

## Impact of Peer-Assessment on Speaking Skills in B1 University Students

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**Research Report** 

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## Impact of Peer-Assessment on Speaking Skills in B1 University Students

Improving speaking skills is an important goal for many B1 university students. It allows them to communicate in a second language, leading to personal and professional development. However, there are challenges that must be addressed to help these students improve their speaking skills. This project seeks to answer a research question that will provide insight into this issue. The question on task is to research the impact that peer-assessment has on speaking in a 4-week B1 English class.

Based on the observations in my classes, speaking is a skill my students find it difficult since they feel shy and afraid to speak because they do not feel confident with their English level.

#### **Literature Review**

The application of peer assessment in improving speaking skills is seen in many studies. A study by Homayouni (2022) found that "scaffolded peer-assessment in group-oriented classrooms had a large effect size on developing both speaking skills and enlarging learners' vocabulary size" (p.2). This study explains that peer-assessment together with guidance from the teacher greatly helps improve the learners speaking abilities and vocabulary.

Another study by Moncayo et al. (2023) explored the impact of peer assessment on speaking skills when used in conjunction with communicative language teaching (CLT) activities and drama. They also found that peer assessment helps enhance student's speaking skills. The importance of this study was that it demonstrated the relevance of interactive activities in this type of assessment. In addition to these studies, McNamara (2001) argued that:

Traditional methods of assessment, such as standardized tests and teacher evaluations, do not place enough emphasis on students' responsibility. Instead,

teachers are urged to collaborate with their students in terms of the employment of peer and self-assessments in higher education (p.2).

This perspective highlights the importance of involving students in the assessment process and promoting their ownership and accountability for their learning. Also, Tony Lim(2019) and Lara Pietro(2024) in their respective researches mentioned the importance of using their language abilities to negotiate and get their point of view out at the same time that they defend it. Furthermore, Homayouni (2022) stated that "peer assessment has drawn significant attention recently due to its pedagogical significance and its ability to foster learner independence and autonomy" (p. 2). In addition, the author pointed out that "the inclusion of peer-evaluation in the assessment processs contributes to student learning and encourages a sense of ownership over the assessment processes" (p.5).

In general terms, all the findings reach the conclusion that peer-assessment does help improve speaking skills. It is also important to notice that more research is needed to confirm the information since a bigger group study could help confirm or deny the influence of this type of assessment on their skills.

Specific strategies and guidelines within the EFL context might help give a deeper understanding of the topic. It is also important to consider factors such as having students with different proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds. Training students how to peer-assess was challenging since every student tended to do it from his own perspective. As explained by the Center for Teaching Innovation at Cornell University teachers need to "help students learn to carry out peer assessment by modeling appropriate, constructive criticism and descriptive feedback through own comments on student work and well-constructed rubrics (p.1)". The use of a structured lesson plan as the one on appendix 1 and a rubric as the one on appendix 2 were essential to overcome

biases or misunderstanding at the moment of peer-assess. Asking students to put themselves in the shoes of the other student was also helpful to create empathic people and therefore obtain clear results in each peer-assessment.

## Innovation

During 4 weeks, students undertook on different tasks regarding animal treatment and food consumption. They participated in different interactive activities in an online class and the aim was to explain the vocabulary needed to express agreement and disagreement. Students were also introduced to modal verbs. The objective was to encourage students to use each verb in discussions specifically in the context of food choices. During the acquisition phase, students learned key language structures related to agreeing and disagreeing including modal verbs like "can," "should," "must," and "might", emphasizing expressions of ability, recommendations, necessity, and possibility respectively, within the context of animal consumption.

For practice, I modeled with the help of another student the activity they had to do which was a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of being vegetarian then students recorded one-minute discussions. Student A supported vegetarianism, while student B opposed it. After recording, we practiced giving constructive criticism as a class and consequently students practiced peer-assessing without grading their peers based on the rubric and checklist they received. Finally, they conducted the peerassessment using both tools the checklist and the rubric and evaluated their peers' speaking performances, modal verb usage, and vocabulary application.

My students worked in different activities aimed at improving their comprehension and collaborative skills. The lessons focused on identifying and summarizing key events using specific texts, fostering both individual understanding and teamwork.

The goal of the entire process was for students to defend their viewpoints using learned vocabulary for agreeing and disagreeing. The approach encompassed pre tasks, main tasks, and post tasks in order for students to be ready to provide feedback and give an accurate peer-assessment.

