

## Peer Assessment and its Effect on Students' Motivation

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**Abstract.** Assessment plays an important role in the process of education. Moreover, it is very important to use the correct form of assessment because it could affect students' motivation. Therefore, teachers should always be very careful when they assess students. Often students are able to assess their classmates. However, it is very important to test the effect of peer assessment because it could affect the students' motivation; especially shy students, who are often very sensitive. The aim of the study is to assess the effect of peer assessment on students' motivation. Furthermore, it will show the students' reaction about the use of peer assessment in the classroom. To achieve this aim a case study took place in the primary school Nuri Mazari. Participants of this study will be Albanian students who learn English as a foreign language. An instrument for this study was the teachers' observation sheet, which was used to take notes about the students' reaction when the teacher told them that they will have to assess their classmates. The teacher classifies students into groups as very motivated students, less motivated students and students who are not motivated at all. This classification was done at the beginning of the study to examine the effect of peer assessment in these three groups of students. The teacher prepared special peer assessment sheets with rubrics appropriate for the study. Students also had to fill in a simple questionnaire, which contained two questions; one question was about the students' impressions that they had to assess their classmates and the impressions that they had to be assessed by their classmates. The results of the study give a clear picture of the effect of peer assessment on students' motivation, which is a very important factor in the students' success.

### 1. Introduction

Education is a dynamic process. It changes due to the innovations that happen every day. Assessment as a part of the teaching and learning system changes, too. Nowadays, the teacher is not the only person who assesses students; students can assess their classmates as well. Peer assessment is a good way that involves students in the assessment process during their studies. It gives students another type of assessment, which provides data from another point of view, students' point of view. An important factor that makes peer assessment attractive to the student is that it makes students feel important in the classroom, and it makes them more responsible. However, it could affect directly in their motivation.

## 1.1 Research hypothesis

The use of peer assessment during the lesson could affect students' motivation

## 2. Literature review

Assessment is an important part of teaching and learning process. Assessment is recognized as probably the most influential factor related to how students learn (Brown&Glasner, 1999) [1]. Moreover, it is not just a simple part of the educational process, but it's an important role in students' motivations. Many researchers classify assessment as one of the main factors that could affect students' motivation. Irons consider assessment as one of the reasons for students' motivation; moreover, he claims that the assessment can be seen as a positive motivator for students if they think the assessment is relevant to their broader goals [2]. Motivation is a key factor to occur learning. As Kember *et al.* Found that students' perception of their effort depends on their motivation more than on hours they actually allocated, and it was possible for students to put in many hours unproductively, especially if they adopted a surface approach to their students [3]. However, in order to evaluate the students in the best way the teachers use different type of assessment. Assessment, as Race (1995) is observed at the best is a very inexact science [4]. Therefore, teachers try to get data from the students' performance from different sources. Garrison& Anderson claims that effective teachers use assessment activities strategically to motivate learners to engage successfully in productive learning activities [5]. Peer assessment is a type of assessment that is applied nowadays, in order to get data from the students themselves. According to Jenkins involving students in peer assessment can increase motivation both though students looking at peers' work and knowing their work will be peer reviewed; he claims that this is a very valuable experience, allowing students to measure themselves against others and compare their own assessment with those of their peers. Moreover, he says that a peer comments may also have more impact than a tutor's [6]. However, there is a difference between peer marking and peer feedback. Brew (1999) says that peer feedback can help focus learning and be positive for a group of learners, whilst peer marking can be disruptive [7].

## 3. Research methodology

### 3.1 A short description of the study

This is a study, which took place in the primary school, Nuri Mazari, Dollogozhda, Struga, in Macedonia. The aim of the study was to examine the effect that peer assessment could have on students' motivation. Moreover, it shows the students' reaction while using peer assessment in the classroom. It was not a complete student assessment because the teacher had also her part in peer assessment. The teacher prepared the peer assessment sheets, according to the rubrics prepared by the teacher students had to evaluate their friends. The teacher designed an observation sheet to take data about the students' reaction while they were assessing their friend and were assessed by them. In order to get data about students' opinion, the teacher prepared a simple questionnaire for the students. The students had to fill in this questionnaire at the end of the study

### 3.2 Forming the groups

In order to assess the effect of peer assessment on students' motivation, students were divided into groups. The groups were organized at the beginning of the study so after the study took place the effect of peer assessment was more obvious. All the students were divided into three groups, very motivated students, less motivated students and not at all motivated students.

