STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS RECEIVING PEER FEEDBACK

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Abstract - **As an alternative assessment tool, peer assessment plays a crucial role in the teaching/ learning context. However, researches have observed that the students have different perspectives towards receiving peer feedback. Hence, the aim of this study was to investigate the students' attitudes towards receiving peer feedback. Though, peer assessment is a popular and widely used in different fields of education, peer assessment is still a new concept in the context where this study has been carried out. The sample of this study consisted of 45 science students who were studying technology in a higher educational institute. The students received peer feedback for the oral presentations they made. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire comprising 15 statements was used as the research instruments of this study. The overall findings illustrated that the informants had positive attitudes towards the peer assessment process as 88.6% shared the opinion that peer assessment had helped them to improve their presentation skills. Also, 60% of the sample shared the opinion that the scores given by peers were fair and reasonable and it was significant to find out that 60% of the participants shared the opinion that they were not nervous about the peer assessment process irrespective of the fact that they were exposed to peer assessment for the first time. However, 55.8% of the sample shared the opinion that they preferred to receive grade from the teacher than from the peer. It is expected that the findings of the study will contribute to the teaching and learning context of Sri Lanka.**

Keywords: **peer feedback, peer assessment, attitudes, learners, presentation skills**

I. INTRODUCTION

Peer assessment has a growing demand in the teaching learning context of higher education in recent years due to its ability to develop the autonomous learning and critical thinking of students (Brusa & Harutyunyan, 2019). In fact, peer assessment provides constructive feedback for the learners. Topping (2009) mentions that "The overriding goal of peer assessment is to provide feedback to learners. Peer feedback can be confirmatory, suggestive or corrective" (p.22). Here, the feedback is provided by the peers and the feedback is given to develop the skills of the students and not to criticize. At the same time, Topping (2009) adds that "A wide variety of products or outputs can be peer assessed, including writing, portfolios, oral presentations, test performance, and other skilled behaviors. The participant constellation can vary: The assessors and assessed may be pairs or groups" (p.21). Similarly, the teachers have the freedom to instruct assesses or assessors to work in pairs or groups. Considering oral presentation, it requires students to possess effective presentation skills which are a combination of few skills.

Presentation skills include a variety of areas such as the structure of the presentation, design of the slides, tone of voice and the body language of the presenter. Aryadoust (2016) specifies that "…presenters may modulate their voice and pitch or use nonverbal communication, such as gestures and facial expressions, to communicate their message effectively" (p. 4). Thus, it is obvious that the skilled presenters are able to get the attention of the audience and to gather the audience around his or her own ideas or point of view. However, it is obvious that presentation skills cannot be developed within a night as it needs constant practice and constructive feedback. In literature, many scholars have identified that learners need developing their presentation skills; it has not received sufficient attention from teachers or researchers. "Although the teaching of oral presentation skills is stressed in many curricula, it has received little research attention" (De Grez et al., 2010, p. 1776).

Although, peer assessment is widely used in education sector, it is hardly practiced in Sri Lankan context and there is a need of practicing and utilizing peer assessment for the betterment of the learners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars and researchers have studied and identified the importance of peer assessment. Karami & Rezaei (2015) point out that "Peer assessment is considered to be one of the main forms of alternative assessment. The importance of peer assessment is highlighted in different educational learning and educational research" (p. 94). Peer Assessment involves students in the assessment process and make them active learners. Puegphrom et al (2011) specify that peer assessment "is an alternative of assessment process that involves the learner's participation. It can well reflect the effectiveness of the learner's feedback and cooperation as well as enhance learners' awareness of self-learning and self-esteem" (p.2). Thus, peer assessment contributes in making active learners in

the class room as they also have to engage in the grading process According to the Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA) (2008) "peer evaluation is a useful part of assessment for learning, as it enables learner to recognize how to improve their work" (as cited in Kovac et al, 2012, p.9). Similarly, peer assessment helps learners to make a judgement on other students work and this helps them to judge themselves also.

