

Using Peer Assessment in Writing for EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at exploring the effect of using peer assessment in writing improvement of EFL students. In this paper, 30 students have to be guided by using a peer assessment approach in their writing skills in class, and after that, they take their classmates' feedback into account as a tool to reflect their improvement. What is crucial here is whether the peer assessment method can boost the learners' writing performance or not, as well as how profound their upgrade in writing is, which play an integral role in this paper. Additionally, some related papers are pointing out the benefits and drawbacks when the teachers apply the peer assessment in considering their students' progress in learning writing. Besides, the specific data are provided, which is yielded to reach the end's key targets. More specifically, this paper's results are linked to students' attitudes regarding learning writing by applying peer assessment that will help the teachers select the more compatible method for writing class in the foreseeable future.

Keywords: *Writing performance, Writing a paragraph, Peer assessment approach, The learners' improvement.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Typically, writing is considered one of the most complicated skills for most learners that also requires a great deal of knowledge background to fulfill a paragraph. Hence, this paper aims to propose a means of writing assessment by which the pupils may brush up on their paragraph and obtain an opportunity for peer assessment.

1.1. Definition of peer assessment

The alternative assessment does play a crucial part in learning and teaching effectively as it makes an effort to contribute to emphasize collaborative and co-operative learning progress. Thus, the teachers must pick up one alternative assessment to guide, transfer feedback, and apply it in class, which will pave the way for the pupils to be self-motivated in their learning outcomes. One of the most efficient ways is peer assessment, which appears as an ideal assessment approach for both teachers and learners. As Topping (2010) states, peer assessment is a tool for the learners to have a concrete plan to consider the factors like level, value, or the quality of the performance for various students [1]. Besides, another important point of peer

assessment is figured out by the researchers Strijbos & Sluijsmans (2010) [2] that peer assessment is an educational organization in which the pupils may obtain the opportunities to give feedback for their classmates based on their performance quantitatively or qualitatively in order to discuss, reflect and learn from each other. Additionally, Wikstorm (2007) [3] refers to peer assessment as an interactive type of assessment since the learners can keep pace with the academic achievement and the teachers may utilize this type of assessment to boost the students' learning progress. Hence peer assessment can be used more in the teaching environment to help both teachers and learners achieve their outcomes sufficiently. Furthermore, using peer assessment in teaching writing for EFL learners is a practical and time-saving way for the writing performance of the learners because through the process that they check, adhere and provide the comments for their mates' writing productions, the learners may learn on their own by considering the oblivious errors as well as their mates also have a chance to reflect and learn from their friends' assessment.

1.2. Reasons for using peer assessment on writing

It is commonly believed that through the peer assessment, the teacher and the learners can create consistent bonds amongst the teacher and students or students and students so as to judge the quality of the writing performance based on the provided rubric from the teacher. Clearly, according to Van Zundert, Sluijsmans, & Van Merriënboer (2010) [4] the peers play the role of assessors or assesses for the other peers, and they can boost the improvement if they receive the unambiguous and rational assessment from others. Although there are two types of peer assessment, namely formative and summative, both of them are feasible for the learners to check and upgrade their learning outcomes. Thus, the main reasons why it is so essential to opt for the peer assessment in teaching, learning as well as improving the writing skill for EFL learners. In fact, the peer assessment takes part in catering for not only the teachers but also the students to realize their weaknesses and strengths through conducting an assessment by peers that will be helpful for their own learning strategies to eliminate their errors in writing and enhance their good points regarding learning, giving assessment and improving their writing skill. In the modern educational background, the teachers have to bear in mind the importance of the alternative assessment to apply in their classes and peer assessment, which is feasible for the EFL learners to learn in chosen popularly.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is commonly believed that to be successful in all aspects of English is not an easy mission as the EFL learners need to take into account more and more efforts in improving their skills. More specifically, writing skill seems to be the most difficult skill for both teachers and students to achieve the completing outcomes. On the one hand, it isn't very easy for the teachers to guide or make the pupils' appropriate assessment. On the other hand, the EFL pupils also meet more challenges in learning or enhancing their writing performance.

