



**Peer Assessment in the Development of Speaking Skills in A2 Students at a Public
School**

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Speaking English is considered of vital importance to be able to interact with other people from other parts of the world because it is a lingua franca (Efrizal, 2012). In Ecuador, the importance of English has also become widespread because it is considered a path of economic, social, and technological development (Montoya, 2019). Therefore, teachers must be innovative from the beginning, and motivate their students to develop the productive skills of this language to be competitive in this globalized world (Gorard, 2002).

Developing the speaking skill does not imply that it is an easy ability to master. Oral production for A2 level students is challenging due to their pronunciation and intonation (Reinholz, 2016). The issue with this research is that students typically lack the proficiency to communicate correctly and fluently with native English speakers when speaking in a foreign language, in this case, English. To address this issue, this study uses peer assessment to enhance speaking skills. It is a good opportunity to identify strengths and highlight areas that need improvement (Topping, 2009).

One very noticeable problem in the group of students who took part in the present innovation is that they tend to be more receptive rather than productive when referring to their skills. For instance, they were having difficulties pronouncing some words in speaking activities due to a lack of confidence, fluency, and this problem occurred even though their English level.

The study highlights the value of using monologue to develop speaking skills. As a result, students can be exposed to genuine English in common circumstances like ordering food and discussing daily routines. So, the use of monologue and peer assessment inside

and outside the classroom are important to fulfill, considering these objectives, which go beyond just remembering words or filling a book with pre-planned activities.

Literature Review

This section was intended to define the variables of the study and to explore the research in the field of peer assessment, speaking skill, and fluency.

Peer Assessment

Prastika (2020) said that peer assessment is a reciprocal activity in which students offer feedback to one another in order to enhance their own learning. On the other hand, Efrilia (2019) said, "Self and peer assessment contributed to the development of a more supportive learning environment" (p.32). In other words, peer assessment becomes a collaborative strategy that allows students to enhance their skills based on observation of errors and thus exceed an objective.

Peer assessment provides an opportunity for students to practice working with others, communicating with others, and helping others to improve all of which are important skills for the increasingly collaborative world in which we live (Gershon, 2016). Speaking and peer assessment are related. Students can offer critique, which simultaneously aids in the development of their classmates. Peer evaluation, according to Furyanto (2016), increased students' verbal communication skills, assisted them in understanding what other students thought, gave them relevant comments about their performance, and encouraged students to practice speaking English (p.5).

The author claims that because participants are motivated and receive feedback from a teacher or peer, they talk more freely. As a consequence, they will be more assured while speaking during a conversation and will be able to provide ideas easily.

Peer assessment allows students adjust their own work and thinking by reviewing the work of others (Liu & Tsai,2016). For peer assessment, they trust each other to provide honest and constructive feedback (Sadler, 2006). This allows them to become comfortable with one another, which increases the quality of the feedback (William, 2019). It does help to learn how to receive feedback from different people, so an educator should encourage students to get feedback from all learners throughout the year (Thompson, 2005).

Exploring Research in the Field of Peer Assessment

Benetollo (2020) claimed that peer assessment is a mutual process between students. The objective of his research is to know the participation of students in commenting on the work of others. Increasing their capacity for making intellectual choices and judgments, as well as the students receiving feedback from their peers helps them acquire a wide range of ideas about their work.

Over the last three decades, peer evaluation has drawn a great deal of research attention, with many educational scholars arguing for its inclusion in classrooms and instructional practices (Zundert, 2010).

Speaking

One of the useful abilities in studying and teaching English is speaking. According to Chameron (2001, as cited in Wenny & Fajar, 2019), “Speaking is the use of language to express meaning so that others are able to understand it” (p.2). Speaking proves that language learners are able to engage and communicate with others.

Speaking and receptive abilities are related. Speaking is only a further action (Benetollo, 2020). It implies that additional skills, like listening, are required in order to produce or engage. No skill exists in isolation. In order to establish a productive discussion

where communication is more fluid and above all easily understood, speakers need a lot of input from other skills such as listening, writing, and reading. Students would be able to put all they learn via speaking into practice using the input they get.