Table 1. Names of the groups.

| I -first group          | II-second group         | III-third group               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Very motivated students | Less motivated students | Not at all motivated students |

### 3.2.1 Criteria of the checklist

In order to organize the students into these three groups, the teacher decided to use main criteria to design criteria rubrics. The main things that the teacher took into consideration in designing the checklist were students' readiness in doing their homework, students' desire to read aloud the homework in the classroom, students' activities at the beginning of the lessons, students' activities during the lessons, and students' enthusiasm during the lessons.

Table 2. Criteria rubrics for dividing students into groups based on their motivation

| G<br>R<br>O<br>U<br>P<br>S | Students' readiness in doing their homework | Students' desire to read aloud the homework in the classroom                 | Students' activities at the beginning of the lessons   | Students' activities during the lessons   | Students' enthusiasm during the lessons   |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| I                          | The student always does his homework        | The student always shows interest in reading the homework                    | At the beginning of the lesson, the student is preparing for the lectures<br>The student asks the teacher questions about unclear things that he has faced while doing the homework<br>The student talks with their friend about the lessons, etc. | The student is always prepared and very active during the lessons.              | The student reflects positive energy and desire to show everything he knows.                    |
| II                         | The student sometimes does his homework.    | Sometimes shows interest in reading the homework aloud in front of the class | Sometimes the student prepares himself at the beginning of the lesson<br>(Opens the books, talking to classmates about the lectures or even sometimes asks the teacher questions about unclear things)   | The student is not always prepared for the lessons but sometimes he is prepared | He is not very enthusiastic during the lessons but sometimes he feels comfortable               |
| III                        | The student never does his homework         | The student never wants to read the homework aloud in front of the class     | The student never prepares himself before the lesson<br>sometimes he does not bring even the books in the class.   | The student is never active during the lessons                                  | The student is not enthusiastic during the lessons; moreover, he does not show interest at all. |

### 3.3 Participants

Participants of this study were primary school students. There were 119 Albanian students, who learn English as a foreign language. They were not all the same age, they from 10 to 15 years old. Thirty-eight of them were sixth grade student, they were the youngest participants, thirty of them were seventh grade, thirty-four were eighth grade and seventeen were ninth grade students, who were the oldest participants of this study.

### 3.4 Materials

There were used three types of instruments to get data for the study

#### 3.4.1 Teacher observation sheet

One of the instruments that were used to get data about this study was the teacher's observation sheet. The teacher used this instrument to take notes on the students' reactions during the lessons when peer assessment was used. The teacher took notes about students' reactions when the teacher tells them that they will have to evaluate their classmates and be evaluated by them, students' reactions during the assessment, and their reactions at the end of the lessons when the peer assessment sheets that were used to evaluate their classmates were given to the teacher.

#### 3.4.2 Peer assessment rubrics

Peer assessment is a part of an assessment that involves students. It makes them feel important in the classroom. Even though, it seems that the students are assessing their classmates, the teacher is not out of the assessment process; even though, this type of assessment is called peer assessment. The teacher prepares the assessment rubrics, which are used by the students to assess their peers. In designing the rubrics the teacher

#### 3.4.3 Students' questionnaire

In order to have another point of view about the students' motivation in the classroom and the effect that peer assessment could have on students' motivation, students' questionnaire was prepared for this study. It was a simple questionnaire because it contained just two questions but at the same time it was very useful questionnaire because it gives data about the students' own impression of peer assessment seen from the students' position.

## 4. Findings and results

### 4.1 Results of the teacher observation sheet

The first step that the teacher took to do this study was the classification of the students into groups. Based on the checklist with rubrics for classifying students into groups, the teacher managed to form three groups. The majority of the participants were part of the second group, it means that most of the students were neither very motivated nor not motivated at all; they were in the medium level of motivation

### 4.2 Results of students' questionnaire

Even though the students' questionnaire contained two questions and it was a simple questionnaire, it was also valuable because it gives data about students' opinion. The results of the students' questionnaire were classified into four groups. The table below shows the groups that were formed based on the students' answers. Moreover, in this table there are given the main answers for each category.