Thus, to get success in writing, alternative assessment is an approach that makes it practical to utilize the information by making inferences regarding the academic qualities of the EFL learners' writing potentials and the successful teaching outcomes according to the learners' performance. Despite an extensive diversity of assessments, peer assessment appears as the most effective way to boost the learners' writing skills. According to Azarnoosh, M. (2013) [5], peer assessment has received much attention in recent years due to the growing focus on learner independence and autonomy. In relation to learning writing, the peer assessment is applied in EFL environment in order to

help the collaborative exchange amongst peers. As Abolfazli Khonbi, Z., & Sadeghi, K. (2012) [6] state, peer response is considered pivotal for both the pupils and teachers in achieving their goals. More specifically, they investigate the effects of peer assessment on the students' course achievement, resulting in the pupils can improve their performance after the implementation of peer assessment in classrooms. Apart from that, there is a useful point related to how the peer assessment is used effectively so as to fulfill the benchmark of a specific educational institution that makes the majority of researchers or teachers put their minds in this. In other words, before enacting peer assessment in their classes; exploring the benefits and drawbacks of peer assessment is really vital that is the reason why many researchers conduct their own paper to figure out more about the pros and cons of the peer assessment, and Zhao (2014) [7] reports in his study that the Chinese university students claim that their writing ability has strengthened very much after exposing to peer assessment. Throughout the interview, the students express their attitudes towards their own errors, review the writing structures, and feel more relaxed when exchanging comments with their peers rather than their teachers. Hence peer assessment in writing is accepted by both teachers and the EFL learners in this case. Similarly, Min (2005) [8] suggests that students from a university in Taiwan showed their own improvement when using peer assessment in the writing section. They realize the merits that they have the chance to check the vocabulary in order to revise them. Furthermore, they gain more self-awareness of their own obstacles in their essays, resulting in they can self-adjust by making their attempts to look for solutions for their peers and themselves. Indeed, these students can learn more feasible and actively by sampling peer assessment. Additionally, motivation, responsibility, and involvement will be aroused during the peer assessment process. Most of the students have to contribute to give feedback for their friends and consider their own marked paper to self-check again for further improvement. Also, a study by Mawlawi Diab (2010) [9] finds that the value of group work is highlighted by conducting peer assessment in writing as each individual has to read their peers' paper and their comments received from others; thus, they have to work diligently to guarantee the outcomes for the whole group or class. Such assessment is considered meaningful for both teachers and students to work and improve together. Another important advantage of using peer assessment is that it helps the learners prepare for their examination as Bryant and Carless (2010) [10] conclude that after reading their mates' assessments, the learners may bear in minds their own mistakes as a useful method of memorization which will pave the way for their overall preparation in their exams because the students may tend to adhere and remember their

mistakes longer in order to avoid them next time. After that, they can be more careful when having an essay.

Nevertheless, everything has two sides, so does this approach. Even though there is quite a vast range of studies have been made on peer assessment and its various positive features, there are also drawbacks that one can encounter when applying peer assessment. First and foremost, in a study made by Harris and Brown (2013) [11], they agree that most of the learners are more likely to value the teachers' assessment more than their peers' assessment in their paper that may lead to the indifferences towards the friends' feedback. Also, Rollinson (2005) [12] suggested that if the teachers' assessment is not reasonable or suitable, it will affect the students' motivation and dedication to learning. Thus, giving sensible as well as the practical assessment is so crucial. Apart from that, from time to time, the students may be worried about their assessment can lead to friendship bias as well as they are not confident enough about their own precise judgments. More seriously, Hu & Lam (2009) [13] reveal that the peers' responses can make the students upset and negatively affect peer assessment in writing. Consequently, the learners are reluctant to give their classmates the assessment that enables the teachers to come across with difficulties in giving marks. Another negative factor is worth taking into account is the burdens and stress levels that the EFL learners may get from peer assessment as the students have a fear of their teachers as well as they want to express themselves better after their friends' assessments; hence they will be stressful if they cannot know how to make the teachers satisfied about their improvements and they may feel embarrassed when they do not obtain any outstanding outcomes with their mates. Last but not least, some students may feel it unfair when their peers give them the assessments, which may influence their real grades; therefore, these students do not believe or try their best to use peer assessment to learn writing.

