PEER ASSESSMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TO ASSESS STUNDENT'S ABILITY IN LEARNING ENGLISH[1]

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ABSTRACT

Based on KTSP curriculum, students have to be active in the classroom. They have to be able to do exploration and elaboration stages when they are learning English. The students who study English have to master four skills which are reading,writing, listening and speaking. This research focused on peer assessment for writing and speaking skills.

This paper intends to describe and analyze the use of peer assessment in ESL (English as Second Language) for Junior and Senior High School Students. For that purpose, it discusses the research conducted in August 2009. The setting was at Smart Ekselensia Indonesia Junior and Senior High School.

The result of the study shows that by doing peer assessment on the speaking and writing skills, the students are able to express their ideas by analyzing their friends' mistakes and giving some critics and opinion directly. The students are able to develop their confidence. Students can also benefit from using rubrics or checklists to guide their assessments. At first these can be provided by the instructor; once the students have more experience, they can develop them themselves.

It is suggested to use peer assessment on the classroom as as long as the teacher put the percentage as much as 60 : 40, 60 % from the teacher and 40% from the student. It is important because the teacher still can keep the objectivity of the assessment but still can involve the students to give assessment for their friends.

Keywords : Peer assessment, writing ability, speaking ability, KTSP curiculum

INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, the word assessment is relatively new. This is because terms such as tests and examinations were more popular before now (Heywood, 2000). According to the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education, and National Education Association (1990), “assessment is a broad term defined as a process for obtaining information that is used for making decisions about students, curricula and programs, and educational policy” as cited in by Nitko (2004, p. 4). Similarly, Gronlund (1996) defined it as, “a general term that includes the full range of procedures used to gain information about student's learning (observations, ratings of performances or projects, paper-and-pencil tests) and the formation of value judgments concerning learning progress” (p. 5). He also refers to it as achievement assessment. Wiersma and Jurs (1990) defined it as the process of collecting data in the context of conducting measurement. Popham (2005) looked at the term assessment in an educational context. He defined assessment as “a formal attempt to determine student's status with respect to educational variables of interest” (p. 6).

Traditional assessment methods use paper-and-pencil tests to measure student's performance. However, alternative assessment is needed when performance skills cannot be assessed adequately with paper-and-pencil tests.

Alternative assessment, Popham (2005) defined alternative assessment as “different tests intended for use with a disabled or

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otherwise limited student so that more valid inferences can be made about the student than if the original test were used (even with assessment accommodation)" (p. 363). Hancock (1994) defined it as "an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgments about the student's progress in language using non-conventional strategies" (p. 2).

There are several types of alternative assessment. The following are a few of the common types: performance assessment, portfolio assessment, peer assessment, self assessment, project work, presentation, lab work, learning journal, oral report, documentary reports, exhibitions or displays, research, case study, concept maps, invented dialogs, making models, interviews, human tableau/ role play/ dramatization/ mime among others. This paper focuses on peer assessment. This is assessment done among students and feedback is provided. It allows students to take responsibility for their own learning and to gain insight into their own performance (Heywood, 2000).

Jacob and Chase (1992) noted that peer assessments are too lenient but this could be corrected by an instructor who also does the grading. Falchikov (1995) defined peer assessment as the process whereby groups of individuals grade their peers. Another researcher, Topping (1998) more accurately defined "peers" as students with similar educational background. One way to make sure students understand this type of evaluation is to give students a practice session with it. The instructor provides a sample writing or speaking assignment.

As a group, students determine what should be assessed and how criteria for successful completion of the communication task should be defined. Then the instructor gives students a sample completed assignment. Students assess this using the criteria they have developed, and determine how to convey feedback clearly to the fictitious student. For peer evaluation to work effectively, the learning environment in the classroom must be supportive. Students must feel comfortable and trust one another in order to provide honest and constructive feedback. Instructors who use group work and peer assessment frequently can help students develop trust by forming them into small groups early in the semester and having them work in the same groups throughout the term. This allows them to become more comfortable with each other and leads to better peer feedback.

In the process of peer assessment, students are able to observe their peers and come to an understanding of how their peers learn. Sluijsmans et all (1999) have reviewed several research articles regarding peer assessment and have concluded that the process of peer assessment engages learners in judgment making. Besides rating or marking, peer assessment is also a part of the learning experiences. Throughout the peer assessment process, students learn to develop high levels of responsibility and to focus on learning itself. Peer assessment also provides the learners with a context where they can observe the role of their teachers and understand the role of assessment (Hanrahan and Issacs, 2001).

