

PEER ASSESSMENT: EXPLORING TERTIARY STUDENTS' VIEW

Masturah Sabri

Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia(UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA
masturaa_sabri@yahoo.com

Melor Md. Yunus

Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia(UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor, MALAYSIA
melor14@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract— In past decades, peer-assessment has been promoted as a valuable approach to enhance students learning experience and has been used to develop autonomous learning environment. This paper is intended to evaluate on university students' perception towards peer assessment of oral skills; by looking into the students' attitude and motivation towards the use of peer-assessment in classroom. It also looked into the challenges faced in implementing peer-assessment in classroom. The research instruments consist of a pre-questionnaire, a post-questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to gather data from 40 tertiary level students of this study. This paper then compares the result of pre-questionnaire with the result from post-questionnaire to draw the findings; by looking at the learners' perceptions before and after experiencing peer-assessment activities during classroom. The findings of this study signify a shift on the learners' perception towards peer-assessment. Peer-assessment seems to display positive impacts towards students' attitude and motivation in learning.

Keywords-peer-assessment, attitude and motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

Often, it is understood that assessment are those grading and judging done by teachers. Nonetheless, peer assessment is somehow reliable and according to Topping (1998), research done shows that peer evaluation does positively influence students learning where "the effects of peer evaluation are as good or better than the effects from teachers assessment".

A growing number of researchers have been looking into the impact of self-assessments, however, it is taken by surprise that less study reviewed on peer assessment (Boud & Falchikov, 1989 as cited in Topping, 1998) even though the study on and benefits of peer assessment is extensively examined and reviewed in during the early forties and seventies (Kane & Lawler, 1978) and research conducted shows increase in putting self-and peer assessment into practice in tertiary level education (Segers et al., 2003 as cited in De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, 2012).

The benefits of incorporating peer-assessment in education have been explored in many education courses (Topping, 1998 and Shimura, 2006). However, most of the existing literature looks into the correlation of the marks given by the teacher and weigh it against the marks awarded by student from peer

assessment, (Cheng & Warren, 2005; Saito & Fujika 2004; De Grez, Valcke, & Roozen, 2012; and Sadler & Good 2006); and has been over emphasized (Liu & Carless, 2006). From research done, it is in general demonstrates that marks given by peer are dependable and that they can be trusted in giving feedbacks as well as in assessing their peers, (Liu & Carless, 2006) as the marks given by them are 'positively correlated' with the marks awarded by the teachers, (Azarnoosh, 2013; Shimura, 2006).

However, it is unexpected that not much of the current research on peer assessment explore on the students' perception towards the use of peer assessment in a language classroom. Therefore, this paper seeks to evaluate on university students' perception towards peer assessment of oral skills by looking into students attitude and motivation towards the use of peer-assessment. It will also look into the challenges faced in implementing peer-assessment in classroom

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Peer-assessment in education context

Commonly, there are two main purpose of assessment: summative and formative (Liu and Carless, 2006). A summative type of assessment frequently associated with major examinations and rigid grading. While formative assessment is connected to the purpose of learning, which focuses on the learning process rather than merely marks and grades. Quoting Liu and Carless (2006), "engaging learners in thinking about achieving outcomes to certain agreed standards is a learning process and giving marks or grades is only part of that process"; where, by involving students in the assessments process, it is believed to make better of their performance in learning (De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, 2012).

Align with the Malaysian government effort in making a shift with its education's culture of teacher-centered classroom to fostering student-centered learning in Malaysian education (National Education Blueprint, 2011), peer assessment is a good method to instill responsibility, (Cheng & Warren, 2005) and promotes constructive teaching and learning (Azarnoosh, 2013). In a study on Malaysian Smart School students done by Azizah, Nor Fariza and Hazita (2005) it shows that the adoption of peer assessment in teaching and learning English in Malaysian Secondary Smart Schools has demonstrated a

positive impact on students learning. Through the finding of the study, the students expressed that the activity of peer assessment conducted during class supports their learning where it helps them to be actively involved during the learning process.

