



**Peer-Assessment of Students' Monologue to Improve Speaking Skills in Third High School  
Students**

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Burns (2019) mentioned that "English is a worldwide language widely used as a tool of communication all over the world" (p. 11). There is a growing demand for oral production in English, and some instances of learning must be addressed in order to provide opportunities to those who use the language in various fields such as education, technology, and others. This is because oral competence is considered an important macro skill that would have to be improved as a successful means of communication that allows the transfer of a clear and fluent message during an information exchange. Therefore, the goal of this action research was to determine the extent to which the utilization of peer assessment influenced the oral production of A2 level students. This study also addressed the obstacles that students had when performing this type of strategy.

This investigation provides a structured learning process designed for a group of students who belong to the institution to critique and provide peer assessment to each other on their work, in which peers are asked to submit information about their performance and it assists learners in developing fluency. In the classroom of this public school with 12 third year high school students who should have a B1 English level at the end of their secondary program. So, at the start of the academic year 2022-2023, this group of students took a diagnostic test, which revealed significant oral production deficits. As a result, changing the teaching style is necessary to make students feel more confidence in their abilities.

#### **Literature Review**

This section provides a discussion of ideas, theories, and research that has been done to determine how effective peer evaluation tasks are for enhancing oral abilities.

“Peer assessment is a system in which people evaluate the quantity, degree, importance, value, merit, or excellence of peers of similar status' learning success” (Topping, 1998, p. 253).

In essence, “peer evaluation is a process whereby students comment on the quality of the work of their peers” (Spiller, 2012, p. 10). Peer review occasionally includes the assignment of a grade.

According to Falchikov (2003), “peer assessment asks students to give feedback or grades to their peers on a performance based on certain standards of excellence for that work” (p. 104).

During recent decades, “the implementation of peer assessment in education learning environments has been increased” (Segers, 2011, p. 25). The interest in this type of assessment is partly due to changing conceptions of teaching and learning which is expected to decrease the central role of teachers in assessment activity. The contemporary approach emphasizes an active engagement of students in their own learning, learner responsibility, metacognitive skills and a collaborative model of teaching and learning. Conversely, Spiller (2012) expressed that “assessment processes in more traditional ways, in which the teacher holds all power and makes all choices, apparently limit the potential for learner development” (p. 10).

In concordance with Greza (2015), “Assessment has an essential role in learning. This evidences students' achievement and measures the quality of their academic performance.

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Lately, literature pointed out peer-assessment as an alternative kind of evaluation to strengthen the teaching and learning process” (p. 1776).

According to Adil (2017), “Peer-assessment increases students' learning through information dissemination and exchange of ideas using evaluation tools that enable students to learn to assess and give others constructive comments to acquire lifelong assessment abilities" (p. 27). Peer evaluation encourages discussion and reflection while also making students more critical because they must provide comments.

As believed by Cheng (2005), “Previous studies have reported benefits of implementing peer assessment in students' process. In particular, several studies report students improve their oral communication production as a result of peer assessment implementation” (p. 93). In other words, peer-assessment of oral presentations engages students into active participation while they are developing oral skills.

According to White (2009), “The effective use of peer assessment components in a course assessment can promote student involvement, responsibility and excellence; establish clearer course frameworks; focus attention on skills and learning; and, provide increased feedback”. Besides, Topping (1998) summarized “The use of peer assessment, particularly in oral presentation, results in improvements in marks, higher learning performance, and higher self-efficacy” (p. 248).

Regarding student’s training, Faruk (2021), outlined some actions for teachers to take in preparing their students for formative assessment "First and foremost, clarity and transparency are crucial; instructions and evaluation criteria must be precise and communicated between

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teachers and students" (p. 74). Second," it is strongly advised to avoid peer assignments owing to personal relationships between students in order to maintain work objectivity" (p. 76).

Despite the perceived benefits, Hyland (2006) stated "the value of peer assessment is skeptical to many English teachers and researchers due to that student preferred teachers' assessment to their peers with various reasons such as the lack of confidence in their peer reviewers, being aware of their own linguistics limitations" (p. 185). This is related to what Tang (1999), said "The familiarity and belief that the teacher is the only audience who is more experienced and can give better quality feedback. In fact, some students even have problems with the concept of peer feedback" (p. 20). They felt they did not know how to give advice properly.