#### **Research Methodology**

As a teacher, my project aims to analyze the impact of peer-assessment on the speaking ability of my students with a special focus on accuracy using action research which Mertler (2017) described as " a systematic approach to inquiry that actively engages practitioners in researching their own practice to bring about practical and meaningful changes" (p. 15). The project had a time frame of four weeks.

This research is based on peer-assessment and I chose speaking because I found that it is an ability that students tend to have difficulties in their performance. Also each class was based on the PPP (presentation, practice, production) methodology first each task was presented then they had time to practice, and finally the task was produced or performed by students.

## **Participants**

The participants in the study were 23 mid-20s college students in which the majority were female- 13 participants and 10 male students. The research was performed at a public institution. It is also important to notice that students registered belonged either from other careers at the institution or outsiders who registered specifically for the English class. My relationship with the participants was based on professional commitments due to the classes I taught, and the research did not change the professional relationship.

#### Instruments

In week 1 to 4 the evolution of the number of words, fillers, and repetitions was based on the recording of one minute of their arguments in favor or against the different topics. The rubric provided on Appendix 2 was the base to check their improvement in agreeing or disagreeing and their ability to do so. Also, for qualitative data, I gave feedback to each student explaining to them their improvements in their ability the defend their point of view and the fluency they had every week compared to the following week. On week 1, the feedback was based on their speaking ability on the previous classes prior to the task in hand.

The pretest involved a role-play activity where participants spoke for 1 minute and each performance was recorded. Students were encouraged to use every tool available for them to defend their point of view, including online presentations, research on the topic from the internet among other.

During the post-test, students individually reflected on their growth and learning throughout the activity, specifically focusing on the impact of the peer-assessment on their speaking skills.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of peer-assessment on the speaking ability of students. The data used in the research included quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data included numbers of words spoken, number of pauses, number of filled pauses, number of repetitions, and number of corrections. The qualitative data gathered was based on the feedback giving to each student which was based on their ability to defend their point of view and the differences in speech delivery from week 1 to week 4.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study did not have any biases based on race or sexual preferences. Anne Bordoel et al (2011) explained that "bias avoidance is both pervasive and gendered. However, cultural differences are also important and strategies to reduce bias avoidance across...countries" (p.1). An outsider, another teacher from a different institution, reviewed my work to ensure there was no cultural bias. Prior to initiating any part of the project, I obtained the students' approval, and precautions were taken to protect the participants if any sensitive data emerged. The project was risk-free as it was based on peer-assessment and focused on students' specific needs.

### Results

The data from this study shows that peer-assessment helps improve students' speaking skills from pre-test until post-test. Both the qualitative and quantitative data showed improvements in the speaking abilities of the B1 university students in my class.

The pretest involved a role play activity where participants spoke for 1 minute, resulting in 1000 words with an average of 50 pauses, 23 filled pauses, 10 repetitions, and 3 corrections. After 4 weeks, a post-test was administered with a similar role play activity, resulting in 1000 words and an average 45 pauses, 20 filled pauses, 5 repetitions, and 3 corrections. These findings highlight the effectiveness of incorporating peer-assessment in improving students' speaking skills since every student had less pauses, fillers, and repetitions which means they felt more confident at the moment of speaking.

The qualitative data, based on teacher's individual feedback to students, showed an improvement in the speaking ability of students from the pretest to the post test. The pretest was based on role play. After 4 weeks, a post-test was administered

with a similar role play activity. The result showed an overall improvement. The use of different stages in the process not only honed students' debating and language abilities but also encouraged empathy and understanding in discussing complex ethical issues.

The first class, many students had problems with fluency, they struggled when trying to express their ideas coherently mainly because they lacked vocabulary and grammar expressions. However, in the last class periods, I noted clear progress in these areas. They were confident and expressed themselves using more complex terms and with longer utterances, they seemed more motivated. By week 4, students reported that they felt their speaking skills had become stronger and more natural of therefore they felt more motivated to speak. Based on evidence this improvement might be a consequence of using peer-assessment among students. The qualitative data gathered on individual feedback suggested improvements in their ability to defend their point of view and their confidence at the moment of speaking, while the quantitative data showed accuracy gains.

This application ensured a deep understanding of the material while promoting continuous learning, motivation, and retention. Collaborative learning was emphasized and students engaged in a discussion about animal rights and food consumption. This exercise encouraged critical thinking and effective communication. The approach fostered collaborative learning and provided students with the opportunity to refine their language skills in a real-world context within the limitations of an online class.