B. Benefits of peer assessment

Peer assessment is regarded as the process of judging and awarding marks and grades to each other based on a particular traits or performance. According to Liu and Carless (2006), focus in peer-assessment is always on the standards and the attempt to interactions made by learners to develop understandings and then will subsequently increase their knowledge absorption.

The benefits of peer assessment have been discussed in a number of studies as in (De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, 2012; Shimura 2006; Sadler & Good 2006), as well as in reviews discussed in the early years of the implementation of self and peer assessment, (Topping, 1998).

Through peer-assessment, it is said to be able to enhance the two-way teacher-students' communication, (Wen & Tsai, 2006), it also aids in the students' development of social and transferable skills (Topping, 1998; Earl 1986 as cited in Cheng & Warren 2005), helps to develop student-centered learning than the traditional teacher approach, and is believed to promote interaction, allows positive criticism and simultaneously will help learners to improve on their performance in learning English, (Azarnoosh, 2013). It also asserted to benefit students learning where the course of action in evaluation their peer helps them to be actively involved during the language learning process (Azizah, Nor Fariza and Hazita, 2005).

Researches done, on the development of an autonomous learner, believed that both peer and self-assessments provide a great assistance for students to be independent with their own learning. It also seems that, from the same study conducted, learners viewed peer-assessment activities as 'educative', (Clifford, 1999 as cited in Wen & Tsai, 2006), where (Boud, 1995 as cited in Liu and Carless, 2006) asserted that student involved in peer-assessment usually found the materials and ideas conveyed by their peer as useful and constructive to be applied during self-learning.

C. Implementing peer-assessment: Challenges

A continuous debate on learners and peer assessment are mainly related to the reliability of peer-assessment, De Grez, Valcke & Roozen (2012) where findings suggest that learners sometimes have distrust in their peer's ability, Azarmoosh(2013); possibly due to lack of language proficiency (Shimura, 2006) and De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, (2012).

However, from a study by Clifford, 1999 as cited in Wen & Tsai (2006), it also seems that students require a clear

direction on marking and grading their peers. Also, another study done on peer assessment by Sullivan et al., 1999 and Orsmond & Merry 1996, as cited in Wen & Tsai (2006), shows that learners happen to have low self confidence in evaluating their peers where they prefer on being briefed concerning the marking and grading system beforehand.

Even though it may possibly be time consuming to impart the strategies and equipped them with the skills required. However, it is also necessary for both teacher and tutors to take part and be responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the approach conducted (Cheng & Warren, 2005); as the benefits of peer-assessment are overwhelming.

D. Implementing peer-assessment: Attitude and motivation of students

Reviews on students' attitude and motivation on self and peer-assessment has displayed learners' positive and negative thoughts on the approach. Attitudes of learners in adapting peer assessment are mostly impacted by their peers as they viewed their peers as incapable and do not have the 'level' of language proficiency to provide comments and insights on their work, (e.g. De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, 2012; Shimura, 2006; Cheng & Warren, 2005; and Sullivan et al, 1999 as cited in Wen & Tsai, 2006) where students with lower language proficiency may exhibit dislike in evaluating their peers due to lack of knowledge and therefore; according to Batchman & Palmer (1989) as cited in Lim (2006), learners would observe assessment as challenging and demanding .

Study by Sullivan et al.,(1999) as cited in Wen & Tsai (2006) and De Grez, Valcke & Roozen (2012), reviewed on learners' motivation level, shows that there is an absence of self-confidence when assessing their peers due to lack of guidance and training in adapting the approach. Similarly, study by Lim (2007) displays that with a few practices on peer-assessing, learners are able to assess their own and peers' work more accurately.

On the other hand, positive feedbacks received by learners on their attitude and motivation in adopting peer-assessment are overwhelming and educative, (refer to study by Wen & Tsai, 2006; Lim, 2007 and De Grez, Valcke & Roozen, 2012). Furthermore, studies by Patri, 2002; Saito & Fujita, 2004 as well as Azarnoosh, 2013 display positive learners' acceptance and attitudes in peer assessment.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample

The participants of this study are 40 second-year engineering major students of University Malaysia Perlis, UniMAP. The participants aged from 20 to 25 years old. The majority are the male students of which they constituted 55% while the remaining of 45% are female students. All the participants of this study enrolled into 'University English' course, a university compulsory program. Students have been

exposed to several peer-assessment activities throughout the 14-weeks-course. This study also involves interviewing 3 lecturers teaching the same course.

