



**Faculty of Humanities**

**Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

# **EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Continuous Assessment**

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this research to my husband, Abbas Gholampour, at first who had been proud and supportive of my work and who had shared the many uncertainties, challenges and sacrifices for completing this dissertation and then to my great family especially my parents who had given me a high level of motivation. Thank you for all of your support along the way.

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## **Abstract**

Despite the inherent drawbacks of one-shot final exams, this mode of assessment still prevails in both public schools and private language schools of Iran. Scholars believe that continuous assessment can be a valuable aid to improve this situation. Hence, this study aims to explore Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of continuous assessment. To this end, seventeen EFL teachers selected through theoretical sampling were interviewed through unstructured open-ended interview to share their opinion on the topic. The data were then deeply analyzed in line with the grounded theory. The rigorous coding procedure of the grounded theory method differentiated the merits of and demerits of continuous assessment. Concerning the merits, the participants believed that continuous assessment has a profound positive effect on transferring information into students' long term memory, reducing learners' test anxiety, increasing their motivation, encouraging their regular class attendance, suggesting them appropriate supplementary materials, lowering discrimination in classes, and providing accurate and continuous report of students' academic achievement. With regard to its demerits, participants believed that continuous assessment would increase unpaid workload on teacher, increase learners' workload, and be inapplicable in advanced levels. They also believed that putting great attention on summative nature of continuous assessment would encourage rote memorization, increase test anxiety, penalize introverted learners, and lower learners' self-confidence. The study would be fruitful for instructional curriculum to help teachers to evaluate students' progress and achievement accurately and help students to improve their learning and overcome their problems with final examination.

Keywords: continuous assessment , final examination, assessment system

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter highlights the background, problems, purposes, and objectives of the study and research question. The significance, implications and applications for practice, delimitations and limitations of the study are also explained in this chapter.

## **1.2. Background**

According to Mastani and Vahdani (2015), English has earned high place in Iran as “new technology and the adoption of the internet have been resulted in a major transition in terms of business, education, science, and technological progress, all of which demand high proficiency in English” (p.1). Despite the great and undeniable role of English in educational system of Iran, the EFL learners’ competence is blow the desired and expected level. Although this course is introduced at the first year of secondary school and has been lasted until the last year of high school, some students don’t yet have the ability to produce correct English structures after graduation. The poor performance of students in English language is attributed to a variety of factors. Teachers’ methodology of teaching, quality of teacher training, quality of curricular materials, the evaluation methods/process, lack of continuous professional development (on job training), and attitudes of both teachers and students are some of the factors that affect the performance of students (Richards & Rogers , 2001; Cross, 1995).

Regarding these factors, the researcher considered the current method of evaluation in public schools and private language schools as the main reason of

unsatisfactory level of Iranian EFL learners' competence and tried to introduce continuous assessment to improve this situation. Puhl explains that "testing greatly influences instruction; and narrow testing has meant narrow instruction, teaching done 'to the test'. In order to transform the whole educational process, the change to assessment is being made hand- in-hand with the change to the instruction system" (p.1).

Final examination encounters Iranian EFL teachers and learners with many problems followed by many negative profound effects. Many scholars submitted that one-shot examination at the end of the term cannot be a suitable tool for measuring overall English competence of students due to using limited assessment devices and giving only one chance for students to show their real language abilities (Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, & Georg, 2003; Njabilis, 1999; Taiwo, 1998).

Having summative nature rather than formative is considered as the other main drawback of an evaluation system deeply rooted in final examination. In fact, instead of improving students' weaknesses and encouraging their strengths during the term, final examination is applied to measure students' learning at the end of the term without providing supportive and meaningful feedback. Overemphasizing the importance of test score and changing the path of education from "teaching to learn" to "teaching to test" can be the negative consequences of summative assessment.

Final examination cannot be a true indicator of students' learning due to provoking considerable anxiety among them. Moreover, the overemphasis on the role of final examination would eliminate many projects and activities which encourage

pupils to be creative and imaginative in classroom (Koerner, 2014). Some EFL learners may be at a disadvantage due to medical problems as well as emotional disorders on the day of final examination and miss their only opportunity to show their learning and achievement. As EFL learners realize that their progress throughout the term is judged according to their scores in final examination rather than their real learning, they may show no special effort during the term and rote memorize the content the night before the exam without deep understanding.

Continuous assessment provides a rich evaluation system in EFL classes which can overcome the above mentioned drawbacks of final examination through constant evaluation of pupils' learning, applying various methods of evaluation and providing effective feedback. In addition, it provides this opportunity for EFL teachers to take into consideration pupils' differences in learning style, age, rate of progress, assessing style, and family status at the time of assessing and grading which are given little consideration in the current evaluation system of Iran. Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, and Georg (2003) support this point by saying that "continuous assessment is a way to ensure that all learners have opportunities to succeed in school. In most classrooms, the range varies, from slow to average to fast learners. By using continuous assessment, the teacher can adapt his or her instruction to the need of the learners so all of them will have the chance to learn and succeed" (p.8).

Hence, this study attempts to investigate EFL teachers' perception of implementing continuous assessment. This being the target of the research, the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do EFL teachers perceive the roles of continuous assessment as an alternative method of evaluation in education system of Iran?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment over final examination in EFL classes?

### **1.3. Operational Definition of Continuous Assessment**

According to Huba and Freed (2000), “assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences”(p.8). In continuous assessment program, the process of assessment is done systematically on daily or fixed intervals during the term or academic year.

Continuous Assessment should not be misinterpreted by formative or summative assessments. Boraie (2012) describes formative assessment as a kind of assessment conducted during rather than at the end of the term by teachers to adjust classroom teaching practices and by learners to improve their weaknesses and enhance their strengths. He also asserts that the aim of formative assessment is making improvement in students’ performance and learning not grading or judging them. In contrast, summative assessment is designed usually at the end of the instruction to measure the outcome of an educational program. According to Boraie (2012), “continuous assessment is an approach that involves multiple formative and

summative assessments throughout the duration of a course or a school year” (P.1) and it focuses deeply on formative assessments.

Continuous assessment should not also be misinterpreted by continuous testing. In contrast to continuous testing which measures pupils’ knowledge of something in duration of term to determine what he or she knows or has learned, the goal of continuous assessment is providing effective and meaningful feedback by constant evaluation of pupils’ performance to make improvement in students’ learning. Moreover, in continuous testing, teachers can take benefit from different methods of testing such as multiple choice, short answer, essay, and cloze test while continuous assessment provides this opportunity for teacher to apply different methods of assessment such as homework, paragraph writing and group discussion in addition to different methods of testing.

#### **1.4. Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to explore the Iranian EFL teachers’ perception of continuous assessment. Language learners face a lot of problems while learning a new language due to improper system of evaluation. One-shot examination at the end of the term cannot be a suitable tool for measuring students’ learning and achievement. They need more opportunities to show their real potential through the academic year. Therefore, some changes are strongly needed in system of evaluation and the researcher considers continuous assessment as the best alternative method.

Before setting any new policy regarding implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes, careful and deep study and investigation are required. In fact, one of the factors that affect evaluating students accurately and fairly is teachers' perceptions and practices of the method of evaluation as proposed by Pierce (2000). Therefore, it calls for a need and must to conduct studies to find how EFL teachers perceive continuous assessment as an alternative method of evaluation and then find the advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment over the current system of evaluation to help learners how to improve their learning and achievement appropriately.

This study aims at exploring EFL teachers' perspectives toward continuous assessment in Iran. It emphasizes an effective way of evaluating language learners' learning in system of education for enhancing their achievement. It tries to find a reliable answer for the following question:

- What is EFL teachers' perception of continuous assessment? Why?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that this thesis and its findings would lighten areas of improvement. This thesis tries to be useful for EFL teachers to improve and develop their method of evaluation, raise their information in line with continuous assessment as an alternative method of evaluation, and be aware that applying this method can be effective in teaching and learning process. Moreover, it would be fruitful for learners to know how to improve their learning and achievement in EFL classes. Researches indicate that final examination which is the sole method of evaluation in Iran cannot

measure students' learning accurately and encounters teachers and students with many problems followed by many negative profound effects. The researcher believes that continuous assessment provides a rich evaluation system for EFL teachers and learners that helps them to overcome the drawbacks of final examination. Hence this study aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment as an alternative method of evaluation.

At the same time, it can be argued that in the growing technological world, English has earned high place and it is necessary for everyone to learn it. Despite this great and undeniable role of English, the Iranian EFL learners' competence is below the desired and expected level. This study will motivate teachers and practitioners to know how to enhance EFL learners' competence. They also will understand the useful techniques to follow in the environment of the classroom to evaluate students accurately and properly. Continuous assessment refers to the process of gathering information by applying various methods of assessment to develop a deep understanding of students' real potential and learning systematically on daily or fixed intervals during the term or academic year.

### **1.5.1. Implications**

In light of continuous assessment program and taking the foregoing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings into account, following implications are offered:



- Teachers will significantly find the useful knowledge of continuous assessment and its advantages and disadvantages over final examination which is the sole method of evaluation in educational system of Iran.
- This study illuminates a light shine on achieving appropriate method of evaluation rather than simply judge based on the result of final examination.
- Pupils will understand how to learn information instead of simple rote memorization of them to pass final examination.
- The findings are significant in that they give voice to teachers and all who are responsible in educational system as well in improving students' learning and system of evaluation.
- It is important for teachers to create an authentic atmosphere in the class in which students extend themselves, maximize their learning, and indicate their real potential. This would be beneficial for teachers to provide such opportunity for students.
- This study will help educational system to make some alternation in evaluation system in order to achieve the main aim of education which is learning.
- The path of education would be changed from 'teaching to test' to 'teaching to learn' by decreasing the importance of test scores and increasing learners' motivation.
- Findings of the present study suggest great emphasis on changing the role of teachers as passive vessels that merely transfer the content of the textbook to learners.
- Teachers would be given the opportunity of applying various methods of assessment during the term rather than one-shot examination at the end of the term.
- The findings are also emphasizing the need for more research to conduct in the case of continuous assessment method.

### **1.5.2. Applications**

This article will find the way of evaluating EFL learners' real achievement accurately which would be useful for teachers in the class environment. It would be practical to test designers particularly those design comprehensive exams such as University Entrance Examination as well. They will find useful hints to cover all the materials in tests and not focus on particular aspects of language like grammar and vocabulary. This study also provides adequate support for the development of learners' language competence. It would be fruitful for EFL teachers to adjust their assessing styles and strategies to students' needs in order to make learners succeed in their learning.

### **1.6. Delimitations of the Study**

Collecting more reliable information and understanding more aspects of continuous assessment, it would be fruitful if the researcher interviews more EFL teachers who are instructing students in rural areas. However, to make the study manageable with the limited time and budget, the study was delimited to EFL teachers of public high schools and private language institutes in Mashhad, the capital city of Khorasan-Razavi Province.

### **1.7. Limitations of the Study**

The findings of the current study would be more credible if the researcher applied various modes of data collection such as questionnaire and observation.

## **1.8. Procedure**

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents a general introduction to the outline of the research, significance, purposes, delimitations and limitations of the study as well as relevant background information. The second chapter includes theoretical perspectives and empirical findings of the previous studies done regarding continuous assessment. Chapter three provides an outline of the general methodological procedures employed for research accomplishment. It focuses deeply on the importance of qualitative research and grounded theory. Chapter four is about the results, analysis of the data and the interpretation of the information gathered for the study. The aim of chapter four is to determine whether EFL teachers have positive attitude toward continuous assessment. The fifth chapter concludes the thesis with a precise summary of the study conducted and findings are presented along with the conclusions derived. In addition, potential areas of further study are briefly discussed. References are listed at the end of the thesis.



# **Chapter Two**

## **Literature Review**

## **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the previous studies which support the research question are reviewed to establish a solid theoretical foundation for the study and then the empirical findings are presented as a separate rubric to substantiate the point of the study.

## **2.2. Theoretical Perspectives**

The theoretical perspectives presented here are defined as follows: the researcher will first define the concept of continuous assessment, then its advantages and disadvantages.

