A Study of Self- and Peer-Assessment of Learners’ Oral Proficiency

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Unlike the traditional assessment of language learners, involving learners in the assessment as an alternative assessment has been a salient theme in the language testing literature. However, how learners can be involved in oral proficiency assessment still needs further investigation since only a handful of studies have attempted to explore this area up to now (Cheng and Warren 2005). It is widely believed that the use of self-assessment techniques can play a great role in enhancing learners’ responsibility for their learning such as monitoring and evaluating in learning, establishing and developing appropriate criteria for assessment.

This paper reports on a study with the upper-intermediate learners in English which was carried out to find the answers to three questions as below:

1. To what extent can learners accurately access their own and peers’ performances of tasks in the target language?
2. What effect does learners’ self- and peer-assessment have on the ways of language study?
3. How does learner training with self- and peer-assessment improve learners’ ability in appraising their own and peers’ language ability?

As far as the reliability of self- and peer-assessment is concerned, learners should be trained in the effective use of self- and peer-assessment instruments (Blue 1988; Davidson and Henning 1985). Thus a fortnight’s task-based learner training programme was also conducted to develop the learners’ abilities to ‘have metacognitive strategies’ and ‘understand and interpret their peers’ feedback’ through two oral performance tasks in order to see how useful the learner training is for both learners and tutors. The training programme was evaluated as an ongoing process with a multi-method approach collecting data from a variety of sources and with various methods such as ethnographic observation, learners’ overall evaluation questionnaires, pre- and post-interviews with learners, interviews with tutors, learners’ self- and peer-assessing results and tutors’ rating scores. The results show that learners were able to assess their performances more accurately with repeated marking practice. The learners were aware of the factors that affected their learning.

References

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