



Peer Assessment of Oral Presentations in EFL Classes: Assessors' View

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Annotation. The study focuses on peer assessment (PA) used in teaching English as a foreign language. It aimed to identify students' attitudes towards PA in oral presentations, using online PA forms and an online post PA questionnaire. Thematic analysis of the data show positive students' attitudes towards PA, as it helped them to understand the task requirements better, be more focused, and improve their own presentation skills. The drawbacks were linked to stress during the assessment.

Keywords: *EFL, oral skills, peer assessment, students as assessors, university students.*

Introduction

Proficiency in foreign languages is no longer viewed only as an instrument to gain and share information. It has been proven to be a prerequisite for person's active participation in the social life in the world (CEFR, 2020). Therefore, the role of language education, including teaching English as a foreign language (hereinafter EFL), is to prepare students to become social agents, responsible for their learning and language use process, leading to their becoming efficient lifelong learners. Peer assessment (hereinafter PA), therefore, has become an important topic in education-related studies in the last thirty years (Azarnoosh, 2013; Double et al., 2020) as it allows learners to more actively participate in the learning process. Because of its broad usage, PA has been defined in a variety of ways, but the following description by Double et al. (2020) is particularly clear and concise and involves all of its participants and performed actions:

Peers are defined as individuals at similar (i.e., within 1–2 grades) or identical education levels. Peer assessment must involve assessing or being assessed by peers, or both. Peer assessment requires the communication (either written, verbal, or online) of task-relevant feedback, although the style of feedback can differ markedly, from elaborate written and verbal feedback to holistic ratings of performance. (p. 486)

In other words, PA may cover quite a broad variety of education-related activities where students can develop their as social agents' skills engaging as assessors or assessees, or both, and the evaluation of those activities may also be performed (by assessors) in a variety of ways depending on the set aims in relation to given tasks on which the students work. Usually, the students who perform the role of assessors are asked by their teacher to assess their peers' skills demonstrated through a particular task that they have carried out so that the assessees could improve those skills in the future.

In the context of foreign language teaching and learning, which is the focus of this article, PA has usually been employed in the assessment of written production. As Phuong Quynh (2021) points out, PA seems to be most effective in helping to improve students' writing skills, even though other than writing skills can also be peer-assessed, for example, through peer dialogues (Double et al., 2020). In addition to PA of certain (foreign) language skills, previous studies have focused on the comparison of teacher assessment and PA (Azarnoosh, 2013; Cheng & Warren, 2005; Jung, 2016; Pourdana & Asghari, 2021; Peng, 2010), possible friendship bias in PA (Azarnoosh, 2013), effects of PA on academic performance (Double et al., 2020; Nejad & Mahfoodh, 2019), and PA and student motivation (Carrió-Pastor, 2016). Yet, the findings in these and other studies are inconclusive (Azarnoosh, 2013) or contradictory, as PA has both advantages and disadvantages that have been documented.

Even though it is possible to employ PA in the evaluation of speaking skills in foreign languages, this has been much less popular so far in comparison to other skills. It is probably not surprising then that PA in relation to oral presentation skills has not received much attention in scholarly studies (Cheng & Warren, 2005). Peng (2010) has also noted a lack of research examining PA in oral presentations.

Since few studies have been done in the field of EFL in order to explore the implementation of PA practices in the assessment of oral presentations, this study hopes to provide insight into it and contribute to the area that has received relatively little attention. Thus, the study *aimed* to find out Lithuanian university EFL students', who served as assessors, attitudes and experiences about PA of oral presentations. The following *research questions* were raised to achieve the aim of the study:

1. What are the students' attitudes towards PA of oral presentations?
2. What benefits (if any) of PA in oral presentations do the assessors identify?
3. What drawbacks (if any) of PA in oral presentations do the assessors identify?

It is important to emphasise that due to the coronavirus pandemic that was continuing at the time of the study, the English class that employed PA of oral presentations was delivered online. Double et al. (2020) make a difference between online and offline PA, as the current reality of educational processes includes both, but they are not certain if the medium of PA might limit it in some way. In fact, Pourdana and Asghari (2021) state that modern technologies can be more effective in PA (even if or even when such technologies are used in face-to-face classrooms). Thus, they are hoped to be useful and helpful in PA during online classes as well.