Table 3. Classification of the students' questionnaire results

| Students' positive attitude about assessing their classmates  | Students' positive attitude about being assessed by their classmates   | Students' negative attitude about assessing their classmates   | Students' negative attitude about being assessed by their classmates  |
|---|--|--|---|
| I felt great when I had to evaluate my friends because I felt that I was more than just a student in the classroom, my opinion was taken in consideration<br>It was a new thing and very interesting, it broke the monotony of teacher assessment<br>I think that I know very good my classmates' strengths and weaknesses, and I am able not only to assess them but also to give a very valuable and fair assessment to assess them | I liked the idea that my classmate is going to evaluate me because it was less stressful for me<br>It was a different kind of assessment | It was stressful for me because they are my friends and I do not want my friends to feel bad because of the assessment that I gave them<br>Maybe my friends will misunderstand the peer assessment | When there is the teacher in the classroom why I have to be assessed by my classmates.<br>My classmates are not able to assess me since they are not as good students as I am |

## 5. Discussion and analysis

### 5.1 Discussion and analysis of the teacher observation sheet

Based on the teacher observation sheet, students' reaction towards the use of peer assessment in the classroom was interesting. There were students who enjoyed to evaluate their friends and also to be evaluated by their friends; however, there were some others who liked to assess their classmates but they did not want to be evaluated by their peers, and vice versa. Moreover, there was also another group of students who neither wanted to be evaluated by their classmate nor wanted to assess them. Based on the group classification, at the beginning of the study, motivated students who are usually the best students enjoyed to assess their students. It seems to them that they have an extra role in the classroom besides being the students, now their responsibilities during the lessons are greater with the usage of peer assessment in the classroom than they used to be before. They also wanted to be assessed by their classmates, but this was not true for all the motivated students, there were also motivated student who didn't like to be assessed by their classmates because they think that their peer is not as good as he is therefore he will not be able to assess his work. The majority of the second group, less motivated students liked both to assess and to be assessed by their classmates. On the other hand, the third group, called as not at all motivated students, were not interested to use the peer assessment, nether to assess students nor to be assessed by classmates.

So, in comparing the results at the beginning of the study and at the end, the two groups which benefited were the first and the second group, whereas, the use of peer assessment during the lessons was not interest for the third group

### 5.2 Discussion and analysis of students' questionnaire

Not all the students have the same character; consequently, their opinion about the usage of peer

assessment and its effect on students' motivation could not be the same. In order to have an overview of the main opinions of the students, their answers were classified into groups. The feeling of the important person affects directly the students' motivation. This makes them like the usage of peer assessment in the classroom. But, it does not have a good effect on students' motivation when their papers have to be assessed by their peers who are not as good students as they are. On the other hand, the third group of students did not show interest in the peer assessment. Therefore, their motivation was not affected by the use of peer assessment in the classroom. After the study took place, all of them remain in the same group called not motivated at all. However, the use of peer assessment had affected the motivation of the second group students, who were classified as less motivated at the beginning of the study. After the study took place, they moved to very motivated students. The majority of this group found it interesting and enjoyed the use of peer assessment in the classroom. Moreover, the first group remained in the same position. They found peer assessment as an interesting way of assessment. Even though, they some of them did not like to be assessed by their classmates, they still remained motivated students.

## 6. Conclusion

The results of the study show that the hypothesis at the beginning of the study was true. Therefore, the use of assessment plays an important role in the teaching and learning process since it could affect the students' motivation. It could have both positive and negative effects on students' motivation. There are motivated students who are also good students and they enjoy using the peer assessment because it gives the good feeling of being important in the classroom. On the other hand, some others are not motivated by the usage of peer assessment. Peer assessment could not affect their motivation because they are also not motivated to learn. Therefore, it could be concluded that peer assessment affects the motivation of students who have a positive attitude towards learning.

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