

Secondary EFL Teachers' Views Towards the Implementation of Peer Assessment: Between Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

As the previous studies lack proof of teachers' experience and perceptions, especially in secondary school; thus, this current study concerns teachers' knowledge of the implementation of peer assessment. This study attempts to answer the three research questions: (1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences towards implementing peer assessment in speaking skills? (2) What are the reasons EFL teachers utilize peer assessment in speaking skills? (3) What are the obstacles faced by EFL teachers in using peer assessment in speaking skills? This current study employed a qualitative approach. It examined the narratives of eight teachers who give responses on the questionnaire and a virtual interview. The results reveal that most teachers gain positive experience in implementing peer assessment in the classroom. It sheds light on three themes of opportunities and five pieces of challenges that have been matched with the literature. Eight teachers encounter more challenges since they don't commonly use peer assessment in the class. Most importantly, a peer assessment provides an opportunity to enhance student's learning, and it should be applied to give a chance for the students to develop their skills. Therefore, educational institutions for secondary EFL teachers should consider incorporating peer assessment into their instructional designs so that they are experienced and make peer assessment a precious alternative to language assessment.

Keywords: : peer assessment, speaking skill, teacher's perception, English Language Teaching (ELT).

INTRODUCTION

In a broader meaning, the term 'assessment' denotes the concepts of evaluating, reviewing, critiquing, and judging (Joughin 2009). In other words, peer assessment that is one type of authentic assessment, becomes the main focus of this current study. As defined by Topping (2009), within peer assessment, the learners can consider and insist on the amount, level, value, quality of the performances from their peers that have similar status. Peer assessment has been widely used in various education levels, particularly in tertiary level, to aid in assessing the results of student's works. With this in mind, peer assessment has become crucial to enhance students' learning levels (Cartney 2010). It is done by evaluating peer products or performance in which there are feedback and points based on the criteria (Falchikov 2007). A simple way to define peer assessment is to judge and decide about peer's work in particular standards. The learners who perceive peer assessment; both measure their peers neutrally and assign their knowledge while giving

feedback with the limitation of the field's standards. In light of this, peer assessment can be defined as the approach to foster student's learning (Keppell and Carless 2006).

Race (1998), as cited in Vickerman (2009) stated that there are several benefits of employing peer assessment, for example boosting learners' autonomy and motivation, stirring up students' responsibility towards their learning, and considering assessment as learning that gives chance for learners to boost their skills. It is also used to perform the transferable skills used to obtain long-term learning, mainly in evaluation skills, employing outward evaluation to give a model for inward self-assessment of learner's understanding and enhancing deep instead of shallow learning. Other claims towards the benefit of self and peer-assessment are to empower students to actively become evaluators and experts in classroom activity (Brindley and Scoffield 1998, as cited in Adachi et al., 2017). Notwithstanding peer assessment has a range of advantages, it also presents the teachers' challenges and complexity Liu & Carless (2006) addressed four reasons teachers might not implement peer assessment in their classes. The first reason is related to the reliability and accuracy of student's judgment skills. It also needs to consider whether the student's marking is accurate since there is the assumption that students are novices, so that the reliability has hesitated. The second reason is that the learners perceive that evaluating students' work should be done by academics to not take it seriously while assessing peer assessment (Tai et al. 2014). The third reason is related to power relations between students and scholars. It is unfair for learners who believe that they are only learners and face pressure while giving assessments. The last point deals with time and resource constraints. It has been proved by Nortcliffe (2012) that peer assessment is complex and it consumes much time.

A number of research have conducted peer assessment seen from students' perspectives, their performances, and experiences in the application of peer assessment in tertiary level (Gaynor 2019; Malan and Stegmann 2018; McGarr and Clifford 2013; Planas Lladó et al. 2014; White 2009; Willey and Gardner 2009). Other researchers have also conducted student responses and peer assessment participation in an online setting (Seifert and Feliks 2019; Yang 2019; Zou et al. 2017). In contrast, there is limited research that pays attention to academics' perspectives toward implementing peer assessment and their feedbacks, especially in a speaking skill. It is needed to explore in-depth educators' perspectives towards peer assessment to positively alter the schoolroom (Adachi et al. 2017). Recent work on teacher's perception of the use of peer assessment has been conducted (Huertas-abril et al. 2021; Wulandari et al. 2021). The research reveals pre-service and novice educators' views and attitudes in executing peer assessment in speaking skills. Therefore, this current study tries to fill this lacuna by examining EFL teachers' views towards implementing peer assessment in speaking skills, focusing on secondary teachers which have not been mentioned before.

