done using a scoring key. Usually, there is one and only one correct answer to each objectively scored test item. In contrast, analytic scoring and holistic scoring both involve some judgment and usually involve training raters to use the assessment system. In holistic ratings, a speech sample (such as an oral interview, or a recorded conversation) is given one overall evaluation, which may be a rating (a "six" on a ten-point scale) or a designation (pass versus not pass, or the "advanced" designation in a system that consists of novice,

intermediate, advanced, or superior categories) (Nation & Newton, 2009; Thornbury, 2005; Özdil & Duran, 2023).

## 2 Materials and methods

The researchers utilized a mixed-method approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of CBLT assessment and students' achievement in speaking skills competency. The study also used a descriptive survey design to explain how Grade 4 English teachers incorporate CBLT assessment to aid the acquisition of speaking competencies in students. The study needs data from a wide area to address its research issues, which is why a survey methodology was chosen.

### *2.1 Setting*

The study was conducted at primary schools in East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region, Ethiopia. Oromia region was selected because firstly, as the Competency-Based Curriculum Framework is uniformly introduced across the country, the region can be seen as representative of the general implementation of the curriculum. Selecting this region can reflect the other regions' status as all regions follow a similar primary English curriculum framework that follows CBLT. Secondly, there is a range of CBE training to implement at primary schools with the cooperation of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, and the Oromia Regional Bureau of Education.

### *2.2 Participants of the study and sampling technique*

Primary school grade four English teachers and students were participants in the study. There are seventeen (17) districts in the East Wollega Zone. Three districts - Diga, Wayu Tuka, and Wama Hagalo were selected through a simple random technique. The three districts have 141 primary school English teachers. From this population, 108 teachers were selected for the study. According to Saunders et al. (2016), with a margin of error of 5% and a 95% confidence level, the sample size required for the target population of 150 is 108. In total, 108 questionnaires were handed out personally and with the help of school supervisors and 97 were returned. Grade Four Students N=56 were selected randomly for oral tests. Five schools with their teachers were selected randomly for observation and interview, four teachers were from Diga and Gute, and one was from Wama Hagalo districts.

### *2.3 Data collection and procedure*

Questionnaires, interviews, observations, and oral tests were employed to obtain data. Quantitative data were obtained through questionnaires and oral tests. The questionnaire which has 26 items, a checklist for observation, and interview

prompts were developed based on an extensive review of the literature. The Cronbach alpha value for the internal consistency of the questionnaire was .872. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study with thirty-three participants to see if they understood all the questions and if the questions addressed the type of information sought. English teachers rated Likert-type questions. To obtain qualitative data, interviews, and observations were employed. Observation was carried out at five schools for seven days at each school to obtain data related to how CBLT assessment is conducted during speaking skills instruction. Besides, the interview was conducted with teachers who were observed in the classroom to obtain information about their practice of CBLT implementation.

Students of grade 4 sat for oral tests to assess speaking competency. The tests were conducted individually, by the researcher, in a free place outside of the class. The tool for the oral test was the interview and each candidate was interviewed individually. Participants' utterances were audio-recorded, with their permission, then transcribed for analysis. The oral test was created based on the syllabus specification for the speaking skills competency which consisted of seven items: introducing yourself, introducing people, greeting each other, talking about their school, asking for and giving personal details including their family, asking and answering questions about everyday scenes, and describing places and household objects. The task used seven competencies covering 24 target sentences with different grammar structures. The tasks during the interview were rated for fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

### *2.4 Data analysis*

The quantitative data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical methods. Descriptive statistical methods were used to describe the mean score and percentage of each measured variable. An oral test, which was administered to assess the speaking competency of learners, was conducted and rated by the examiners and other assessors. Different raters were assigned to evaluate and measure the recordings. As stated by Surkamp and Viebrock, (2018), if recordings are made, they can then be graded independently by different raters. The test employs a rating scale to measure student's performance. This scale assesses students on categories of fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The scoring of the result followed analytic ways of scoring in this study. The candidates could achieve a minimum of one and a maximum of five points within each category according to the descriptors for each point. The additional way used to analyze the data obtained was an analysis of target sentences produced by each candidate under each competency specified. In the analysis production, relevance to the competency identified and accuracy were emphasized. So, target sentences were selected from activities related to the

competencies set in the syllabus contentment analysis was made to conclude the competency of the candidates.
Data drawn from interviews and class observation were analyzed qualitatively and thematically. They were analyzed using descriptive content analysis. Data recorded were transcribed, translated, and codified. After providing codes, there was the organization of categories and themes, creating thematic content, and finally presenting comments in the form of an argument (Creswell, 2012).