Benefits and Drawbacks of PA

There are definitely numerous positive features of PA. They are related to a variety of benefits students gain in the learning process when PA is used. Firstly, students learn from each other and are excited to do PA (Phuong Quynh, 2021). Thus, PA may be an engaging and fun activity in which students can be involved while learning at the same time. Secondly, it helps to promote students' critical thinking and autonomy and to see peers' strengths and weaknesses (Azarnoosh, 2013), which is useful for their learning experience. Students can notice their peers' errors, then their own errors (Cheng & Warren, 2005; Jung, 2016), and eliminate them (Phuong Quynh, 2021), since they become active participants in their learning process (Musfirah, 2019; Pourdana & Asghari, 2021; Peng, 2010), especially when they occupy the role of assessors. In other words, PA leads to student self-correction (Cheng & Warren, 2005), improvement of their own production, whether it is written or spoken, and independent learning (Pourdana & Asghari, 2021). This shows that through PA students can be in control of their own learning (Cadena-Aguilar & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021; Meletiadou, 2012) and take responsibility for it (Cheng & Warren, 2005). To be more precise, PA opens the learning horizons that students would not experience if their teachers were sole assessors all the time. Moreover, the findings of a study by Double et al. (2020) reveal that in comparison to no assessment at all or even teacher assessment, PA "improves academic performance" (p. 481), even though the authors of the study claim PA to be not very different from self-assessment in terms of its effectiveness. Yet, Birjandi and Siyyari (2010), would not agree with this, as the results of their study prove the opposite, that is, that PA is more effective than self-assessment in the improvement of students' written production.

In the earlier mentioned study by Double et al. (2020), PA was found to be even more effective than teacher assessment. However, it is important to emphasise that PA is not to be used instead of, or, in other words, replace teacher assessment, including grading, but rather supplement it (Peng, 2010). As far as grades are concerned, the grading done by peers in PA seems to be useful for the students of the third cycle, that is, higher education, as such students are often grade oriented (Double et al., 2020). On the other hand,

Peng (2010) does not recommend PA to be worth more than 40% of the given grade. Furthermore, grades may not be given at all, as PA might be used for formative feedback, formative assessment, or other purposes. As Ubaque Casallas and Pinilla Castellanos (2016) reveal in their study, PA can be used to promote personal learning, collaborative learning, and student reflection on their learning, so students can “enhance their own learning experience” (p. 113) this way. At the same time, as Meletiadou (2012) suggests, it is important to consider the fact that students need time and training in order to adapt to PA and use it successfully. Such training may even change students’ attitudes towards PA and make it more positive if it is negative at first (Meletiadou, 2012).

In terms of PA of oral activities in the EFL context, Ubaque Casallas and Pinilla Castellanos (2016) noted that in their study university students served the following functions: they were makers of “analytical judgments of oral tasks” (p. 117) and “co-constructors of knowledge produced through the assessment” (p. 121) of such tasks. Peng’s (2010) research showed that university students saw PA as an opportunity to speak in English and boost their oral presentation skills. Even schoolchildren admitted to have improved (86%) their English oral presentation skills and critical thinking skills through PA in the study by Hung et al. (2016). It is also pertinent to point out that earlier studies show that students usually have a positive attitude towards PA of oral skills, e.g., related to giving oral presentations (see Nejad & Mahfoodh, 2019). In short, it seems that PA has been successfully employed in the assessment of oral skills in the EFL classroom so far, even though the number of such studies is rather limited.