Speaking skill becomes the one which is crucial in the EFL classroom. It is the capability to be proficient at interacting and communicating with one another. Brown & Abeywickrama (2019) stated that speaking skills result from creative constructions. The speaker selects the lexicon, structure, and discourse. The alternative assessment that could be done in speaking skills is peer assessment. Since peer assessment requires the students to evaluate, the students are being trained to become an assessor. It is used to transform the passive learners become active ones (Cheng and Warren 2005). Noble peer assessment

needs arrangement and supervision, such as rubrics that develop peer assessment quality (Panadero and Brown 2017). The teacher guides the students to implement peer assessment and shows the criteria for what is assessed. Besides, White (2009) further explained that peer assessment, especially in speaking, aims to strengthen students' speaking skills. It is expected that peer assessment could improve student's ability in speaking, particularly in presenting and delivering the information.

A large body of research has touted peer assessment seen from student's points of view. It has been revealed that students show their positive attitude towards implementing peer assessment due to its advantages they obtain (Malan and Stegmann 2018; Tsivitanidou, Zacharia, and Hovardas 2011; White 2009; Yang 2019). However, there remains a dearth of previous studies that explore teachers' perceptions towards utilizing peer assessment in speaking skills. It also needs to date the affordances and constraints while using peer assessment in the classroom. Adachi et al. (2017) uncovered the benefits and challenges in utilizing peer assessment seen from teachers' perspectives. The study found that academics have a strong faith in the control of peer assessment as a formative assessment. Correspondence to this work, Hogg (2018) analyzed a self-study related to peer assessment utilization in undergraduate education courses. The findings revealed that implementing peer assessment is closely linked to learners' ideas about the values and motivation to assess their fellow. Additionally, in Wulandari et al. (2021), Indonesian novice EFL teachers' perception was being investigated with its advantages and challenges. The results discovered that the two categories of teachers have dissimilar opinions, welfares, and peer assessment limitations based on their peer assessment and undergraduate study experience.

To date, a small number of studies have been done to discover Indonesian secondary EFL teachers' opinions. With the previous studies are lack of research in peer assessment practices and experiences through secondary teachers' lenses, particularly in speaking skills; this current study highlights teachers' opportunities and obstacles while conducting peer assessment in secondary school, focusing on speaking skills. With this background in mind, this recent study poses the following research questions: (1) What are EFL teachers' insights and experiences towards implementing peer assessment in speaking skills? (2) What are the reasons EFL teachers utilize peer assessment in speaking skills? (3) What are the obstacles faced by EFL teachers in using peer assessment in speaking skills?

METHOD

The research design employed in this current study is a qualitative approach in which the study was conducted based on descriptive data. Creswell & Creswell (2018) stated qualitative inquiry could be defined as inductive and exploratory. It explores and understands the meaning of individuals or groups in which the researcher interprets the purpose of the data as the final written report for the research. Eight secondary school teachers contributed in this study. One of them was male, whereas the rest participants were females. All the teachers have teaching experience of more than one year. They were categorized as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, and T8. They all teach English in secondary schools in East Java, Indonesia. All teachers were pseudonyms and selected for particular

reasons. The details of teachers' profiles and their frequency in using peer assessment are presented in the following table.

Table 1
Teachers' Profile and Their Frequency in Using Peer Assessment

Teacher	Gender	Institution	Teaching Experience	Frequency in Using Peer Assessment
T1	F	Junior High School	23 years	Not too often
T2	M	Senior High School	32 years	Rarely
T3	F	Senior High School	16 years	Sometimes
T4	F	Junior High School	14 years	Often
T5	F	Vocational High School	2 years	Rarely
T6	F	Junior High School	>1 year	Occasionally
T7	F	Vocational High School	5 years	Rarely
T8	F	Junior High School	2 years	Rarely

To obtain the data is through an open-ended questionnaire. It was made in Google form; the questionnaire had two parts. The first part aimed to know the teachers' profiles related to name, gender, institution, and teaching experience. The second part aimed to capture teachers' experiences in implementing peer assessment in their speaking skills. This part consisted of 5 (five) questions that lead to their experiences. Eight secondary school teachers contributed in this study. As a follow-up, it also conducted a virtual interview to explore in-depth related to teachers' responses seen from the open-ended questionnaire. Every participant was contacted through WhatsApp. This consideration is to prevent the spread of Covid-19—the data was gained in April 2021.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Secondary EFL Teachers' Opinions and Experiences towards Implementing Peer Assessment in Speaking Skills