### Discussion

The use of peer-assessment helps teachers create motivation in students, which as a result improves the amount of information grasped and in turn, helps them communicate better. Students acting as negotiators and interactors empower them and help them communicate with more ease. Lara SanPietro (2024) in teaching negotiation claimed that

"at the core, negotiation skills encompass back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement between two or more parties who are in conflict" (p.1). However, it is important to notice that the research was based on a limited group study where all the participants belonged to a similar background and had the same English level. Having a broader group study from different backgrounds and English levels may give different result because as Yow and Lim (2019) said "being able to communicate in the same language provides a critical platform for facilitating problem solving among members" (p.1)

On the other hand, the task, which was to agree and disagree on different topics, gave some freedom to the participants to give their own opinions and talk based on their own experiences about each discussion. This allowed each person to talk without worrying that much about grammar or vocabulary but instead they focused more on defending their point of view, which probably means that the task also permitted participants to improve their speaking abilities for the sole purpose of defending their point of view.

#### Conclusion

This study provides evidence of the positive impact of peer-assessment in speaking. However, further research is still needed to understand the nuances, generalizability across different contexts, and any potential contradictions or interactions with other factors. The data collected that the effectiveness of incorporating peer-assessment in improving students' speaking skills. As I analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data, I found evidence to support this claim.

Qualitatively, I noticed an improvement in speaking proficiency from the pre-test to the post-test among students who engaged in peer-assessment. These students demonstrated enhanced oral expression abilities. This qualitative finding highlights the

practical impact of this approach. Moreover, the results revealed an increase in speaking accuracy. The gains in accuracy validate the pedagogical value of incorporating peer-assessment.

In conclusion, the research indicated the practical benefits of incorporating peerassessment. As teachers it is important to continue refining language teaching methods, the role of peer-assessment remains an area for exploration and development.

#### Limitations

There were many positive results based on the study but there were also some limitations. First, the number of participants in the study was small. Having participants from different classes and schools might be needed to confirm the results. Also, while both types of data showed speaking improvements, there were some differences regarding the areas improved according to each data source.

The limitations, as stated on the discussion, were that the study group was limited and mostly belonged to the same cultural background and English level. It was very important to plan appropriately for these cases so that students easily understand the use of each authentic material and the reason for them in each case.

Another limitation was the lack of technology for in-class activities which sometimes led to resort to resources that did not need to use of technology. However, although a limitation it helped students and myself be creative to overcome this obstacle.

#### Recommendations

The study was very thought-provoking since it created a connection between students and myself. The recommendation gathered from the study is to expand the time of it and include several repetitions in order to check the validity of the results. Each group of students think differently and therefore their responses varies on the same study. Having a broader group study would help confirm the results or deny them.

More research is needed to fully understand how peer-assessment might impact different aspects of speaking ability in different ways. It would also be valuable to look at how peer-assessment might be affected by other factors that could impact speaking development, such as individual student characteristics, specific teaching methods used, or the types of authentic objects utilized. Examining these other variables could provide deeper insights into getting the most out of this approach and any potential limitations.

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# Appendix 1

Institution	CEC-EPN
Year of study:	23 mid-20s college students
Student description:	B1 - College students
Professor:	Francisco Velasquez
Unit title:	Agreeing and disagreeing
Weeks of instruction:	4 weeks
Hours per week	2.5 hours: 10 hours total.
Action Research decisions:	1. Speaking or writing focus? Speaking
	2. Is innovation focused on peer or self-assessment?
	Peer- assessment

Learning Activities (from student's	Intention				
perspective). Indicate whether the	(Related to Column C and lesson				
strategy is whole class, groups or	flow. Engage, introduce, closure, review				
individual work.	etc.)				
Week 1 (or Lesson 1)					
<b>Objective:</b> To Introduce the topic	Engage students' attention. (A)				
of animal treatment in the food					

industry and collect pre-assessment data.

Hook: I will show a short video clip or image related to animal treatment in the food industry.

Acquisition: I will present information about the topic.

Learning Task:

I will teach the necessary vocabulary to agree and disagree.

I will teach students to peer-assess themselves using a checklist against the recording provided by me.

