



**Influence of Peer-Assessment on English Speaking Performances**

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### **Influence of Peer-Assessment in English Speaking Performances**

Students face many problems in English classes every day, particularly in their speaking performances. The issues identified are the lack of confidence, grammar mistakes, and low vocabulary during speaking performances.

Moreover, some students feel nervous and anxious while speaking in English, it occurs because they do not practice it every day. For this reason, while students perform, they do not feel confident with themselves. Sometimes, they tend to feel scared, shy and demotivated.

Furthermore, grammar mistakes are a common inconvenience that students have during speaking at EFL (English as Foreign Language) classes. It is because they get confused with the use of verbs such as: verb To be, regular and irregular verbs.

Additionally, another common issue it's the students 'low vocabulary, they do not know enough words in English. For this reason, they are slow to express themselves in their English performances.

### **Literature Review**

The variables described below contain concepts and previous studies about peer assessment and its influence on the students' speaking skills. The dependent variable is speaking and the independent variable is peer assessment. This phase describes the benefits and disadvantages of peer assessment and speaking.

The lack of practice in speaking activities affects the students' performances. It has been evidenced that they felt stressed, nervous, and afraid of being wrong when they speak in English. Moreover, it is important to highlight that a big number of students do not have someone to practice with at home. Other students, do not have a stable internet connection, so it is hard to interact with people who speak English. Thus, these were the limitations that most of the students face in order to practice English as (Castañeda,

2019; Essien, 2016) pointed out that students have limitations in order to experience speaking activities in class and practice speaking after school.

According to Cetin (2021), “Language skills assessment plays a very crucial role in the learning process but it turns out that changing or reforming assessment is quite difficult.” (p. 4). For this reason, teachers should select the type of assessment that really help students to improve their speaking skills.

Peer assessment is a tool that some teachers implement in their EFL classes. There are many benefits of peer assessment. As Topping (2009) mentioned peer assessment is made by learners and they make decisions about their partners’ assignments based on specific criteria. In this sense, it has been observed that students are competent to grade their classmate’s participation.

Moreover, Brown stated that “peer assessment possesses the most obvious principle of cooperative. It is simply a large number of procedures and tasks within the area of learners-centered and collaborative education” (2004, p. 270). Thus, working cooperatively helps students to feel more comfortable during their participation in class.

According to Douglas (2010) peer assessment process has one important advantage, and it is to promote students to be more aware of learning goals and standards. For this reason, students will be more competitive planning their speaking performances before they make a presentation in class. Additionally, Brown (2003) stated that peer assessment allows students to judge their peers’ performances. Thus, students will be motivated in order to reflect, discuss and collaborate. In this regard, students experience on how to grade and comment on their classmates’ performances.

Wenny and Fajar (2019) stated that students prefer peer assessment to teachers’ assessment; also, they noticed that students participated actively in broadcasting their ideas. By taking into consideration, it is possible because some students feel nervous

about their teachers' comments. This is a reason why peer assessment is a good strategy for implementation in EFL classes.

In contrast to the mentioned authors, Falchikov (2001) indicated that peer assessment may take too much time for teachers because it requires; time for planning teaching, and observing. Additionally, teachers will need more time on training students on how to assess effectively. In this respect, this could be considered a disadvantage, in case there are many students in virtual or face-to-face classes.

There are many studies about the influence of peer assessment on speaking as well as in the reported results. Hung (2018) mentioned in his research students positively participated and worked in small groups on peer assessment activities. Therefore, it was helpful because assessment decisions were made with their classmates. Thus, students' confidence and interaction improved.

According to Wulandari, et al. (2021), 'EFL teachers should be motivated to design a creative peer assessment to experience and perceive peer assessment as a valuable alternative way of language assessment'. In regards to this, peer assessment should be integrated to speaking practices by teachers in order to learn and teach students how to assess their classmates as well.