## 3 Results

### *3.1 Techniques of assessment*

Table 1

*Techniques of assessment*

| | *N* | *Mean* | *Std. Deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers administer oral tests in the form of presentation | 96 | 2.01 | 1.129 |
| Learners are assessed with role-playing | 97 | 2.11 | 1.198 |
| Discussing missed items in the picture | 97 | 2.27 | 1.350 |
| Interview with teacher enabling to demonstrate spoken skills | 97 | 2.28 | 1.289 |
| Using description tasks for testing students' competency | 96 | 2.04 | 1.075 |
| Speaking is assessed through narrative tasks | 96 | 2.25 | 1.105 |
| Instruction tasks are used in the assessment | 97 | 2.14 | 1.190 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 94 | | |

Respondents asked to rate items listed concerning techniques of assessment they employ in their assessment. Responses from participants show that the practice of using components of assessment in assessing speaking skills competency are implemented at the mean of M=2.17, SD=1.19. Their response indicates that components of assessment, such as oral tests in the form of presentation (M=2.01, SD=1.129), role-play (M=2.11, SD=1.198), interview with teacher enabling to demonstrate spoken skills (M=2.28, SD=1.289), discussing missed items in the picture (M=2.27, SD=1.350), narrative tasks (M=2.25, SD=1.105), description tasks (M=2.04, SD=1.075), and giving instruction as a task (M=2.14, SD=1.190), all are practiced in speaking skills at below average (Table 4).
In one on one interview, participants shared their experience of implementing CBLT assessment in speaking skills. T1 (Teacher at Mulisa School) mentioned a technique of assessing speaking skills, he gave: "tests to students during the mid or final exam". Another participant T2 (Teacher at Kolobo School) agreed, "learners were assessed while they are completing the tasks". Another respondent, T4 (Teacher at Ariya Jawi School) added to the list: "asking questions and oral presentation". Learners find questions in the class work, homework and in the activities, but oral presentation is the form of assessment

attracts attention. This is because it involves oral production. T3 (Teacher at Gute School) shared "no test is conducted for speaking skills because there is lack of material and time". In general, response from interview indicates that tests, class works and home works are employed during assessment.

Response for open questions from participants in the questionnaire indicated that different forms of assessment are being implemented. According to the respondents, the techniques used in the assessment of the speaking skills were administering exams (tests), providing classwork such as completing a task and presenting to the class, asking oral question, continues assessment, class participation and asking questions. One of the respondents shared that he "checked students' skills and behavior through tests". Another respondent wrote his response "asking oral question, giving tests and giving class work". One way or the other, respondents indicated that there are some techniques of assessing students. There are participants who responded in a way that "class participation" in the class is considered as technique of assessment.

The observation data showed that teachers rarely implement different components of CBLT assessments in the teaching of speaking skills. Teachers evaluated learners' comprehension of the lesson's content, but did not assess their ability to speak competently. Ample time was given to the activities of listening to teachers' explanation on grammar, writing and reading. Data obtained from observation are not consistent with the data obtained from questionnaire, interview and open questions. Questionnaire and interview data indicated that there are signs of using different components of assessment. However, the analyzed observation data do not provide evidence of assessment of the learners' speaking skills on a regular basis. The practice of using different forms of assessment expected to be implemented during instruction to measure oral performance was not observed.