The researchers went on to say that peer assessment helps students to learn about learning, and enhances student's meta-cognitive understanding about their own learning process. Students can also benefit from using rubrics or checklists to guide their assessments. At first these can be provided by the instructor; once the students have more experience, they can develop them themselves. An example of a peer editing checklist for a writing assignment is given in the pop-up window. Notice that the checklist asks the peer evaluator to comment primarily on the content and organization of the essay. It helps the peer evaluator focus on these areas by asking questions about specific points, such as the presence of examples to support the ideas discussed.

A rubric is an authentic assessment tool used to measure students' work. It is a scoring guide that seeks to evaluate a student's performance based on the sum of a full range of criteria rather than a single numerical score. A rubric is a working guide for students and teachers, usually handed out before the assignment begins in order to get students to think about the criteria on which their work will be judged. Rubrics can be analytic or holistic, and they can be created for any content area including math, science, history, writing, foreign languages, drama, art, music, etc.

The rubric is one authentic assessment tool which is designed to simulate real life

activity where students are engaged in solving real-life problems. It is a formative type of assessment because it becomes an ongoing part of the whole teaching and learning process. Students themselves are involved in the assessment process through both peer and self-assessment. As students become familiar with rubrics, they can assist in the rubric design process. This involvement empowers the students and as a result, their learning becomes more focused and self-directed. Authentic assessment, therefore, blurs the lines between teaching, learning, and assessment (Pickette and Dodge).

Rubrics can be created in a variety of forms and levels of complexity, however, they all contain three common features which:

- focus on measuring a stated objective (performance, behavior, or quality).
- use a **r**ange to rate performance.
- contain specific performance characteristics arranged in levels indicating the degree to which a standard has been met (Pickett and Dodge).

ADVANTAGES OF RUBRICS

Many experts believe that rubrics improve students' end products and therefore increase learning. When teachers evaluate papers or projects, they know implicitly what makes a good final product and why. When students receive rubrics beforehand, they understand how they will be evaluated and can prepare accordingly. Developing a grid and making it available as a tool for student's use will provide the scaffolding necessary to improve the quality of their work and increase their knowledge. Rubrics offer several advantages**.**

- Rubrics improve student performance by clearly showing the student how their work will be evaluated and what is expected.
- Rubrics help students become better judges of the quality of their own work.
- Rubrics allow assessment to be more objective and consistent.
- Rubrics force the teacher to clarify his/her criteria in specific terms.
- Rubrics reduce the amount of time teachers spend evaluating student work.
- Rubrics promote student awareness about the criteria to use in assessing peer performance.
- Rubrics provide useful feedback to the teacher regarding the effectiveness of the instruction.
- Rubrics provide students with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement.
- Rubrics accommodate heterogeneous classes by offering a range of quality levels.
- Rubrics are easy to use and easy to explain.

Strengths of Alternative/ Performance Assessment

Gronlund (2006) identified several strengths and weaknesses of performance assessment. The major advantages/ strengths are:

1. It can be used to evaluate complex learning outcomes that cannot be evaluated through traditional assessment.
2. It provides a more natural assessment of some types of reasoning and physical skills.
3. It provides greater motivation for students and makes learning for these students more meaningful.
4. It enables the students to produce or work on real-life situations.

Weaknesses of Alternative/ Performance Assessment

The major disadvantages/ weaknesses are:

1. It is time consuming to administer and score.
2. Grading can be subjective and taxing.
3. Assessment must be done individually and frequently.

METHODOLOGY

This research was held in August 2009 at Smart Ekselensia Indonesia Senior High School. For this purpose, the research focused on peer assessment for writing and speaking skills. For the speaking skills, there were 16 grade X-B Senior High School students of

Smart Ekselensia. They were divided into 4 groups by the teacher. The teacher gave some time for the students to discuss and made a conversation about sport. One of the students acted out to be a sport reporter while the others were athletes-like from different sport. The reporter asked some questions related to personal lives, achievements, etc. and the athletes should respond to them. While one group was doing the performance, the other groups were doing the peer assessment. They filled in the checklist based on the rubric given by the teacher so all of the students were supposed to be always active during the lesson.

For the writing skill, there were 6 grade XA Senior High School students of Smart Ekselensia. They were asked to find and read a book about a place in the world which was excited to visit by some tourists, for example India, Egypt, and etc. The teacher asked the students to act out to be a tourist who has visited the place they have read. the students wrote their experience as if they were a tourist. After the students had finished their writing, the teacher divided the students into four groups. The teacher chose 4 writings and divided to each group and asked them to read and analyze it. Each of the student in his group filled in the checklist and gave opinion about the writing after he has discussed the writing mistakes with the group.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

It was shown that by doing peer assessment on the speaking and writing skills, the students were able to express their ideas by analyzing their friends mistakes and giving some critics and opinion directly in more relaxed atmosphere. Below is the example of the speaking checklist and rubric, and the example of the rubric of writing and the sample of the composition.