As peer evaluation seems to have a significant effect on students learning, this study intends to find out students' view and perceptions towards this method of assessment. It also seeks to look into the effect of peer evaluation on students' motivation and attitude towards learning as well as factor in inhibiting the implementation of peer-assessment in tertiary level education.

B. Research Instruments

To evaluate the students' perception on peer-assessment, 2 sets of questionnaire (adapted from a study by Liu & Carless, 2006 and Wen & Tsai, 2006), was designed to extract feedbacks from them. For a pre-questionnaire interview, the questionnaire is consisted of only 2 parts that look into the learners' demographic profile, and the second part looks into their view before the use of peer-assessment in classroom. The second part was designed using a semantic differential type of question.

After being exposed to a few peer-assessment activities, learners' were given a post-interview which consists of 3 parts. The first part is on learners' demographic profile; the second part looks into their view after the use of peer-assessment in classroom and the third part are made of 15 statements in a Likert-scale type of questions to further understand their view after the use of peer-assessment in classroom as well it is integrated to also looks into the challenges in the implementation of peer-assessment in classroom. A semi-structured interviewed were then used to gather more in depth information from selected respondents.

C. Research Procedures

The students in the study sample were students taking an English course for 14 weeks. Students took this course as part of university requirement. After 12 weeks of lectures and tutoring, students are required to present on their project paper as a formal part of the course. Peer-assessment was introduced when the students were to present on the proposal of their project. Students' attitude on peer-assessment was monitored before and after the implementation of the assessment activities by using a set of questionnaire.

A pre-questionnaire were administered before they start evaluating their classmates for the first time. A post-questionnaire was then conducted after the presentation of their project paper; this is to find out more on their perceptions and motivation level after the implementation of peer-assessment activities.

In order to achieve desired result of their perception in peer-assessment, students were briefed on the assessment criteria and judging score. Teacher also demonstrates examples of excellent, good, average and poor oral presentation skills (i.e. the content, delivery, language, etc.) before the assessment activities to set a guideline for all student assessors. The students were exposed to two

assessment activities before they were asked to answer the post-questionnaire.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As the study seeks to evaluate on the attitudes and motivation of learners towards peer assessment, a pre and post-questionnaire were distributed, and the data is presented in the table below (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Students' perception towards peer assessment

Features	Responses	Pre-questionnaire		Post-questionnaire	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
		N=40	%	N= 40	%
Beneficial	Yes	10	25	29	72.5
	No	9	22.5	1	2.5
	Not sure	21	52.5	10	25
Interesting	Yes	24	60	25	62.5
	No	2	5	8	20
	Not sure	14	35	7	17.5
Motivating	Yes	7	17.5	29	72.5
	No	13	32.5	2	5
	Not sure	20	50	9	22.5
Difficult	Yes	10	25	8	20
	No	11	27.5	23	57.5
	Not sure	19	47.5	9	22.5
Bias	Yes	17	42.5	5	12.5
	No	9	22.5	25	62.5
	Not sure	14	35	10	25

Table 1 displays the learners' perception on peer assessment before the exposure and after experiencing it for two times during the 14-weeks course. It exhibits the percentage and the frequency of the 5 features asked about peer assessment using semantic differential type of question. Learners' perceptions on peer-assessment are viewed through these 5 features of whether peer-assessments being: beneficial, interesting, motivating, difficult and bias.

From the data, it can be seen that learners happen to have a shift in thinking on their perception towards peer-assessment based on the questionnaire distributed. As for the first question, before being exposed to peer-assessment, only a quarter of the learners (25%) thinks that peer-assessment will be useful for them, while; the majority was not being whether it will be useful to them (52.5%). Another 22.5% have a view that peer-assessment will not bring benefits to their language learning. After being exposed to the assessment activities, a margin of 72.5% viewed peer-assessment as beneficial while another 25% still was not sure of its benefit; and another 2.5% thinks that the activities do not bring any benefit.