### **2.2.1. The Concept of Continuous Assessment**

Continuous assessment has been defined by different scholars in a variety of ways, but most of them put great attention on the formative nature of this program which is mostly neglected in conventional assessment or traditional method of evaluation. In fact, the main aim of continuous assessment is providing students with supportive and meaningful feedback to improve their weaknesses and increase their strengths. Accordingly, Ezewu and Okoye (1981) described the notion of continuous assessment as the cumulative recordings of students' learning from the beginning until the end of the instruction to evaluate and promote students' learning. In a same manner, Ipaye (1992) believed that continuous assessment is a periodic process throughout the course of instruction which takes into account progress toward goals

as well as success in reaching them. As is realized from the literature, what is important in continuous assessment is deep learning and understanding of the subject matter rather than achieving good marks. Okoye (1994) submitted the same theme and theorized that continuous assessment is a process of collecting more comprehensive information about pupils' learning and using this information in the development of them.

Pasigna (2002) linked continuous assessment to the process of mastery of learning and argued that this program helps each student to become a successful learner by considering his/her diversity in teaching learning process. He believed that different learners have different learning styles and require different amounts of time in order to master a skill and teachers and schools have this responsibility to “provide the conditions, enough time to learn, appropriate teaching methods, and a good learning environment” in continuous assessment (p.7). Generally, it can be said that continuous assessment provides this opportunity for teachers to take into consideration pupils' differences in learning style, age, rate of progress, assessing style, and family status at the time of assessing and grading which are given little consideration in the traditional system of evaluation. In a similar manner, Yoloye (1984) pointed that the main goal of continuous assessment is helping pupils to develop their abilities to the fullest. According to the literature, applying continuous assessment may lead pupils to developing automaticity in any subject matter. This would be a valuable tool of teaching and assessing particularly for those students who are below the desired level.

Segun (1994) asserted that continuous assessment is the process of documenting students' learning throughout the course of instruction without using examinations. Considering his view, any form of testing such as essay and cloze-test should not be implemented as a method of assessment in this program. In contrast, Akinboye (1990) and Smith (2003) considered different forms of testing such as interviewing and intellectual ability tests as one of the main methods of assessing pupils in this program. Accordingly, teachers have this opportunity to take advantage of different methods of assessment including homework, oral and written tests, class discussion and etc. in continuous assessment. It is worth mentioning that distinction should be made clearly regarding continuous assessment and continuous testing for instructors before implementing this program. As is put by Aggarwal (1999), cited in Mvebaza (2005), continuous assessment is not simply continuous testing. Misinterpreting these two concepts and the extensive use of testing instead of assessment may encounter students with more problems than the final exam such as high anxiety and a sense of hatefulness toward teacher and his course.

Njabilis (1999) provided the most comprehensive definition of continuous assessment which embodied most of the identified features. According to her, "a continuous assessment scheme is one that involves a systematic collection of marks or grades into a final score taken into account in deciding the candidate's final grades. The most distinctive feature of continuous assessment, in general, is that it is a cumulative process, developing as the pupil develops and reflecting his/her changes in response to the course" (p. 114). All in all, we can describe continuous assessment as a systematic and cumulative assessment of students' learning which takes into



account students' diversity by providing various methods of assessment to enable them to adopt automaticity in a particular skill.

### **2.2.2. Advantages of Continuous Assessment**

Bock, Elago and Kunyanda (2003) considered providing effective feedback, understanding students' real strengths and weaknesses, motivating students, evaluating them accurately, and providing record as the main advantages of continuous assessment. Comparing to conventional assessments or traditional system of evaluation, this program can motivate students considerably through applying various methods of assessment and giving positive feedbacks. Moreover, teachers have this opportunity to provide regular, accurate and clear record from students' progress and achievement for parents which results in more parental involvement in teaching learning process. Along the same lines, Yoloye (1984) argued that continuous assessment provides this opportunity for teachers to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, provide a continuous record of students' qualities, monitor and give effective feedback to enhance their learning, and to give academic guidance to pupils. Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, and Georg (2003) and Pasigna (2000) also developed the same theme and theorized that continuous assessment helps the learners to recognize their weakness and problems and get correction from their instructor or classmates. As is realized from the literature, most scholars put great emphasis on meaningful, effective, and clear feedback to enhance pupils' learning as the main advantage of continuous assessment.

Some methods of evaluation such as final examination have a profound negative impact on students' level of anxiety than other methods (Crossman, 2004). One of the advantages of continuous assessment over the other methods of assessment is its key role in reducing pupils' test anxiety. Accordingly, Denga (1986) theorized that in this program the level of test anxiety is significantly lower than what students experience in one-shot examination. This reduction in test anxiety is due to providing more chances for students to show their potentials and abilities in this program. Moreover, the importance of the score of one-shot examination which is the major determiner of ones' achievement after the course of instruction is considerably higher than the score of daily assessment.

Hoste and Bloomfield (1975), cited in Njabili (1999), pointed to other advantage of continuous assessment and argued that pupils who are assessed continuously should obtain better results than those of equal ability, assessed through one-shot examination. Gipps (1994) also supported the same idea and asserted that in continuous assessment students have deep understanding and learning as higher cognitive levels of thinking are involved in this program. Generally, when learners realize that their progress throughout the term is judged by only one shot examination at the end of the course work, they may show no special effort during the term and rote memorize the content the night before the exam and forget after a short while. Continuous assessment enhances students' learning and achievement through repeated practices. In fact, students review the content and monitor their learning continuously throughout the term which has a great positive influence on their final achievement.

As put by Alausa (2000), continuous assessment places teachers at the center of teaching and learning process and enables them to modify their instruction according to needs of students by providing more reliable information. Obviously, it is identified that continuous assessment is teacher-centered and changes the role of teacher as a passive to active instructor and assessor who is significantly involved in the process of educating his pupils. Along the same lines, Yoloye (1984) asserted that teacher plays the role of instructor and counselor in continuous assessment. He believed that continuous assessment puts greater demands on the part of teachers who have the responsibilities of giving necessary academic and psychological guidance to pupils as well as providing accurate report, diagnosing pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and giving meaningful feedback.

Le Grange and Reddy (1998) also argued that continuous assessment enables teacher to use a wide variety of assessment methods. In fact, this opportunity is provided for teachers to select various and most appropriate methods of assessment regarding pupils' interest, learning style and age in this program. Considering these diversities at the time of grading is also required particularly in classes with the significant different age groups to provide more reliable information. Nikto (2004) and Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, and Georg (2003) developed the same theme and asserted that applying various kinds of devices in continuous assessment enables teachers to collect more reliable information. Furthermore, Quansa (2005) asserted that "by extending the time span for collecting assessment information throughout the duration of a course, different forms of testing and different assessment situations

including acquisition and demonstration of practical skills can be introduced in the continuous assessment process” (p.3).

### **2.2.3. Drawbacks of Continuous Assessment**

Ellington and Earl (1997: online), argued that “continuous assessment can be, if not properly managed, a very real danger that student may be grossly over-assessed particularly at certain times of the year, when several lecturers are asking simultaneously for assignments to be handed in”. In fact, successful implementation of continuous assessment requires careful consideration especially on the part of teacher. This program can be followed by several negative effects if it is wrongly implemented. For instance, misinterpreting the concepts of assessment and testing and putting excessive emphasis on continuous testing instead of assessment may leave high level of test anxiety on the part of learner. In addition, this program cannot be implemented in all subject matters simultaneously; otherwise, students would suffer heavy workload. Generally, applying this program for all courses in schools puts students in great disadvantages due to study overload and fear of negative evaluation.

Yoloye (1984) pointed to inapplicability in large classes, time constraint, and teachers’ lack of computational skill for grading as the three main disadvantages of continuous assessment. Obviously, this program is not applicable in public schools with large number of students in each class due to the lack of sufficient time for grading and providing meaningful feedback. In addition, administering and grading assessments correctly and carefully are two most critical responsibilities of teachers

in the successful implementation of a continuous assessment program which cannot be carried out without sufficient knowledge and skill. Alousa (2000) also supported this idea and asserted that the problems of continuous assessment chiefly concentrate on teachers' skill in test construction and administration. In fact, any kind of assessment cannot be effective unless teachers equip with essential skills regarding the considered educational assessment. Accordingly, Quansa (2005) believed that "since there is currently no formal training of teachers in the `continuous assessment process, each teacher and each school tend to use their own separate ways for conducting continuous assessment which creates lack of uniformity in the continuous assessment process in the country" (p.3). He suggested Ministry of Education to provide a book regarding the type and quality of assessments in each country to avoid problems of lack of uniformity. Generally, the successful implementation of continuous assessment requires in-service training or workshops regarding grading and administering reliable and valid assessments which can be comparable across different students or classes.

Njabili (1999) considered excessive workload on the part of teacher and student as the other significant drawback of continuous assessment. As opposed to the traditional evaluation system, administering and grading assessments and providing effective feedbacks constantly are undeniable duties of teachers in the continuous assessment program which requires much time and consideration.

Large number of assessments in this program reduces the quality of assessment. As is put by Quansa (2005), teachers mostly use questions that require

easier marking and “high level ability questions that involve critical thinking and problem solving skills are rarely, if ever, used” (p.3). It is worth mentioning that teachers should not entirely overlook the importance of quantity over quality and sacrifice the later for the former.

### **2.3. Empirical Findings**

The empirical findings presented here are defined as follows; the researcher will first explain the previous studies done regarding teachers’ perception of continuous assessment, then the studies done regarding the relationship between continuous assessments’ scores and final examination score.

#### **2.3.1. Teachers’ perception of continuous assessment**

##### **2.3.1.1. Teachers’ Attitudes toward Continuous Assessment**

Narayan (2014), based on his study on teachers’ perceptions of continuous assessment, found that most teachers have a favorable attitude toward continuous assessment and consider this program helpful to plan for their students’ learning need. By the same token, Yigzaw (2013) indicated that high school teachers and students consider continuous assessment as an advantageous tool for the overall development of students’ behavior, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Okeke and Christiana Ohia (2011) conducted a study to determine primary school teachers’ perception of continuous assessment and developed the same theme and reported that all teachers have positive attitude toward applying continuous assessment in primary schools and consider this method fruitful to improve the quality of the products of

education. Equally, Adebowale, and Alao (2008) examined teachers' attitude toward continuous assessment and the methods adopted by teachers in the implementation of this program. They recorded that nearly all the studied teachers prefer to adopt continuous assessment in all subject areas as they believe that this method helps the learners to identify their strength and weakness and enhances their self-esteem. Accordingly, Chung (2000) studied teachers' perception of continuous assessment of the subject of English in primary schools and reported that teachers consider this method as an effective instrument to improve their teaching strategies and discover pupils' difficulties which can enhance their learning considerably.

Uiseb (2009) conducted a study on primary school teachers to gain a contextualized and comprehensive understanding of the teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding continuous assessment. He found out that interviewees consider continuous assessment a great potential in contributing to the teaching and learning process which makes evaluation more comprehensive and motivates the learners to study regularly. As is realized from the literature, pupils usually memorize the contents of the textbook before the final examination without deep learning and understanding. On the contrary, continuous assessment motivates students to learn the materials due to repeated practices. Along the same lines, Nxumalo (2007) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of continuous assessment in the promotion of learners. The results of a self-structured questionnaire indicated that the majority of teachers perceive continuous assessment as an effective instrument for the promotion of the learners and a suitable tool for determining the progress of learners and motivating them to participate actively in their learning.

### **2.3.1.2. Changes in Teachers' Role**

Uiseb (2009) conducted a qualitative study on teachers' perception and experience of continuous assessment and revealed that contrary to traditional methods which have amply emphasized on students, continuous assessment turns this attention to teachers by giving them more choices, rights, and freedoms in teaching and learning process. He also found out continuous assessment changes the role of teacher as a passive assessor to active one who could find out learners' current level of performance on any task and share with them possible ways in which their performance might be improved on a subsequent occasion. Contrary to Uiseb, Narayan (2014) who investigated the teachers' perception of class based assessment and the effects of class based assessment on learning and teaching reported that continuous assessment shifts learning from teacher-centered to child-centered and results in students becoming more engaged in teaching and learning process. Moreover, the findings of this study showed that continuous assessment provides more opportunities for learners to work in groups which is the main reason of the marginal role of teacher in this program.