Conforming to Bailey (2005), "When learners convey their views, their inability to speak with the fluency they desire is typically depicted as an indisposition and lack of confidence" (p. 199). Many students do not have experience speaking a foreign language, so they tend to repeat words rather than develop their way of thinking. In this regard, "the use of a continuous monologue allows students to prepare oral presentations and then critically and analytically reflect on their own and their peers' performance" (Thomas, 2006, p. 237).

Due to the difficulties that the participants of the present study have with their speaking fluency and after reviewing recent literature which pointed out the benefits of peer-assessment on oral presentations, this research was developed and implemented to enhance fluency through a students' monologue activity. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

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1. To what extent can students' speaking fluency be improved through Peer-Assessment?
2. What are students' perspectives towards this innovation?

### **Innovation**

This study looked into the impact of peer assessment on improving speaking skills. The experiment lasted three weeks, with nine pedagogical hours of class in total, or three hours per week. Participants included 12 third-year high school students who had achieved English level A2. The innovation was planned by using an innovative instructional design which was applied for the unit (Appendix 1). The main materials for executing the innovative teaching plan were internet connection, cell phones, and a speaker to record the students' skill.

During the first week, students were trained to peer assess their classmate's performance through oral tasks, therefore, during the learning process students were introduced to the checklist in speaking activities prior to the innovation project (Appendix 2). Students were learning on the topic Interesting People Around the World which consisted of some short reading activities where students had to read, share and discuss information, preparing a short presentation in some audio scripts.

The checklist was mainly used to train students to assess their peers and give them feedback during the audio script monologue. Next exercises provided the opportunity for learners to enhance their speaking skills through brainstorming and problem-solving activities.

Furthermore, students focused on terminology relevant to adolescent life, street art, and comparative and descriptive adjectives to enhance their knowledge and facilitate student interaction while discussing topics and concerns in our society using the vocabulary and grammar

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shared in class. As a result, students completed a pre-assessment task that consisted of recording a brief monologue (Appendix 3).

Students were involved in the second week of this innovation plan to analyze, identify and share their ideas through brainstorming activities. In addition, critical thinking tasks were used through certain questions aimed at informing, developing knowledge and responsibility about the need for internet safety. Furthermore, the teacher explained the meaning of new words during this segment by using a game called Pictionary to practice lexical sets, and these chunks of words were afterward located in a well-structured monologue tape that was presented to the class and graded by the students using the proposed rubric (Appendix 4).

During the first stage of the final week, students were instructed to discuss in pairs questions about generational variations and traits throughout history. Finally, as part of the summative project, students composed and delivered a sustained monologue using all of the phrases, words, grammar, and vocabulary studied. Before presenting the final version to the class, they practiced and recorded it as many times as necessary. Based on their prior experiences, individuals were creative in how they applied the material.

### **Research Methodology**

This study used action research since the investigator gathered data and reflected on it before taking action to solve the problem. According to Rademaker (2013), “action research is an investigation undertaken by educators in their settings to enhance their work and improve their students' learning” (p. 265).

### **Participants**

The subjects of the study were twelve (12) third-year baccalaureate students from a public high school in Samborondón, Guayas. Their ages ranged from 16 and 17 years old. The majority of them have an A2 level, based on the English Cambridge Key test, which was taken prior to implementing the innovation strategy and is connected to the Analytical Scales of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Appendix 5). Speaking limitations were a common factor in the majority of them. That is why the researcher decided to conduct the study in that particular class.

The educational population is drawn from the rural parts of several communities that surround the urban zone. They come from a low socioeconomic background. Due to the country's severe economic situation, numerous families are currently experiencing both parents' unemployment. The school day begins in the afternoon (12:30 p.m. to 18:15 p.m.). The sample selection did not include any learners with special needs.