### *3.2 Teachers' awareness on what CBLT assessment components measure*

Table 2

*What components of assessment measures*

| | *N* | *Mean* | *Std. Deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students are shown what good work looks like by assessing their own work against the criteria. | 96 | 2.23 | 1.209 |
| Continuous assessment identify what students can do and know. | 97 | 1.95 | .993 |
| Measure competency at the end of the lesson. | 97 | 1.96 | .934 |
| Speaking skills are given more emphasis compared with grammar. | 97 | 2.09 | 1.061 |
| Measures competency-based performances regarding speaking skills. | 97 | 1.90 | 1.005 |
| Achievement reports identify student's proficiency levels on standards. | 97 | 2.15 | 1.064 |
| Formative assessments show student proficiency levels in standards. | 97 | 2.28 | 1.484 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 96 | | |

Teachers responded to questions about the purpose of assessment in the context of CBLT during speaking skills instruction. Based on Table 2, the awareness of teachers on the practice of putting components of assessment for the purpose intended is below average (M=2.08, SD=1.107). For example, their understanding of putting assessment for the practice of assessing students' proficiency level is M=2.28, SD=1.484. Results show that assessment has little purpose for students in assessing their work against the criteria (M=2.23, SD=1.209). Achievement reports identify student's proficiency levels in standards (M=2.15, SD=1.064). Speaking skills are given more emphasis compared with grammar M=2.09, SD=1.061. In the implementation of the CBLT approach in speaking skills instruction, the practice of "measuring competency at the end of the lesson" in general and specifically "measuring competency-based performances" regarding speaking skills are by far below average, M=1.96, SD=.93, continuous assessment identify what students can do and know M=1.95, SD=.993 and M=1.90, SD=1.00 respectively (Table 2).

Respondents of the interview reacted to the questions on what the components of assessment perform. T1 said, "Assessment helped me to give credit for my student's work." Another respondent T3 said, "Assessment components are useful in identifying one student from the other." T4 expressed his idea through the question: "How can a teacher get proficient learner? One can produce competent students through assessment." Respondents T2, and T5 were reluctant to give their opinion to this question. Their response was not direct. Respondent T2 said, "Implementing speaking test assessment is difficult, because there is no sufficient time and material, so, it is not easy to know the impact of assessment." Another respondent T5 said, "Students are required to show competency and have good results, but the practice of assessing is available."

Observation data shows assessment purpose is limited to eliciting an understanding of the day's lesson content. During all the observation sessions teachers posed a few questions to check students' concerns about the lesson. They asked students questions unrelated to the assessment of speaking competency. Teachers were not observed testing speaking skills. As a result, no sign of purposeful and targeted assessment of speaking was observed. There was no assessment of speaking and there was also no awareness of the purpose for assessment of speaking.

### *3.3 Students' achievement in speaking skills competency*

The following tables show the results of oral tests of Grade Four students from four schools in four districts. The researcher assessed speaking skills competency through oral test and presented in the table that follows. Achievement in the competency of students was assessed using oral tests. Whether any difference

occurs 2 scorers marked students' performance to see if there is any significant difference in the results.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for speaking skills competency test*

| | *N* | *Minimum* | *Maximum* | *Mean* | *Std. Deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grammar | 56 | 1.30 | 3.00 | 1.86 | .306 |
| Pronunciation | 56 | 1.75 | 2.25 | 1.96 | .154 |
| Vocabulary | 56 | 1.50 | 3.00 | 2.00 | .319 |
| Fluency | 56 | 1.80 | 2.50 | 2.02 | .135 |
| Valid N | 56 | | | | |

The table shows that all the components of the speaking skills are at the mean below average. The test result shows that fluency is the better result recorded, with the mean M=2.02, yet it is below the average. In the order of the results recorded, vocabulary is the next better result, with M=2.00, pronunciation M=1.96 and grammar M=1.86, all below the average. The overall average for the four criteria was 1.96.

Table 4

*Statistics showing competencies and candidates' performance*

| | | *Greeting* | *Self-Introduction* | *Talk about school* | *Personal details with family* | *Introducing others* | *Ask and answer about everyday scene* | *Describe household objects* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 48 | 54 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Missing | 8 | 2 | 48 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 56 |

As can be seen from Table 4 candidates' results show low performance in the competencies identified. The result shown in the missing row in the table indicates students who did not respond to the oral test in any way. In the table, the competencies identified are greeting, self-introduction, talking about school, personal details including family, introducing others, asking and answering about everyday scenes, and describing household objects. Number of participants in the test is 56 students. The majority of the students 54/56 (96%) could demonstrate mastery of 'self-introduction'. The vast majority 48/56 (85%) again could demonstrate mastery of 'greeting'. However, only 8/56 (14%) students could demonstrate mastery in 'talking about their school'. In the fourth competency in which learners are required to talk about, 'personal details including family', only one student responded accurately. The other three competencies did not get any response from the candidates.