To be a successful communicator, one must possess certain speaking skills. The primary components, according to Kurniati et al. (2015, as referenced in Astudillo, 2021) were interaction, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, correctness, and pronunciation. Díaz et al. (2021) described that being involved with someone else is interaction. Language use and rules are connected to grammar. The words or lexicon employed are known as a vocabulary. Speaking with ease and without pausing, with words and phrases appearing to "move," is what is meant by being fluent. How accurately someone utilizes the language is referred to as accuracy. Finally, pronunciation is defined as the oral production of the sounds. Any speaking assignment would be considered to maintain conversations, monologues, oral presentations, or arguments with the inclusion of all of these elements.

Fluency

Bailey (2005) stated that fluency is “the capacity to speak fluidly, confidently, and at a rate consistent with the norms of the relevant native speech community.” (p. 15) In other words, fluency is “the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions” (Saito, 2008, p. 34).

It allows to express oneself and make oneself understood in a conversation in an agile way. People with verbal fluency are more easily able to establish interpersonal relationships (Rossiter, 2009). Improving language learners’ ability to fluently speak and

accurately interact with interlocutors are some of the objectives of foreign language instruction (Richards, 2006).

According to Scrivener, the main challenge for language learners is becoming fluent speakers. In other words, a key objective of any language students is to communicate confidently and eloquently in a range of settings (Scrivener, 2005). Al-Haj and Mielke stated that when students spoke to others, they sought to help the listeners comprehend what they wanted to say, which created an issue with fluency. The author discovered that because the students have difficulties recalling lexical words, encoding the grammatical structure of their message, and editing their own output, they prefer to pause and talk in fragments (Al-Haj & Mielke, 2013).

Research in the field of fluency

In China, Zhang (2019) carried out a study on factors influencing Chinese college students' oral fluency in English. The results represented that the prominent factors influencing the Chinese students' oral fluency are chances of speaking English, the environment, listening and understanding of the target culture are the secondary factors. Yurong and Nan (2008) mentioned "a good way to improve oral fluency is not being afraid to make mistakes, every time students talk to someone in English is an achievement. Every single interaction they have, no matter how small, will help you improve your skills over time. Be proud of your progress".

With the objective of improving students' fluency in learners in a meaningful way, this proposal has included theories that will help learners to improve oral skills through peer assessment. This proposal aims to answer these following research questions:

1. To what extent does the use of peer-assessment in A2 students impact oral fluency?

2. What are students' difficulties in peer assessing?

Innovation

This pedagogical innovation was designed to develop student's speaking skills through peer assessment. The implementation of the innovation lasted three weeks with a total of 5 hours per week. This study took place in a public school in Machala city from El Oro province. The participants of this proposal were twenty-four students from ninth grade, whose English level is A2, according to a proficiency test that was applied at the beginning of the study.

During the first week, participants were taught how to give effective monologue presentations included aspects of fluency, grammar and vocabulary related to sports, healthy habits, food, also organizing information (script of their monologue), and pronunciation (listen to students and recordings). Extra guidelines included information on how to manage time and body language. The students were introduced to the main objective of this innovation, in order to learn how to improve oral skills through peer assessment.

A power point presentation was used to give specific information about what they were going to learn during the three weeks of training. During this first week, I also explained to the students what peer assessment is providing an example (video), then I played a video about a monologue and the correct way to perform it. At this moment many students asked about what they should know beforehand to apply peer assessment and how this will help them to improve their oral skills. The questions were answered in detail so as not to have doubts in the future.

The topic of this first week was related to environmental protection, students answered two questions using their mother tongue about how we can protect the environment, then three students were asked to give their ideas. After this activity the vocabulary related to the topic was explained and then they watched a monologue from the Ted Talk page. Students used a checklist to evaluate a speaker's presentation. To end this week, the students took their pretest, recording a one-minute audio about what they understood from the video. This activity was very helpful, as it allowed me to learn about the students' previous work and to see if the students learned from this first session.