### **Instruments**

The instruments were designed to collect information in order to address two study questions: 1) To what extent can students' speaking fluency be improved through Peer-Assessment? 2) What are students' perspectives towards this innovation? In this study, the independent variable is peer-assessment, while the dependent variable is speaking, specifically the lengthy monologue.

A pre and post-test, as well as a survey, were used to collect information. Before the innovation, a pre-speaking test was administered to determine the performance of students'



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speaking skills. This test was based on organizing a sustained monologue explaining the life stages of adolescence. In addition, the teacher employed a rubric to assess details of speaking skills in sustained monologues such as vocabulary and grammar, pronunciation, and fluency.

The teacher and a second evaluator utilized a speaking rubric adjusted to the Cambridge A2 level assessment scale to address the first research question. The speaking rubric considered three criteria or variables: grammar and vocabulary; pronunciation and fluency. Each descriptor was given a score of 5 points, and the outcomes were averaged. It was necessary, to begin with, a grade higher than two and then improve it for more than one point with peer input on their first speaking task.

In order to assess scorer reliability with the speaking rubric, a second evaluator trained in its usage who also assessed the first and last speaking tasks. As Brown (2001), "Consistency refers to the uniformity of scoring by two or more scorers, whereas validity refers to the extent to which a test assesses what it is intended to evaluate". The Cambridge A 2-level speaking evaluation scales were used to raise the validity of the speaking rubric. It was then reviewed by two EFL teachers before being tested with the first session participants.

Regarding the second question about students' perspectives, the teacher employed a survey from Google Forms which included five open-ended questions which were based on the students' perception of the learners and considered the effectiveness of the peer assessment application to improve speaking skills (Appendix 6). The participants had to answer by writing on the lines conforming to their perspectives. Consistent with what was said before, survey research is

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defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals based on their replies to questions" (Schutt, 2012, p. 160).

### **Data Analysis**

Concerning the first question, grades of pre-tests and post-tests were uploaded and processed in an excel database. This program ran descriptive statistics, such as minimum, maximum, mean. These insights were compared and contrasted to determine the variation of results. All these data were processed to obtain the results and verify if the peer-assessment using a sustained monologue had a positive effect in speaking. After the results were gathered, the data was presented in statistical tables and graphs, establishing percentages for analysis and interpretation.

Regarding the second question, a survey was used to obtain the results which was based on the students' perspectives about peer- assessing their classmates' performance. This document was sent to the participant via whatsapp in order to be done. Then all of this information was analyzed to determine whether the peer-assessment application had a positive effect on speaking. Following the collection of results, the data was presented in student comments for analysis and interpretation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Considering the ages of the participants and the place where the study took place, approval and consents were required. A document with a requirement of approval to do the study was sent to the principal of the high school, with a previous face-to-face conversation to explain the study and its benefits. As Fleming (2018) mentioned "In research, ethical concerns are a set of

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principles that drive study designs and practices. Voluntary involvement, informed consent, anonymity, secrecy, the potential for damage, and results disclosure are among these concepts” (p. 205). After the respective signature of the principal and given that the participants were minors, a formal letter was sent to the parents asking for their consent, including the name of the study and reassuring them that their student's personal information would not be disclosed (Appendix 7).

### Results

#### Quantitative Results

Quantitative results refer to students' pre-test scores on the rubric that responds to the following research question: To what extent can students' speaking fluency be improved through Peer-Assessment ?

**Table 1**

#### *Pre-Test Rubric Scores*

PRE-TEST	MIN	MAX	MEAN
Grammar-Vocabulary	1	4	2.42
Pronunciation	1	4	2.42
Fluency	2	4	2.58
Total	4	12	7.42

Table 1 exhibits the pre-test values for each features of the speaking rubric. The following criterion were considered: grammar and vocabulary that resulted in a mean of 2.42 which denotes some target grammar usage such as simple present tense, descriptive and comparison adjective that showcase some control of the topic connected to express feelings and opinion

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related to relationship in response to others in dialogue situation with a few mistakes and generally clear meaning using vocabulary words associated with the unit. Pronunciation score achieved of 2.42 denoting the student's pronunciation was understandable with some error. Still difficult to understand, but the pronunciation was good enough to understand what they were trying to say. Fluency, which was the last descriptor, reached 2.58 which refers to the flow and efficiency with which students expressed their ideas, particularly when speaking.

