



**The Impact of Peer Feedback on Students' Oral Production**

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### **The Impact of Peer Feedback on Students' Oral Production**

Developing speaking skills in a second language is influenced by many factors. As Brown (2000) mentioned, one of these factors that can negatively impact this skill is the affective factor. Most students feel anxious whenever they have to speak because they fear blurting out something wrong or incomprehensible. It is one of the difficulties identified in eighth-grade students aged twelve; it is difficult for them to maintain a conversation and express and support their ideas in spoken English.

These eighth-grade students have gone through two years of online education where they have not had the chance to practice their speaking skills with peers and have focused on content. Therefore, they cannot maintain a conversation or share their opinions using English. They are now back in their physical classrooms. After a month of review, the school system has focused on evaluations through lessons, homework, individual activities, and group activities without any feedback to help them improve.

Consequently, this research proposes introducing peer feedback into educational practice to improve students' oral production. Peer feedback is when "learners work together and comment on one another's work or performance and provide feedback on strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement" (Yu & Hu, 2017, as cited in Banister, 2020, p. 2). In the hope that it can help engage students in their learning and positively impact their speaking skills, which is one of the most challenging skills for most students learning a foreign language because of the factors mentioned at the beginning. Therefore, this paper aims to answer whether peer feedback impacts students' oral production. For that reason, the research question that guides this study is: 1) To what extent does peer feedback improve eighth-grade students' oral production?

## Literature Review

### Peer Feedback

Feedback is a form of formative assessment which can help students compare their performance against their learning goals. It can be given by a teacher or by a peer. Peer feedback is “a set of activities through which individuals make judgments about the work of others” (Reinholz, 2015, as cited in Ndoye, 2017, p. 255).

There have been many studies on peer feedback (Au & Bardakçi, 2020; McGarrell, 2010; Ndoye, 2017), but not many on its influence on oral production (McGarrell, 2010; Ndoye, 2017). However, studies focusing on how peer feedback impacts oral production have had some positive results (Au & Bardakçi, 2020; Joo, 2016; Ratih et al., 2020).

One research that has studied the impact of peer feedback on oral performance is that of Au and Bardakçi (2020). Their study was conducted among A1 students throughout three academic modules (A1 Elementary, A2 Pre-Intermediate, and B1 Intermediate modules). Students were divided into two groups, Group A and Group B; Group A received peer feedback and Group B immediate teacher feedback, both feedback done with TOEFL independent rubric. The results showed that both groups' oral performances displayed significant improvement. Furthermore, this study examined the correlation between students' oral performance and self-efficacy. The results showed that there was no significant correlation between the two. Alternatively, Ratih et al. (2020) research focused on online students' self-efficacy in using oral peer feedback for speaking activities. They found that participants had different results affected by their self-efficacy, goals, experiences, and strategies; the students with higher self-efficacy had better results than those without self-efficacy.

According to Ndoye (2017), peer feedback promotes students' learning through effective feedback, a supportive learning environment, and cooperation among learners. It was supported by the results of his research, where most of the students reported that they preferred to discuss their feedback orally because this helped them act on it while still on the task. In addition, peer feedback helped them identify their learning gaps and locate appropriate tools to improve. They also reported that peer feedback helped them clarify a task's expectations and requirements, which allowed them to feel like they had a supportive learning environment. Likewise, they felt a stronger sense of responsibility towards their peers as they needed to prepare themselves to offer the same assistance they received. A study done with 40 major English students from a Taiwanese university showed that most students agreed that "peer-assessment had learning benefits such as enhanced awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, development of critical thinking ability, and the acquisition of oral skills" (Cheng & Warren, 1997, as cited in Joo, 2016, p. 9).

### **Challenges**

There are some challenges when conducting peer feedback. The most common is that many students feel that their English-speaking ability is not good enough to assess their peers' performance or feel unprepared to give feedback (McGarrell, 2010; Ndoye, 2017; Ratih et al., 2020). Other challenges include time constraints to discuss feedback thoroughly, learners not seeing assessment as their responsibility, and students' disposition to work in groups (Ndoye, 2017).

For learners to successfully give feedback to their peers, teachers must make sure to meet some conditions. "These conditions include the clear provision of task-related criteria, sufficient training, considerations of the learner traits and their perception, as well as the strong integration

with the curriculum” (Joo, 2016, p. 13). For example, one way students can be trained is by familiarizing them with a rubric and asking them to give feedback on multiple spoken performances the teacher has previously revised, then comparing their feedback with the grading report of these performances. This type of training was done in Au and Bardakçi's (2020) research, where students trained for a week by giving feedback to five responses to the same TOEFL independent speaking task they undertook.

### **Oral Production**

Abugohar et al. (2019) defined speaking as a “communicating process of interaction which is the foundation of all relationships between humans” (p. 2). On the other hand, Kürüm (2016) stated that we can say someone speaks a language when the person can produce meaningful sentences in that language. This author also pointed out that learners of a foreign language evaluate their progress in the target language based on their ability to speak fluently (Kürüm, 2016).

