

# Piloting Two Sets of Peer Assessment Rubrics on Arab EFL Learners' Academic Writing Performance

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the crucial role of EFL teachers in enhancing EFL learners' academic writing, addressing EFL teacher classroom stress still stand as significant challenge in education. This study describes two newly developed sets of peer assessment (PA) rubrics on English academic writing of EFL learners. The peer assessment rubrics named PA rubric (PAR A) and PA rubric were adapted from Oshima and Hogue [1]. While both sets of rubrics focus on the components of an essay, each rubric assesses the language criteria differently. Adopting an experimental design, 10 EFL Arab learners enrolled in the Preparatory English Course at the University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia participated in the pilot study. The participants were randomly assigned into two groups. Both groups were asked to write an academic essay of 250 words, later assessed one essay written by a peer in the other group. Group A used Peer Assessment Rubric A, while Group B used Peer Assessment Rubric B. All ten essays were assessed by two English lecturers based on an agreed essay marking rubric. The findings indicated that there is no significant difference between the two PA rubrics (PAR A and PAR B) and teachers' assessment at  $p < 0.073$  and  $p < 0.097$ , respectively. This suggests that PAR A and B manage to guide the peer assessors in evaluating essays as similar as their English teachers' assessment. The preliminary findings suggest that both Peer Assessment Rubrics were suitable for the use of EFL learners in assessing academic essays.

**Keywords:** Arab EFL learners, peer assessment rubric, writing performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Peer assessment designed as new method and technology to support such exchange feedback between the learners. It allows students to be active if compared to past technologies and common instruction. Throughout peer assessment students receive in a short time feedback on the strength and weakness in their writing after training on peer assessment [2].

Although, peer assessment is viewed to be positive in the education process. This is because it helps students produce high quality writing in which students can reflect on their strength and weakness points during peer assessment [3].

Topping [4] indicated that peer assessment would promote a sense of ownership, personal responsibility, and motivation can improve students' interaction. Daweli [5] examined the impact of online peer assessment done by university student. The researcher found that students were extremely motivated in using peer assessment as new method that can advance their writing level.

Online peer assessment learning environment has become increasingly common with instructors and learners. The need to critically assess internet sources in order to determine the reliability of the data is further complex. This quickly evolving writing environment has consequences for the reliability of evaluations that assess

understanding of online peer assessment; however, online materials need to be assessed for reliability that learners usually neglect and make it a contentious issue [6]-[11]. Nawas [9] stated that students are more confident, they feel happy when they are doing exercise responsibility about their peers' writing. Moreover, Faber and Visscher [12] indicated that peer assessment supports students to be independent and improves proficiency in high knowledge area. They acknowledge the definite weakness of this kind of assessment. So that technologies such internet, information and communication can manage a great number of students.

Though the increasing popularity of online peer assessment in universities has already given rise to a wide range of studies [13]-[14]. Besides the need to better comprehend peer-assessment capabilities growth, the effect of work complexity on peer-assessment performance justifies more attention. The quality of online peer assessment was discovered to be inversely linked to the difficulty of the assignment's evaluation [15]-[16].

Peer assessment has been tried out in many English language classes, some found it helpful [17]-[20], while others found that it gives only a little impact [2], [11], [21]. While the impact of the peer assessment strategy on the student achievement process has been widely acknowledged, there are concerns as to whether students have the ability to accurately judge the work of peers [22]-[24]. However, to determine whether peers can assess one another's written works depends mostly on the peer's own L2 proficiency. To be a peer assessor of an English language essay, one must possess a certain level of English language proficiency. To date, there is yet to be a study on peer assessment that looks into the required threshold level of English language competency to make an EFL learner a modest peer assessor.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### ***2.1. Design***

This study was used two newly adapted set of peer assessment (PA) rubrics on English academic writing of EFL learners. The peer assessment rubrics named PA rubric (PAR A) and PA rubric were adapted from Oshima and Hogue [1]. While both sets of rubrics focus on the components of an essay, each rubric assesses the language criteria differently.

### ***2.2. The Sample for The Pilot Study***

The sample of the pilot study contained of 10 preparatory year students, specialty in Engineering and two EFL lecturer from University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. The

university is located in north of Saudi Arabia, 1,286 km away from the capital city Riyadh. The subjects were selected from the institute of languages preparatory year English Language program at University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. The participants of the pilot study were not part of the sample of the main study. They will be placed in one group according to their respective classes and time. The 10 university students are males and two male EFL lecturer were selected as the group for the peer assessment process.

### ***2.3. Instruments***

The propose of the pilot study was to examine the two newly developed set peer assessment rubrics among Arab EFL learners. An instrument namely peer assessment rubrics A and B henceforth (PAR A) and (PAR B), were adapted from Oshima and Hogue [1].

### ***2.4. Peer Assessment Rubrics (A) and (B)***

Peer assessment rubrics were used to mark students writing. The students in the group A was used (PAR A), while group B was used (PAR B). These rubrics were used to mark student's writing after receiving an idea about how to mark their peer's writing task. The first rubric consists of four parts which are content, organization, grammar and mechanics, and sentence structure. While the second rubric consists of five sections which are title, organization, introductory paragraph, body paragraph and conclusion paragraph. These criteria designed to suit preparatory year students to see whether students could be able to mark their peer's writing task.