Kahfi (2021) concluded that the peer assessment carried out was successful because the researcher gave clear instruction from the beginning of the study and the students felt confident while assessing their peers. According to this, by giving instructions is they key when a research study take place because all students should be clear about the beginning to the end of the study.

According to Adachi et al. (2017), in their study, 13 Australian academics were interviewed in order to know their perceptions of peer assessment challenges. A group of participants interviewed recognized five changes in peer assessment; students'

superficial engagement, time constraints, insufficient feedback skills, lack of students' and teachers' involvement, and technical difficulties. In this regard, those perceptions contrast the previous benefits found in other studies that emphasized speaking benefits.

Pico (2020) mentioned that his study influenced positively the speaking skills of the students also, his study encouraged; interaction, reflection, making decisions, providing feedback, and learning. Furthermore, Kasch et al. (2021) summarized that peer assessment is useful for students and teachers. Additionally, Karpovich et al. (2021) stated that through the application of peer assessment to students of first-year, they improved their performances in many activities.

### **Innovation**

The purpose of this innovation was the implementation of a lesson plan. That was focused on teaching the students to identify how to describe people while they showed their photos. The name of the unit was "Describing People". The implementation of this innovation took a period of four weeks. Each week included 2 hours, an asynchronous, and a synchronous hour with a period of 30 minutes (via zoom). This study was carried out in an Educational Unit at Milagro, Guayas province. The students were minors; for this reason, parental consent was provided. Before starting the innovation, students were instructed in the use of a checklist for peer assessment.

During the lesson plan, students learned how to describe people (age, name, profession, preferences) while showing peoples' photos. Also, they practiced the use of grammar according to the main topic.

In the first class, a mentor text was modeled by the teacher, which included the final task that students had to present at the end of the unit. Also, an assignment was sent in which students had to record a video describing pictures of their mom and it was

taken as a pretest. They were assessed by their classmates using the checklist and the teacher provided comments about their performances. During the second week, students practiced the verb-to-be and personal pronouns. In the third week, time expressions and the use of the past tense were the grammar learned. Lastly, in the fourth week, a post-test took place which consisted of recording a video showing and describing pictures of the students' three best friends applying for all the content reviews during the unit. It is important to highlight that, in all sessions, students were peer-assessed by their classmates using the checklist.

This innovation allowed students to experience how to assess their classmates and become more confident and critical. Moreover, they learned the use of a checklist as an instrument that helped them to notice their partners' speaking improvement.

### **Research Methodology**

This is an action research study. According to Koshy (2010), action research improves educational practices. It is a process of gathering evidence that allows researchers to carry out changes in their practices. Also, Clark et al. (2020) affirmed that action research promotes activities that enhance the roles of students in the education system.

This study was conducted qualitatively and quantitatively to analyze the research questions as follows: "Does peer assessment influence the speaking performances grades among 2nd baccalaureate students at a public school in Milagro compared to students 'speaking performances grades before applying peer assessment?'" and "What were the students' limitations on peer assessment during the implementation?"

Data collection was carried out through a speaking rubric according to the checklist features that the students had used to peer assess during this research study. This rubric was applied to grade the pretest and the posttest.

## **Participants**

Participants were Ecuadorian students from a public school in southern Milagro, in the Guayas province. The average age of students was 16. There was a total of 12 students assessed from 2nd- grade baccalaureate high schools with a CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) A1 level. Of which, 11 of them were girls and one boy.

## **Instruments**

For the aim of this research study, the teacher designed a rubric based on the students' checklist during the innovation. It was applied in order to assess the pretest and the posttest.

Ulker (2017) pointed out that the aim of rubrics is to assess the performances. Moreover, Brookhart (2018) stated that analytic rubrics grade each criterion separately, they require a decision for each criterion. The criteria used for the rubric were; Grammar & Vocabulary, content, pronunciation, and fluency.