However, PA has also been reported to have a number of disadvantages. Students may have a negative attitude towards PA that they would do in any of their classes (not necessarily EFL) if they believe that only their teacher has the right to assess student skills, or students may see PA as a form of entertainment rather than a serious activity from which they could learn something useful (Musfirah, 2019). If they do agree to assess their peers’ performance, they may also experience high levels of stress or fear, since they would wish to meet their teachers’ and peers’ expectations (Phuong Quynh, 2021). Moreover, some students who become assessees may feel it is not fair that their peers are their assessors, especially if the grades the assessors provide have some sort of effect on the overall course or assignment grade(s) (Phuong Quynh, 2021). For example, in the study carried out by Cheng and Warren (2005), “the marks awarded by the students constituted 50% of the marks awarded for the group project and 20% of the final grade for the entire EAP subject” (p. 99). Consequently, the assessees of their study may have perceived such PA grading as having too much effect on them, especially if their assessors were not seen as very competent in PA or English in general. In fact, the same study showed that half of the students who served as assessors believed to be unqualified for the task because of their low or limited English proficiency, which did not allow them to assess their peers’ skills successfully (Cheng & Warren, 2005). Therefore, such and similar situations may lead to assessee dissatisfaction with PA, as assessors may give lower grades than they

should (Jung, 2016). On the other hand, as Peng (2010) suggests, the opponents of PA as a method do not recognise the fact that PA does not aim to be of “high validity and reliability” (p. 89). Its main goals are rather related to the advantages of PA discussed above.

The success of PA itself may depend on a variety of factors, some of which have been pointed out before. Of course, there are some others as well. It has been noticed that in addition to student attitudes, in the context of foreign languages, PA may also be affected by “language levels, familiarity with the assessing criteria, the type of skill being assessed, and the possible presence of bias such as gender and friendship” (Azarnoosh, 2013, p. 2). Thus, it is important to consider these factors before PA takes place. Yet, they do not always come into play or some new ones appear. For example, the study by Azarnoosh (2013) did not reveal any friendship bias, while the research by Cheng and Warren (2005) did reveal different assessment behaviour in terms of marking oral and written production. On the other hand, the latter research (by Cheng & Warren, 2005) and some other studies noticed that before PA students had had a negative attitude towards it but it changed towards the end of the PA in relation to, for instance, writing skills (Cadena-Aguilar & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021; Azarnoosh, 2013; Meletiadiou, 2012). Therefore, it is possible to assume that the more students know about PA and the more experience of it they have, the more positive their attitudes towards PA become.

Despite the above discussed advantages and disadvantages of PA, Double et al. (2020) observed a “small to medium effect” (p. 481) of PA on academic performance while overweighing what they call a high number of previously done studies. In contrast, the way usefulness of PA is perceived differs in a very recent study by Cadena-Aguilar and Alvarez-Ayure in which they found that “20% [of the study participants] believed it was *very useful*, while 50% thought that peer-feedback was *somewhat useful*, and the remaining 30% found it *just useful*” (Cadena-Aguilar & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021, p. 74; italics in original). In other words, all the participants found PA useful to a greater or lesser extent. This only shows that just like many other aspects of PA that have been discussed here, its effect may vary greatly in different contexts, even in EFL classes in different countries, at different levels of English or other foreign languages, among students of different age groups, to name a few.

Methodology

Logic of inquiry. The study used both qualitative (thematic analysis) and quantitative (survey questionnaire) approaches in relation to the identified research problem and set research questions. In the study, PA was used as a form of formative assessment, as it is believed to improve student academic performance (Double et al., 2020). The grades that the students who were assessors awarded their peers (assessees) with did not constitute any part of final student course grades.

Research setting and participants. The study involved a class of general English at the upper-intermediate level at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania (n = 55). The students were from various study programmes, from arts to law or agronomy, as, according to the requirements of VMU Study Regulations (2021) students are grouped into English language levels depending on their initial language proficiency level rather than their field of study. Even though the level of proficiency in English could have an effect on the accuracy of PA, in this case, it was assumed that the proficiency of the participants of the study was sufficient, as they were close to the end of their English studies at the upper-intermediate level and were expected to continue studying English at an advanced level next semester.

Methods and Procedure of Data Collection. The research was both quantitative and qualitative and employed the following research *instruments*:

- *Anonymous Online Peer Assessment Forms* (criteria set by the Institute of Foreign Languages for all presentations of the upper-intermediate English).
- *Anonymous Online Post Peer Assessment Questionnaire* that the students who were assessors filled in in order to reflect on their overall experience of assessing the performance of their peers. The post PA survey was designed by the study authors on the basis of the relevant literature analysis in compliance with the research aims and objectives.