It has been collected from secondary teachers' opinions and their experience towards implementing peer assessment in speaking skills. They reported that peer assessment in the classroom gains positive experience. It offers some advantages while implementing peer assessment, and it is essential to implement peer assessment in speaking class since it helps them improve their speaking ability. It could be seen through their answers as follows:

T1: *Peer assessment has a very positive influence on speaking skills. because they will try to show their maximum performance since they are not only evaluated by their teachers but also their friends as well*

T2: *It's very important to get the students ability of practicing communication of the language target.*

T3: *Peer assessment in speaking class is very useful for the students because it can help the students more relax in learning and make learning in the classroom more fun.*

T4: *It is a kind of alternative assessment that has a function in engaging the students to be autonomous learners and they can evaluate themselves and their peers as well.*

T7: *It is fun and beneficial; however it needs well preparation and takes long time as well.*

The results show that most teachers have positive experiences while doing peer assessments. Even though teachers are not too often using peer assessment in speaking skills, they acquire several potential advantages and enjoy the process of peer assessment. Their perceptions also revealed that they have a good understanding of peer assessments related to an interactive process, improved students speaking, and the student's ability to give feedback. The findings were in line with several previous studies in which the participants share their perceptions of peer assessment. It is consistent with the study by Panadero & Brown (2017) that peer assessment in the classroom creates a positive experience. The self-reported research shows that peer assessments' frequency is strongly positive rather than a negative experience. As in T1, students perform better when their fellow assessed them; the previous study by Harris & Brown (2013) revealed that peer assessment strengthens students' learning and self-regulated learning. It is also supported by Bay (2011) that teachers got proficient skills through peer assessment. They also recognize that peer assessment can improve the excellence of education, provide useful feedback, and allow the students to obtain self-ruled values in the learning progression. Similarly, most teachers realized plenty of advantages of peer assessment that their students get after implementing peer assessment in speaking skills.

On the other hand, others viewed peer assessment as the knowledge in which the students evaluate and give a score to other's work. Their knowledge of peer assessment is considered limited since they do not commonly use peer assessment in their classroom. From the data collected, it can be drawn that peer assessment involves a large of positive aspect such as encouraging learning, enabling feedback, participating in the learning and evaluation process, taking on the responsibility of being an assessor, engaging students to be more autonomous learners, and improving student's speaking skills. As a parallel to the previous studies, the learner's and teacher's opinions towards peer assessment are generally positive (Panadero and Brown 2017; Serpil 2016; Wulandari et al. 2021). Almost all teachers mentioned that they are rarely using peer assessment. They claim that it is hard to apply this kind of assessment when their speaking ability is considered low. However, they perceive peer assessment as a positive experience that could enhance their learning process. As the results from a virtual interview could be seen as follows:

T2: *I rarely apply peer assessment due to limited abilities of students at my school. This is very difficult to do. The difficulty is in managing and awakening students' abilities to be able to communicate with each other.*

Referring to the findings, it can be summarized that most teachers rarely use peer assessment in the class due to the challenges they encounter. Apart from the student's ability, as stated by T2, the teacher also considers the accuracy of the peer assessment. They are not often using peer assessment in the class due to the validity of the evaluation. Related to the validity, it is in line with Bay (2011) that the relation between friends could

lead to an invalid assessment. Most importantly, the teachers consider peer assessment as the crucial thing to be applied in the classroom. Additionally, they realize that peer assessment is part of authentic assessment that provides more positive advantages to be used in the EFL context, especially in secondary school.

The Reasons of EFL Teachers Utilize Peer Assessment in Speaking Skills

Despite teachers' opinions of peer assessment being largely positive, peer assessment offers several advantages that become the reasons teachers apply peer assessment in speaking skills. These benefits would be outlined as follow:

Enhance Student's Learning

Overall, the teachers believed that peer assessment tends to enhance student's learning in the classroom. Thus, it becomes the reason teachers implement peer assessment in speaking skills. The extracts are reflected as follows:

T1: *It can improve learning outcomes, enhance learning collaboration through peer feedback, help friends in understanding and learning they feel more comfortable in the learning process, students can comment on the performance of the theme*

The first benefit is to enhance student's learning. In line with the previous study by Adachi et al. (2017), peer assessment helps the student learn more. It is essential to include the students in evaluating so that they are willing to learn and have a good understanding of the materials that are being discussed (Adachi et al. 2017).