After that, students will discuss having opposing views on the advantages and disadvantages of producing artificial meat, record themselves, and hand the recording to the teacher. Student A will support artificial meat, student B will reject it. Engage students in a discussion to activate prior knowledge. (A)

Demonstrate their speaking skills (A)

Feedback: Provide feedback on the pre-assessment performance, noting areas of strength and areas for improvement. (M)

Transfer: Discuss the purpose of the pre-assessment in determining the impact of peer-assessment on students' speaking skills. (T)

Week 2 (or Lesson 2) Objective: Introduce modal Hook: I will engage my students in a brief discussion about the importance of peer feedback in improving speaking or writing skills. (A)

Acquisition: I will introduce peer assessment as a tool for my students.

Acquisition: I will review key concepts, vocabulary, and language structures relevant to agreeing and disagreeing and animal consumption

Learning Task:

Student will submit a new recording on the topic of advantages and disadvantages of being vegetarian, student A supports it students Create Engagement (A)

Review (A)

Evaluate their peers' speaking performances. (A)

Practice the uses of the checklist (A)

Feedback: I will monitor my students' practice assessments and provide feedback on their use of the checklist and their ability to accurately assess their peers' performances. (M)

Transfer: Discuss the purpose of peer-assessment in promoting student

	reflection and accountability for their		
	own and their peers learning. (T)		
Week 3 (or Lesson 3)			
Objective: Performance Task -			
Debate on animal treatment in the			
food industry.			
Hook: Discuss the value of peer-			
feedback when used in a discussion.			
Remind students of the upcoming	Emphasize its role in identifying		
performance task and the purpose of	strengths and areas for improvement.		
the debate. (A)	(A)		
Acquisition: Review the process of			
peer-assessment (debate guidelines,			
expectations, and evaluation criteria)			
using the checklist.	Encourage students to provide		
	constructive feedback and		
	suggestions. (A)		
Learning Task: I will pair students			
up and have them conduct the debate,	Feedback: Monitor students' peer		
with one group supporting animal	assessments, ensuring they are using		
rights and the other group supporting	the checklist correctly, and provide		

their arguments and engages in	additional feedback where necessary.
respectful discussion and rebuttal.	(M)
Then they will assess each other's	
practice performances using the	Transfer: Reflect on the overall
checklist.	learning experience, discussing the
	progress made in using vocabulary,
	modal verbs, and communication
	skills to articulate and support
	arguments. (T)
Week 4 (or Lesson 4)	
<b>Objective:</b> Evaluate their ability to	
keep the discussion going and defend	
their point of view. Finally, prepare	
for the post-assessment.	
Post-assessment: I will have	
students individually reflect on their	
growth and learning throughout the	
activity, specifically focusing on the	
impact of the peer-assessment on their	
speaking skills.	
	Review concepts learnt

Acquisition: I will recapitulate essential concepts, vocabulary, and language structures pertaining to the topic of agreeing and disagreeing focusing on their speaking skills. (A)

Learning Task: I will offer my students opportunities to practice speaking exercises connected to agreeing and disagreeing that are aligned with the upcoming postassessment. They will use the checklist for peer assessment. (A) Feedback: Review and provide feedback on students' reflection and analysis, acknowledging their progress and offering suggestions for further development. (M)

Transfer: Discuss the long-term benefits of peer-feedback in fostering independent learning and continuous improvement in speaking skills. (T)

# Appendix 2

	<b>Excellent</b> 25 Points	<b>Good</b> 21 Points	<b>Fair</b> 17 Points	<b>Poor</b> 13 Points			
Grammar/Vocabulary: Statements on agreeing and disagreeing	Consistently expresses statements on agreeing and disagreeing accurately and appropriately.	Mostly expresses statements on agreeing and disagreeing accurately and appropriately with some minor errors.	Occasionally expresses statements on agreeing and disagreeing accurately and appropriately with notable errors.	Rarely expresses statements on agreeing and disagreeing accurately and appropriately.			
Pronunciation: Good pronunciation	Exhibits clear and easily understandable pronunciation with correct intonation and stress.	Demonstrates mostly clear pronunciation with occasional minor errors in intonation or stress.	Pronunciation is somewhat unclear and may require effort to understand, with notable errors in intonation or stress.	Pronunciation is often unclear and difficult to understand, with significant errors in intonation or stress.			
Ability to ask and answer questions to keep the discussion going.	Actively engages in the discussion by asking and answering questions fluently, effectively maintaining a smooth conversation flow.	Generally engages in the discussion by asking and answering questions, with occasional pauses or minor disruptions in conversation flow.	Participates in the discussion but struggles to ask and answer questions fluently, leading to noticeable interruptions or gaps in conversation flow.	Rarely asks or answers questions, resulting in lack of meaningful interaction and frequer interruptions in conversation flow.			
Grammar/Vocabulary: Appropriate modal verbs	Consistently and accurately uses appropriate modal verbs in the right context and with correct grammar.	Mostly uses appropriate modal verbs in the right context and with correct grammar, with occasional minor errors.	Occasionally uses appropriate modal verbs in the right context and with correct grammar, but with notable errors.	Rarely uses appropriat modal verbs in the righ context or with correct grammar.			