### **2.3.1.3. Test Anxiety**

Olubukola and Bankole (2015) studied the usage of continuous assessment in reducing examination malpractices and reported that this strategy reduces the anxiety of taking examination as it enables students to master more of the curriculum contents than the one-shot examination. By the same token, Osuji and Omoifo (2011) conducted a study on different methods of data collection in continuous assessment



and problems and prospects of this program. The results of their study showed that unlike one-shot examination which creates high level of anxiety in the pupils, continuous assessment decreases test anxiety by providing more opportunities for learners to show their real ability. They also found that as parents, guardians and relations have more opportunity to give pupils the needed remedial attention, they would experience less anxiety during the assessment tasks. Similarly, Cardno, Tiko, Harish, and Nairn (2009) investigated the advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment and found that this program has a significant role in reducing test anxiety. In a same manner, Uiseb (2009) studied teachers' perception and experience regarding continuous assessment and reported that the majority of teachers feel strongly that continuous assessment decreases fear and anxiety attached to examination. Furthermore, he evidently showed that one-shot examination at the end of the term which is the major or only predictor of pupils' learning puts great anxiety on the part of learners. On the contrary, Hayford (2007) studied the uses of continuous assessment as experiences of lower attaining pupils and reported a general feeling of anxiety and stress among the pupils particularly low attaining ones in the period leading to class tests. He also revealed that this stress is attributed to a variety of factors such as difficult tasks, lack of self-regulated learning skills, and lack of self-efficacy and support.

#### **2.3.1.4. Effect of Gender**

Some scholars tried to find out the role of gender in teachers' attitudes toward continuous assessment. Awofala and Babajide (2013) based on their study on the role of gender in the attitudes of teachers toward continuous assessment practices revealed

no statistically significant effect of gender on teachers' attitudes toward continuous assessment. Similar to these scholars, Adebowale and Alao (2008) gained the same results as studying the effect of four independent variables (gender of the respondents, duty post, years of teaching experience and educational background) on teachers' perception of continuous assessment. They observed no significant difference in the responses of participants based on these four independent variables. By way of contrast, Okeke and Christiana Ohia (2011) investigated the effect of three variables of gender, experience and location on teachers' perception of continuous assessment and found that males have more positive attitudes toward this alternative method.

#### **2.3.1.5. Teachers' Skill**

Successful implementation of continuous assessment requires skillful and knowledgeable teachers in terms of administering and grading assessments in a reliable and valid manner. Clement and Ayibatony (2014) studied the causes of the science teachers' indifference to the implementation of continuous assessment and found that more than half of the participants agreed that they do not have requisite experience and their continuous assessment practice is faulty and deviated from policy guidelines; therefore more in-service training courses are needed to educate teachers more on continuous assessment. Similarly, Uiseb (2009), based on his study on the role of teacher in the successful implementation of continuous assessment, indicated that the success of continuous assessment deeply depends on teachers' will, abilities and skills. He reported that teachers should be equipped with essential knowledge and skill to have successful implementation of continuous assessment;

otherwise, this program may have a profound negative effect on students' learning, interest and motivation. In a like manner, Dowrich (2008) conducted a qualitative study on teachers' perception of continuous assessment program in primary schools and showed that most of the teachers believe that they have a basic knowledge of continuous assessment and need more training in this regard. By the same token, Yigzaw (2013) and Kapambwe (2010) studied the teachers' and learners' perception of continuous assessment and indicated that both teachers and students do not apply continuous assessment in the schools as expected and misinterpret it as continuous testing due to lack of adequate training or influence of traditional objective-based assessment. In fact, continuous assessment and continuous testing are two completely different concepts in teaching learning process. Misinterpreting these two concepts may lead to negative consequences such as increased anxiety, demotivation and even learners' failure.

#### **2.3.1.6. Low Attaining Learners**

Regarding the effect of continuous assessment on the low attaining students' achievements, Nxumalo (2007) explored that the majority of teachers feel strongly that continuous assessment enables weaker students to improve as well as stronger ones. He showed that this perfect and comprehensive method of evaluation supports all pupils' learning and progress without discriminating them regarding their abilities. Different students have different rates of progress which should be taken into consideration at the time of evaluation. By the same token, Hayford (2007) revealed that the results of self-completed questionnaires indicate teachers' great attitude

toward continuous assessment as an advantageous tool in improving lower attaining pupils. Surprisingly, he found out teachers consider this program unfair to pupils with difficulties, in interviews.

### **2.3.1.7. Drawbacks of Continuous Assessment**

Narayan (2014), Yigzaw (2013), and Dowrich (2008) conducted qualitative studies on teachers' perception of continuous assessment and reported that teachers consider consuming much time and incurring additional workload to teachers as two main drawbacks of continuous assessment. Moreover, Dowrich (2008) revealed that continuous assessment sets new demands on teachers such as administering and grading assessments and providing meaningful feedback in each session and these workloads are much more complex and time-consuming than can be carried out in limited time of classes.

Dowrich (2008) also indicated that the majority of teachers complain about lack of qualified helper, parental support, and accessible and available resources which play an important role in their success in this program. These teachers believed that some workshops or seminars are required to inform parents on continuous assessment which results in more parental involvement in the process of educating their children. They assumed that parental supports can decrease teachers' workload significantly. Dowrich also pointed to students' absence on the day which is scheduled for the tests as other disadvantage of continuous assessment stated by interviewees.

Fan, Umaru and Bawa (2014) conducted a study to find out whether continuous assessment had any effect on the final examination scores obtained by students and showed that the major problem is the availability of valid and reliable tests which can be used in all schools. Furthermore, they pointed to the fact that many teachers are not skillful enough to construct reliable and valid assessments comparable across all students in the class or school.

Accordingly, Nxumalo (2007) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of continuous assessment in the promotion of learners and reported the inapplicability of continuous assessment in large classes and rural schools. He also asserted that large number of students in one class incurs too high workload to teachers which results in applying improper methods of assessment and providing delayed and inaccurate feedbacks. Moreover, students usually lack experienced and knowledgeable teachers and facilities to take benefit of different methods of assessment in rural schools.

### **2.3.2. Relationship between Continuous Assessments and Final Scores**

Considering the relationship between continuous assessments' grades and final examination scores, Fan, Umaru and Bawa (2014) and Pudaruth, Moloo, Chiniah, Sungkur, Nagowah, and Kishnah (2013) conducted studies and showed that continuous assessment has a great effect on the final examination scores and students who have high performance in continuous assessment programs are more successful in their semester examinations. In the same way, Rezigalla, Abdalla, Haider, Ali, and Alhassen (2014) study the effect of continuous assessment on the final results of

students and indicated that continuous assessment has a significant impact on both the students' performance in final examination and methodologies of learning. They also reported that teachers can use the mean of scores achieved from continuous assessments as an alternative for the score of final examination due to strong and perfect correlation between these two sets of scores. Accordingly, Kola and Ganiyu (2013) reached the same findings as they studied the correlation between continuous assessment and students' performance in physics.

Emmanuel and Clement (2012) also conducted a study to find out whether continuous assessment scores have any effect on the final examination scores obtained by students in mathematics. Their analysis revealed that there is a positive correlation between continuous assessment scores and final examination scores in mathematics but this correlation is stronger when teachers and school administration pay more serious attention to continuous assessment of students. It means that the results of continuous assessment can be a proper alternative for the scores of final examination as teachers administer reliable assessments and grade them carefully. Accordingly, Oyekeyi (2011) studied whether continuous assessment scores are good predictors of academic performance in school certificate examination and indicated that if teachers be able to construct good assessment tools that are comparable across students, classes and schools and interpret the results in all the domains of objectives, the results of continuous assessment would help the system to give a good predication of the students' performance.

In contrast to the above studies, Kolawole and Ala (2014) studied the effect of continuous assessment on students' academic performance and found out that continuous assessment scores have significant negative effect on final grade. In other words, continuous assessment score is not a good predictor of final score. Similarly, Berg and Shepherd (2006) analyzed the relationship between continuous assessment and matriculation examination marks and reported that continuous assessment accuracy is weakest in terms of the great leniency of assessment in many schools and it is not possible to inform students how they can prepare better for the matriculation examination based on the results of continuous assessment.

#### **2.3.2.1. Role of Gender**

Some scholars such as Kola and Taiwo (2014) and Kolawole and Ala (2014) also investigated the role of gender in students' success in continuous assessment. They revealed a disparity between males' and females' performance in this program with the higher level of performance of the former. There is a very strong relationship between continuous assessment scores and pupils' gender. Higher performance of boys may be due to several factors such as their higher ability in reasoning.

## **2.4. Summary of Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Findings**

### **2.4.1. Summary of Theoretical Perspectives**

Continuous assessment has been defined in a variety of ways by different scholars (Ezewu & Okoye, 1981; Yoloye, 1984; Akinboye, 1990; Ipaye, 1992; Segun, 1994; Aggarwal, 1999; Njabilis, 1999; Passigna, 2002; Smith, 2003), but they all agree on the conception that continuous assessment is a systematic, regular and cumulative recordings of students' learning from the beginning until the end of the instruction which takes into account students' diversity by providing various methods of assessment to enable them to adopt automaticity in a particular skill.

Different scholars considered many advantages in continuous assessment comparing to traditional methods of evaluation such as providing effective feedback, diagnosing students' real strengths and weaknesses, motivating students, evaluating them accurately, and providing a continuous record of students' qualities (Yoloye, 1984; Passigna, 2000; Bock, Elago & Kunyanda, 2003; Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, & Georg, 2003). In addition, students' level of text anxiety in this program is significantly lower than what students experience in one-shot examination (Denga, 1986) and they have deeper understanding and learning (Njabili, 1999; Gipps, 1994). Yoloye (1984) and Alausa (2000) also asserted that continuous assessment places teachers at the center of teaching learning process and enables them to modify their instruction according to needs of students by providing more reliable information. Moreover, teachers have this opportunity to take benefit from various methods of assessment in teaching learning process (Le Grange & Reddy, 1998; Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, & Georg, 2003; Nitko, 2004, Quansa, 2005).



Considering the drawbacks of continuous assessment, Ellington and Earl (1997:online) argued that this program cannot be implemented in all subject matters simultaneously; otherwise, students may be grossly over-assessed. Moreover, this program cannot be implemented in large classes due to time constraint (Yoloye, 1984) and teachers aren't equipped with skill in test construction and administration (Yoloye, 1984; Alousa, 2000; Quansa, 2005). Njabili (1999) also considered excessive workload on the part of teacher and student and Quansa (2005) pointed to sacrificing quality of assessments for quantity as the other significant drawbacks of continuous assessment.

#### **2.4.2. Summary of Empirical Findings**

As is put by Narayan (2014), Awofala (2013), Okeke and Christiana Ohia (2011), Uiseb (2009), Adebawale and Alao (2008), Frans Nxumalo (2007), Chung (2000), and Humphreh (2000) most teachers have a favorable attitude toward continuous assessment and consider it as an advantageous tool for students' development. Continuous assessment shifts learning from learner-centered to teacher-centered (Uiseb, 2009), has a key role in reducing fear and anxiety attached to examinations (Olubukola & Bankole, 2015; Osuji & Omoifo, 2011; Cardno, Tiko, Harish, & Nairn, 2009; Uiseb, 2009) and enables teachers to support lower attaining pupils to improve (Narayan, 2014; Nxumalo, 2007). Empirical findings also revealed that there isn't significant correlation between teachers' attitudes and their gender (Awofala, 2013; Adebawale & Alao, 2008).

Narayan (2014), Yigzaw (2013), and Dowrich (2008) reported that teachers consider consuming much time and incurring additional workload to teachers as two main drawbacks of continuous assessment. Moreover, unavailability of valid tests which can be used in all schools is the other disadvantage of continuous assessment (Fan, Umaru, & Bawa, 2014). Dowrich (2008) also indicated that the majority of teachers complain about lack of qualified helper, parental support, and accessible and available resources in this program.

While some scholars found out a significant positive correlation between continuous assessments and final scores (Fan, Umaru, & Bawa, 2014; Rezigalla, Abdalla, Haider, Ali, & Alhassen, 2014; Kola & Ganiyu, 2013; Pudaruth, Moloo, Chiniah, Sungkur, Nagowah, & Kishnah, 2013; Emmanuel & Clement, 2012; Oyekeyi, 2011), Kolawole and Ala (2014) and Vander Berg and Shepherd (2006) argued that continuous assessment scores have a significant negative effect on final grades. In addition, some studies revealed males' higher performance than females' in continuous assessment program (Kola & Taiwo, 2014; Kolawole & Ala, 2014).

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides an outline of the general methodological procedures employed for research accomplishment. This methodology plays an important role in implementing this research study accordingly. The details of the methodology are explained in detail in this chapter. The first section explains the suitable methodology to achieve the research objective which is exploring teachers' perception of continuous assessment. The second part presents a general overview of the grounded theory. The third part provides a description of the research context, sampling procedure, participants, data collection and strategies of data analysis.