During the second week, the students gave their opinions about the first monologue they recorded, for me it is very important to know their opinions and how they feel, during this phase while the students gave their ideas, I was taking notes of their experiences with their first monologue and the use of the checklist. For many, this activity was new, because previously they did not have the opportunity to record audios in English or talk about a very important topic such as environmental protection. This week they were taught about the use of present simple, present continuous and vocabulary related to the topic (Healthy life, food and sports). Students worked in pairs and answered questions related to the topic, then both students recorded their answers and applied a checklist to evaluate this activity.

In the last week, the students looked at a picture of a cyclist and in pairs discussed questions related to cycling and the cycling culture where they live, after which I introduced new vocabulary related to the topic (Bicycle culture in Copenhagen) and worked on a summative assessment (Model sustained monologue). At the end, as a posttest the students used information from the English book to write a short text answering the following questions: What impact do bicycles have on society? And How do bicycles

benefit the environment? in their own words, they had to write why it is important to promote a bicycle culture in their community? Finally, they recorded their answers, which was their final monologue.

Research Methodology

This proposal is based on action research. Burns (2015) defined action research as a research approach that is grounded in practical action (the action component) while at the same time focused on generating, informing, and building theory (the research component). These two components work in combination, each mutually informing and supporting the other. It is a constructivist approach to research that involves processes of collaboration, dialogue, and action among the participants in the surrounding social system - typically the language classroom in the field of English language teaching (Araujo, 2013).

Quantitative data from pretest and posttest were collected at the beginning and at the end of the innovation for a cycle of three weeks. It chooses an idea, which was transformed into one or more relevant research questions; then derives hypotheses and variables from these; develops a plan to test them; measures the variables in a context; analyzes the measurements obtained (often using statistical methods) and establishes a series of conclusions regarding the hypothesis (Tamayo, 2007). This information can be verified and can also be conveniently evaluated using numerical techniques to know the level of the students in the speaking skill.

Qualitative data is known as the type of information that describes a piece of evidence. It is investigative and often open-ended, allowing respondents to fully express themselves. Additionally, it is known as categorical data, this data type is not necessarily

measured using numbers but rather categorized based on properties, attributes, labels, and other identifiers (Pickell, 2021).

Research questions:

- To what extent does the use of peer-assessment in A2 students impact oral fluency?
- What are students' difficulties when providing peer assessment in speaking?

Participants

Twenty-four (24) students of 9th grade of a public school located in Machala, El Oro, were the subjects of study. This group of students live in different places of Machala, most of them live in dangerous zones considered like suburbs and a small group of students who live close to the center or around the school, that is why most of them do not have the chance to practice their English because of their socioeconomic status. Their ages ranged from 13 – 14 years old. Their English level was A2. That was why the researcher decided to implement this study in that class.

Instruments

This action research included quantitative instruments such as pretest-posttest, and field notes as qualitative instrument to gather information.

Pre-Posttest

A pretest is an assessment measure given to participants before they have undergone some type of treatment as part of a research study (Smith, 2019). A posttest is an assessment measure given to participants after they have received treatment as part of a research study (Zientek & Nimon, 2016). A pretest-posttest research design must provide participants with the same assessment measures before and after treatment to determine if any changes can be connected to the treatment (Zientek & Nimon, 2016). That is why this

research both pretests and posttests consisted of a monologue (oral presentation). The first participants' oral presentation, before the treatment served as a pretest. Similarly, at the end of the intervention students made a final monologue presentation which was considered as a posttest. This instrument served to answer the research question: To what extent does the use of peer-assessment in A2 students impact oral fluency?

Rubric

Rubrics are assessment tools developed to evaluate qualitative data or assignments by providing a specific set of criteria to be rated and specific details about what is needed to achieve each level of performance for each criterion (Brookhart, 2013). Rubrics typically have ratings of 1 to 2 or 4 with labels (unacceptable to excellent or undeveloped to mastered; Dawson, 2017).