The students (both assessors and assessees) received training to ensure the PA process. The training session focused on the assessment criteria and decision-making in PA. During a set week of presentations, each student was an assessee once and an assessor several or many times, depending on the number of students in a particular online class on a particular day during the week (and depending on how many students attended when they were assessors).

The study *procedure* was as follows: The students were familiarised and provided with presentation and assessment criteria during the first week of the semester. They prepared presentations for seven weeks as a project. They needed to choose a scientific article related to their field of study and prepare to present a short version, or rather, a summarised version of it as a presentation to the class held online during a particular week of presentations (according to a set schedule prepared in advance). The students who were assessees gave their presentations, while their audience (assessors) was assessing them by filling in the assessment forms online (on their mobile phones or other devices) and in such a way giving feedback on the presentations in relation to both speaking skills and slides separately. At the end of the week, the students were filling in the questionnaire about their peer-assessment experience while being assessors. The assessees (presenters) were able to see how they had been assessed by their peers when the teacher sent them the feedback based on the PA forms by email. This happened one day after the *Anonymous Online Post Peer Assessment Questionnaire* had been filled in.

Methods and Procedure of Data Analysis. An online tool, which the students had been familiar with, was used to create both online presentation PA forms and later the questionnaire. Since the tool allows exporting the received data to MS Excel files, it was convenient to use them as feedback documents and send them to individual presenters (assessees), but at the same time they were used for research purposes: processed and analysed as the quantitative data. As the study was quantitative and qualitative, the online questionnaire included closed-ended and open-ended questions. The data received from the latter ones was analysed using thematic analysis: student answers were read repeatedly; salient themes were identified and cross-checked by two researchers, grouped, and later illustrated with examples.

Ethical Issues. Both the assessors and assesseees had been informed about the process of being peer-assessed before PA took place and agreed to participate in PA. Moreover, the students who served as assessors performed PA anonymously, and the results of the assessors did not have an impact on the overall evaluation of the assesseees' presentations that was performed by the teacher.

Results and Discussion

Demographic characteristics of the participants. The participants of this study were fifty-five Lithuanian university students studying the same upper-intermediate level English course as an obligatory study subject taught to students of various study programmes in the autumn semester of 2021 online (due to the continuing pandemic situation at that time). These students performed the role of assessors of oral presentations and later reflected on their experience. Most of them were female students – 69.1%, while others were male students – 30.9%. All the participants were undergraduate students: 60% of them were second year students, 36.4% were first year students (freshmen), and the rest of the sample contained third- and fourth-year students, even though in general the course of upper-intermediate level of English should be completed during the first two years of undergraduate studies. The age of the participants was as follows: 7.3% were eighteen years old, 34.5% were 19, 34.5% were 20, 5.5% were 21, while 18.2% were 22 or older. Thus, most of the assessors were 19–20-year-old first- and second-year students. Since, by definition, peers are students of the same or similar age, the participants' answers were not compared based on their age.

Attitudes towards peer-evaluation. For more than a half of all the study participants, PA was not new – 54.5%, but all the others experienced PA for the first time. The questionnaire did not require indicating how much of PA the participants actually had done before, as their experience may have varied greatly (e.g., from doing it only once or several times to doing it many times before). Thus, the study did not focus on the

comparison of the assessors who had had any previous PA experience and those who had not. Whether the students had had experience related to PA or not, overall, they had a positive attitude (72.7%) towards PA before it was actually used in their English class online. However, 21.8% did not have any opinion about it, admitted not knowing anything about it, while only a small number of the respondents (5.5%) thought about PA in a negative way.

Having assessed their peers' oral presentations, the study participants indicated they liked being assessors – 67.3%, while 32.7% did not, which means that more assessors liked PA in general (72.7%) (had a positive attitude towards it) than actually enjoyed being assessors (67.3%). The research participants were then asked to dwell on their experience as assessors by indicating the reasons for liking or disliking PA (having read the answers, the reasons were generalised and thematically grouped, but the numbers here and elsewhere in the paper where such a grouping is used do not show the frequency of mentioning).