TABLE 2: Statements on the perception of students towards peer-assessment

Statement	Responses	Post-questionnaire	
		Frequency N=40	Percent %
Peer-assessment helps my learning	Agree	38	95
	Disagree	0	0
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	5
Peer-assessment helps me to understand the teacher's requirement better	Agree	39	97.5
	Disagree	0	0
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	2
After assessing my classmates, I am able to improve my knowledge in identifying strengths and weaknesses in my classmates presentation	Agree	39	97.5
	Disagree	0	0
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	2

In the table above (table 2), the statements are given to evaluate further on the students' views; where, the majority agreed that peer assessment is useful to them.

From the interview conducted, it supported the findings as most of the students claim that peer-assessment is useful in helping them to increase their performance; it helps them to understand the requirements and guidelines in the oral presentation better.

One of the students, during the interview, viewed peer-assessment as useful as: *"it makes me understand how to perform better in presentations because I know how the teacher evaluates me during my presentation"*. This finding correlates with a study by Wen & Tsai in (2006) and Lim (2007) as the learners discover that peer-assessment is helpful to their learning.

For the second question on their interest in evaluating their peers, the majority of learner shows interest in assessing their peers during pre-questionnaire (60%) and 62.5% post-questionnaire. However, there is a small sum of students (20%) who thinks that peer-assessment does not interest them. Further interview were conducted, and students view peer assessment as: *"I think giving marks to friend is interesting only in the beginning, if I have to evaluate too many groups presenting, it is not as interesting as the first few groups"*. Another student during the interview says: *"It is tiring to give marks to all the students"*. Moreover, students in this present study also think that peer-assessment is time consuming (27.5%), from the data it may be assumed some students may display dislike towards peer-assessment possibly due to the perception of grading student are teachers' responsibility as displayed in a study by Wen & Tsai,(2006).

On to the next question, students were asked if they view peer-assessment activities as motivating. During the pre-questionnaire, 50% of the learners viewed peer-assessment as not motivating, 17.5% thinks that it is motivating while another 32.5% was not sure on the impact of peer-assessment.

However, the data shows a significant increment where the large number of students (72.5%) thinks that peer-assessment activities are motivating, another 22.5% was unsure on whether it helps to motivate them in learning, while another 5% thinks that peer-assessment does not play any role in boosting their motivation in learning. This displayed a massive change on the students' opinion and view on peer-assessment as it positively affects their motivation in learning after going through the activities conducted.

Overall, from the questionnaire and interview conducted, it is inferred that students feel motivated in evaluating their peers mainly because they are aware on the criteria which they will be assessed on; they believed that peer-assessment motivates them to perform better as they will be assessed by their peers the same way their peers evaluated them. They also voiced that it is motivating, in line with study by Azarnoosh (2013) and De Grez, Valcke & Roozen (2012); as they may learn from other students' mistakes during the presentation and at the same time helps them to improve themselves.

The next criteria observed in determining the students' perception is whether the peer-assessment activities conducted is difficult for the learners.

From the pre and post questionnaire conducted, it can be seen from the data that learners' display a change of view on the difficulties of the exercises. Before being exposed to the peer-assessment activities, the majority (47.5%) of the learners was unsure on the complexity of peer-assessment activities, 27.5% assumed that the activity will be hard, and another 25% thinks that it peer-evaluation may not be difficult.

After being exposed to 2 peer-assessment activities, students portray positive views. 20% of the learners still think that peer-assessment is complicated; while, the majority of 57.5% does not think that evaluating their peers is difficult while a small number of 22.5% was not sure on this question.

From the interview conducted, students described their view on this point as: *"It is difficult to give marks to my friends, because most of the time I am not sure on the grading marks"*. Another student answered: *"It is quite complicated because everyone thinks differently, and, for example, I think the presentation is good but maybe my friends think it is not good enough. So for me, it is difficult for me to give grades because I am not so sure."* Another opinion is, *"I think peer-assessment is not that difficult. I think I just need time to practice a few more times before assessing my friends for real."*

The finding from the post-questionnaire (refer to table 3), it reveals that the majority of 75% needs more guide and practice in being a peer-assessor.