### **3.2. Why Qualitative?**

This research used the qualitative approach in the tradition of the grounded theory for its investigation into EFL teachers' perception of continuous assessment. Exploration of the new ideas and concepts is regarded as the main element of qualitative studies. Accordingly, many scholars argued that qualitative research has inductive and exploratory nature and centers on generating hypotheses and insights rather than merely testing them (Patton, 2002; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Pope & Mays, 1995). According to Hancock, Windridge, and Ockleford (2007), in contrast to quantitative study which "tends to focus on how people or groups can have different ways of looking at reality", qualitative study tries to find the "ways of describing and understanding reality by the discovery of general laws" (p.6).

This method of inquiry can provide an in-depth understanding to participants' thoughts, experiences and beliefs. In fact, researcher tries to collect data on the

perceptions of the participants from the inside through deep and empathetic understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Accordingly, Harwell (2011) considered discovering and understanding the perspectives of participants in a naturalistic setting as one of the important features of a qualitative study.

As is put by Harwell (2011), “what is embedded in this approach is the perspective that researchers cannot set aside their experiences, perceptions, and biases, and thus cannot pretend to be objective bystanders to the research” (p.149). As qualitative study is subjective in approach, freedom from any bias in the process of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data is prerequisite to having credibility. In fact, as much as a qualitative research being free from bias, it could equally provide valid and reliable information. Moreover, Keele (2012) pointed that increasing relationship between participants and researcher would result in neutral process which is free from the bias in qualitative study. Therefore, increasing the connection between researcher and participants is prerequisite to promoting the credibility and reliability of this method of inquiry.

The present study sought to understand the perceptions of EFL teachers of continuous assessment. Thus, the perspectives of the participants were of utmost importance as the researcher sought to understand and describe the participants’ perspective. For these reasons therefore, application of the qualitative paradigm was considered critical to the study.

### **3.3. Why Grounded Theory**

Selecting an appropriate research method is one of the most critical challenges presented to a researcher. The research method selected in any study should provide reliable and credible product as well as be easily implemented without decades of practice (Jones & Alony, 2011), be relevant to the area of investigation (Maxwell 2005), and be driven by research question (Husseini, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014). The design considered suitable for this study was the grounded theory where a theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed, is developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Borrowing from Corbin and Straus (1990) “Systematic asking of generative and concept-relating questions”, “systematic coding procedures” and “theoretical sampling” are three main aspects of the grounded theory (p.274). Other implications of the grounded theory that are not accounted in other qualitative approaches are collecting and analyzing rich data systematically and simultaneously as well as constant making of comparisons (Gharmaz, 2005). Husseini, Hirst, Salyers, and Osuji (2014) pointed to “intuitive appeal”, as well as “ability to foster creativity”, “conceptualization potential”, “systematic approach to data analysis” and “data depth and richness” as the main advantages of grounded theory (p.2).

This method of inquiry was suitable for this study because it was aimed at exploring EFL teachers’ perception of continuous assessment. Grounded theory would best serve this investigation which began with a question, had inductive nature

and had the goal of generating concepts that explain the way EFL teachers think about continuous assessment.

### **3.4. Short History of Grounded Theory**

The notion of grounded theory was first introduced by two American sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, as an approach to qualitative analysis while conducting a study on the way in which hospital staffs dealt with dying patients in 1967. During this study, Glaser and Strauss stressed the need to generate theory instead of verifying it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Moore, 2009). As is stated by Kenny and Fouri (2014), “Glaser and Strauss contended that marrying theory construction with social research would produce a robust and astute hypothesis *grounded* in research” (p.2). Glaser and Strauss published a book entitled *The discovery of grounded theory* (1967) and introduced a number of distinct methodological techniques unique to grounded theory. They also emphasized on the simultaneous process of data collection and analysis in grounded theory.

### **3.5. Theoretical Sampling in Grounded Theory**

The sampling method which is closely associated with grounded theory methodology is theoretical sampling. Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined theoretical sampling as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (p.30). Unlike many other sampling methods, theoretical sampling is not a good representative of population and develops in the field as the theory emerges. Indeed, Strauss and

Corbin (1994) have described theoretical sampling as a means to “maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p.201).

### **3.6. Data collection in Grounded Theory**

In grounded theory, the researcher can take benefit from a variety of data sources including interview, observation, speeches, and narrations. Khambete and Athavanka (2010) considered availability of multiple sources of data as one of the main strengths and benefits of the grounded theory since it provides enormous flexibility to the researcher. As is put by Corbin and Strauss (1990), the researcher can collect qualitative data with relatively “little expenditure of time, money, and effort” in grounded theory (p.161). Moreover, they believed that these sources enable the researcher to understand the substantive area he has decided to study and formulate his hypotheses in early days of the research.

A grounded theory study begins with a general question. As stated by Dey (1999), the researcher will usually start with a “general subject or problem conceived only in terms of a general disciplinary perspective” (p.3). Once a data site has been selected, collection of data begins. Jones and Alony (2011) believed that data collection is usually in the form of open-ended interviewing and transcription. Similarly, Holloway and Wheeler (2002) considered semi-structured and unstructured interviews as the common way of collecting data in grounded theory. Hence,



interview can be considered as one of the main sources of data collection in grounded theory not the most important one.

As is stated by Khambete and Athavanka (2010), the process of gathering data ends “when theoretical saturation is reached” (p.14). It means that collecting additional data wouldn’t result in discovering new concepts and categories. This progressive nature of grounded theory can be considered as one the main advantages of this mode of inquiry.

### **3.7. Data Analysis in Grounded Theory**

There is reciprocal relationship between data collection and analysis in grounded theory. It means that data analysis takes place during data collection and thoroughly integrated in all aspects of data collection. Glaser and Strauss (1967) believed that one of the main features of grounded theory is the simultaneous process of data collection and analysis. As is put by Khambete and Athavanka (2010), “the first set of data is analyzed and coded immediately, and the results inform the next set of data collection activity” (p.13). In fact, analyzing data in early days of research gives hints to researcher on which data to collect, which aspects need special attention and where to collect data (Khambete & Athavanka, 2010).

The first step of data analysis in grounded theory is called open coding. Khambete and Athavanka (2010) described open coding as “an interpretive process in which data are broken down analytically with the intent to gain insights about the phenomenon under study” (p.14). The researcher continuously compares all the actions to arrive at concepts and categories. As is stated by Corbin and Strauss

(1987), through analysis, data is arranged to conceptual codes and then a deep comparison between codes is done. The aim of this comparison is to understand the relationships amongst codes which form the basis of the emergent theory (Khambete & Athavanka, 2010). It is the second step of data analysis in the grounded theory. In this step the researcher creates subcategories by determining several factors. Khambete and Athavanka (2010) considered “conditions that give rise to the category”, “the context in which it occurs”, “the actions that express it” as the main factors used in this step (p.14).

The last step is called selective coding. According to Khambete and Athavanka (2010), in this step, the researcher arrives at a core category, “which unifies all the categories and leads to the theory” (p.14). In fact, the researcher creates theory by considering the relationship between categories and subcategories.

### **3.8. Research Context**

This study has been conducted in Iran. Public schools and private language schools are two forms of language education in Iran. As is put by Richards and Sadeghi (2015), English is taught with the aim of communication with the world and having access to “information needed for technical, scientific, and economic development” in Iran (p.3). Unlike the public schools which emphasize on the written forms of English, the private language institutes focus on spoken forms and functional communication.

In public schools, English is introduced in the first year of secondary education as a required course and lasted until the fourth year of high school. As is

stated by Richards and Sadeghi (2015), students “take between two and four hours of English instruction each week with different syllabi for different years, which are revised from time to time” and teachers cannot change syllabus, contents or structures (p.4). In private language institutes, students meet three hours a week during each semester which encompasses fifteen class sessions. The teachers of the private institutes also lack the opportunity to make some alternations in syllabus and contents.

The Ministry of Education has appointed a group of authors to write the English textbooks of public school (Dahmardeh, 2009). Editing and proofreading these textbooks after each academic year are other responsibilities of this appointed group. Moreover, teachers’ books are also available with the goal of providing better instruction in English classes. Textbooks mostly include several lessons started with a short dialogue followed by vocabulary exercises, grammar practice as well as pronunciation and a reading. Locally-printed textbooks such as Interchange books have been taught in private language institutes. These international textbooks place significant emphasis on listening and speaking with the aim of developing communicative competence.

### **3.9. Research Methodology**

#### **3.9.1. Sampling Procedure and Participants**

Theoretical sampling method has been used for the selection of the participants of the study. This sampling method is an important component in the development of grounded theories. The goal of this approach is developing a deep

understanding of a concept. According to Corbin and Strauss (1987) sampling in grounded theory is closely related to “concepts, their properties, dimensions, and variations” (p.8). Glaser and Strauss (1987) pointed that the researcher should be theoretically sensitive in the process of collecting and coding data to sense where the data is taking them and what to do next. They also asserted that “as this iterative process continues, the researcher may explore the same group more deeply or in different ways, or may seek out new groups” (p.123). The participants of this study were selected based on their theoretical relevance to further development of categories. The number of participants was based on the extent of saturation and the level of theory the researcher wanted to generate (Glaser & Strauss, 1987).

Participants of this study were EFL teachers who were teaching English in public high schools and private language institutes for at least five years. The study was started with a teacher and went on to reach theoretical saturation. All of these EFL teachers were willing to participate and invited in the study voluntarily. They were knowledgeable in the field of continuous assessment to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under the study. They were also informed that they are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time they want.

Language education in Iran takes two forms of public schools and private language institutes. To uncover teachers’ perception of continuous assessment in these two varied contexts, this study sampled participants from Somayeh and Asma public high schools and Khorasan, Meraj Andisheh, Shokooh, and Asma private language institutes in Mashhad, the capital city of Khorasan-Razavi Province.

Seventeen EFL teachers (twelve females and five males) between the ages of 27 to 41 have been the participants of this study selected through theoretical sampling. Since the teachers' experiences were needed, it is important to select experienced teachers for achieving valuable data. Each participant had at least five years of experience in teaching English as foreign language in public or private language schools. The most experienced one had taught English for 16 years in public school. All of the participants were native speakers of Persian and had learned English as foreign language. Six participants did not have any academic degree in the field of language teaching and had learned English through attending English classes in private language institutes. Seven teachers had Bachelor's degree in the field of English teaching and four had M.A.

Table 1: The Distribution Table of Teachers' Gender, Ages, Teaching Experience & Professional Qualifications.

| Teacher | Gender | Teaching Experience | Professional Qualification  |
|---------|--------|---------------------|---|
| 1       | Female | 7                   | 1. Certificate in English<br>2. Bachelors in Education<br>3. Masters of Science |
| 2       | Male   | 5                   | 1. Bachelors in Education   |
| 3       | Male   | 5                   | 1. Bachelors in   |

|    |        |    |   |
|----|--------|----|---|
|    |        |    | Education<br>2. Masters of Science                        |
| 4  | Female | 12 | 1. Certificate in English                                 |
| 5  | Female | 6  | 1. Certificate in English<br>2. Bachelors in<br>Education |
| 6  | Female | 7  | 1. Certificate in English                                 |
| 7  | Female | 5  | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education                              |
| 8  | Female | 10 | 1. Certificate in English                                 |
| 9  | Male   | 9  | 1. Certificate in English                                 |
| 10 | Female | 5  | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education<br>2. Masters of Science     |
| 11 | Male   | 5  | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education<br>2. Masters of Science     |
| 12 | Male   | 6  | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education                              |
| 13 | Female | 5  | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education                              |
| 14 | Female | 9  | 1. Certificate in English                                 |

|    |        |    |                              |
|----|--------|----|------------------------------|
| 15 | Female | 16 | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education |
| 16 | Female | 15 | 1. Certificate in English    |
| 17 | Female | 10 | 1. Bachelors in<br>Education |

### 3.9.2. Data Collection

In this study, the researcher tried effectively to discover EFL teachers' point of view about continuous assessment. The unstructured open-ended interview which is mostly used in qualitative studies was the mode of data collection in this research. Borrowing from Patton (2002), interviews in qualitative studies should be open-ended and sensitive as well as exploratory and flexible in nature. The purpose of interview in grounded theory methodology is not testing hypotheses or understanding a truth but helping the researcher to explore the experiences of the respondents to create a theory. Whyte (1982) believed that in order to elicit detailed information, the interview should be unstructured, conversational and open-ended. This is actually interviewer's responsibility to encourage participants to elaborate their answers and present details (Hancock, Ockleford & Windrdge, 2009).