Table 5

*Target sentences analyzed in the competency identified*

| *Target sentences produced by students* | *Frequency* | *Percent* |
|---|---|---|
| Good morning. | 35 | 62.5 |
| I am fine thank you. | 18 | 32.1 |
| My name is Lalisa. | 47 | 83.9 |
| I am from Tinfa. | 0 | 0 |
| I am 10 years' old. | 1 | 1.8 |
| My height is 1.3m tall. | 1 | 1.8 |
| I am a student. | 8 | 14.3 |
| I like banana, I like potato. | 1 | 1.8 |
| I like English. | 0 | 0 |
| My school name is Tinfa. | 2 | 3.6 |
| There is a football field. | 0 | 0 |
| It is big/small. | 1 | 1.8 |
| This is my friend. | 0 | 0 |
| His name is Yohannes. | 1 | 1.8 |
| I have brothers and sisters. | 0 | 0 |
| I have 2 brothers and 3 sisters. | 0 | 0 |
| My brother is in grade 2. | 0 | 0 |
| My brother is in grade 2. | 0 | 0 |
| It is bright, it is sunny. | 0 | 0 |
| I have a friend; his name is Girma. | 0 | 0 |
| Knife is used for cutting. | 0 | 0 |
| He is tall. | 1 | 1.8 |

Target sentences are possible sentences expected to be constructed by learners in the context of competency. The teachers know, the syllabus bears it and student text encourages similar sentences. A student who has mastered the competency can produce utterances of greeting using appropriate expressions such as good morning, and good afternoon. Students who could demonstrate this skill of greeting are 35 (62.5%). Students who could respond to greetings using the expression, "I am fine, thank you, and you?" are 18 (32%). In the competency of self-introduction and giving personal details one of the sentences suitable for conveying the message is "My name is Lalisa." Students who could say it were 47 (83.9%). However, other essential expressions needed in the competency of self-introduction and giving personal details were poorly dealt with. A few students produced sentences like "I am a student." 8 (14.3%) and "I like banana/I like potato." 1 (1.8%), "I am 10 years old." 1/56, "My height is 1.3 m." 1/56. All students were not able to produce other expressions useful in talking about themselves: "I am from Tinfa.", "I am Grade 4 student.", and "I like English" or similar construction to talk about their address and their likes.

The third competency is talking about their school. Candidates were required to produce sentences used to talk about their school. For example, "My school

name is…' 2 (3.6%) and "The school compound is big/small.", only one (1.8%) student responded to the production. Expressions useful in talking about the school, for example, "There is a football field." or sentences similar with it not observed. "Talking about the family" is the fourth competency in which a few students show signs of producing a few sentences like "Yes, I have a family." (1.8%). No candidate produced sentences useful to express family: "I have brothers & sisters.", "My brother is in grade 2.", and "My mother's name is Gadise." or similar additional expressions which are useful in talking about family at this level.

For the other competencies, 'Introducing others, 'Ask and answer about everyday scenes' and 'Describing household objects', learners could not answer and there were no sentences produced. 'Introducing others' has four items as target sentences. No sentence was produced. 'Ask and answer about everyday scene' has two sentences as an immediate target sentence. 'Describe household objects' has two initial target structures. Altogether, in three of the competencies, no students produce a sentence.