Grammar & Vocabulary criterion, in this part the highest grade was described as students were able to describe pictures of people and talk about their likes and dislikes by using the correct form of verbs in past and the personal pronouns. The lowest grade was described as students making mistakes and distorting the meaning of the ideas, also they do not use the grammar and vocabulary as required.

Content criterion, the highest grade was described as students' content covering all the topics in-depth with details and examples. The lowest grade was described as students' content do not cover all the topics in-depth with details and examples.

Pronunciation criterion, the highest grade was described as students' pronunciation is intelligible to describe pictures of people and talk about their likes and dislikes as the control stress of the intonation. The lowest grade was described as

students' pronunciation is limited and not intelligible to describe people and talk about likes and dislikes as the control stress of the intonation.

Fluency criterion, the highest grade was described as students most of the time speak fluently with little hesitation that does not interfere with communication. The lowest grade was described as students never speak fluently with a lot of hesitation that interferes with communication.

Each of the criteria components was graded from 0.5 to 2.5, being 0.5 the lowest and 2.5 the highest with an overall score of 10. The rubric followed the A1 Level standards according to the Cambridge Assessment Scale. After applying the rubric to the pretest and posttest, the teacher compared the grades obtained on those tests.

In order to answer the second question, "What were the students' limitations on peer assessment during the implementation?" a survey was sent to the students through Google forms in which they expressed their opinions and perspectives according to the limitations they had. Furthermore, the teacher took notes about the students' comments during the innovation.

### **Data Analysis**

Microsoft Excel was used to obtain statistics in this research study. To report the first action research question "Does peer assessment influence the speaking performances grades among 2nd baccalaureate students at a public school in Milagro compared to students' speaking performances grades before applying peer assessment?". The teacher used descriptive statistics to obtain information about the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. Also, the *p-value* from the students' grades from the pretest and the posttest.

To report the second research question, "What were the students' limitations on peer assessment during the implementation?" the teacher sent a survey to the learners



through Google Forms, then the data collected was analyzed and transcribed.

Furthermore, the researcher observed and took notes from the students' comments and impressions during the innovation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For gathering data from participants ethical considerations should be considered Fleming et al. (2018) stated that:

It is important that approval has been gained before the commencement of data gathering from human participants because human research ethics committees cannot grant approval for research after the data collection has begun (with three expectations; data was collected for non-research purposes is now proposed to be used for research, data was gathered through a 'chance encounter', and if the data was already publically available, e.g., already published); (p.6).

For this reason, the teacher asked the students' parents for permission to participate in this research study through informed consent. It was required because the participants were minors. Concerning this topic, Conelly (2014) pointed out that, informed consent is needed in the research process; a characteristic of consent is that it should be given voluntarily.

### **Results**

In order to answer the first research question "Does peer assessment influence the speaking performances grades among 2nd baccalaureate students at a public school in Milagro compared to students' speaking performances grades before applying peer assessment?" the results are shown in table 1.

Descriptive statistics of pretest and posttest

*Table 1*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	P. value
Pretest	12	4.00	8.00	5.25	1.27	0.00

Posttest	12	6.00	9.50	7.54	1.05	0.00
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*Note: N= sample      Std. Deviation= Standard Deviation*

There was a comparison between the pretest and posttest grades according to the rubric. The posttest has an increase of the mean of 2.29. The minimum of the posttest has increased by a value of 2 compared to the pretest value. The maximum of the posttest has increased by 1.50 compared to the pretest maximum. The standard deviation had decreased from the pretest to the posttest and the p-value is 0. To conclude, the results gotten in this study showed that the hypothesis supports the use of rubrics on peer assessment influences positively in the students' speaking performances.

Concerning the second research question ‘‘What were the students' limitations on peer assessment during the implementation?’’ the information received in the survey shows the following answers from the twelve students involved in this research study.