Even though English is a language studied profusely worldwide, many students of this language have difficulty speaking it (Paakki, 2020). Both Brown (2000) and Paakki (2020) addressed the factors which hinder students' oral production skills. Brown (2000) called it the “language ego,” which is students' idea that they are what they speak. They do not want to be judged by their performance.

On the other hand, Paakki (2020) called it “normativity,” which is defined as the “idealization of standard target language (TL) accents, and standard TL models that are free from dialect features, learner errors, spoken-language-like colloquialisms or imperfectness...” (p. 24). Another factor mentioned by Paakki (2020) is the instruction and input factors; this study showed that both

Finnish and Japanese students were taught based on accuracy rather than fluency, where language test-taking activities prevailed over oral production tasks. These factors hindered their performance and their self-confidence in their speaking ability. Consequently, it is essential to focus on both accuracy and fluency of language and to find the right balance so students feel encouraged to speak (Brown, 2000).

### **Innovation**

This innovation was carried out with 15 eighth-grade students, ages 12 to 13, at a private bilingual school; their English level varies from A2 to B1. The classes were taught face-to-face, and the process lasted two weeks.

The unit was planned using a backward design planning framework (Appendix 1), where the transfer goal was decided first. Then, the summative (final task) and formative (peer feedback checklist) assessments were planned to see how students were doing against the transfer goal. Finally, the instructional part of the lessons was designed to determine the types of activities students must complete to reach the transfer goal. These activities were classified into acquisition, meaning-making, and transfer.

In addition, the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) method was used to ensure students were more proactive in class. This method consisted of first showing students a model of the task. Then, through guided instructions, students practiced the activities collaboratively and finally showed they could transfer the new knowledge independently.

The unit plan consisted of four lessons, including the summative assessment. In addition, each class provided functional language and vocabulary to talk about past experiences. Also, students practiced using the past simple and continuous tenses in context through tasks that

encouraged students to talk about different situations they experienced in the past. Students also had controlled practice of the structures of both tenses.

Students were trained on how to give peer feedback using a checklist. This training happened throughout the unit after they had already listened to a model of the desired outcome. Students practiced giving peer feedback three times to recordings of different people describing an experience using the checklist. Then, they would compare their feedback to their teacher's and reflect on how well they did.

Students were presented with different models of the desired outcome during the unit. At the end of each lesson, they would have production activities like role-plays, creating a recording talking about an experience, or retelling a story. Students also practiced giving feedback on their peers' recordings. The teacher would monitor the class collecting useful language and any mistakes to give feedback at the end of the activities. At the end of the unit, students were given thirty minutes to plan and record their final oral task on the class's i-Pads. Then, they were set in pairs to give feedback to each other using the checklist. Finally, students were given twenty minutes to make any changes to their recordings based on their peer's feedback before uploading them to Flipgrid.

### **Methodology**

The present study is action research, defined as “empowering and professional research done by teachers to inform and improve their practices” (Milton-Brkich et al., 2010). According to Land (2000), action research has the following steps: “identify a problem, collect relevant information about the problem, take action, measure it using various methods, and interpret the results” (p. 3).

This action research was carried out using quantitative instruments to analyze to what extent peer feedback (independent variable) improves 8th-grade students' oral production (dependent variable).

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from a single eighth-grade class at a private school in Samborondon, Ecuador. The school is in an affluent area near the city of Guayaquil. Students were between the ages of twelve and thirteen years old. The class was made up of 23 students who were invited to participate in the study. Parental consent was received from 15 students. More than half of the students were female (9) and less than half were male (6). Their English level ranged from A2 (13 students) to B1 (2 students), according to the CEFR.

### **Instruments**

#### Pretest and posttest

Students were asked to record two audios as a speaking test, one at the beginning of the innovation (pretest) and one at the end (posttest). A rubric was used to grade students' pretest and posttest. Ulker (2017) mentioned that the status and form of assessment conducted varies depending on the purpose. Based on the purpose, there are eight criteria teachers can choose to assess speaking; the rubric uses four criteria: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and content.

The rubric employed a two-and-a-half-point analytical scale. The scores were derived from the evaluator's holistic considerations of a general description based on the four dimensions mentioned previously. For each category, score bands and student performance descriptors were listed and used to systematically assign scores to students' oral production. This study assigned two and a half points within each category, totaling ten points. The complete rubric can be seen in Appendix 2. An expert in the field at Universidad Casa Grande vetted it.



Peer feedback checklist. The students' peer-feedback checklist had four items, each linked to one rubric descriptor. In addition, it had the following qualitative scale: "not yet," "sometimes," and "yes." The checklist was designed to follow the principles of backward design. An expert in the field at Universidad Casa Grande vetted it. The complete checklist can be found in Appendix 3.