This method was considered as the most suitable method to find an in-depth understanding of the perception of small numbers of participants regarding continuous assessment as an alternative method of evaluation. According to Patton

(2002), interviewing enables the researchers to find out those things which cannot be directly observed such as feelings, thoughts and intentions.

The researcher sampled participants who were willing to share their experiences and opinions with researcher. The study started with the general question, “What is your perception of continuous assessment? Why?” The researcher adjusted later questions depending on how the interviewee answered earlier questions, to clarify the responses, to follow promising new lines of enquiry, and to probe for more details (Soklaridi, 2009). The process of interviewing went on until the theoretical saturation was reached.

Of great importance to the research in conducting interviews was providing respectful environment for interviewees. Hence, in this study, the interviewees were free to choose the interview time and location for the sake of being comfortable to answer the research questions. Each interview had duration of thirty minutes. One prompt interview question that focused on the teachers’ perception of continuous assessment and the reasons behind it was asked without interference from the researcher aired her views on the issue. All interviews were recorded and the notes were taken by the researcher as well to restrict the problems of interview. Teachers were totally comfortable with such a procedure. Interviewing teachers would give a better understanding of their perspectives on continuous assessment – their feelings, their beliefs, their views and concerns about it.



### **3.9.3. Data Analysis**

In this study, the researcher has started data analysis from the beginning of the interview. In grounded theory, data collection, analysis and coding progress hand in hand (Khambete & Athavanka, 2010). Then, the other interviews were conducted to reach theoretical saturation. Non-verbal signals were also analyzed to reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under the study.

Coding is considered as the main feature and strategy in grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 1987). The researcher started analyzing and coding data immediately after conducting the first interview. This process informed the next set of data collection activity. Borrowing from Corbin and Strauss (1990), it is the main strategy in qualitative study in which the researcher forming categories by rearranging data derived from theory behind the research. Holton (2007) believed that “it is through coding that the conceptual abstraction of data and its reintegration as theory take place” (p.1).

At the time of analyzing each interview, the researcher tried to identify concepts and ideas. In fact, the researcher broke down text into pieces to find the relationships, similarities and dissimilarities between the codes to select the categories. This is the first step in data analysis in grounded theory and Corbin and Strauss (1987) called it open coding. Borrowing from Corbin and Strauss (1990), the aim of open coding is giving a new insight to analyst “by breaking through standard ways of thinking about or interpreting phenomena reflected in data” (p.12). In this process, the similar ideas and concepts are grouped together to form categories and

subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1987). For example, the researcher noted several advantages of continuous assessment from an interview and labeled these as “advantages of continuous assessment”. Then she broke this category into specific dimensions of “reducing test anxiety”, “regular class attendance”, and “increase in learners’ motivation”. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), in open coding, a researcher develops categories through specification which “furthers the precision of a grounded theory” (p. 12). In fact, open coding stimulates questions to guide the researcher throughout the study (Corbin & Strauss, 1987). To continue with the example of “advantages of continuous assessment”, open coding generates some questions such as “what is the merit of continuous assessment over final examination?”, “how would continuous assessment reduce learners’ anxiety?”, “how could continuous assessment encourage learners to regular class attendance?”

To create a conditional matrix which is the purpose of axial coding, categories were related to subcategories as the second step of data analysis. In axial coding, the researcher also tested the relationships among categories and developed them (Corbin & Strauss, 1987). To continue with the example of “advantages of continuous assessment”, the researcher scrutinized and determined the possible methods of increasing learners’ motivation by implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes and developed three subcategories of “encouragement”, “varied activities”, and “peer assessment”. The researcher didn’t consider the opinion of one EFL teacher about the significant role of continuous assessment in increasing learners’ motivation a sufficient basis to develop a theory. In fact, she interviewed more teachers who pointed to this idea over and over again.

Finally, the researcher selected the core categories through the process of selective coding to create the theory. Borrowing from Corbin and Strauss (1990), “selective coding is the process by which all categories are unified around a core category, and categories that need further explication are filled-in descriptive detail” (p.14). The researcher identified the core categories by asking questions such as “what is the main idea presented in this study?” and “what does all the interviews seem to be about?” (Corbin & Strauss, 1987). “Advantages” and “disadvantages” are selected as two core categories of this study which represented the central ideas of EFL teachers about continuous assessment.

#### **3.9.4. Establishing Credibility**

Credibility is the main factor in increasing the strength of qualitative research and determining whether the findings are accurate (Creswell, 2003). Borrowing from Patton (2002), credibility should be taken into consideration at the time of designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study. Hence, as much as the researcher increases the credibility of the study, they could equally provide accurate interpretation and record of data.

In this study, the researcher did member checking after each interview to increase the credibility and improve the accuracy of data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checks as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” in a study (p.314). Borrowing from Curtin and Fossey (2007), “It is a way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants’ experiences” (p.92). In this study, data was gathered and precisely transcribed by the researcher and then

returned to interviewee to analyze and comment on it whether reflects their perception and experience or not. Member checking provides this opportunity for researcher to understand whether the interviewees agree with the findings and interpretations (Bitsch, 2005). Doyle (2007) asserted that member checking gives power, voice and engagement to the participants throughout the research process which would increase the credibility of the study significantly.

# **Chapter Four**

## **Results**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Compared to theory-first studies which take one technique in varying conditions, this data-first study which is deeply grounded in practitioners' perspectives clearly indicates that most teachers have positive attitudes toward implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes along final examination. More specifically, it shows the importance of making some alternations in the process of evaluating learners in public and private language schools.

Hence, the researcher conducted this study in an EFL environment and interviewed EFL teachers to understand their perceptions of continuous assessment. In short, the coding schemes of the grounded theory method yielded “advantages and disadvantages of continuous assessment” as the core categories and some subcategories including “transfer of information into long term memory”, “reducing test anxiety”, “information-rich evaluation”, “increase in learners’ motivation”, “regular class attendance”, “appropriate supplementary materials”, “lowering discrimination”, “redefining teachers’ role”, “rote memorization”, “increasing unpaid workload”, “increasing learners’ anxiety”, “penalizing introverted learners”, “inapplicability in advanced levels”, “lowering learners’ self-confidence”, and “increasing learners’ workload”.

#### **4.2. Advantages of Continuous Assessment**

In this section, the researcher classifies the major advantages of implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes mentioned by the participants in response to

the research question. Interestingly, most of the participants had positive attitude toward implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes. They believed that this method of assessment would increase students' achievement and learning significantly and have a key role in reducing text anxiety. Moreover, it increases learners' motivation, encourages regular class attendance, and lowers discrimination in EFL environments. Continuous assessment also provides this opportunity for EFL teachers to suggest appropriate supplementary materials to students. The advantages of continuous assessment are described in details in the following:

#### **4.2.1. Transfer of Information into Long-Term Memory**

Considering participants' view, students' memorization of the content rather than learning is one of the main drawbacks of final examination. Overemphasizing the role of scores in the traditional method of evaluation results in retaining information in short-term instead of long-term memory and then forgetting all the contents after a while. The participants believe that evaluating students through final examination doesn't suit the aim of education which is learning. They consider continuous assessment a valuable method of evaluation as it results in transferring information into student's long-term memory and enhancing learning through repeated practice. Verifying this point, Abbas says:

*Continuous assessment has higher efficiency than midterm and final examination as it leads learners to use their long-term memory. Students usually study the day before the final exam and then forget all the materials the day after. Contrary, continuous assessment results in deep learning as students' long-term memory is involved in this process.*

Considering participants' viewpoint, repetition which is the main feature of continuous assessment is a powerful teaching tool in EFL classes particularly in beginner levels due to lack of skill in reading and writing. In fact, repetition and practice are the main methods of instructing beginner learners especially those who aim to master conversational skills. Supporting this idea, Sara says:

*Continuous assessment is a valuable tool of teaching especially in beginner levels. Insufficient knowledge of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary of learners makes listening and repetition the main methods of receiving instruction in these levels. Continuous assessment provides this opportunity for them to master standards by reviewing and repeating continuously.*



Participants also believe that if teachers encourage students to assess their classmates by making up their own questions while reviewing information through continuous assessment, more information would be transferred into students' long-term memory. In addition, teachers would realize that students learn the contents deeply and don't memorize them. Nazanin explains this idea:

*Teacher can enhance students' learning and involve their long-term memory more actively in continuous assessment by encouraging them to assess their classmates. In addition, she can be sure that students learn the materials rather than simple rote memorization.*

The traditional method of evaluation often doesn't provide this opportunity for students to think beyond the framework of their textbooks and students just memorize the content of books to achieve good marks in final examination. In fact, this situation changes the path of education from 'studying to learn' to 'studying to achieve good marks'. Continuous assessment improves this situation as its goal is to make improvement in students' learning rather than simply judge them by scores. Regarding this, Mahsa says:

*The educational system of Iran overemphasizes the role of examinations which results in considering good score instead of good learning as the main aim of education. By way of contrast, continuous assessment makes students eager to learning by deemphasizing scores.*

Bahareh, one of the participants, also points to some drawbacks of the current evaluation system which can be overcome through implementing continuous assessment. She justifies her idea by giving an example and explains:

*Unfortunately, the aim of most teachers is supporting students to get good marks in examinations as good score is a sign of good learning in educational system of Iran falsely. Once, I asked students to study for exam of the following session. Next month, I took the same exam without informing them. Interestingly, around 70 percent of students, who got the top scores in the first exam, wrote wrong and incomplete answers in the second one. This shows that I as a teacher try in vain. This indicates that my students just rote memorize the lessons, retain them in their short-term memory and then forget them immediately. I think it is the main flaw in the educational system of Iran. Assessing students every session, students would review teaching materials*

*several times which results in transferring them into their long-term memory.*

Considering teachers' perspectives, reviewing doesn't mean repeating a point in one session several times, but repeating a point in several sessions. The teacher should consider the intervals in repetitions as is included in continuous assessment. As is said "practice makes perfect", the impact of repetition in the whole process of learning is undeniable. EFL learners cannot learn anything without practice and repetition.

#### **4.2.1.1. Developing Automaticity**

Some participants also believe that in addition to enhancing learning, continuous assessment may lead to automaticity. According to their viewpoint, practicing teaching materials continuously would move the contents from controlled to automatic processing. As an example, an EFL learner practices a grammatical pattern over several sessions; remembering and using this pattern become easier and easier and eventually the learner can use this grammatical structure without conscious thinking. This is what exactly happens in acquiring the first language. In fact, mastering the first language is due to practice and repetition, not receiving special instruction. Roya confirms this idea by giving an example:

*Learning a language is like learning driving. A driver can drive a car for more than one hundred kilometers without being tired and thinking about other things while driving wouldn't cause him to forget this complex skill because he had enough practice. Continuous assessment enables language learners to perform a task or answer a question very quickly and efficiently due to repeated practices.*

Like common activities in daily life such as walking, driving, and speaking which require a few efforts to perform them, EFL teachers can decrease the need for effortful control over speaking, reading, and writing in English by developing automaticity. As soon as your students adopt automaticity, he doesn't need to focus on grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects of language while producing English. Abbas says in this regard:

*Adopting automaticity is essential for our EFL learners to become successful in the field of language learning. In this case, learners wouldn't forget what they learnt immediately after finishing the course. An EFL teacher who was teaching English for more than 20 years would forget this foreign language after retirement because he didn't adopt automaticity. In fact, automaticity which is the result of repetition and practice would*

*best be achieved through implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes.*

Dorsa has the same viewpoint and believes that continuous assessment encourages learner to acquire a foreign language efficiently. Verifying this point, she says:

*Repetition is a powerful tool of mastering a skill. Once you master English, even years later, with no additional experience, it is possible to remember the words, grammars and etc. as they were strongly encoded in your brain.*

Continuous assessment provides practices needed to develop automaticity. Repeating linguistic patterns continuously over the academic year establishes automatic response patterns that require small amount of time and effort to call upon them.

#### **4.2.2. Reducing Test Anxiety**

The second significant advantage of continuous assessment mentioned by the participants of this study is its key role in reducing test anxiety. They believe that although a little anxiety before examination is necessary and can help students to focus their attention, high levels of test anxiety can lead to poor performance.