Ultimately, it is essential to explore the strengths and weaknesses of peer assessment before conducting it in teaching and learning writing. In addition, the learners should be announced and guided on how to use peer assessment overwhelmingly to make the most of its benefits and boost their learning outcomes. Indeed, these above studies aim to broaden the knowledge of peer assessment by exploring proficiency differences in students' attitudes and score correlations between teacher and peer assessments. The more workable the peer assessment is implemented, the more efficient the EFL learners' writing ability can be upgraded.

3. APPLICATION FOR PEER ASSESSMENT

3.1. Strategies for using peer assessment in writing

It is really essential for both the teachers and the learners to comprehend exactly the peer assessment and how to apply it in their writing improvement. Although it is the most usable alternative approach used in an academic environment, there are still not too many teachers or pupils who can deal with it overwhelmingly. Thus, the able teachers are able to transfer the strategies regarding peer assessment to guide the learners to use it in their writing skills and may boost their writing performance. According to Falchikov (2007) [14], there are three main strategies that the teachers can utilize to boost the quality of peer assessment, including modeling, scaffolding, and fading. It is unambiguous that before the EFL learners can use peer assessment to exchange feedback with their peers, they can also learn on their own by receiving the assessment. They need to know the way to follow the peer assessment. In that case, the teachers will be the pioneers to lead the learners to have the knowledge in peer assessment. More specifically, teachers can provide examples of how they personally use assessment tools and strategies to improve reliability and accuracy in the writing tasks; after that, the learners will be able to follow this process in applying the peer assessment in their friends' essays. In relation to scaffolding, the teachers also cater to the pupils their marked structures or the rubrics in which the students can read and check by following these items. It is undoubtedly that if the learners are taught and provided the strategies of peer assessment to enhance their own writing skills, they may get involved entirely in these responsibilities and increase their interests in marking or giving an assessment. Additionally, knowing about peer assessment and what criteria they have to check in advance will ease the anxiety and strengthen self-motivation in learning writing. Hence, practicing, applying, and learning from the peer assessment are paved the way for both the teachers and students can make the most of the learning strategies they have to reach their learning outcomes.

3.2. Technology for peer assessment in writing

As a rule, it is the information age; thus, the teachers and learners may make the most use of technology to keep pace with the learning achievements as regards peer assessment. Thus, there is quite a diverse mixture of technology that contributes to use the peer assessment reasonably and practically. First and foremost, the teachers may use connectivist MOOCs to help the learners eliminate the burden leaving on accuracy when providing the peer assessment for their mates [15]. This way may allow the pupils to view

assignments, projects, and online discussions, resulting in the outcomes effectively. Another technological item considered a workable approach is Calibrated Peer Reviews (CPRTM) [16]. This technology evaluates the ratings provided by each individual and weighs their ratings according to their relative degree of accuracy. The final rating score for the submission would be a weighted average of the peer raters' rating scores. In fact, the general peer assessment process is similar to that of the basic peer assessment approach, but it is just an addition of a calibration process. During calibration, each learner rater is marked up to three essays or projects, which are assessed by the instructor and the other peers in order to cater for the EFL learners the best observation in checking again their writing performance. It is obvious that CPRTM is an effective instructional tool that can help to improve students' scientific writing skills. Finally, the teachers may apply the Credibility index approach to enhance the accuracy of peer assessment. The basic premise of the credibility index's apparent errors in peer assessment results arises from their writings to actively lead learners to check their writing performance. Besides, there are several ways that both the teachers and learners may use technology to support using peer assessment to boost their writing outcomes in general [17].

4. DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES OF PEER ASSESSMENT

In specific situations, peer assessment does play an integral role in marking and improving learning outcomes.