The students who served as assessors of oral presentations in their English classes liked PA because PA:

1. made them be more focused in their English classroom online.
2. made them participate more actively in their English classroom online.
3. gave them ideas about what they could do in their own presentations in the future.
4. was useful because it was a new and interesting experience.
5. allowed them to express their own opinions in their English classroom online.

In other words, the assessors liked PA because it was useful for A) their English language learning (1, 2, 3, and 5) and B) for their personal growth (4). Consequently, from the perspective important for our study, it can be seen that the participation in PA not only created conditions for students to develop their English language competence, but it also allowed them to become more independent learners by focusing on their learning (1) and becoming more engaged in it by participating actively (2), expressing their opinion (5), and enjoying learning (4). Here are some examples of the provided explanations (the language of open-ended student answers here and elsewhere in the paper has not been corrected): “Because we could get good experience for presentation and get more ideas for next time” R3 (research participant no. 3); “It helped me to stay focused at the presentations and learn something new” (R17); or “I liked that we were able to express our opinion ourselves” (R 12).

Some assessors, however, did not like PA. Having thematically grouped their explanations of why they felt this way, the following five reasons were distinguished from the answers they provided:

1. They did not like evaluating/ assessing others in general.
2. They felt their assessment would be very different from the one done by the teacher.
3. They thought their assessment might offend their peers.

4. They did not feel comfortable while assessing their peers.
5. They felt they did not have (enough) experience in PA.

Here are some examples of the reasons in students' words: "Because I don't have experience and don't want to misjudge my friends" (R1); "I don't like to evaluate people because I'm afraid it might offend them" (R6); and "I didn't like to assess my peers, because it seems hard to me. However, this is a useful method because you notice not only the mistakes of others, but also learn from them. And that allows you to improve on your own" (R15). The latter example is particularly important, because it demonstrates that even when some the assessors did not like PA, they saw that it was useful for their learning experience.

As indicated above, over 54% of the students had had prior PA experience, but it seems that by some students it was not considered as sufficient. Moreover, this previous experience did not necessarily mean the students liked to assess their peers' skills. As a result, those who did not like PA had a variety of concerns that should probably be addressed before the use of PA in any classroom. For instance, as the students did not feel comfortable assessing their peers' performance, it needs to be given attention in the future. Nevertheless, in the study, there was no friendship bias observed, as the students studied in the virtual environment and most of them did not know each other personally. Consequently, no one indicated having felt uncomfortable assessing their friends or having assessed other students better than they should have because of their (close) friendship.

Benefits of peer-assessing. When asked whether PA of oral presentations of their peers helped the assessors to improve their own presentations, more than half of all the study participants answered positively (63.6%), while over a third of the study participants did not improve their own presentations because of PA (36.4%). Since PA was employed as a means of formative assessment, it was expected that the study participants would find it useful in terms of improvement of their own oral production and slide preparation skills. In fact, those who did improve their own presentations indicated the following revisions were made or useful ideas considered (five themes were identified through thematic analysis of student written comments):

1. The assessors understood what was required in presentations (presentation evaluation criteria) better and were able to make some necessary changes.
2. Attentive observation of other presentations as examples (good or bad) helped the assessors to prepare for their own presentations.
3. The assessors noticed errors made by their peers and noted them down in order not to make the same ones in their own presentations.
4. The assessors added the things they had missed earlier while preparing for their own presentations (which would be presented later that week in their English class online).

5. PA helped to prepare better for their own presentations in general (not necessarily for the upper-intermediate level English class).

Here are some examples of how the assessors explained that PA was useful for them personally: “After looking at what others did, I saw my own mistakes” (R9); “It helps to understand that is important in presentations” (R18); “This helped me to analyse my own presentation and make it better” (R30); “Peer assessment helped me to improve my presentation in the way of presenting my topic. During the presentations, I got a better view of how I should be presenting the topic to an audience. Strict points clarified my goals and criteria [I needed to rely on]” (R36); and “It made me realise what I had to change in my presentation. The assessment helped me memorise the criteria that I had to do the presentation on” (R47). In other words, being an assessor was a valuable experience that repeatedly drew the assessors’ attention to the set presentation requirements (evaluation criteria), which later helped them to prepare better for their own presentations. At the same time, while assessing the presentations done by others, they were able to learn from them (both what to do and what not to do in their own future presentations – oral presentations and slides that accompany them). In sum, the assessors were preparing to take a closer look at the task requirements and this is a useful skill in any activity.