### Participants' Improvement

To measure participants' progress throughout the innovation results from the rubrics applied to the first and final presentations were pondered. The following table represents the overall mean scores of post-tests.

**Table 2**

#### *Post -Test Rubric Score*

	POST-TEST	MIN	MAX	MEAN	
	Grammar -Vocabulary	3	5	4.6	
	Pronunciation	3	5	4.3	
	Fluency	3	5	4.3	
	Total	9	15	13.2	

Table 2 displays the values for each descriptor of the speaking rubric in the post-test. The following criteria were taken into account: grammar and vocabulary, which resulted in a mean of 4.6 , indicating a good control of simple grammatical form. A pronunciation score of 4.3 was obtained, indicating that the student's pronunciation was good enough to understand what every word said was. The final descriptor, fluency, reached 4.3, referring to the fluidity and efficiency

with which students presented their ideas. In other words, the differences in means between the pre-test and post-test for each construct are significant, and the innovation outcomes are thus educationally important.

A paired *t*-test was used to explore the research question, to what extent can students' speaking fluency be improved through Peer-Assessment Monologue Task?, The paired-sample *t*-test identified statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores ( $t = 11,63$   $p = 0,0001$ ).

In reply to a qualitative question: What are students' perspectives towards this innovation? The survey gave the following results which include extracts from the students' answers to the five questions.

1.-What do you think about the teacher's application of a sustained monologue as a tool to improve oral communication?

In general, all the students said that the monologue was a useful tool to build up their thoughts and express them orally in a coherent manner. A student affirmed, "I think it helped me to express my feelings about an experience and provide reasons to explain them" (S.4). When reading this, at least two more students agreed. In a part of the survey, one student said, "I believe it helped me articulate my feelings about an experience clearly and provide reasons in an oral presentation" (S.10). This was supported by the rest of students' answers.

2.- How do you think the teacher's application of peer assessment contributed to assessing and improving your speaking skills?

In relation to assessment and improvement their speaking skills, some students commented,

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“I believe it contributed by commenting on others' work and offering strategies to improve it” (S.9); “I believe that using peer assessment helped me since it allowed me to discover my classmate’s weaknesses in grammar, pronunciation, and content” (S.10). In contrast, two students added that, “In my opinion, this method did not contribute to my speaking skill because it was developed in short time” (S.12); “ I believe that it did not help me because there were external aspects that did not permit to concentrate on tasks”(S.11).

3.-Was it difficult to apply peer assessment rubrics to your classmate's performance? Why?

Most students agreed that especially at the beginning they had some issues with applying it. In fact, some comments were focused on the following: “It was difficult, but I began practicing with some of my classmates by applying the rubrics to other people's audio scripts for monologues” (S.7). “It was a little bit at the beginning. Then I started to practice with some of my classmates at home by checking my teacher’s explanation” (S.3). In contrast, one student showed his disagreement by saying that, “yes. I did not have any training about this before” (S.8). The analysis of this question shows that although some students felt uncomfortable at the beginning giving comments and feedback to peers, they recognized their improvement in the end.

4.- How is peer assessment different? Advantages or Disadvantages

All students shared some strengths which were developed by using this type of formative assessment based on the following comments. “It was different because it helped us to develop skills in providing feedback to others and also equipped them with skills to improve our work” (S.3). “ It is different because two students can provide quality feedback on each other's work

through both positive and negative comments” (S.8). Therefore, most students considered that the use of peer feedback was a good experience and a helpful tool to improve their speaking skills.

5. Was the second application of the rubric easier, more difficult, or the same? why?

Overall, all the students said that there was not much issue by applying the rubric for the second time. This can be confirmed by two answers that the students gave in the last question. “It was simpler than in the first activity because I applied the rubric to various types of audio from the internet” (S.2). “It was simpler after reviewing my teacher’s instruction, I felt more confident in applying it” (S.12).