### ***2.5. Research Procedures***

The study was conducted among 10 preparatory year students at University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. Students were assigned into two groups A and B. Both groups were asked to write an English essay. The purpose of this test was to find out the student's ability to use peer assessment rubric and to see their English proficiency level. Students' paper was rated by two expert English lecturers from University of Tabuk who expert in the area of English writing. The results showed that there is no significant difference between the two peer assessment rubrics (PAR A and B) and teachers' assessments.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***3.1. Results***

To address the difference between the two groups, independent t-test was used to examine the difference between the two peer assessment rubrics on Arab EFL

preparatory year students. Independent t-test was run in order to find out whether there is significant difference between the two group and teachers' assessment in English essay writing. The following tables will show the results of group (A and B) and teachers' assessment.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for peer assessment rubric (PAR A). The statistic indicates that students who have used (PAR A) is very closed to teacher assessment. The mean score of students in group A is 77.80 while the standard deviation is 3.89. Meanwhile, the mean score of the first teacher is 83.00 and the standard deviation is 13.96. The researcher found that student's assessment is not closed to the first teacher assessment.

Table 2 show the results of the independent sample t-test of the students in group A comparing to teacher assessment. The results of the test indicate a statistically not significant mean difference in the students who have used peer assessment rubric A comparing to second teacher assessment. The mean score of students in group A is 77.80 while the standard deviation is 3.89. meanwhile, the mean score of the second teacher is 73.40 and the standard deviation is 18.58. The researcher found that students in group A were very close to the second

teacher, and researcher found students can use the rubric in prefect way.

Table 3. indicates the results of students who have used peer assessment rubric B comparing to the first teacher assessment. The results show there is no significant difference between students' assessment and the first teacher assessment. The mean score of students is 79.40, while the standard deviation is 13.59. the mean score of the first teacher as it mentions in the above table is 72.40, while the standard deviation is 4.87. The researcher noticed that, students in group B were closed to the first teacher assessment. This study suggested that Arab EFL preparatory year students can use peer assessment rubric B.

Table 4. show the results of the student's assessment in group B with the second teacher assessment. The results indicate that student's assessment using peer assessment rubric B is not significant comparing to the second teacher assessment. The mean score of student's assessments is 79.40 and the standard deviation is 13.59. while the mean score of the second teacher is 69.00 and standard deviation is 6.51. The researcher reported that student's assessment was not close to the second teacher assessment.

Table 1 Independent Samples Test between students in group A and the first teacher

| Participants A Teacher 1 |              | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SEM</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Student A and Teacher 1  | Participants | 5        | 77.80    | 3.89      | 1.744      | -.802    | 8         | .446     |
|                          | Teacher      | 5        | 83.00    | 13.96     | 6.245      |          |           |          |

Table 2 Independent Samples Test between students in group A and the second teacher

| Participants A Teacher 2 |              | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SEM</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Student A and Teacher 2  | Participants | 5        | 77.80    | 3.89      | 1.744      | .518     | 8         | .618     |
|                          | Teacher      | 5        | 73.40    | 18.58     | 8.310      |          |           |          |

Table 3 Independent Samples Test between students in group B and the first teacher

| Participants B Teacher 1 |              | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SEM</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Student B and Teacher 1  | Participants | 5        | 79.40    | 13.59     | 6.079      | 1.084    | 8         | .310     |
|                          | Teacher      | 5        | 72.40    | 4.87      | 2.182      |          |           |          |

Table 4 Independent Samples Test between students in group B and the second teacher

| Participants B Teacher 2 |              | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SEM</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Student B and Teacher 2  | Participants | 5        | 79.40    | 13.59     | 6.079      | 1.542    | 8         | .162     |
|                          | Teacher      | 5        | 69.00    | 6.51      | 2.915      |          |           |          |

### 3.2. Discussion

The pilot study was aimed to examine the two newly developed sets of peer assessment rubrics of English academic writing in EFL learners. The findings indicate there is no significant difference between the two group and the two teachers after using the two newly developed sets of peer assessment rubrics of English academic writing. Data reveals that students who have used peer assessment rubric (PAR A) score less than the students who have used peer assessment rubric (PAR B). The pilot study indicated that the two newly developed sets of peer assessment rubrics allow Arab EFL learners to improve peer's assessment skills by using the right rubrics to give feedback on their peers' writing work. This help students identifying their writing performance. The results suggested that, when Arab EFL learners received peer assessment idea, they can effectively develop their English writing skills. This finding is in line with previous studies conducted by Hegg et al. [2] and Double et al. [25]. Double et al. [25] recommended that peer assessment effect comes from assessing, better than being assessed and giving and receiving feedback can help students to develop their writing skills.

In addition, this study is not in line with study done by Liu et al. [26] stated that EFL students from other educational background could show different models of engaging in peer assessment.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The present pilot study examines the two developed sets of peer assessment rubrics on Arab EFL learners' academic writing. The findings of this pilot study indicate that there is no significant difference between the peer assessment rubric A and B. However, the findings found that peer assessment rubric (PAR B) manage to guide students to evaluating essay perfectly as similar as their English teachers' assessment.

In addition, the finding of the current pilot study demonstrated that both Peer Assessment Rubrics were suitable for the use of EFL learners in assessing academic writing essay.

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