## 4 Discussion

The results indicated that there is little practice in using different components of assessment to assess speaking skills competency. Despite implementing different techniques of assessment as the principle of CBLT, several components of assessments were utilized at below average in the speaking skills to assess competency. According to respondents, oral tests in the form of presentation, role-play, interaction with teacher enabling to demonstrate spoken skills, discussing missed items in the picture, narrative tasks, description tasks, and giving instruction tasks were used in the assessment at below average. This finding is concurrent with a study conducted by other researchers. For example, the findings of a study by Tabe (2019) revealed that the assessment tactics used by teachers do not reflect what is required of the competency-based assessment. Rather, the teachers continue to follow the objective-based approach, and thus structuralism and linguistic input are prioritized over functionality and usage required of the current methods. Another principle of CBLT assessment is functional, meaning that questions have relevance to functionality. All the listed items to be rated by respondents were techniques that appeal to the imagination of the learners about the use of language in real-life situations. The components of assessment such as the provision of tasks to test the competency of students, and administration of oral tests in the form of presentation, interview, and role-play are functional. However, techniques relevant to functionality were not in place to assess the competency of learners to use language for real-life situations. Competency-based assessments must include evidence to demonstrate student assessment of knowledge and skills associated with specified competencies

(McClarty & Gaertner, 2015). For this purpose, there should be components of assessment that can measure students' performance in speaking skills. Even if the syllabus outlines the competencies, many teachers fail to apply the assessment components that are necessary to determine the student's understanding of the material.

Some participants responded in a way that "class participation" in the class is considered a technique of assessment. However, in CBLT, assessment is mainly conducted to confirm that learners have mastered the competency. So, class participation does not indicate mastery of competency. It is a class environment that facilitates learning for more performance, not an assessment tool. According to Hanaysha, Shriedeh, and In'airat (2023), the classroom environment was found significant predictor of both academic performance and engagement.

Data collected through observation showed that teachers focus on assessing other language skills rather than speaking skills. Activities performed in the class targeted other skills excluding speaking skills. Teachers provided a few activities that they performed through discussion. However, assessments focusing on speaking skills competency were not observed in the class. Teachers were observed tending to overlook speaking activities and their assessment, conversely, learners were made to stay on activities accounting for the development of reading and writing skills. This finding aligns with the results of the study conducted by Akongoh (2021) and Zaviš and Diamantopoulos (2024). Their findings indicated that the number of teachers who were confident in testing their students' speaking skills was deficient and teachers often prefer to apply written forms of assessments in the class.

Responses from the teachers also indicated that teachers have low awareness of putting assessment components to achieve the purpose for which they were intended. The purpose of assessment through components of assessment was to measure competency at the end of the lesson. However, the practice of measuring competency was carried out at below average. Another purpose of the assessment practice was to use assessment as the achievement reports that identify student's proficiency levels on standards. It also practiced at below average. The other important purpose of assessment in the teaching of speaking in the context of CBLT was to enable students to see what good work looks like by assessing their work against the criteria. This purpose was also not achieved as the finding shows the result to be below average. This finding shows that the assessment did not serve the function of assessing speaking in the principle of assessment in the CBE model. The use of assessment practice does not fit the purpose intended in the CBLT context. Any of the purposes rated by the respondents indicate that respondents' experience of conducting assessment based on the purpose set in the principle of assessment in CBLT is below

average. The finding agrees with the conclusion made by Chien (2022), who stated that designing a lesson aligned with the aims, procedural steps, and assessment standards of an instructional program is challenging for, experienced and novice teachers in the competency model. According to McClarty and Gaertner (2015), the purpose of the competency-based assessment is to test learners' competencies and to test usage in realistic situations. So, competency assessment is conducted via performance tests for which the mastery of the specified competency is necessarily conditional. In this regard, teachers are required to have adequate awareness of the purpose of assessment and the procedure of administering it.

Results of the speaking test showed that the results of students in all four components of speaking skills are below the average. The test results of the fluency and vocabulary categories are a little better than pronunciation and grammar, however, both are far below the average. Therefore, the result indicates that students' competency level in speaking skills is low. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Lingga, Simanjuntak, and Sembiring (2020) and Tokunaga (2021) which participants of the study were tested for grammatical accuracy, use of vocabulary, and correctness of pronunciation of words in a Second Language context. The studies concluded that participants had difficulty in speaking English, namely lack of grammatical understanding, lack of vocabulary, and the incorrect pronunciation of words, and were neither accurate nor fluent.