Scholars have found the efficacy of peer assessment in the development of presentation skills. Falchikov (2005) points out, "involving students in the assessment of presentations is extremely beneficial" (p.16). Unlike traditional assessments, peer assessment helps to develop many skills of a learner. There are a few studies focused on different aspects with regard to the use of peer assessment of oral presentations. In Peng's study (2008), she investigates whether there is a correlation between peer- assessment, attitudes and the language proficiency levels of the students and concludes that even though students did not have any prior exposure to peer assessment, they all expressed positive attitudes towards peer assessment regardless of their different proficiency levels (p.104). Hence, irrespective of the fact that peer assessment is a new concept for the students, they have had positive attitudes towards the new assessment approach. Weaver & Cottrel (1986) identify that peer assessment can "promote student involvement, responsibility and excellence, establish clearer course frameworks, focus attention on skills and learning, and provide increased feedback" (as cited in White, 2009, p. 2). Thus, it is important to give students the responsibility in the teaching learning process.

However, there are counterarguments on peer assessment. In her study, Suganuma Oi (2011) looks at a combination of self/peer and teacher assessment of English oral production of 92 students and she claims that there is no correlation between teacher assessment and peer assessment while self- assessment showed a high consistency with teacher assessment. Some academics have found factors which can negatively affect peer assessment. Nortcliffe (2012) have found that PA is "time consuming to implement" and the possibility of "racial prejudice, personality clashes and personal loyalties may distort the results'. In fact, these factors may affect the assessment process especially in regions like Asia where culture and religion have much influence on people. Further, Topping (1998) believes that "social embarrassment might be a particular issue of concern in smaller groups where students know each other and students may not take the exercise seriously" (p. 253). In fact, some students like presenting in front of teachers and hesitate to present in front of their peers.

Moreover, referring to a series of research findings of Boud and Tyree,1979; Wangsotorn,1980; Heilenmann,1990; Rolfe, 1990, Patri (2002) claims that, "Previous studies on self and peer-assessments found that learners over or underestimating their own or their peers' language skills affects the validity of assessments" (p.110). On the other hand, considering reliability and validity literature raises an issue such as

students being 'poor judges' of effective communication skills (eg. Swanson et al., 1991; Van der Vleuten et al., 1991). In the study on reliability of teachers and peer assessment, Magin (2010) points out that the findings "…lend support to the common-held belief that students are quite poor at judging oral presentations skills" (p.295). Therefore, integrating peer assessment into the teaching learning context of ESL/EFL has to be handled prudently.

However, in Sri Lankan context and in the set up to which this particular institute is attached, peer assessment is a new concept. There is a demand for studies on peer assessment in this particular context. Consequently, this study aims to find out the students' attitudes towards receiving peer feedback.

III. METHODOLODY

The sample
The sample of this study consisted of 45 students who were studying in a higher educational Institute. During their Advanced Levels, they have studied in science stream. The age group of the participants is 21-23 and all of them belonged to the lower middle socio-economic back ground. Also, they are a mixed ability group.

Questionnaire
The questionnaire consisted of a five-point Lickert scale and was adopted from Kovac & Sirkovic (2012) and MaCgarr and Ciforrd (2012). It is used to explore the attitudes of participants towards receiving feedback. The questionnaire comprised of 15 questions on receiving peer feedback such as,

The procedure
The study was carried out for a period of 7 weeks. During this period, the sample was exposed to a session on peer assessment. In the next stage, students were grouped as five members per a group. Then the students were instructed to make two group presentations to which they receive peer feedback respectively. At the end the questionnaire was distributed and obtained their responses.

Analysis of data
To obtain students' attitudes in receiving peer feedback, the data collected from the questionnaire was used. The research question was analyzed using SPSS statistical package. KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to measure the adequacy of the sample to identify whether the questionnaire is capable of measuring the attitudes. Then Exploratory Factor Analysis was carried out for the questionnaire. Further, Descriptive Statistics was used to find out the mean, mode and the standard deviation of the responses given by the informants.