TABLE 3: Statements on the perception of students towards peer-assessment

Statement	Responses	Post-questionnaire	
		Frequency N= 40	Percent %
I think I need a clearer guide in giving marks to my classmates	Agree	30	75
	Disagree	6	15
	Neither agree nor disagree	4	10

From the findings, this study suggests on sufficient training should be given to the assessor to improve on the quality of the assessment, similar with findings from a study by De Grez, Valcke & Roozen (2012).

Training could be in the form of practices, and may also be in a detailed briefing on the judging criteria or by giving out tips on how to deliver good presentations, may help assessors in awarding marks. Teachers may also showcase a short video of good and bad presentations to help learners with clear examples and at the same time to set a guideline for the assessor in awarding marks.

The last criterion on determining the students' perceptions towards peer-assessment is biases. From the pre-questionnaire result, 42.5% thinks that the marks given during peer-assessment may be bias, another 22.5% thinks otherwise while 35% was not sure. During the post-questionnaire, there is a significant difference in the learners' perception toward peer-assessment on the issues of being bias perhaps due to clear guidance and guidelines given before each activity. As a result, only 12.5% still thinks that peer-assessor might be bias, another 62.5% thinks otherwise and 25% of them were not sure.

From the interviews done with the teachers on this criterion, teacher described that: *"Students may think that they can grade their peers according to their preference (i.e. more marks to best friend and fewer marks on acquaintance, etc.) without specific guidelines, maybe which is why they tend to have a perception that peer-assessment most probably will be bias"*.

However, research conducted by Azarnoosh (2013) on a friendship bias in peer-assessment shows that there is no significant difference between marks given by teachers, peers and non-peers on EFL writing activities. Therefore, result from this present study shows that when learners are exposed to the activities they will by time noticed that bias may occur but with clear guidance on scoring and judging by the teacher, bias in peer-rating could possibly be avoided. An interview has been conducted to look further on the challenges faced in implementing peer-assessment in classroom.

From the interviews conducted, teachers' views on the issues inhibiting the use of peer-assessment in classroom are recorded as follows: *"I am aware of the benefits of peer-assessment; however, it takes a lot of time to carry-out peer*

assessment in the classroom; just by laying out clear guidelines and instructions already takes up around 15 minutes from a total 2 hours of the class time. Some students need further guidance on judging and scoring; while some may need further explanation on the rubric given, where it will take some more of the class time, sometimes it goes on up to 40 minutes just to make sure they are clear about the evaluation process." Another teacher expressed *"some students have problems in evaluating their peers due to lack of proficiencies, and therefore it leads them to have low self-confidence as the students with a higher level of proficiency usually tend to doubt the comments made by their peers who have lower proficiency level than them"*.

Learners with low-level of proficiency was also seen as not confident in assessing their peers' grammatical errors, similar result by Cheng & Warren (2005). The challenges in implementing peer-assessment in classroom could possibly be overcome by allocating a specific slot to carry out the practice during class time to avoid taking up to much of the class time. Teacher may also make peer-assessment as one of the strategies to be used in class to enhance students learning; where at the same time, the students are able to experience more practice in being a peer-assessor.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper was carried out to investigate on the tertiary level students' view towards peer-assessment, and the study leads to the following conclusions: students' perception on peer assessment shows a significant change towards the end of the course. Most students display positive attitude and acceptance in adapting peer-assessment activities, in their learning. From the five criteria that determine their attitudes and motivations towards peer-assessments, the most significant change of perception is the features of peer-assessment being motivational and beneficial.