Develop Soft Skills (Communication and Collaboration)

Another opinion towards the advantages of peer assessment is to develop soft skills in which peer assessment offers the opportunity to learn and expand their knowledge. The following is the data from the teachers:

T5: *Students can discuss and share to each other. Students active to give their suggestions. build students self-confidence more because they can be like a tutor for their friends.*

Peer assessment allows the students to enhance their communication skills should also be noted:

T7: *It trains both the students' speaking and assessment skills.*

T8: *For junior high school, the advantages of peer assessment is improving students' vocabularies and understand pronunciation.*

The learners also critically reflect on the process of implementing peer assessment. It was also detected as follows:

T4: Motivate students in learning, students are more active in creating their learning strategy, encourage students to reflect their role and the contribution during the process in group work.

The second benefit is to develop soft skills. Examples of soft skills involve communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and self-management (Reinholz 2015; Suñol et al. 2016). As the data above dealing with communication skills, teachers reveal that peer assessment can train both the student's speaking and assessment skills. Learners also critically reflect on implementing peer assessment. Besides, it also encourages the students to collaborate. These findings were validated by Brown (2004) that peer assessment points out the most apparent of supportive learning. Mixed-method research also noted that peer assessment encourages students to have collaborative learning that might affect their lifetime learning abilities for their upcoming level of education (Malan and Stegmann 2018).

Build Student's Autonomy

The difference in peer assessment from other types of evaluation is building students' autonomy. Since they collaborate to evaluate their peers' work, it allows them to become independent. It is also proved by the teachers as follows:

T4: *It is a kind of alternative assessment that has a function in engaging the students to be **autonomous learners**, and they can evaluate themselves and their peers as well.*

T6: *They are more confident and they can **develop their autonomy** and skills as well.*

The results support the previous studies that peer assessment gains several benefits. It was also regarded as an authentic assessment. Even though both groups have different years of teaching experience, they all agree that peer assessment has many advantages. The last advantage is to build students' autonomy. It is consistent with Race (2001) that implementing peer assessment has two benefits: aid learners to become autonomous learners and improve skills related to life-long learning. Correspondence to this work, Wen et al. (2006) asserted that peer assessment is used to enhance active autonomous learners to think intellectually and have a charge for their learning. It is also supported by Race (1998) and Zariski (1996) as cited in Vickerman (2009) that there are several reasons of employing peer assessment, such as boosting students' autonomy and motivation, stirring up students' responsibility towards their learning, and considering assessment as part of learning that gives opportunities rather than failures.

The Obstacles Faced by EFL Teachers in Using Peer Assessment in Speaking Skills

Despite several benefits detected in peer assessment, teachers also point out the challenge and complexity to consider when implementing this assessment. From the data obtained, the challenges could be served as follows:

Subjectivity and Accuracy of the Students' Evaluation Skills

The first challenge is related to unfairness in giving the score. The extracts can be seen as follows:

T1: Usually students are not fair while evaluating their friends.

T7: Training the students how to do a proper peer assessment before the real implementation and encouraging them to provide objective assessment to others.

The first challenge is related to the subjectivity and accuracy of the students' evaluation skills. It is relevant with Brown (2004), who emphasized that subjectivity is the main challenge to deal with peer assessment. The students might be too kind or too harsh to their fellow. The relationship between friends might lead to invalid evaluations (Serpil 2016). They may also have no enough skills to give an accurate assessment. Douglas (2014) added that it is essential to provide practice of peer assessment before the students are making judgments and evaluating their fellow' works. The teachers could give an example of the way of conducting peer assessment.

The Heterogeneous Classroom Where the Students are Varied

Apart from the unfairness issue, teachers must deal with the learner's ability. The students are diverse, and they have various skills. Thus, it becomes a challenge for the teachers to implement peer assessment since it requires them to be more active. The data is shown as follows:

T3: The different ability from each student, especially in pronunciation.

T8: Sometimes, students cannot develop the topic which I have given to them.

The second challenge is dealing with a heterogeneous classroom where the students are varied. Thus, it is difficult for teachers to measure whether peer assessments can work or not due to the low ability of some students in the class. In line with Planas Lladó et al. (2014), different levels of students in understanding the way to assess are typical and could be minimized through several ways, one of which is by making transparency in assessment processes.