IV. RESULTS

The responses given for the questionnaire on receiving peer feedback was considered as the data in exploring the attitudes towards PA in receiving peer feedback.
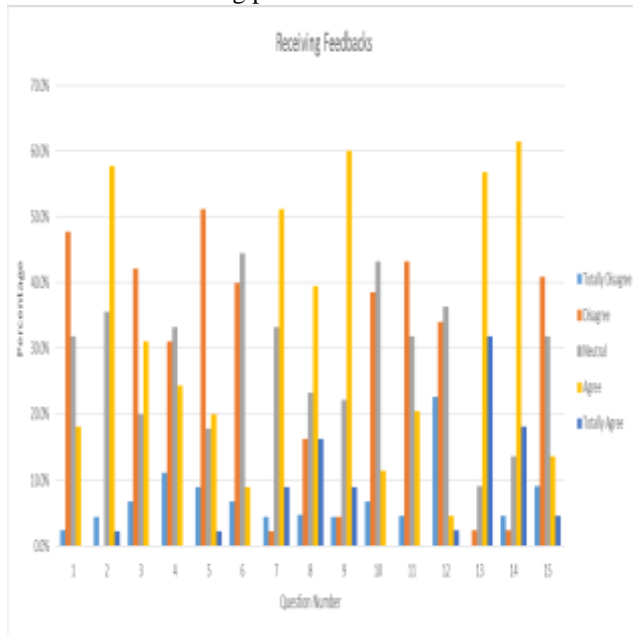

Figure 4.1 Attitudes on Receiving Peer Feedback

It is imperative to identify that the results of the survey showed that 50% of the informants were not over confident as peers were assessing them and 31.8% of them had a neutral opinion on this. Meanwhile, 60% of the sample shared the opinion that the scores given by peers were fair and reasonable. This was an important finding that they have not felt penalized due to the fact that they were assessed by their peers. In fact, they were satisfied with the scores given by their peers. Also, 48.9% of the sample disagreed with the opinion that peer assessment has limited educational value while 31.1 % of them agreed with the same. This shows that the leaners have realized the importance of receiving peer feedback in the teaching learning context. On the other hand, 42.2% of the sample was not embarrassed when peers were assessing them, but 24.4% of them were embarrassed about the same. This embarrassment can be minimized by providing the students with more training on receiving peer feedback.

At the same time, it was significant to find out that 60% of the participants shared the opinion that they were not nervous about the peer assessment process irrespective of the fact that they were exposed to peer assessment for the first time. However, 60% of the sample believed that including peer assessment made the assessment more accurate. This indicates that they have positive attitudes towards receiving peer feedback. When compared to the grading of teachers, 55.8% of the sample shared the opinion that they preferred to receive grade from the teacher than from the peer. This implies that

more than 50% of the participants still have more confidence in teacher assessment.

On the other hand, 68.9% of the participants desired to receive feedback from peers. Though the participants desired to be assessed by the peers following findings show that there are participants who do not have confident of the proficiency level of the peers and have prejudices against the marks they have received. However, only 45.4% of the sample believed that their peers had sufficient knowledge and skills to assess their peers and 11.4% of them disagreed with the same. Also, only 20.5% of the participants thought that peers should have given more grades to them while 18.1% of them shared they were annoyed & discouraged when they received low grades from their peers.

However, 88.6% of the participants shared the opinion that peer assessment had helped them to improve their presentation skills while 56.1% of them shared the opinion that peer assessment was fair. At the same time, it was interesting to note that 79.2% of the sample agreed that they were motivated to work hard as their peers were assessing them. Also, 50% of the participants shared the opinion that they were not annoyed & discouraged when they received low grades from their peers. These findings convince that the peer assessment can be used to develop skills of students in this teaching learning context.

Further, the following table 4.12 shows the descriptive statistics of attitudes on receiving peer feedback. As in the above question, it shows the minimum and the maximum mode of scale selection of the participants, the mean value and the standard deviation of each item of the questionnaire.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes on Receiving Feedback

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	44	1	4	2.66	.805
2	45	1	5	3.53	.757
3	45	1	4	2.76	.981
4	45	1	4	2.71	.968
5	45	1	5	2.56	.990
6	45	1	4	2.56	.755
7	45	1	5	3.58	.866
8	43	1	5	3.47	1.099
9	45	1	5	3.64	.883
10	44	1	4	2.59	.787
11	44	1	4	2.68	.857
12	44	1	5	2.30	.954
13	44	2	5	4.18	.691
14	44	1	5	3.86	.905
15	44	1	5	2.64	.990
Valid N (listwise)	42				

According to table 4.1, 8 participants have not indicated their selection in the feedback form but there is no wide variation in the standard deviation except in the item in which a deviation of 1.099 is observed.