## Appendix 3

Categories	Yes	Sometimes	Not
			yet
1. Grammar/vocabulary:			
Statements on agreeing and			
disagreeing			
2. Pronunciation:			
Good pronunciation			
3. Interaction if interactive goal			

Able to ask and answer questions to		
keep the discussion going.		
4 Grammar/vocabulary:		
Appropriate modals verbs		

## Appendix 4

Teacher: Good morning, everyone. Today, we talk about animal rights, which is very important. But first, let's review some important ideas, words, and how to say if we agree or disagree. This will help us talk about this topic.

First, let's understand what animal rights mean. Animal rights mean treating animals fairly and making laws to protect them. It's about not hurting or using them unfairly.

Now, let's hear from you guys. Student 1, what do you think about animal rights?

Student 1: Sure. I think animals should be treated well, but I also think it's okay for them to be used for fun sometimes, like in circuses or zoos, as long as they're taken care of.

Teacher: Student 2, do you agree with Student 1, or do you think differently?

Student 2: I think animals should be treated well, but I don't think it's okay to use them for fun. They should be free and not kept just for people to watch.

Teacher: That's an interesting difference in opinions. Student 1, how do you think we can balance using animals for fun with their rights?

Student 1: I think we can enjoy seeing animals perform, but we should also make sure they're happy and taken care of.

Teacher: Thank you for sharing. Student 2, what do you think about this?

Student 2: I don't think we should use animals for fun. We should find other things to do that don't hurt them.

Teacher: Both good points. It's clear we have different ideas about animal rights, and that's okay. We can learn from each other.

Teacher: Okay, everyone. Our talk about animal rights was interesting. You all did a great job sharing your thoughts. Now, take some time to think about what you learned, especially from listening to each other.

## Appendix 5

	procedure	definition	results of studies	challenges/limitations
animal	5 steps	To introduce the topic	positive	Students participation
treatment		of animal treatment in		in online classes is
in the		the food industry by		limited

Challenges of the strategy

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food		teaching vocabulary,		
industry		show students how to		
		agree and disagree		
		and teach students		
		how to peer -assess		
		each other.		
modal	5 steps	Introduce modal	positive	Some students learnt at
Verbs		Verbs in order to		a different pace
		agree and disagree		
review	cycles	Debate on the uses of	positive	Some students get
Modal		animals for		more passionate about
verbs		entertainment like a		the topic than others
		bull fight or in		
		circuses.		
Post-	Cycles	engage in a discussion	Positive	Difficulties in peer-
assessme		about animal rights		assessment
nt		and food consumption		
<u> </u>		l		

	Gender (0M -	Number of	Number of silent	Number of filled	Number of	Number of	
Student	<b>1F)</b>	<b>words</b> 1000	pauses 45	pauses 20	repetitions 9	corrections	<b>Total</b> 10
2	1	1000	43 50	20	9	1	10
3	1	1000	30 47	22	10	1	10
4	0	1000	47 52	21	10	1	6
5	1	1000	48	24	8	2	9
6	1	1000	51	23	12	2	9
7	1	1000	49	23	9	2	11
8	1	1000	53	24	11	2	13
9	0	1000	46	21	10	3	6
10	0	1000	54	25	10	3	11
10	0	1000	50	22	8	3	8
12	0	1000	50	24	12	3	7
13	0	1000	50	23	9	4	8
14	0	1000	50	23	11	4	7
15	0	1000	50	23	10	4	8
16	0	1000	50	23	10	4	7
17	1	1000	50	23	8	5	9
18	1	1000	50	23	12	5	8
19	1	1000	50	23	9	5	8
20	0	1000	50	23	11	5	7
21	1	1000	50	23	10	6	8
22	1	1000	50	23	10	6	8
23	1	1000	50	23	10	1	9
Total		1000	50	23	10	3	9

# Appendix 6

## Appendix 7

E-portfolio

https://sites.google.com/casagrande.edu.ec/franciscovelasquezsportfolio/home