The result showed that students demonstrated good performance in a few competencies identified. Speaking competencies under scrutiny in this study were greeting, self-introduction, talking about school, personal details with family, introducing others, asking and answering about everyday scenes, and describing household objects. These competencies are indicated in the Grade Four English syllabus. It is observed that learners fall short of the expected skill level when it comes to describing their school, providing personal information about their family, introducing themselves, inquiring and responding regarding everyday scenes, and describing household things. This concurs with other findings by Dağta and Cabaroğlu (2021). The results indicated that a great majority of the participants in their study lacked English speaking skills competency.

Candidates displayed low performance in producing sentences indicating mastery of the speaking competency. For example, the number of students who could produce expressions of greeting such as "I am fine, thank you..." is little. Some students struggled to greet in English. In the competency of self-introduction majority of the candidates were able to tell their names. The number of items used in the self-introduction was seven. However, most of the candidates used a few items in the self-introduction. It was noted that a lot of

students could understand a few expressions of self-introduction and a few expressions were elicited during the task. A large number of students were able to tell their names using the expression "My name is …" However, some students were struggling to introduce themselves using different possible items that can be produced in the context of specified competencies. For example, a lot of students used "My name is …" appropriately, but six other ways helpful items for self-introduction were used by a few students. Items like "I am a student.", "I am 10 years old." and other similar items were used by a small number of students. Items like "I am from Tinfa." and "I am a Grade 4 student.", "I like bananas.", "I like a potato.", and "I like English." and similar items, none of the students could produce them. Sentences like these were not found in the candidates' elicited production.

'Talking about the school' was the other competency to which a small number of candidates responded. A large number of students were not able to talk about their school. Quite a lot of activities were indicated practice in the student's textbook. However, in their test during the task, only a few students were accurate in describing their school. Quite a few students were able to produce expressions such as "My school name is…" and "It is big/small."

Talking about family is another competency data were collected. This competency equips learners with the skills learners need to give details about their families. The findings indicate that learners lack the skills required to talk about their families. They were exposed to different ways of expressing their opinion about their family during the test. However, they displayed poor command of the vocabulary and grammar essential for this purpose. As a result, a few students produced a sentence to describe and provide information about their family. It was found that pupils at this level were unable to communicate about their families. Sentences useful in describing family such as "I have brothers & sisters.", "I have 2 brothers and 3 sisters.", "My brother is in grade 2.", and "My mother's name is Gadise.", which are useful in talking about family this level were not elicited.

The other competencies expected at this level were 'Introducing others', 'Asking and answering about everyday scenes', and 'Describing household objects'. The findings indicated that students were struggling to introduce their friends, talk about everyday scenes, and describe household objects. Learners could not answer questions related to these competencies and there was no competency demonstrated. The finding concurs with another study which uncovered the discrepancies in terms of students' mastery of skills and curriculum demand. Alata (2019) noted that students do not always demonstrate the intended competency and lack the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes expected of them.

## 5 Limitations

Only four schools found in four districts were included in the sample as a source of data. It would have been more useful had additional sample schools been included. The number of sample schools was limited to four because the schools were geographically located in a widely dispersed area.

## Conclusions

The study aimed to address issues of implementation of CBLT assessment in English speaking skills. It focused on assessment components and awareness of what CBLT assessment does in speaking skills. It also aimed to measure speaking skills competency in Grade Four. The CBLT approach for competency assessment practiced fewer speaking skills assessment components. In the CBLT approach, speaking skills instruction only evaluates student competency to a limited extent. Teachers' awareness of the purpose of CBLT assessment in speaking instruction is below average. It was also discovered that learners performed below average in the competency identified for Grade Four students in speaking skills.

The current study has important implications for teaching practices. Firstly, assessment is a crucial component of the CBLT model, which involves the use of various methods to measure competency mastery. Unlike other approaches to ELT, assessment is not an optional part of the process, as students cannot move to the next level without demonstrating competency mastery. Therefore, the results offer insights into implementing CBLT assessments practically in spoken language instruction. Secondly, educational experts can gain insights into addressing the lack of awareness regarding the purpose of assessments in spoken language instruction. Thirdly, the findings can help practitioners and educational experts remain committed to promoting learners to the next level only after demonstrating mastery evaluated through the prescribed CBLT assessment.

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