Lack of Students' Motivation to Speak a Lot

Other teachers reveal that they need to encourage the students to speak a lot. Besides, the teachers need to familiarize the students with peer assessment to improve their skills. It could be seen through the data collected from the open-ended questionnaire as follows:

T5: One of the challenges are encourage the students to speak a lot.

T6: At the beginning, the students were not familiar and some students are being shy, so that it is my work to familiarize students with peer assessment in the class.

The third challenge is dealing with the lack of students' motivation to speak a lot. Hadzhikoleva et al. (2019) stated that emotional, cognitive, or psychological difficulties might appear when the students do peer assessment. For instance, students are unwilling to give their peers feedback and lack skills that may not create an objective evaluation. It contrasts with Planas Lladó et al. (2014), who argued that peer assessment could improve students' motivation and assist them in promoting better comprehension.

The Probability of Students' Making Mistakes in Evaluation

The fourth challenge is related to the probability of students' doing mistakes in doing an evaluation. Thus, it makes the learning process need to consume much time because the teacher should check and review the results of the student's evaluation. Commonly, the students make mistakes due to their inexperience in doing an assessment. The extract from the teacher is displayed as follows:

T4: *The students relatively make mistake in pronunciation, grammatical errors and they are lack of vocabulary. it takes longer time in learning.*

As seen from the extracts above, the students make pronunciation mistakes, grammatical errors, and lack of vocabulary. Thus, it affects the way the students make mistakes in evaluating their friends' performances. Serpil (2016) stated that apart from the affordances of using peer assessment, there also have obstacles while conducting peer assessment; one of them is the possibility of learners making mistakes in judging and evaluating their friends. It may happen because they have no experience to give an evaluation (Al-Barakat and Al-Hassan 2009; Bay 2011)

Time Constraints

Another challenge deals with time constraints. Since they do not frequently use peer assessment, some teachers should manage the time wisely. Based on their experience, peer assessment takes a much time, and it becomes inefficient to apply this kind of assessment. The results of a virtual interview could be seen below:

T1: *I think peer assessment is not effective, because the students offer a good score if they are their best friends. And we must do re - check, it makes we work twice.*

From the data above, it can be drawn that teachers encounter some challenges when implementing peer assessment. One of them deals with time constraints. Whilst a number of studies reveal that peer assessment can rescue time for teachers (Boud and Holmes 1995) (Boud & Holmes, 1995), others exhibit that the strategy and utilization of peer assessment could be complicated and take much time (Nortcliffe 2012). Teachers who are novices in applying peer assessment may need extra teaching support in implementing peer assessment. Assisting its application and dealing with matters and focuses on the problems that arise affect the restricted time frame that teachers have (Berg and Seeber 2016).

CONCLUSION

This current study revealed the opportunities and challenges of peer assessment seen from the lenses of secondary teachers. It has been explored through the narratives of eight teachers who gave responses on the questionnaire and a virtual interviewed. It can be drawn that most teachers gain positive experience in implementing peer assessment in the classroom. It sheds light on three themes of opportunities and five pieces of challenges

that have been matched with the literature. The opportunities are divided into three themes: enhance student's learning, develop soft skills (communication and collaboration), and build student's autonomy. Meanwhile the five pieces of challenges are related to the subjectivity and accuracy of the students' evaluation skills, the heterogeneous classroom, lack of students' motivation to speak a lot, the probability of students' making mistakes in evaluation, and time constrains.

Most importantly, a peer assessment provides an opportunity to enhance student's learning, and it should be applied to give a chance for the students to develop their skills. Since most of them rarely use peer assessment, this study can be beneficial for educational practitioners to familiarize peer assessment as an alternative assessment used in secondary school. It is important to establish secondary EFL teachers' positive perceptions of peer assessment and as a basis for implementing peer assessment in EFL classrooms. In terms of benefits, secondary EFL teachers who do not have a good understanding of peer assessment need to increase their knowledge of peer assessment and how peer assessment can help them engage with alternative assessments. In addition, it is necessary to emphasize the practice and knowledge of peer assessment in training to make teachers aware of the importance of peer assessment and how to deal with peer assessment. Therefore, this research can provide a wake-up call for the government to promote peer assessment in secondary schools due to of its many benefits.

The limitation of this current study is the small number of participants, making the results not generalizable. It is exclusively limited in exploring secondary EFL teachers' opinions of peer assessment utilized in speaking class. Therefore, further studies can conduct a more significant number of participants from various levels and institutions. Eventually, triangulating the teacher and student's point of view also needs to be undertaken to know whether the teacher's claim is valid or not.

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