Monologues (oral presentations) were graded using rubrics. It included components such as Grammar and vocabulary (control, range, appropriacy), pronunciation (stress, individual sounds), fluency (speaking spontaneously and without many pauses), and accuracy (grammatically correct ideas, phrases, or chunks).

The rubric was created by the researcher, but it was checked by two other English teachers. This instrument served to grade the research question: What are students' difficulties when providing peer assessment in speaking? It provided consistency in evaluating student work.

Field Notes

Field notes are written observations recorded during or immediately following participant observations in the field and are considered critical to understanding phenomena encountered in the field. They are commonly associated with scratch notes, diaries, and

journals (Valke, 2011). Field notes gather data from observation of the learners' reactions when they were assessed by their peers.

Field notes were written in chronological order according to the day, time, and location the observation took place. A practical suggestion for researchers that helped me with my innovation is to use shorthand to take notes while in the field.

According to some statistics, research field notes capture the heart of a situation, and the feelings of participants with concrete details, it is very important to know what to note and how to note.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the pretest and posttest were analyzed quantitatively in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to obtain data about to what extent does the use of peer-assessment in A2 students impact oral fluency (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation). First, the grades were uploaded in an Excel worksheet to run statistics. Then, data from the pretest activity was collected and the data from the posttest too, next both results were used to compare if peer assessment helped to improve oral skills.

Data collected from the field notes were analyzed qualitatively like what were the difficulties of students at the beginning and at the end of the innovation, this information was based on peer pressure or friendship and students experience.

Ethical Considerations

To carry out this study, the authorities of the institution granted their approval. Similarly, the students were notified about the goals of the research and its processes. They were guaranteed that all the information taken from this study was totally confidential and

for academic purposes. Stokes (2020) mentioned that in any research, special attention needs to be paid to concerns related to the participation, impacts and outcomes of all research students.

For the innovation, students were informed previously explaining the role they would have in those 3 weeks. So, they decided to participate with their parent's permission. They were also not identified by name. Students had the opportunity to see their outcomes (scores) and the comments that their instructor and classmates had made at the conclusion of the application. If they wanted to read or listen to their peers' opinions whenever they wished, a google drive website was also accessible. So, before, during, and after the data gathering, every kid was safe.