Some students had a positive attitude as they expressed ‘‘I felt nervous during the first assessment, but then I liked it’’ as the student #1 pointed out. Student #2 said ‘‘I feel more comfortable speaking English now’’. Student #6 enjoyed the experience as said ‘‘Assessing my classmates was a great experience’’. On the other hand, there were some drawbacks as the student #3 mentioned ‘‘This was hard for me because I had to evaluate my friends’’. Some students did not accept the assessment by their classmates as student #10 pointed out ‘‘There are some classmates who do not accept in a good way the comments’’

The mentioned comments were provided by the students in a survey at the end of the research study in order to know their different perspectives and difficulties presented during this research study. Most of them mentioned that at the beginning of the study they felt nervous. Furthermore, students' answers reflect that despite the difficulties, they knew how to handle the different situations presented. Also, students

applied what was thought by the teacher, and as they mentioned the experience was meaningful.

### **Discussion**

This research study had determined that peer assessment enhances the students speaking performances, the learners involved in this research study participated working in groups giving comments and suggestions to their partners' speaking performances as Hung (2018) mentioned in his study that students participated actively working in small groups with peer assessment activities. Along the same lines, students' participation in speaking performances improved since they were receiving an assessment from their partners. It is important to highlight that before the innovation, they felt nervous about teachers' comments on their performances as (Wenny&Fajar,2019) pointed out that students prefer peer assessment to teachers' feedback.

Furthermore, in break-out rooms when working in groups all students worked collaboratively in the different assessing activities. They were willing to work together and became sociable with their partners. These findings agreed with the theory of Brown (2014) when he pointed out that cooperative learning is one of the characteristics of peer assessment.

During this research study, another important benefit of peer assessment was found. It was during peer assessment activities that students used the checklist, they were able to answer the questions stated about their perceptions of their partners' speaking performances. This benefit is similar to the one stated by Topping (2009) about students' decisions on their partners' assignments by using criteria.

The outcomes of this research study revealed that peer assessment inside on students' speaking performances. This study was successful because in the first session, the teacher provided all the instructions to the students, so they were trained on how to

work. These results are aligned with Kahfi (2021) when he mentioned that his study was successful because the instruction was provided from the beginning.

### **Conclusions**

This research study aimed to find out how peer assessment influences the students' speaking performances. The evidence of applying the pretest and posttest using the rubric during this study revealed that students speaking performances grades improved. This aligns with the theories reviewed in the literature part of this research study which emphasizes the benefits of peer assessment on speaking.

In addition, this study involved interesting experiences for students. For example, it was observed that students felt more confident in their performances because their classmates were the assessors rather than the teacher. Moreover, the student's participation was important because it contributed to the students' improvement in this study.

To summarize, the application of this study covered the researcher's expectations from the beginning to the end of the implementation. It was found that the students involved experienced the benefits of peer assessment and the results were positive because at the end they felt more comfortable in their performances.

### **Limitations**

There were some limitations in this research study that should be considered for future studies. The internet connection was an important issue in the participation of the whole class. A total of 21 students, only 12 parental consents were provided because the other 9 students had not a stable internet connection. Thus, they were not able to join in zoom sessions.

Moreover, some students were distracted during the sessions because of the holidays from December. This is another issue that teachers should manage in the development of a research study.

### **Recommendations**

For future research studies, it is recommended that teachers should select a class where the majority of their students had a stable internet connection, in the case that the classes are online.

In order to deal with the students when they get distracted during online sessions, it is recommended that teachers manage the situation properly in order to promote respect in the classroom. In addition, students have a positive attitude to these situations when they are asked to do something in good manners.

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## Appendix 1

### Instrument (checklist)

Available upon request.

## Appendix 2

### Instrument (Rubric)

Available upon request.

## Appendix 3

### Lesson plan with backward design.

Available upon request.

## Appendix 4

### Grades

Available upon request.

## Appendix 4

### Authorization letter

Available upon request.

## Appendix 5

### E-portfolio