On the other hand, those assessors who did not improve their presentations because of PA indicated that:

1. They had known the presentation evaluation criteria well (this is natural because their teacher had presented the criteria to all the students during the training they had received several months before the actual presentations).
2. They were able to prepare successful presentations without seeing the presentations done by others, since they did not need any examples or thought they were good at presentations (had good enough presentation skills) in general.

That is, over a third of all the study participants had been able to or were able to prepare their presentations successfully without PA activities. Therefore, they did not experience PA as much beneficial as other assessors.

It seems that quite many students engaged in their English classes online more actively when PA was implemented, as 58.2% of them felt PA increased or developed their sense of class participation. Thematic analysis of students’ written comments helped to distinguish the following indicators of active class participation and engagement through PA:

1. PA encouraged attending more classes.
2. PA made the assessors direct their attention to what was happening in class.
3. PA left the assessors with a feeling that others were actually listening to presentations (they had probably thought no one did when they had presented something earlier).

Here are some example answers the assessors provided in relation to their active engagement during PA: “Because you feel some kind of mutual assistance and you try to help your peers with their assessment” (R5); “it encouraged me to continue attending lectures” (R8); “it helped me to participate in the activities and listen to presentations more carefully” (R12); and “[because of PA] I was forced to listen to presentations, otherwise, I don’t know if I would have listened to them so carefully” (R15). As a result, when the assessors were filling in the online evaluation forms on their mobile phones or computers, PA became a sort of hands-on activity that they worked on, and it required their full attention, because it became their main priority at that time. Since they were actually listening to their peers’ presentations, they understood that students are heard and their effort is appreciated.

Over a third (34.5%) had no opinion on how PA affected their active participation in the English classes online, while others (7.3%) thought PA had no effect. Yet, in another question, the study participants were asked directly if PA made them be more focused in class. Surprisingly, then 80% of the assessors indicated that, in fact, this was the case, and 20% of them answered negatively. As a result, it is possible to claim that even if/when PA did not always encourage participating more actively or being more engaged, it definitely made the assessors be more focused on what their peers intended to say during their presentations, and, in turn, the students who served as assessors had no time to do other things (e.g., be distracted by something else) at that time.

However, as far as motivation to study was concerned, the responses provided by the assessors were divided almost equally, since 52.7% indicated that PA enhanced their motivation to study and /or learn more, while the motivation of other students who served as assessors (47.3%) was not affected by PA. The latter students pointed out that they had already been motivated before/without PA or did not feel any change caused by PA. In other words, when PA was implemented in their English classroom online, the students felt definitely more focussed, more involved, and more engaged but PA itself was not necessarily a factor that increased their motivation to study or motivated them in general. Yet, the assessors who indicated that PA had increased their motivation explained their answers by providing the same reasons which were also related to why they liked PA and why it was beneficial for them (discussed above). Some of such benefits were very practical (served as external motivators) and later may have resulted in the form of (better) received grades for their own presentations in their English class or some other class.

PA definitely helped to understand (better) what the students actually needed to do in order to meet the presentation requirements. 83.6% of the assessors indicated so, while only 16.4% did not find PA as a useful way to understand the presentation requirements that they would need to comply with in their own presentations and the evaluation criteria that would be used in order to assess their skills. The responses to the open question revealed that the students who served as assessors understood through PA the following (two main themes were revealed by thematic analysis):

1. They needed to pay more attention to the speaking part of their presentations and spend more time thinking about how to communicate with the audience and engage it.
2. Looking at the same requirements repeatedly in the PA online forms, which they were filling in, made them understand more about the requirements than when they saw and heard them being presented and discussed in class or while reading them later individually.

This is in line with the results of the earlier discussed question that considered whether PA of oral presentations helped the assessors to improve their own presentations. The assessors found it useful to look at the evaluation criteria many times, because this helped them see what they needed to change in their presentations in the future. Moreover, as the presentation evaluation criteria had separate requirements for the slides and the speaking part, the assessors understood they needed to devote equal attention to both. As earlier their focus had been mostly on the slides, they were made aware that they would need to devote more attention to their speaking part than they had previously planned to.