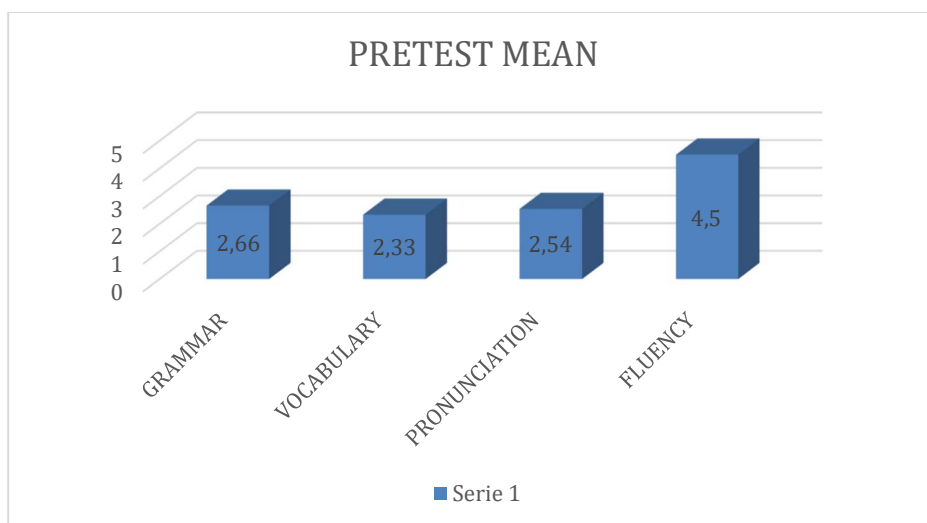
Results

Pretest Results

Results of the pretest and posttest are presented to answer: To what extent does the use of peer-assessment in A2 students impact oral fluency? the following criterion were considered: grammar resulted in a mean of 2.66 which denotes the use of target grammar while it achieved a 2.33 in vocabulary which means students use a great amount of vocabulary words related to unit. Pronunciation results achieved of 2.54 denoting student's expressions, intonation, and stress as not too clear or easy to understand. Fluency is the ability to speak smoothly (not quickly) without noticeable effort or loss of coherence. Poor fluency is normally associated with frequent self-correction, hesitation, pausing or repetition. Fluency reached 2.33, it means that students have problems with the flow, rhythm, and speed of speech.

Table 1.

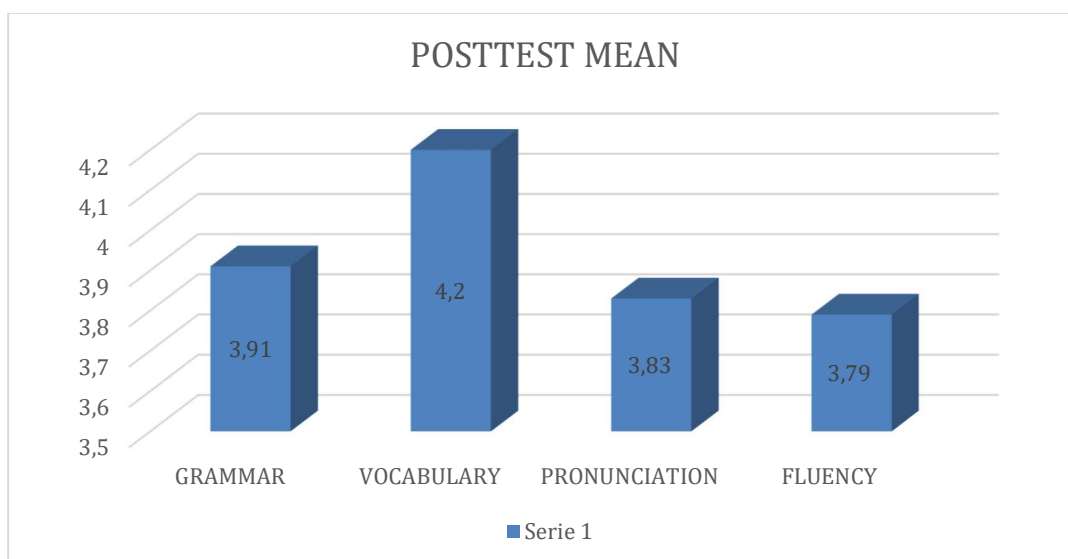
Pretest rubric results



Posttest Results

Table 2.

Posttest rubric results



Grammar reached 3.91. It reflects that student improved their grammar skills, during the monologue, students must write the script according to the task assigned, it was used during the peer assessment according to the rubric. Students were able to write

correctly and apply the correct grammar rules in both verbal times studied in the unit.

Vocabulary reached 4.20, it demonstrated that student applied all the vocabulary learned during the innovation. Students were able to recognize the vocabulary and they could apply it in a context. The most important is to know the results about pronunciation and fluency because both are part of oral skills that this research questions want to know. Pronunciation reached 3.83 in comparison with the pretest, students were able to improve their pronunciation. It demonstrates that they were clear during the monologue. Finally, fluency reached 3.79 students could control flow, rhythm, and speed of speech.

The paired sample *t*-test identified significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($t=15,18$, $p < 1,768$). The test supported for the alternative hypothesis, as shown in table below:

Table 3.