Maryam is one of the participants who considered continuous assessment as a valuable tool to reduce test anxiety and says:

*Test and anxiety are like twin brothers who seem never separate from each other, but the high amount of stress during a test may lead to student's failure. We can decrease test anxiety considerably by implementing continuous assessment in EFL classes.*

Participants consider pressure by parents and schools to achieve top scores as the main cause of test anxiety. In other words, high expectations of a child's performance in a test provoke considerable test anxiety which may lead to his failure. These EFL teachers believe that in continuous assessment program, EFL learners don't feel much anxiety as it deemphasizes the role of scores. In addition, unlike final examination which gives only one chance to students to show their language abilities, students have enough opportunities in continuous assessment to indicate their real potential. Regarding this, Mahsa says:

*Test anxiety can affect anyone. Even I as a teacher have anxiety while you are interviewing me and this results in not performing as well as possible in this interview. What about students who are always worried to get top scores, be the best among their*

*classmates and satisfy their parents. Parents also concern about their children's scores. This anxiety leads students to poor performance. Actually, it does not allow students to study and learn efficiently. Continuous assessment reduces this anxiety in students by providing enough opportunities for compensation for unacceptable grades.*

Dorsa also highlights that teachers and parents should not overemphasize or deemphasize the role of continuous assessment scores. Overemphasizing these scores would lead to greater anxiety and deemphasizing them would make students to consider them unimportant and not show any effort to have good performance in assessments. Moreover, teachers should encourage every positive point in students' performance to reduce their anxiety considerably. She explains:

*Continuous assessment should be implemented carefully. Teachers and parents shouldn't consider assessments too important or too trivial. Considering assessments too important would increase students' anxiety. On the other hand, considering assessment unimportant would decrease students' effort. In addition, Promotional aspects should be involved in continuous assessment program to reduce test anxiety. For instance, when an EFL learner is encouraged by teacher due to good*

*performance in his homework, a sense of self-confidence would be strengthened in him that leads to reduction in test anxiety.*

Mahdi also believes that continuous assessment decreases text anxiety by reviewing the learning materials several times during the term. Not studying at all or waiting until the last minute can have significant negative effect on students' anxiety. He states:

*Reviewing lessens in continuous assessment results in reduction in this anxiety. This role is even more prominent in English classes as not knowing the meaning of a word may cause student to not understand the meaning of the whole paragraph. . As an EFL teacher, you may hear this sentence several times from students that "I have more anxiety for English final exam than other courses." High level of difficulty of English textbook is not the reason of this anxiety but it is due to lack of enough study, review and preparation.*

#### **4.2.3. Information-Rich Evaluation**

Schools and institutes have a responsibility to provide regular, accurate and comprehensive information about learners' development for parents and students.



Effective parental involvement in students' progress is the result of true reporting of students' achievement. In addition, it enables teacher to adopt their instruction to match student's needs. Participants believe that teachers can carry out this critical task by implementing continuous assessment in their EFL classes. Verifying this point Mahsa says:

*Better evaluation of students' learning can be considered as the other advantage of continuous assessment. The teacher can draw the scores obtained from continuous assessment on a chart to have better understanding of students' progress and report to the parents. He can show the real state of a student to his parents on this chart.*

Mahsa, one of the participants, explains that classroom assessments do more than just measure learning and highlights the active role of teachers in assessing and providing feedback in continuous assessment. She states:

*As opposed to traditional system which requires teachers to just administer one or two tests during the term, teachers play more active role in continuous assessment. Administering and marking assessments, providing accurate information about students'*

*achievements for parents, and providing appropriate and meaningful feedback on each assessment every session are other responsibilities of teachers.*

Providing accurate, meaningful, and comprehensive information about students' achievements and progress is not the only goal of continuous assessment. Teachers are responsible to provide effective feedback based on the results of assessments. Providing students with meaningful feedback can greatly enhance learning and improve students' achievements. Moreover, Bahareh believes that feedback should be provided in a timely manner to be effective. For instance, delayed feedback would develop the habit of using a wrong grammatical pattern. She says:

*Continuous assessment helps me as a teacher to evaluate students' learning accurately and provide constant, immediate and effective feedback to students on their learning. When feedback is given immediately after student's performance, student can use it to enhance their learning; otherwise, student would be confused to connect the feedback with the action.*

#### **4.2.4. Increase in Learners' Motivation**

Some of the participants consider motivation as a vital component to learn a foreign language which can be met through implementing continuous assessment. They believe that continuous assessment is a strong motivational tool in EFL classes which can motivate students through encouragement, varied activities, and peer assessment.

Teachers can enhance EFL learners' achievement through continuous assessment by providing proof of their success. Participants argue that as soon as students realize their own success, they would be motivated to have better performance on the following assessments. In fact, without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals (Dornyei, 1998). Verifying this fact, Hamid says:

*Continuous assessment can play a significant role in motivating EFL learners to learn. Continuous and accurate appraisal of learner's achievement fuels motivation which results in improvement of his performance in assessments and better learning.*

Maryam believes that teachers should not only encourage learners' academic achievements but also their creativity, behavior, personality, and etc. This leads to a

sense of hopefulness in students and actuates them to show better ability, potential, skill, and performance in the classroom. She continues by giving an example:

*If teachers take in to account students' creativity in addition to their achievement in continuous assessment and use different methods of assessment, students would be motivated considerably. For instance, when I ask my EFL learner to draw the meaning of the word "spider" and he draws it on a tree, he deserves the full mark. These appraisals make student motivated and interested in teacher and her course.*

Moreover, in continuous assessment, different methods of assessment are available. Considering participants' view, teachers can take benefit from this opportunity and apply various methods of assessing knowledge and skills of students such as oral method, homework, paragraph writing, group discussion, and etc. to motivate students. On the other hand, as different students have different learning style, each may prefer a different method of assessment based on his potential and perform better in that method. Verifying this point, Sanaz says:

*Each student has different learning style and considering this fact in teaching, assessing, providing feedback, giving homework*

*and even suggesting appropriate textbooks is a great source of motivation.*

Learners develop at various levels, using various patterns, and at different rates of progress which are not considered important in educational system of Iran as all of them are evaluated through one-shot examination at the end of the term. This diversity becomes even more important in EFL classes due to different learners age groups in one class. According to Hasan, continuous assessment takes into account this diversity and provides teachers with various methods of assessment. He says:

*Different methods of assessment lead to students' motivation.*

*Different students have different learning styles and their performance is different based on the method of assessment.*

*Some are happy assessing though homework, while others much prefer the oral method. The secret to have motivated students is ensuring that assessment tasks are varied.*

The studied teachers consider peer assessment as a powerful motivator in EFL classes. In other words, one method teachers can motivate EFL learners is to involve them in the process of assessment. For instance, teachers can request students to

make up their own questions from a certain part of the textbook and ask their classmates to answer. This kind of assessment changes the role of EFL learners from passive to active learners and assessors. Leili makes this point clear by giving an example:

*This program can be more successful when students are involved. For instance, I usually implement peer assessment in teaching reading comprehension. One session before, I ask students to read the passage and make questions. After reading each paragraph, students ask their questions and their classmates answer voluntarily. This makes students more active and motivated in the process of learning.*

Roya shares the same idea and says:

*The process of continuous assessment can serve an important role in enhancing EFL learners' motivation. If we involve learners in the assessment process, they would take responsibility for their own learning. This increases students' motivation to learn in addition to their success.*

#### 4.2.5. Regular Class Attendance

Teachers highlight the importance of regular class attendance from the beginning of the term as it facilitates learning particularly in EFL classes. Some of the most frequent reasons of missing EFL classes are that learners need to study other more important course work and find the class boring. Participants of this study believe that continuous assessment has a key role in encouraging EFL learners to attend classes regularly in private language institutes.

Participants believe that considering English as an unimportant course is the main reason of irregular class attendance in these institutes. Paying more attention to the school courses, EFL learners attend English classes on an irregular basis. In other words, EFL learners are usually absent in class at the night of having exam at school. This problem is even more prominent in advanced levels as most students study for entrance exam. Assessing students every session, continuous assessment program makes EFL classes more important in private language institutes. Verifying this fact, Hamid says:

*In continuous assessment, students do not just fill a seat; they have active participation in class. Actually, they would pay more attention to their class attendance and participation because missing one session results in missing one score.*

Being bored can also have a profound negative impact on how well EFL learners do and how regular they attend to the classes. Participants of this study believe that continuous assessment program makes boring classes more interesting for students.

When students find the teaching materials difficult to understand, they are less likely to attend and consider the class boring. Participants believe that reviewing the materials of the previous sessions makes the teacher's lectures more perceptible and understandable for students in continuous assessment. In this case, students would find the material more challenging and have more active presentation. In fact, continuous assessment makes students interested in learning materials and sometimes encourages them to have pre-reading. Verifying this point, Nazanin, one of the participants, says:

*Studying before coming to the class leads to have good assessment. Good assessment encourages students to have more active participation. And more active participation makes EFL classroom interesting for learners. The time will pass much faster when students are engaged in the material.*

As is put by the participants, encouragement is a strong motivational tool to regular class attendance. As soon as students realize their own success, they would be



motivated to have better performance on the following assessments and have active participation and presentation in the classes. Regarding this, Maryam says that

*Doing well in continuous assessment and receiving positive feedback make students motivated and interested in English classes.*

Another valuable aid to have interesting class is using varied activities for teaching, assessing, testing, and giving feedback. Fortunately, in continuous assessment, teachers have this opportunity to take benefit from various methods of assessing knowledge and skills of students such as oral method, homework, class discussion, paragraph writing, and etc. Mahsa makes it clear by giving an example and states:

*Despite I loved geology very much; my geology teacher was possibly the most boring person I had ever met in high school. Every day our class activities were the same. I preferred to not attend such tremendously boring class and pass the course by simple rote memorization of the textbook. This developed a sense of hatefulness in me toward geology. If my teacher had used varied activities even for assessing, maybe I were a geologist*

*now. Applying various methods of assessment at least results in not having a boring class in continuous assessment.*

Maryam shares the same idea and believes that different methods of assessment can keep students interested in classrooms. She explains:

*I would assess students through dictation, homework, oral questions and playing if I implement this program. If teachers take in to account students' creativity in addition to their achievement in continuous assessment and use different methods of assessment, students would be motivated considerably. For instance, when I ask my student to draw the meaning of the word "spider" and he draws it on a tree, he deserves the full mark. These appraisals make students motivated and interested in teacher and his course.*

#### **4.2.6. Appropriate Supplementary Materials**

Even the most comprehensive textbooks don't include all the required materials for students. Appropriate supplementary materials improve students' learning effectively due to encouraging more study on the subject matter. Students usually ask their teachers to suggest a good supplementary material which improves

their weaknesses and encourages their strengths. Some participants believe that continuous assessment enables teachers to do this critical task well and make proper suggestions in this regard. Continuous assessment enables teachers understand more and finer details of students' weaknesses and strengths. For instance, teachers can understand through assessments that a student has learned vocabularies very well but still has problem in grammar. The best supplementary material for this student practices grammatical points meaningfully and clearly. Concerning this point, Maryam states:

*In continuous assessment I can suggest better supplementary materials and software as I have better understanding of my students.*

On the other hand, implementing continuous assessment program enables teachers to realize students' learning style. As an example, a teacher may find that his student has visual learning and suggests those textbooks which include more pictures. As different students have different learning style, they would prefer different supplementary materials. This diversity becomes even more important in EFL classes of private language schools due to different learners age groups in one class. Students' ages can vary significantly from 7 to 20 particularly in beginner levels. Hence, realizing learners' learning styles is considered critical in EFL classes. Sanaz

believes that identifying learners' learning style can keep students motivated in classrooms and says:

*Each student has different learning style and considering this fact in teaching, assessing, providing feedback, giving homework and even suggesting appropriate textbooks is a great source of motivation.*

#### **4.2.7. Lowering Discrimination**

Participants have negative opinion on discrimination and believe that it encourages more talented student to demonstrate what he knows while has opposite effect on learner whose performance is below the desired level. Continuous assessment results in not discriminating EFL learners according to their language ability as the aim of this program is learning not getting good scores. Dorsa says in this regard:

*Unfortunately, most teachers pay more attention to stronger students than weaker ones. They consider that high scores of a limited number of students in final exam can be a good predictor of teachers' successful instructing in the related course. In continuous assessment, teachers' performance would*

*be judged based on learners' progress rather than final scores which leaves no place for discrimination in EFL classes.*

Considering Dorsa's viewpoint, one of the main reasons of discrimination in classes is judging teachers' performance based on their pupils' final scores. This leads teachers to pay greater attention to those students who are talented enough to get the best scores in final exams. In continuous assessment, teachers' are judged based on their pupils' learning and achievement not scores.