Disadvantages of peer-assessing. Despite the benefits of PA which have been discussed in this paper so far, quite a significant part (40%) of the assessors in the study felt stressed while assessing their peers' oral presentations. Having analysed their provided comments with the help of thematic analysis, the following three causes of stress emerged most frequently:

- The assessors did not want to hurt or offend their peers.
- The assessors felt pressure to assess "correctly".
- The assessors felt it was a difficult activity for them, since they were not sure about the presentation requirements or their own English proficiency or both.

Some students indicated that it was too difficult to do two things at the same time: listen to peer presentations and assess them. On the other hand, 60% of the assessors did not find PA stressful because it was anonymous and fun or they had found the presentation requirements clear before the presentations, so later this did not cause any difficulties. Some of these students also saw PA as a part of their study process, but it does not mean that PA was not challenging at all. It was sometimes challenging in terms of noticing language-related mistakes (usually those related to grammar or pronunciation), understanding the main idea or giving an overall grade, even though the assessors knew their grade would have no effect on the actual grade for the presentation. In addition, for the assessors it was easier to assess the presentation slides (e.g., their structure, slide layout, used resources) rather than the oral part of the presentations (speaking skills).

Summarising, it can be said that in terms of the benefits of PA, the assessors emphasised learning from the mistakes made by other students. Another benefit was the fact that PA made the assessors think they should look at their own future presentations

more seriously, especially the speaking part, in order to prepare for them. Furthermore, PA encouraged active listening and made them be more focused, which was seen as a positive outcome, and made the assessors see their presentation requirements in a new light or get a better picture of what a presentation, not necessarily for their English class, should be like. Yet, not all students who were assessors believed they should assess their peers' oral production or language skills in general: 56.4% believed they should, while 27.3% did not have an opinion, and 16.4% thought students should not assess their peers in any way, since their teacher is the only one who is qualified to do this.

Conclusions

This small-scale study revealed some Lithuanian university students' attitudes, experiences, and feelings about PA when the students served as assessors of oral presentations delivered in an English as a foreign language classroom online. The study found out that the students generally had a positive attitude towards PA and found it useful in many ways. In addition, more than half of all the assessors found PA to be an enjoyable activity. The fact that PA was seen in a positive light and perceived as an interesting activity might have led to the opinion of the majority of the study participants that students should assess their peers' skills, oral English skills in this case.

The positive effect that the assessors experienced because of PA benefits might have also been related to their positive opinion about PA. The benefits were twofold. Firstly, PA definitely made the assessors be more focused in their English classes online and encouraged their active participation. However, being focussed and involved in PA did not necessarily mean higher motivation to study English. No such results had been observed in other reviewed research on PA. Secondly, when they assessed their peers' oral presentation skills, they were able to gain knowledge actively, since they engaged in active listening during the classes when their peers' presentations were being delivered. As they were exposed to the same presentation requirements and evaluation criteria many times, they were able to understand them better. At the same time, they learned from the mistakes made by their peers. These findings are in line with those of other studies that had revealed self-correction, improvement (Pourdana & Asghari, 2021), and learning from mistakes in PA (Cheng & Warren, 2005; Jung, 2016; Phuong Quynh, 2021), all of which showed that the students took responsibility for their learning (Cadena-Aguilar & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021; Meletiadou, 2012), thus, becoming autonomous and independent learners.