As shown in Table 4.2, a principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the 45 items with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO value (sample adequacy value) is 0.605, and all KMO values for individual items were > .89, which is above the acceptable limit of .5. According to Keiser if the KMO value is between 0.60 – 0.69, the sample is mediocre.

Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (253) = 224.828, p < .001, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was carried out to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. That is, significance is less than 0.05.

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test on the Sample of Attitudes on Receiving Feedback

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.605
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	224.828
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

Four components had eigen values over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 50.32% of the variance. The scree plot (see appendix 4.5) was slightly ambiguous and showed inflexions that would justify retaining both components 2 and 4. In general over 45 Respondents for sampling analysis is probably adequate (Andy, 2009).

Based on the statistical data mentioned above, five subscales were developed and with 13 items in the ESL learners' attitudes towards peer assessment in receiving feedback. Same as in question no 4, considering the characteristics they shared, the subscales were named as 1. Positive attitudes subscale, 2 Negative attitudes subscale, 3. Fear of grades subscale, 4. Lack of confidence subscale and 5. Confidence subscale. These items, basically inquire the positive and negative attitudes and of peer assessment, the assurance of receiving fair grades from peers and the confidence and lack of confidence with regard to peer assessment. This is indicated in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis on Receiving Peer Feedback

Factors	Items and indicators
1. Positive attitudes subscale	13.My peers' assessment helped me to improve my presentation skills
	14. I was motivated to work hard as my peers were assessing me.
	9. I like to receive feedback from my peers
2. Negative attitudes subscale	10. I feel my peers do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to assess me
	4. I was embarrassed when my peers assess me
	8. I prefer my lecturer to grade me than my peers
	12. PA is unfair
3.Fear of grades subscale	5. I was nervous about the peer assessment process
	15. I was annoyed & discouraged when I got low grades from my peers
4.Lack of confidence subscale	3. PA has limited educational value
	11. My peers should have given more grades to me
5.Confidence subscale	1.I was over confident as my peers were assessing me
	2.The scores I receive from my peers were fair and reasonable

Six factors were identified in this study and the item 6 and 7 can be eliminated in future studies. They are PA is fairer than teacher assessment and Including PA made the assessment more accurate respectively.

V. DISCUSSION

In the study 24.4% shared the opinion that they were embarrassed when their peers assess them. It is possible that this can happen due to factors such as gender and culture. It is natural that some participants are nervous to perform in front of participants of opposite gender. However, the factor of gender and culture are not explored in this study and there is a need for further investigation on these factors in future studies. However, as mentioned above, only 24.4% of the participants were embarrassed when they are being assessed by their peers but in their study Miller and Ng (1994) have found that learners all together were embarrassed in front of the classroom. It was evident that the participants of the present study were more confident than the participants of Miller and Ng.

However, with regard to receiving feedback, 55.8% of the informants preferred the lecturer to grade them than their peers. A Similar finding has been observed by the following researchers who have noticed that their students prefer teacher as their assessor. Liu and Carless (2006) have carried out a study with regard to the views on peer assessment from both Hong Kong academics and students by distributing a questionnaire with open- ended questions. According to their study, they have identified that the students believed that the sole responsibility of the assessment was of the academics and the academics were the custodians of the standards as they possessed the necessary knowledge and the expertise to conduct reliable assessment. Similarly, in this study the learners still believe that teacher should be their assessor.

VI. CONCLUSION

The peer assessment plays a significant role in driving students in to the learner- centered education. Though teachers in the Sri Lankan context are aware of peer assessment, only few have attempted to practice it in the real scenario. Peer Assessment makes the class more dynamic and interesting, both for the teacher and the student. The students in this study neither had experience with peer assessment nor heard of the peer assessment process. However, majority of expressed positive attitudes on peer assessment. Similarly, majority of the participants believed that they were not nervous about the peer assessment process and it was helpful to their learning. Hence, it is believed that this study has furnished the demands of the modern education system in the education sector. It is expected that this study will stimulate the researchers and practitioners to deal with peer assessment for the betterment of the future of the education in Sri Lanka.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

VIII. REFERENCE

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