### **Discussion**

Concerning the first research question: To what extent can students’ speaking fluency be improved through Peer-Assessment ? The outcomes are favorable focused on Speaking skills as a result of the intervention. When viewed through the lens of peer assessment, the findings exhibit commonalities with the relevant literature from Chen (2005), who stated that various research found that students improved their oral communication production as a result of peer evaluation implementation. Furthermore, these findings contradict Hyland (2006), who stated that the value of peer assessment is questioned by many English teachers and researchers due to the fact that students preferred teachers' assessment of their peers for a variety of reasons, including a lack of confidence in their peer reviewers, being aware of their own linguistics limitations.

Concerning the second question: What are students' reactions to this innovation? Students recognized the value of peer-assessment and acknowledged that it helped them improve certain areas of their speaking presentations. They also had pleasant feelings about it. Furthermore, the research's use of peer feedback emphasized the importance of formative feedback in helping out every one to boost their speaking. These findings are consistent with Faruk (2021), who outlined some actions for teachers to take in preparing their students for formative assessment. First and foremost, clarity and transparency are crucial; instructions and evaluation criteria must be precise and communicated between teachers and students.

### **Conclusions**

The goal of this research was to find out how peer review affects EFL speaking skills. The findings revealed that students improved their performance after receiving peer-assessment after each monologue. Therefore, peer criticism for monologue speaking tasks is a beneficial method for improving the speaking skills of EFL students. Furthermore, the students expressed approval and a positive attitude toward it, and it aided them in their verbal production, both individually and collectively.

The researcher observed that the learners were able to express themselves freely without the usual worry and fear of making mistakes since someone was watching them. The ability to communicate on a topic of interest was viewed as a valuable and relevant tool for participants to practice and enhance their speaking skills. Students providing feedback were required to read and reflect on the criticisms provided, making them more conscious of their flaws, whereas students receiving feedback may improve on their next speaking position based on the guidance



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provided by their peers. The study also emphasized the significance of offering adequate training to students before employing peer feedback to ensure its quality. Giving assessment was a completely new activity for the students, so it is crucial to underline that the time spent training students how to give feedback was critical to the effectiveness of the innovation.

This type of study would contribute to a better understanding of the benefits and application of peer evaluation as a formative assessment technique for improving speaking skills. Students must be trained to provide quality comments in order for peer review to be useful.

### **Limitations**

Although the study yielded favorable outcomes, some failures during implementation must be anticipated in future research. On the plus side, school officials were supportive of the procedure, which might tremendously improve children and education in the institution. However, time and the student's lack of prior experience in non-traditional classes were two constraints. The study was intended to be carried out during the months when students are being prepared to take the oath of the flag. As a result, I experienced delays in the backward design sequence. Students were also concerned about oral and written quizzes, as well as other homework. The second constraint was based on the fact that the first-time students used a distinct learning style, not only following the coursebook but also analyzing texts to understand the material and practice pronunciation. For example, students had never used a rubric before, so it was novel to them.

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The students appeared to have never concentrated on peer assessment, and they would always examine each other throughout the study. Specific classes were required to provide appropriate feedback and practice, which resulted in satisfying results.

### **Recommendations**

Researchers might consider some of the following guidelines for future investigations. At the time, investigations could be carried out over a longer period of time, and planning could be based on future events. Check the upcoming vacations or activities at the target school, for example. External factors will not affect the results in this manner, and a deeper understanding of students' processes may be possible. Consider having activities that target the competences that students will need to reach the communicative aim. Students in the current study were required to assess each other, thus they must understand what assessment is and how to perform it appropriately. The teacher should watch the open-ended questions without intervening but making it clear that replies should be thoroughly studied up to their ages.

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**Appendix 1**

**Backward Design**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 2**

**Checklist**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 3**

**Audio Recording of Sustained Monologue**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 4**

**Rubric**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 5**

**A2 Key Cambridge Speaking Test**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 6**

**Post-Test Survey**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 7**

**Consent Letter**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 8**

**E-Portfolio**

Available upon request.