Table 1. Speaking checklist

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Comment
Accent				X			Gulam has good accent
Grammar			X				Sandy can speak English with good grammar
Vocabulary				X			
Fluency			X				
Comprehension			X				

Table 2. Writing Checklist

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Comment
Language use			X				The tenses is bad
Mechanical skills			X				
Treatment of content			X				
Stylistic skills			X				
Jugdement skills				X			

Sample of student's composition:

India

Last week, I visited the Republic of India, in south Asia. I don't understand with speak in India. They a re speak English and Hindi. But, I study speak English with my father. We visited to Himalaya mountain, Himalaya beautiful mountain. In the summit of Himalaya mountain we fount a snow and ice. In there is very cool. I wear a very thick jacket. After satisfied with beautiful scenery in the summit of Himalaya, we down for the summit to the city and back to our hotel. The currency of India is rupee. Our hotel location in the New Delhi city. New Delhi is capital city of India. It's a beautiful city. After day we went to a triangle gold in India. The first a New Delhi city. After that Agra city to see Taj Mahal. It's a beautiful building. Taj Mahal the member of ”seven miracle of the world”. And the last is Jaipur city or “pink city” called a “pink city” because the buildings in Jaipur city pink and yellow multicolored.

Last day we went to Gangga river and Bollywood. Gangga river is crowded river. Gangga river location in Varanasi city or usually people called that with Holly city and Gangga river with holly river. People came to Gangga river to take a both. And the Bollywood is beautiful place. Bollywood used to make the film of India. I happy visit to place in India because that very beautiful.

Table 3. Speaking Rubric

Score	Accent	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Fluency
1	Pronunciation is difficult to be understand	Almost all grammar are incorrect	Insufficient vocabulary even for some simple conversation	There are some hesitations during the conversation	A little understanding about the conversation.
2	Some mistakes can be seen clearly ; need some repetitions	Some mistakes sometimes influence some sentences pattern and influence the communication	Vocabulary limited for private things and survival condition (time, food, transportation and family)	The conversation is slow and in doubt	Only understand some simple conversation but needs repetition.
3	There are some mistakes in pronunciation that influence the meaning	Some mistakes often shown control that is not perfect.	The choice of words sometimes is not appropriate with the topic.	The conversation is often in doubt. There are some unfinished conversation.	Able to Understand the conversation but the languange should be simplifized.
4	There are some mistakes in pronunciation but don't influence the meaning	Mistakes can make some misunderstanding .	There are some professional vocabulary to discuss about special topic; general vocabulary is used to discuss about non technical thing with the speaker.	Sometimes the conversation is in doubt because of rephrase and vocabulary grouping.	Good enough for normal dialogue
5	There is no mistake in pronunciation but still can't be seen as the real native speaker.	A little mistakes	The proffesional vocabulary is wide; general vocabulary is used to discuss about complex problems.	The conversation flows naturally but can not be understand by the native speaker.	Understand all conversation except some informal or uncommon conversation.
6	Good pronunciation just like the real native speaker.	Not more than 2 mistakes made during the conversation	Wide range vocabulary	The conversation flows naturally for all topic.	Understand all formal and informal conversation.

For writing rubric, the range of score are 1 (very bad), 2 (bad), 3 (average), 4 (good) and 5 (excellent). And there are five indicators :

1. language use : the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences.
2. mechanical skills : the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language, e.g. punctuation, spelling.
3. treatment of content : the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all relevent information.
4. stylistic skills: the ability to manipulate sentences and paragraphs, and use language effectively.
5. judgment skills : the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information

Students could also benefit from using rubrics or checklists to guide their assessments. At first these were provided by the instructor; once the students had more experience, they could develop themselves. Below are the graphs showing the result of the assessment of speaking activity which shown that there were some variations in the assessment on accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