Hasan pointed to mental health problems and other disadvantages of discrimination in EFL classes. He states:

*While every teacher knows that all students should be treated the same way and given the same opportunities as other students, some of them pay more attention to those learners who are more talented. This discrimination results in low self-confidence, anxiety, or depression in learners. Continuous assessment may prevent such situation as the goal of this program is to have progress not be the best student.*

Giving students the same opportunity to progress is one of the core principles of continuous assessment. In fact, teachers should not expect all students to learn

equally in a same rate and then pay little attention to those who have poor performance in classrooms as students are different in social and educational background, age, learning styles, motivation for learning English, ability, needs and interests. Mahdi justifies the idea by giving examples:

*Before any implementation of assessment, teacher should get some information about students' social and family status to accomplish justly expectation from their performance in assessment. As an example, teacher should not expect a student whose father is worker to perform as well as a student whose father is professor. Imagine you have two same plants. One plant receives sufficient water, sunlight, air, and nutrients while the other doesn't. You shouldn't expect these two plants to grow similarly.*

#### **4.2.8. Redefining Teachers' Role**

Unlike the current method of evaluation in which teacher just administer final examination at the end and some subtests during the academic year to decide whether students go to the next level or not, in continuous assessment, teachers have constant look on students' progress and provide immediate and meaningful feedback after each assessment for each learner which are required more time and effort. In

other words, continuous assessment encourages more teacher participation in the process of learning and teaching. Based on her experiences, Dorsa highlights:

*Continuous assessment has set new demands on teachers which change the role of them from passive to active assessors and instructors. Moreover, teachers have constant observation on students' achievements and progress.*

Mahsa compares today's system of evaluation and continuous assessment and pointed that continuous assessment redefines teachers' role. In fact, continuous assessment puts more responsibilities on the part of teacher followed by several advantages. She says:

*As opposed to the traditional system which requires teachers to just administer one or two tests during the term, teachers play more active role in continuous assessment. Administering and marking assessments, providing accurate information about students' achievements for parents, and providing appropriate and meaningful feedback on each assessment every session are other responsibilities of teachers.*

In general term, continuous assessment program made teachers accountable for achieving the main aim of education which is learning.

### **4.3. Drawbacks of Continuous Assessment**

In the previous section, the advantages of continuous assessment were discussed. In this section, the researcher classifies the major problems of continuous assessment particularly when it is wrongly implemented as continuous testing or EFL teachers put greater attention on summative nature of this program. According to the participants, continuous assessment would penalize introverted learners, lower learners' self-confidence, and encourage rote memorization when teachers focus mostly on summative continuous assessment. They also believed continuous assessment is likely to increase learners' anxiety when it is misinterpreted as continuous testing. This program cannot be implemented in advanced EFL classes due to the lack of time and high volume of teaching materials and increases students' workload considerably.

#### **4.3.1. Rote Memorization**

Some participants believe that repetition which is the main feature of continuous assessment encourages rote memorization rather than learning if teachers focus greatly on summative assessments. Leili confirms this idea by giving an example:



*Imagine that every session I point to a picture of ball in the textbook and ask learners 'what do you see in the picture' and they immediately answer 'a ball'. Although they give a correct answer, they don't learn the meaning of the word 'ball'. If you use another picture, they may not answer correctly since they just rote memorize the relationship between the picture of the book and the word 'ball'.*

Saeid is another EFL teacher who assumes that improper implementation of continuous assessment would lead to memorization and reproduction not deeper understanding of new information. He says:

*In my opinion, focusing on summative assessments in this program has negative effect on EFL learners as it encourages rote memorization. If I assess students every session to just measure their learning, they may have better performance but it doesn't mean better learning. Learners just memorize the contents because of fear of bad mark and punishment.*

Saeid believes that students memorize their lessons for the fear of low teacher's attention, a poor grade and possible ridicule by teacher in summative

continuous assessments. The right answers of students to assessments' questions and their possible high performance in this method is due to rote memorization not deep learning. Zohreh also supports the same themes and says:

*Repetition in summative continuous assessments leads to memorization. Memorization wouldn't train learners' brain or help them better at learning.*

#### **4.3.2. Increasing Unpaid Workload**

The EFL teachers under the study believe that managers do not give financial recognition it deserves to the work of teachers particularly those who are teaching in language institutes and consider this issue as a barrier in implementing continuous assessment as this program results in more teachers' responsibilities in the process of learning and teaching. Abbas considers increasing unpaid workload as the main flaw of continuous assessment and says:

*Since this program requires teachers' hardworking, most of the EFL teachers in institutes would refuse to implement it due to inadequate income. Low income demotivates teachers to do their job effectively.*

Participants complain that while they have the most critical profession in the society of Iran, they are rarely paid comparing to other professions. On the other hand, increasing unpaid workload is the main reason of working two shifts as they cannot live in the current economic situation with such low salary. For this reason, many EFL teachers provide private tuitions to pay their living expenses which may results in low quality of teaching and alternatively, students' low achievements. Verifying this fact, Mahsa says:

*Teachers' higher workloads in continuous assessment than traditional method of evaluation and their underpayment seems as a barrier to implement this program. As opposed to traditional system which requires teachers to just administer one or two tests during the term, teachers play more active role in continuous assessment. Administering and marking assessments, providing accurate information about students' achievements for parents, and providing appropriate and meaningful feedback on each assessment every session are other responsibilities of teachers. Despite the great advantages of these activities for EFL classes, the teachers wouldn't do the due to underpayment.*

Definitely, increasing unpaid workload can be one of the main causes of the lack of progress in educational system of Iran as it demotivates teachers to

concentrate on their job and spend more time and energy to enhance students' learning. Hasan also believes that working two shifts leaves no time for continuous assessment and says:

*Working two shifts, teachers don't have sufficient time to administer and mark course assessments tasks which are undeniable parts of continuous assessment.*

#### **4.3.3. Increasing Learners' Anxiety**

Some of the participants believe that continuous assessment is likely to increase rather than decrease learners' anxiety when it is misinterpreted as continuous testing. According to their viewpoints, taking an exam every session would put students under pressure to get certain academic results which can cause a lot of anxiety. On the other hand, when students don't get the results they think they should get in one examination, they would have more anxiety for the next one. Based on her experiences, Sara highlights:

*Unlike final examination, in continuous testing, EFL learners don't know whether the exam would be taken at the beginning or end of the class and which parts of the book would be included*

*in exam. All of these questions would result in having anxiety in English classes.*

Misinterpreting these two concepts and the extensive use of testing instead of assessment may encounter students with more problems than the final exam such as high anxiety and a sense of hatefulness toward teacher and his course. Sanaz believes that the level of anxiety in continuous assessment is higher considerably than in final examination if we misinterpret it as continuous testing and explains:

*Having good performance in assessments and getting good marks would become the main concerns of learners in continuous testing which would increase their anxiety significantly.*

Test anxiety can affect any people of all ages and intelligence. Saeid believes that being afraid of failing and performing badly in exams are the main reason of test anxiety. He says:

*Students usually feel anxious before and during midterm, final exams, quizzes and even class participation for the fear of poor*

*performance. Assessing students continuously throughout the term wouldn't decrease students' anxiety. Both intelligent and unintelligent students usually feel significant discomfort at the time of summative assessment disregarding the number of times they are assessed.*

#### **4.3.4. Penalizing Introverted Learners**

Some of the participants believe that summative continuous assessment encounters introverted learners with their worst academic fears in EFL classes. Implementing summative continuous assessment in EFL classes, especially a class that emphasizes the oral assessment, put introverted learners in a great disadvantage. Using this program, most of the learning occurs in classroom setting through constant performance, evaluation by teachers or peers, and reception of feedback. Such situation is intolerable for introverted learners due to their fear of negative evaluation and being humiliated by teachers or others. For instance, they may not produce a correct grammatical pattern in response to teacher's question despite of mastering that structure due to feeling uncomfortable speaking in front of other classmates. Verifying this fact, Zohreh says:

*I agree to use formative not summative continuous assessment instead of final examination as the rights of introverted learners*

*who don't have active participations in class would be violated. During years of teaching, I encountered a large number of introverted students who perform very well in final examination despite of poor performance in classroom. It is not fair to evaluate these learners' achievement through summative daily assessments.*

Participants consider penalizing introverted learners as one of the drawbacks of continuous assessment when teachers put greater attention on summative nature. They believe that fear of negative evaluation and being humiliated by classmates may result in poor performance in assessments, irregular class attendance and eventually dropping the course. Nazanin, one of the participants, says:

*High levels of fear and anxiety have significant negative effects on students' ability to learn effectively in classroom. It is what exactly happens for introverted learners in summative continuous assessments. These students are always anxious and worried about their poor performance in assessments and this leads to a sense of hatefulness toward EFL classes and teachers which finally causes them to fail.*

Saeid also supports the same theme and exemplifies:

*Class participation doesn't play an important role in public schools but in private language institutes 30 percent of the whole mark is referred to active class participation. When I was an EFL learner, I didn't raise my hand even when I knew the answer with one hundred percent absolute certainty. I was a good student, studied hard and earned good grades in final and midterm exams, but I was also introverted and never opened my mouth in classrooms. It wasn't easy for me to participate in class actively. Obviously, I usually lost class participation marks. This is exactly what would be happened to introverted learners in summative continuous assessment.*

#### **4.3.5. Inapplicability in Advanced Levels**

Some of the participants of this study believe that continuous assessment cannot be implemented in advanced EFL levels due to the lack of time and high volume of teaching materials. Despite the high level of difficulty of English textbooks in advanced levels, sufficient time is not scheduled for proper instruction. Such condition obliges teacher to hold some free make-up sessions out of institute



and school time such as Fridays which put additional workload on teacher and students. Based on her experiences, Sara explains:

*In advanced levels, I cannot even manage my time to teach all the contents of the book, how is it possible to implement continuous assessment? Learning four skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking in advanced level, complicated grammar, and hard vocabularies leave no time for continuous assessment.*

Considering participants' opinion, even the most experienced teachers need to study and review teaching materials before advanced EFL classes. In addition, advanced lessons require advanced and more complicated tasks and questions for assessment and subsequently more time to design them. Usually the learners of these levels are high school students who need to spend more time to study their lessons at school to accept in entrance exam. All of these situations make continuous assessment an inapplicable program in advanced levels. Zohreh supports this idea and says:

*This program is only applicable in schools due to low volume of materials and enough time. In addition, students pay more*

*attention to their schools' courses due to high importance of school marks. I think implementing continuous assessment in advanced levels is impossible.*

Similar to Zohreh, Hasan who has taught English in advanced levels for 15 years believes that continuous assessment is not applicable in advanced levels and says:

*I am always suffering from lack of enough time for teaching. In one hour, I am supposed to teach conversation, grammar, pronunciations, and new words.*

#### **4.3.6. Lowering Learners' Self-Confidence**

Some participants of this study argue that assessing students continuously to evaluate their learning which is one of the aims of continuous assessment cause a terrible condition for EFL learners to progress. They believe that having poor performance in some assessments leads to weakening spirit, lowering self-confidence, and severe feeling of frustration. Verifying this fact, Saeid says:

*One of the main disadvantages of summative aspect of continuous assessment is frustrating students due to not performing well in some of these assessments. This feeling of frustration can have a negative effect on students' learning and achievement. Moreover, it may cause them to lose their self-confidence and have a sense of hatefulness toward English.*

Participants consider this problem even more prominent at elementary levels where learners are very young and desire to have the best performance and score. Regarding this, Leili says:

*Younger EFL learners like to get the top score in class, otherwise they would become frustrated. Not getting good mark in assessment, students express their lack of faith in themselves and feel that they are not clever enough and don't deserve to be at the top of the class.*

Akram points to the negative impact of lowering self-confidence on EFL learners which varies greatly and can range from poor performance to shyness and social difficulties. She explains:

*Low self-confidence results in poor performance in assessments. Actually, a student's low self-confidence can have a profound negative impact on everything he does in the classroom and even society. For instance, it can lessen a student's desire to learn, his cooperation with classmates, and his willingness to participate in class activities as well as social interactions with teachers and other students.*

#### **4.3.7. Increasing Learners' Workload**

Putting students under the high workload and leaving no time for them to get enough rest and sleep are the last drawbacks of continuous assessment mentioned by the participants. They believe that study overload results in problem of understanding during class, poor performance in assessments, and low achievement at the end of the term. Regarding this fact, Sanaz says:

*EFL teachers should take into consideration that students should perform other more courses every day. If teacher of each course implement continuous assessment, students should give up sleep to study every night and this limits their ability to learn.*

Hence, implementing continuous assessment in all courses is impossible as students don't have enough time to prepare themselves for several assessments every day. Akram also believes that implementing continuous assessment would increase learners' workload considerably and says:

*Continuous assessment makes students so busy "studying" that they don't have time to rest. They apply to their study all of the time and energy that they possibly could. This situation results in narrowing students' focus in classroom and diminishes their intelligence.*

Leili also has the same idea and believes that bad performance is not the only result of giving up sleep to study and points to other results of having inadequate sleep for students and says:

*Implementing continuous assessment in all courses makes students exhausted. They may complain about study workload which causes them not to learn efficiently. In my opinion, sleepiness is a significant cause of depression, anxiety, and irritability in EFL classes. Sleepiness also makes learners obese.*

Moreover, Saeid believes that applying continuous assessment would lead students to leave this course due to increasing their workload. He states:

*Increasingly, EFL learners are faced with high amount of workload when engaging in several continuous assessment programs. It is essential for teachers to be aware of not increasing learners' workload in EFL classes of private language schools; otherwise, the number of learners would be decreased considerably.*

# **Chapter Five**

## **Discussion and**

### **Conclusion**

## **5.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher provides a brief summary of the study, discusses about the findings and draws some conclusions. In addition, the researcher presents some recommendations for future study.