### **Data Analysis**

Microsoft Excel's data analysis add-in was used to calculate the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum of the results of each of the rubric descriptors for the pretest and posttest. Additionally, a paired sample *t*-test was used to identify if there was statistical value in the mean difference between students' performance, in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and content, before and after the innovation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This action research followed the procedure of ethical considerations (Gajjar, 2013). First, the author obtained the authorization of the school's principal to administer the innovation (Appendix 4). Then, it was explained to students the goal of the innovation, and then proceeded to send a letter to their parents asking for their consent for students to participate in the innovation (Appendix 5). Parents' consent was received from 15 students out of 23 who were invited to participate. These steps follow the

### **Results**

To answer the research question: to what extent does peer feedback improve 8th-grade students' oral production? First, the author took the approach of doing a general analysis of the total scores of the pretest and posttest and then a more detailed analysis of the different aspects of the rubric.

### ***General Results from the Oral Production Rubric***

Students' pretest minimum score was three, and the maximum score was eight, with a mean of 6.2 and a standard deviation of 1.32. The posttest minimum score was five, and the maximum score was 10, with a mean of 8.86 and a standard deviation of 1.68. The null hypothesis in a paired sample *t*-test is that there is no difference between dependent groups. The paired sample *t*-test showed no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores with a *p*-value ( $t = -8$   $p = 1.369$ ) which is above the alpha value of 0.05 and therefore indicated support for the null hypothesis.

**Table 1**

#### *Paired Sample t-test Results from Experimental Group*

(N= 15)					
<b>Test</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S D</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Sig. (P)</b>
Pre	6.2	1.3 2	3	8	1.369
Post	8.7	1.6 8	5	10	

Note: N= sample M= mean Sd= standard deviation Min= Minimum Max = Maximum Sig (P): Significance

#### ***Detailed Results from each Descriptor of the Fluency Rubric***

Another paired sample *t*-test was conducted to compare each aspect of the rubric to look for considerable changes in the experimental group. The results exhibited in table 2 identified a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores in the grammar ( $t = -4.03$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and vocabulary ( $t = -5.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ) descriptors of the rubric. The test indicated support for the alternative hypothesis in these two descriptors.

**Table 2***Experimental Group Rubric Results*

<b>Experimental Group - N = (15)</b>				
<b>Pretest</b>				
	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>	<b>Content</b>
Mean	1.36	1.1	2.3	1.43
SD	.743	.632	.414	.258
Min	0.5	0.5	1.5	0.5
Max	2.5	2.5	2.5	1.5
<b>Post-test</b>				
Mean	2.1	2.1	2.43	2.23
SD	.632	.736	.258	.457
Min	0.5	0.5	1.5	1.5
Max	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
tStat	-4.03	-5.12	-1.46	-7.48
Sig.(P)	0.001	0.000	0.164	2.952

Note: N= sample M= mean Sd= standard deviation Min = Minimum Max = Maximum tStat = test statistics Sig (P)= Significance

**Discussion**

This study demonstrated that 8th-grade students of A2 to B1 levels could improve their overall oral production through repeated practice and peer feedback. This study was echoed by Au and Bardakçi (2020), who observed that repeated oral practices and treatment provided opportunities for learners to glimpse at their performances and enhance their speaking ability. In this study, students successfully gave peer feedback to their classmates due to the previous process of familiarization with the rubric and repeated practice. They used the checklist to give feedback on some recordings and compared it to the teacher's feedback before using the checklist to give feedback to their classmates. This kind of preparation is mentioned in the study of Joo (2016), who stated that sufficient training must be met for students to assess their peers' oral performance. This kind of training was also put into practice in the study of Au and Bardakçi (2020) with positive results.

This research was significant because it revealed that most students already had good pronunciation. Furthermore, unlike other studies, this study revealed that after treatment, students' grammar and vocabulary significantly improved. On the other hand, there was no statistically significant difference between overall scores of students' oral production before and after treatment.

### **Conclusions**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine to what extent peer feedback would affect eighth-grade students' oral production. These students had gone through two years of online education because of the pandemic. The effects of these two years of online education showed their difficulty in expressing themselves using the language.

Subsequently, to help students express themselves in the target language, the lesson plan was created using a backward-design planning framework where the transfer goal and assessment criteria were chosen first. Then the activities were planned to reach that goal. Finally, the activities provided repeated oral practice and training for effective peer feedback.

This research has proved that peer feedback can help improve students' oral production. Nonetheless, the results of this study go beyond previous reports, showing a significant improvement in students' grammar and vocabulary aspects of their oral production.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of the present study was that students were just getting used to the rigorous schedule of face-to-face classes in a bilingual school, with some English classes lasting longer than an hour. It is essential to highlight that these students had previously been used to online classes of forty minutes. Another limitation of this study was the timing of the posttest. The posttest was carried out during a week of evaluations during the last hours of the school day.

It affected some students' commitment to the task. Finally, it was estimated that twenty-three students would participate in this study, but only fifteen were allowed to participate.

Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited by the number of participants.

### **Recommendations**

Future studies should strategically examine which aspects of students' oral production improve with peer feedback. It should also aim to replicate the results with a larger sample to generalize the positive effect peer feedback can have on students' oral production.

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**Appendix 1**

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.



**Appendix 2**

**Rubric**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 3**

**Telling Stories - Peer Feedback Checklist**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 4**

**Consent Letter**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 5**

**Parent's Consent Letter**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 6**

**Portfolio**

Available upon request.