The impact of group work on assessing speaking skills in Task Based Language Teaching

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The use of group work in the ESL classroom has been shown to be an effective means for improving language competence, (Long, 1996, 1985; Pica, et al., 1996; Pica & Doughty, 1985). There is a growing body of evidence that group work helps the learners to build confidence and improve their language. However, peer assessment is an innovative concept which is utilized as a supplement to teacher assessment. The primary focus of this study was to determine the effect of peer assessment on developing speaking skills. An instructional programme based on Task-Based principles has been designed to improve oral skills among the ESL[5] learners of the University of Jaffna.

The subjects of the study included fifty three students whose main subject was Business Administration. When the designed programme was implemented as the pilot study in the ESL classroom, the rest of the class assessed the performance of their peers. The data have been collected through various tools like, observation and interviews. Questionnaires were also administered.

The findings show students' positive attitude towards group assessments in class. This contributes to a noteworthy increase in students' participation in their groups. With the implication achieved from the pilot study, students are more aware of the important aspects in the assessing process. Therefore, they know how to train and adjust themselves as speakers. A variety of data verifies that peer assessment can improve students' ability of rating and commenting. Meanwhile, it is also effective to improve students' speaking ability Most students have positive attitudes towards peer assessment, agreeing with the effectiveness of peer assessment to improve one's speaking ability, critical thinking ability, communicative ability, learning autonomy and paying attention in class.

Keywords: Assessment, Speaking Skills, Group Work, Peer Review

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[5] ESL = English as a Second Language