## **5.2. Summary of the Findings**

In this thesis, the researcher tried to find out how EFL teachers of Mashhad, the capital city of Khorasan-Razavi Province, perceive continuous assessment as an alternative method of evaluation in educational system of Iran by applying qualitative approach in the tradition of the grounded theory. Analysis of learners' perspectives revealed the merits and demerits of continuous assessment.

Concerning its merits, the participants pointed to undeniable role of continuous assessment in regular class attendance and enabling EFL teachers to suggest the most appropriate supplementary materials to learners. Transferring information into long-term memory which may result in better learning and even automaticity and reducing text anxiety were considered as the other main benefits of continuous assessment. Providing accurate and comprehensive information about learners' achievement and giving meaningful feedbacks were other advantages of continuous assessment as well as motivating students through encouragement, varied activities and peer assessment. Implementing this program, teachers wouldn't discriminate learners according to their language ability as the aim of this program is learning not getting good scores.



Participants also pointed to some demerits of continuous assessment in EFL classes particularly when it is wrongly implemented as continuous testing or EFL teachers put greater attention on summative nature of this program. They believed that EFL teachers would refuse to implement continuous assessment because it sets more demands on them as they don't get financial recognition they deserve. Lowering self-confidence, penalizing introverted learners, encouraging memorization, and increasing learners' anxiety were considered as the consequences of improper implementation of continuous assessment. In addition, participants also pointed to inapplicability of this program in advanced levels due to lack of time and high volume of teaching materials.

### **5.3. Discussion**

The conceptual framework indicated that continuous assessment program can reduce EFL learners' test anxiety considerably. Cardno, Tiko, Harish, & Nairn (2009) and Uiseb (2009) and Uiseb (2009) also developed the same theme. They submitted that continuous assessment gives relief to fear, nervousness, and anxiety attached to examinations. This anxiety can be the result of many interrelated factors such as pressure by parents and schools to achieve top score. This high expectation may lead students to cheat in examination. Continuous assessment reduces the probability of EFL learners' cheating in examinations by deemphasizing the role of scores and providing more opportunities to show their real potentials and abilities.

This study also indicated that one of the important aspects of continuous assessment is motivating students through teachers' encouragement, varied activities

and peer assessment. Similarly, from the literature it was understood that continuous assessment is a suitable tool for determining the progress of learners and motivating them to participate actively in their learning (Uiseb, 2009; Frans Nxumalo, 2007; Chung, 2000; Humphreh, 2000). Motivation is a vital component in learning a foreign language such as English which is usually neglected by teachers. Unlike the traditional method of evaluation, in continuous assessment this opportunity is provided for EFL teachers to make students motivated and interested in classes and provide a challenging learning environment for them.

Moreover, the findings revealed that the nature of continuous assessment redefines teachers' role and puts greater demands on the role of the teachers. This is in keeping with the literature stated by Uiseb (2009) and Alausa (2006) that continuous assessment places teachers at the center of all performance-assessment activities and encourages more teacher participation in the overall assessment or grading of his/her learners. By way of contrast, Narayan (2014) concluded that continuous assessment shifts learning from teacher centered to child centered by giving opportunities for students to work in groups. Continuous assessment makes both students and teachers accountable in the process of learning as opposed to traditional system which puts great emphasis on the role of students. Unfortunately, Iranian teachers are like passive vessels that transfer information from textbooks to students without being allowed to make some alternation in the course structure and content. Placing teachers at the center of education enables them to prescribe the syllabus and course content according to the needs of their students which would enhance their achievement considerably.

The findings also revealed that as students are supposed to attend different classes each day, continuous assessment cannot be implemented in all courses. Ellington and Earl (1997: online) shared the same idea and submitted that “Unless continuous assessment is carefully planned and coordinated, there is a very real danger that student may be grossly over-assessed particularly at certain times of the year, when several lecturers are asking simultaneously for assignments to be handed in.... Continuous assessment can, if not properly managed, adversely affect the relationship between students and their tutors.” In fact, putting students under a high workload may result in profound negative effects such as developing a sense of hatefulness toward English which can affect the whole life of students alternatively.

Moreover, Participants identified that continuous assessment has a key role in encouraging students to have regular class attendance. Contrary, from the literature it was understood that teachers complained about students’ absence on the day which is scheduled for the tests in this program (Dowrich, 2008). Poor attendance can be the result of wrong implementation of continuous assessment. If teachers implement continuous assessment properly, students would attend to EFL classes on a regular basis.

In addition, the conceptual framework indicated that applying various methods of assessment results in collecting reliable information about students’ learning and keeping them interested in classes. Nitko (2004) and Plessis, Prouty, Schubert, Habib, and Georg (2003) also developed the same theme. Continuous assessment provides this opportunity for teachers to apply the most proper method of

assessment according to students' age, learning style, assessing style, personality, family statuses which can be vary greatly in EFL classes.

The findings of this study also include more merits and demerits of continuous assessment than what can be identified from previous empirical studies. Developing automaticity and deep learning are considered as the main advantages of continuous assessment in this research. In addition, this alternative method enables teachers to provide regular, accurate and comprehensive information about learners' development for parents and students. Teachers also can suggest better supplementary materials to EFL learners as they have better understanding of their pupils in this method. Moreover, continuous assessment results in not discriminating EFL learners according to their language ability as the aim of this program is learning not getting good scores. Increasing unpaid workload and inapplicability in advanced levels are considered as two main disadvantages of continuous assessment in this data-first study. Some of the participants of this study believed that continuous assessment cannot be implemented in advanced EFL levels due to the lack of time and high volume of teaching materials.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

The researcher found that most of the EFL teachers felt the need to make some alternations in evaluation system which is an integral part of teaching learning process in Iran. The findings of this first-data study, which is deeply grounded in practitioners' perspectives about continuous assessment, indicated that continuous assessment is a valuable aid to improve problems teachers and students encounter in

traditional evaluation system which is deeply rooted in final examination. This beneficial method of evaluation would greatly increase learning, reduce anxiety, provide rich evaluation system and meaningful feedback, motivate learners, encourage regular class attendance, and enable teacher to suggest appropriate supplementary materials to learners in EFL settings. In addition, unlike other alternative systems of evaluation, this approach doesn't require high budget which is the primary concern of educational system.

The conceptual framework also indicated that final examination or continuous assessment should not be chosen in preference to another as both of them have some advantages and disadvantages. According to Kelvin, Imrie, and Miller (1998) "schools and institutes should adopt a form of continuous assessment which records the completion of a series of required tasks and this is complemented by a final examination which is an indication of a student's level of attainment at the end of a unit of learning" (p.91).

Having theorized teachers' views, the available research would be helpful for second and foreign language researchers by presenting them some hypotheses in light of its findings. It is also useful for EFL teachers to develop their method of evaluation and raise their information in line with alternative methods of assessment. Moreover, It informs the managers of the Ministry of Education to set new policies in order to change the path of education from "teaching to test" to "teaching to learn" and support learning which is the main aim of education.

Considering conceptual framework, EFL teachers have limited knowledge regarding administering and assigning assessments, applying the proper methods of assessment and grading assessments which are undeniable parts of continuous assessment program. If EFL teachers do not have adequate and complete understanding about the various aspects of continuous assessment, it may be very difficult for them to implement continuous assessment for its prime objective (Nitko, 2004). Hence, successful implementation of continuous assessment in EFL settings requires sufficient in-service trainings to develop teachers' awareness of this program.

In sum, continuous assessment is one of the valuable methods to provide true information about students' achievement and focus on both summative and formative nature of evaluation which are mostly neglected in current evaluation system of Iran. In addition, as the success of this program is widely proved by many developed and developing countries implemented continuous assessment such as USA, United Kingdom and Nigeria in different subject matters, it can improve the quality of teaching learning process in EFL classes of Iran considerably.

### **5.5. Recommendation**

Based on what this study has revealed the following recommendations have been provided for any attempts designed to bring about improvement and effective implementation of continuous assessment.

Grading assessments correctly is one of the most significant and undeniable parts of successful implementation of continuous assessment program particularly in

EFL classes in which learners are greatly different in social and educational background, age, learning styles, motivation for learning English, ability, needs and interests. Hence, careful and further consideration and study are required in this regard. As Pudaruth, Moloo, Chiniah, Sungkur, Nagowah, and Kishnah (2013) submitted that if students are not marked properly for continuous assessments and if they are given high marks, they can become overconfident and may not prepare themselves adequately for the exams; On the contrary, if the scores for continuous assessments are less than examinations scores, this may mean that the continuous assessments were wrongly set and which has underestimated the students' capabilities and therefore given them wrong feedback.

From the study, it can be concluded that continuous assessment has a key role in enhancing students' learning in urban schools and language institutes. Further study is required in terms of efficiency of this program in rural areas in which students are at risk for low motivation and lack of experienced teachers.

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## چکیده

علیرغم وجود اشکالات اساسی در امتحانات پایان ترم، این روش ارزیابی هنوز هم در کلاس های زبان انگلیسی مدارس و آموزشگاه های خصوصی در ایران بسیار رایج است. پژوهشگران بر این باورند که ارزیابی مداوم می تواند کمک ارزشمندی به رفع مشکلات موجود در سیستم ارزیابی متکی به امتحانات پایانی کند. از همین رو، هدف از این تحقیق، بررسی دیدگاه معلمان زبان انگلیسی ایرانی نسبت به ارزیابی مداوم میباشد. هدفه معلم زبان انگلیسی به کمک نمونه گیری نظری انتخاب شدند و دیدگاه هر یک از آنها به کمک یک مصاحبه ی باز بدون ساختار بررسی شد. داده ها بر اساس روش نظریه پردازی داده بنیاد به دقت مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفتند و به دو گروه اصلی مزایا و معایب ارزیابی مداوم کد گذاری شدند. شرکت کنندگان بر این باور بودند که ارزیابی مداوم تاثیر بسزایی بر انتقال مطالب درسی به حافظه ی بلند مدت، کاهش استرس امتحان، افزایش انگیزه ی زبان آموزان، کاهش تبعیض در کلاس، و افزایش اهمیت حضور در کلاس دارد و به معلمان زبان انگلیسی کمک میکند تا کتابهای کمک آموزشی مناسب تری را به زبان آموزان خود پیشنهاد دهند و گزارش مداومی از عملکرد و پیشرفت تحصیلی زبان آموزان به والدین ارائه دهند. شرکت کنندگان همچنین اظهار داشتند که ارزیابی مداوم در سطوح بالای زبان انگلیسی قابل اجرا نیست، منجر به افزایش حجم کاری دانش آموزان و معلمان شده است و معلمان حقوق کافی برای اجرای این روش دریافت نمیکنند. علاوه بر این، آنها معتقد بودند که تاکید بیش از حد بر ارزیابی های تلخیصی در این روش سبب حفظ کردن مطالب درسی، افزایش استرس زبان آموزان، کاهش اعتماد به نفس آنها و افت تحصیلی زبان آموزان خجالتی میشود. نتایج حاصل از این تحقیق، میتواند در جهت ارزیابی صحیح پیشرفت و یادگیری زبان آموزان بسیار مفید باشد و به افزایش یادگیری زبان آموزان و رفع اشکالات موجود در سیستم ارزیابی کنونی کمک کند.

کلمات کلیدی: ارزیابی مداوم، امتحان پایانی، سیستم ارزیابی



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آموزش زبان انگلیسی

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هانیه دریادل

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