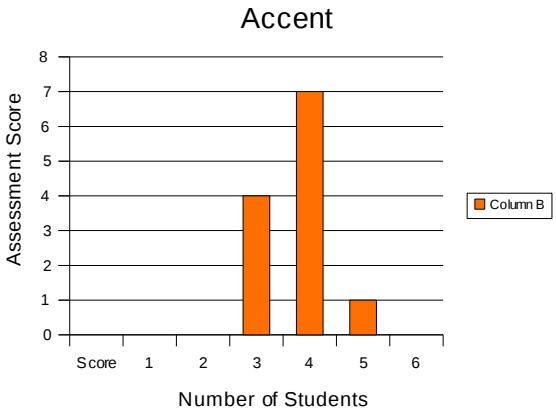

Chart 1. Accent Assessment on speaking Performance

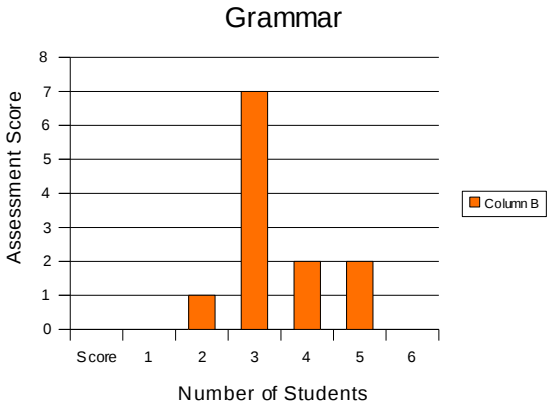

Chart 2. Grammar Assessment on speaking Performance

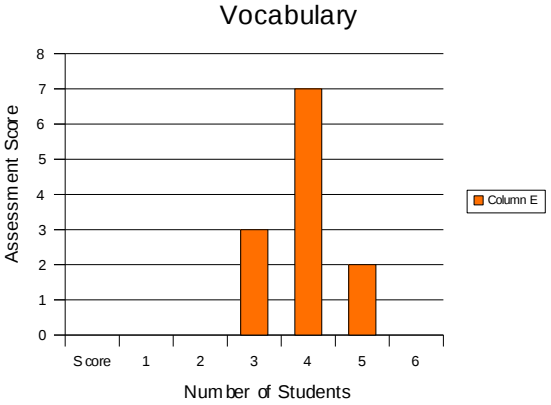

Chart 3. Vocabulary Assessment on speaking Performance

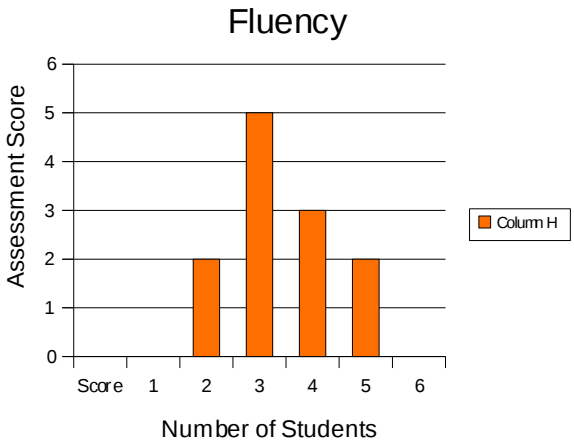

Chart 4. Fluency Assessment on speaking Performance

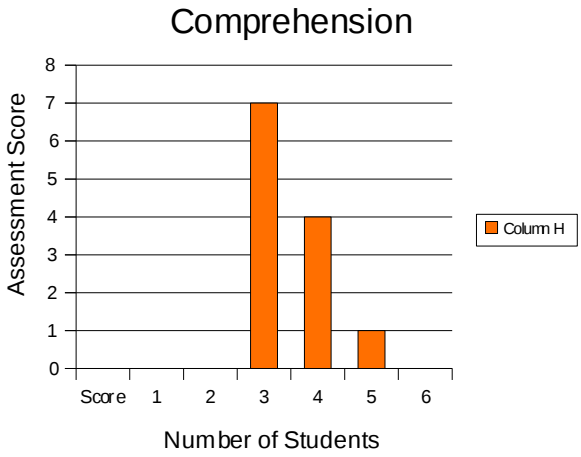

Chart 5. Comprehension Assessment on speaking Performance

The students were able to develop their confidence which can be seen from their expression on the video and photographs. A problem such as subjective assessment still can be found but as long as the classroom environment is conducive, the peer assessment still can be done. But to make it more effective, the teacher should put the percentage as much as 60: 40, 60 % from the teacher and 40% from the student.

CONCLUSION

Peer assessment is one of the alternatives to assess students' ability in learning English especially on writing and speaking skills. Based on the result of the study,

student could assess their friends fairly which can be seen from the varied assessment scores. They also could learn much from their own friends mistakes. Students could raise their self confidence which can be seen from their expression.

It is suggested to use peer assessment on the classroom as as long as the teacher put the percentage as much as 60 : 40, 60 % from the teacher and 40% from the student. It is important because the teacher still can keep the objectivity of the assessment but still can involve the students to give assessment for their friends.

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