Paired –sample t-test

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
	<i>PRETEST</i>	<i>POSTTEST</i>
Media	0,49375	0,7875
Variance	0,02137228	0,01570652
Observations	24	24
Pearson Coefficient Correlation	0,76679145	
Hypothetical Mean Difference	0	
Degrees of freedom	23	
Statistical t	P(T<=t) two tail	
P(T<=t) one tail	8,8425E-14	
Critical Value of t (one tail)	1,71387153	
P(T<=t) two tail	1,7685E-13	
Critical Value of t (two tails)	2,06865761	

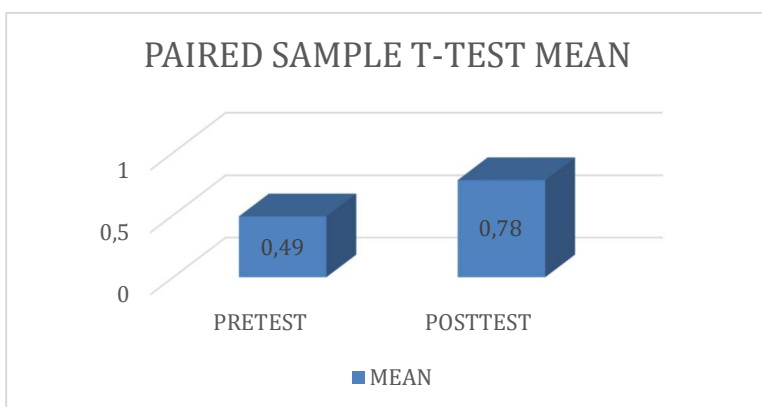
Comparison from pretest and posttest

Table 4 shown a difference from pretest to posttest, at the beginning students got 0.49 percent in the application of peer assessment but at the end during the training and the

feedback provided by the teacher the results shown 0.78 percent. It means that at some point the application of peer assessment helped students to develop speaking skills and oral fluency.

Table 4.

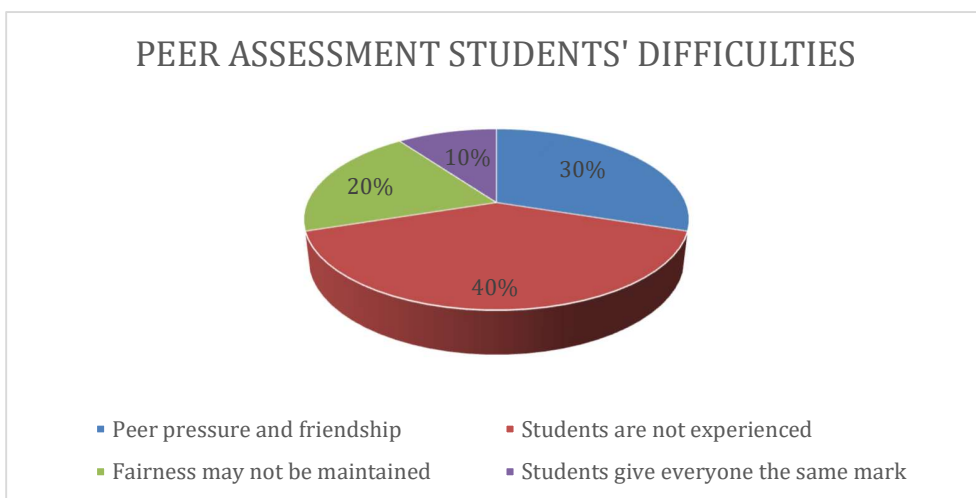
Statistical comparison of pretest and posttest rubric results



Qualitative Results

The field notes describe the observations during the training and applications of peer assessment highlighting details of this process, in reply to qualitative questions: What are students' difficulties when providing peer assessment in speaking? The observation gave the following results making use of excel and color-code formulas to collect qualitative data, as shown in table 5.

Table 5.

Peer Assessment Student's difficulties

According to the observations in class, students had difficulties to provide peer assessment. A 40% of the students mentioned that they did not have enough experience to provide feedback because it was something new that they do. The 30% of students said that it is difficult to assess their peers because peer pressure, most of them get along and they did not want to assign a bad grade. The 20% of the students said that fairness may not be maintained because extroverted students can be usually being marked higher and quieter students got marked down. Finally, 10% of students mentioned that students tend to give the same mark to everyone.