In general, based on the study conducted, peer-assessment seems to display positive effect towards students' attitude and motivation in learning (similar findings from studies by De Grez, Valcke & Roozen (2012); Azarnoosh (2013) and Lim (2007). The result shows that learners were more motivated to improve themselves after going through peer assessment activities conducted by teacher. They also find that the activities were helpful as it helps them to be able to understand on how the teacher grades and judge their presentations. Although, in the beginning of the activities, some students display adverse reactions towards the use of peer-assessment; they were not confident in evaluating their peers and most were not sure on the benefits of the activities, as well as some find it not convenient to have to evaluate their peers. However, the post-questionnaire's results show positive acceptance in all 5 features of peer assessment evaluated. This study also found out on the challenges faced towards the use of peer assessment. It can be deduced that insufficient class time may possibly be one of the key factor contributing to the issue as well as some learners' with low proficiency level were not

confident in evaluating their peers, especially those with higher proficiency level students.

To overcome the challenges and negative attitudes portrayed by some students towards peer-assessment, it is suggested to have both peer and teacher assessment in the classroom as according to Shimura (2006), by having both tutor and peer assessment in classroom, learners are expected to broaden their perspective as they are exposed, not to only one but multiple types of assessment: the teacher and their own peer. It may possibly help learners to deal with their trust issues on their peers' assessing ability; whereby, according to Panadero, Romero, & Strijbos, (2013), students may display the unwillingness to be assessed by classmates as they do not have the credentials to evaluate others.

Students perhaps are able to weigh and take into consideration the reviews made by their peers, by integrating both tutor and student evaluation in classroom, (Mendonca and Johnson, 1994 as cited in Azarnoosh, 2013). Teacher may also initiate an open discussion for peer discussions; to provide feedbacks on their classmates' work after each assessment session to offer developmental feedback; (Baker, 2007) as peer involvement in assessment should be more than just grading and comparing marks (Liu and Carless, 2006 and Baker, 2007).

Future study may perhaps examine on a broader range of peer-assessment method, may be by looking into the effectiveness or the impact of peer feedback when integrate with peer-assessment and teacher-assessments, and also the challenges and issues faced in the implementation of the integrated methods in language classroom.

REFERENCES

- Azarnoosh, M. (2013). Peer assessment in an EFL context: attitudes and friendship bias. *Language Testing in Asia*, 3(1), 11.
- Baker, D. F. (2008). Peer assessment in small groups: a comparison of methods. *Journal of Management Education*, 32(2), 183-209.
- Cheng, W., & Warren, M. (2005). Peer assessment of language proficiency. *Language Testing*, 22(1), 93-121.
- De Grez, L., Valcke, M., & Roozen, I. (2012). How effective are self- and peer assessment of oral presentation skills compared with teachers' assessments?. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 13(2), 129-142.
- Kane, J. S., & Lawler, E. E. (1978). Methods of peer assessment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 85(3), 555.
- Lim, H. (2007). A study of self-and peer-assessment of learners' oral proficiency. *CamLing Proceedings*, 169-176.
- Liu, N. F., & Carless, D. (2006). Peer feedback: the learning element of peer assessment. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(3), 279-290.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2012). National Education Blueprint 2013-2025.
- Panadero, E., Romero, M., & Strijbos, J. W. (2013). The impact of a rubric and friendship on peer assessment: Effects on construct validity, performance, and perceptions of fairness and comfort. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*.
- Patri, M. (2002). The influence of peer feedback on self-and peer-assessment of oral skills. *Language Testing*, 19(2), 109-131.
- Sadler, P. M., & Good, E. (2006). The impact of self-and peer grading on student learning. *Educational assessment*, 11(1), 1-31.
- Saito, H., & Fujita, T. (2004). Characteristics and user acceptance of peer rating in EFL writing classrooms. *Language Teaching Research*, 8(1), 31-54.
- Shimura, M. (2006). Peer-and Instructor Assessment of Oral Presentations in Japanese University EFL classrooms: A Pilot Study.
- Topping, K. (1998). Peer assessment between students in colleges and universities. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(3), 249-276.
- Wen, M. L., & Tsai, C. C. (2006). University students' perceptions of and attitudes toward (online) peer assessment. *Higher Education*, 51(1), 27-44.
- Ya'acob, A., Nor, N., & Azman, H. (2005). Implementation of the Malaysian Smart School: An investigation of teaching-learning practices and teacher-student readiness. *Internet Journal of e-Language Learning & Teaching*, 2(2), 16-25.