Some drawbacks of PA in oral presentations in their EFL class were observed by the assessors as well. As in some previous studies, for instance, the one by Phuong Quynh (2021), a significant number of the students who served as assessors found PA stressful, because they were not sure if they knew the presentation requirements very well or had

doubts about their own English proficiency and thus were afraid, they would not assess the presentations accurately. They worried, or rather felt pressure, to award the assesseees with “correct grades,” even though they knew such grades were not included into the final presentation grades. Such students usually suggest that the teacher, not the students, should do the assessment. In the study by Cheng & Warren (2005), the students felt not qualified enough to do PA because of their low proficiency in English as well, but they did not worry about giving grades to their peers or suggest their teachers should do PA instead. Furthermore, in the study of the present paper, the students emphasised that it was challenging to assess their peers’ speaking skills, but it was easier to assess the slides that accompanied the speaking part. This is probably one of the reasons why PA is usually employed in relation to writing in the EFL context. Yet, it was challenging for the assessors to assess both at the same time, which may have increased stress levels. This and other concerns (e.g., feeling uncomfortable or being afraid to offend peers by PA in some way) should be addressed before PA is used in any classroom, as this may help to facilitate students’ positive learning experiences, increase students’ satisfaction with the learning process and outcomes, decrease stress and encourage to like and appreciate PA even more.

Knowledge about the benefits of PA in oral presentations, which EFL students identify, can encourage EFL teachers to use PA when they want their students to be more active, engaged, or learn by themselves through observation of good and bad examples. On the other hand, their knowledge about the drawbacks can help them become more aware of what they should consider prior to the implementation of PA in their EFL classes. As the study findings indicate, EFL students might benefit from learning more about stress management techniques, which in turn might make PA activities more enjoyable and have a more positive effect on their learning. This could be an interesting direction for future studies. In addition, as this study focused only on the assessors’ view of PA, it would be a good idea to learn about the way assesseees see PA in oral presentations and compare both perspectives.

The study results allow to conclude that peer assessment as a method of engaging learners in the active learning process allows them to (self)improve their English as a foreign language learning competence, to become more self-regulated learners, responsible for their learning skill development, and leads then to becoming active social agents who are able to use the acquired language competences in active participation in their future social world.

Limitations of the Study

The study results are limited by the number of participants, the length of time of the study, the chosen instruments and skills (oral presentations online). Thus, future studies could involve a greater variety of English skills and larger numbers of students. Other types of instruments could be employed as well. In addition, this study implemented only thematic analysis to process qualitative data. Therefore, future research could search for other effective ways to approach such data. Even though Jung (2016) sees the fact that students who are not native speakers of English assess their peers' skills as a limitation, this paper would not see it as such, as both assessors and assessees were non-native speakers and should have had more or less the same level of English skills.

Even though, in the existing literature on the subject, it has not been noticed that student biological factors, such as gender, might somehow affect PA, this may also be a direction for further studies to undertake.

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Bendramokslių žodinių pristatymų vertinimas anglų kalbos paskaitose: studentų-vertintojų požiūris

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Santrauka

Tyrime nagrinėjamas tarpusavio vertinimas, kaip viena iš studentų aktyvaus įsitraukimo į mokymąsi formų, taikomas mokant anglų kaip užsienio kalbos. Pagrindiniu tyrimo klausimu siekta nustatyti studentų požiūrį į bendramokslių žodinio pristatymo tarpusavio vertinimą, jo naudą ir trūkumus, naudojant virtualias tarpusavio vertinimo formas bendramokslių žodinei produkcijai vertinti ir virtualų klausimyną po tarpusavio vertinimo. Teminė duomenų analizė rodo teigiamą studentų požiūrį į tarpusavio vertinimą, nes jis padėjo studentams tobulinti pristatymo gebėjimus, skatino labiau susikaupti anglų kalbos paskaitose, aktyviau klausyti ir dalyvauti bei geriau suprasti užduoties reikalavimus. Tarpusavio vertinimo trūkumai pristatant žodžiu buvo susiję su vertinimo metu patiriamu stresu, nes tai buvo sudėtinga patirtis, jų manymu, nepakankama jų anglų kalbos kompetencija arba nepakankamai suprasti pristatymui keliami reikalavimai, kuriais reikėjo remtis vertinant. Tyrimas leidžia daryti išvadą, kad tarpusavio vertinimas gali pasitarnauti kaip veiksmingas metodas kuriant aktyvų ir įtraukų mokymąsi užtikrinančią aplinką besimokantiems kalbų.

Esminiai žodžiai: *anglų kaip užsienio kalba, kalbėjimas anglų kalba, bendramokslių gebėjimų vertinimas, studentai-vertintojai, universiteto studentai.*

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