Discussion

For the first question “To what extent does the use of peer-assessment in A2 students impact oral fluency? It is obvious that peer evaluation has a good impact on the growth of speaking abilities. Peer evaluation, according to Prastika (2020), is a reciprocal activity in which students offer feedback to one another in order to enhance their own learning. In fact, it was feasible to assess how much the students improved by comparing their pre and posttest results. Students were first shy and worried about not properly

assisting their friends. But in the end, they were happy with the fantastic outcome and all the wonderful progress. Peer assessment helped the innovation in the classroom. By this point, students are aware that everything depends on their effort and that positive outcomes are possible if everyone works together.

For the second question, “What are students' difficulties when providing peer assessment in speaking?” It is important to note that students were completely unprepared. They were considerably more anxious since they were beginners. Students became more engaged in their learning of grammar, offering comments, assessing, and making adjustments for the performance of others by utilizing peer assessment activities. Additionally, the students developed critical thinking skills for both themselves and their classmates when speaking.

Peer assessment has been used as an assessment method in the field of education at an increasing pace in recent decades, according to Topping (2009). It is an example of a learning system built around the learner and their peers. It is based on effective learning and emphasizes the student's complete participation in the process of collaborative learning with peers while being supervised by the instructor.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine how student speaking performances are influenced by peer assessment. The results of implementing the pretest and posttest utilizing the rubric in this study showed an improvement in the students' marks for their speaking performances. This is in line with the theories looked at in the research study's literature section, which emphasizes the benefits of peer evaluation for public speaking.

Additionally, this study also gave the pupils interesting experiences. As an illustration, it was discovered that when their classmates assessed them rather than the teacher, students felt more confident in their performances. The student's participation was crucial since it helped them in this study and led to their progress.

In conclusion, from beginning to end, the study's execution surpassed the researcher's expectations. It was found that the students who took part in peer evaluation profited from it, and the results were positive since, by the time it was complete, they felt more assured in their accomplishments.

Recommendations

The use of peer assessment in the classroom to enhance students' oral performance has confirmed that using the right assessment techniques during class has a positive effect on the development of the students' abilities. In the future, teachers should think about applying innovations over a longer period since it would improve the results.

Some students experience pressure and embarrassment when evaluating others by their peers because they believe their partners may retaliate in other ways because of criticism. The instructor should thus highlight the genuine significance of student input in the instructional process as well as the respect for differing viewpoints.

More activities should be included to help students practice peer assessment and demonstrate the value of providing their partners with constructive criticism.

Limitations

Although the study findings are encouraging, future research will need to account for certain implementation-related failures. Positively, school officials backed the

procedure since it would be beneficial for students and education at the institution, but at the same time there were some limitations that have to be considered.

This research evidences the lack of experience in peer assessment from students, it was very difficult for students to understand at the beginning what the goal of peer assessment is. Even though they were eager to take part in this innovation, some of them had a lot of trouble understanding how to use the checklist correctly, provide comments, and peer-assess their partners. Other limitation is that school does not count with technological tools like a projector to project a video or a speaker to play an audio in class.

Other limitation that occurred during training was that most of the students did not graded their peers correctly according the checklist provided. Most of them graded according their preferences because they did not want to harm their peer's grades. It was a problem that accoured during an activity assigned. Despite this, it was attempted to take advantage of the opportunities for practice, and following the innovation, the students continued to ask their partners for peer-feedback and peer-assessment because they stated that they were really interested in the comments that would help them to identify the areas in which they needed to improve.

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Appendix 1

LESSON PLAN

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

RUBRIC PEER ASSESSMENT

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

CHECKLIST PEER ASSESSMENT

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

RESEARCHER'S FIELD NOTES

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

CONSENT LETTER

Available upon request.

Appendix 7

MONOLOGUE INNOVATION

Available upon request.

Appendix 8

E-PORTFOLIO

Available upon request.