Table 1. The Model of Evaluation Criteria (Adapted from Jung, 2009) [18]

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs improvement
Task fulfillment	Covers all the requirements	Covers almost all the requirements	Partly covers the requirements	Does not address any part of the task
Organization	Organizes information and ideas logically	Organizes information and ideas coherently	Organizes information and ideas generally coherently	Has very little control of organizational features
Vocabulary	Uses a wide range of vocabulary	Uses a good range of vocabulary	Uses an adequate range of vocabulary	Uses a limited range of basic vocabulary
Grammar	Uses a wide range of simple and complex structures precisely	Uses a wide range of simple and complex structures in a relatively effective way	Show good control of simple structures, attempts some complex structures but unsuccessfully	Uses some simple and memorized structures correctly

This is because most EFL learners are willing to take part in the new and appealing approach to boost their writing skills as long as they are guided carefully on how to apply it in the learning process. In this circumstance, most pupils who are at university always want to figure out the best method for studying writing. Thus, they are interested in peer assessment after the teacher explains and guides them to try it in class several times; then, they are excited about giving their friends' assessment as they can learn a lot from each other. Nevertheless, apart from the self-improvement or excitement when learning to write a paragraph, there are still some issues such as this process is very time-consuming, quite complex for insufficient students. Consequently, these students may feel isolated, tedious, or discouraged in participating in peer assessment in the writing section as a whole. Instead of giving peer assessment for their mates, these students just focus on their own essays by proofreading them carefully, or they just believe and consult the teacher to get the feedback and correct by themselves. Indeed, the learners should get familiar with peer assessment in writing a paragraph; however, getting used to using this approach is another challenge for the teacher. Hopefully, in the foreseeable future, some researchers pay more attention to the learners' psychology when they try to apply the peer assessment as well as the solutions to tackle this

Table 2. Questionnaire and Result

QUESTIONNAIRE	YES	PERCENTAGE
1. Do you know how to develop relevant ideas?	24	80%
2. Do you know how to organize a paragraph?	29	96.7%
3. Do you remember more vocabulary in writing?	21	70%
4. Do you remember more grammatical structures?	20	66.7%
TOTAL	94	100%

issue regarding the learners with peer assessment. It is generally believed that the more carefully examine the EFL learners' quality and psychology, the better results than they can get at the end.

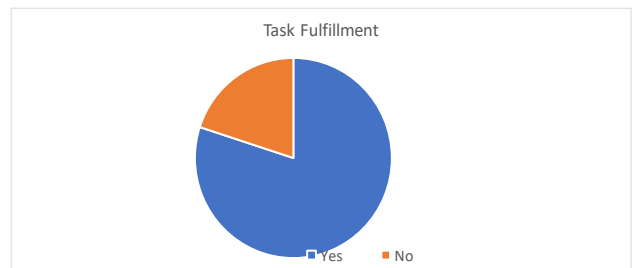


Figure 1. The percentage regarding Task Fulfillment



Figure 2. The percentage regarding Organization



Figure 3. The percentage regarding Vocabulary

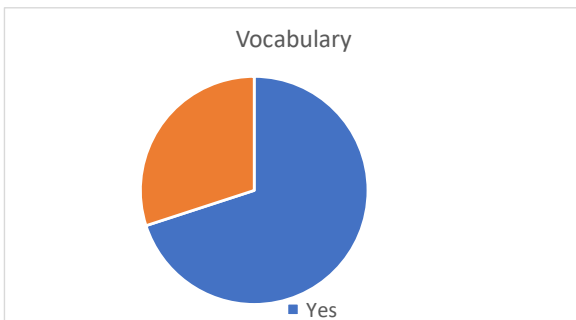


Figure 4. The percentage regarding Grammar

5. CONCLUSION

All things considered, this study focuses on the usage of peer assessment and its effect on EFL learners' writing skills. Through the information displayed in this paper, the peer assessment approach helps the students improve their writing performance. If the teachers and the EFL learners may apply this type of assessment reasonably, they will obtain more and more beneficial throughout the teaching and learning process.

The literature review also pays more attention to finding out and highlighting the pros and cons of peer assessment, which is the most primary point in this paper. As an English teacher, I really appreciate these results to explore more effective teaching methods in the foreseeable future. Indeed, the higher the positive attitudes the learners express in peer assessment for their writing performance, the more usable that method can bring to them.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Generally, I attempt to complete this research on my own that I find so complicated and time-consuming. Nevertheless, I highly appreciate all feedback coming to me when I conduct this research. Indeed, I feel grateful as I can fulfill it sufficiently.

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