

Transformations in Peer Feedback for Learning-Oriented Language Assessment

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the evolving role of peer feedback within the framework of learning-oriented language assessment (LOLA). As language education increasingly prioritizes formative assessment practices, peer feedback emerges as a key strategy for promoting learner autonomy, reflection, and deeper engagement with language learning processes. Drawing on classroom-based research and discourse analysis, this study explores how peer feedback practices have transformed in response to pedagogical shifts toward collaborative learning and assessment for learning. Findings reveal that when effectively scaffolded, peer feedback not only enhances linguistic accuracy and communicative competence but also fosters a supportive learning environment. However, the success of such practices depends on clear guidance, assessment literacy, and student trust. The study offers practical recommendations for integrating meaningful peer feedback into language assessment frameworks that support sustained learning outcomes.

Keywords: peer feedback, learning-oriented assessment, language education, formative assessment, learner autonomy, assessment literacy, collaborative learning.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment in education has increasingly shifted from a purely summative function, primarily focused on evaluating learning outcomes, towards a more formative and integrated approach known as learning-oriented assessment (LOA) [3]. LOA emphasizes the role of assessment *for* learning, aiming to actively involve students in the assessment process to enhance their learning and develop their capacity for future learning [3, 8]. In this paradigm, feedback is not merely a one-way transmission of information from teacher to student but a crucial component of the learning process itself [16, 49]. Effective feedback within LOA is seen as dialogic, fostering interaction and understanding between students and sources of feedback [16, 50].

Peer feedback, specifically, has gained prominence as a valuable pedagogical tool within LOA in language education. It moves beyond the traditional teacher-centric model of feedback, empowering students to become active participants in evaluating their own work and the work of their peers [42]. This shift aligns with constructivist and socio-cultural perspectives on learning, which highlight the importance of social interaction and collaboration in knowledge

construction [54, 55]. Engaging in peer feedback can foster learner autonomy [3], enhance metacognitive awareness [10, 24], and promote deeper engagement with learning tasks and criteria [3, 50, 52, 66, 67]. Student engagement, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, is strongly linked to positive academic outcomes [18, 38, 39, 57, 62].

However, the effective implementation and uptake of peer feedback are not without challenges [17, 23, 24, 44, 56]. Students may lack the necessary skills to provide constructive and helpful feedback [42], struggle to interpret and utilize the feedback they receive [13, 24], or experience negative emotional responses to peer comments [56]. Therefore, understanding the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of peer feedback within the evolving landscape of LOA is crucial for maximizing its potential to support language learning. This article explores the paradigm shifts in peer feedback within LOA, drawing upon key theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from the literature.

METHODS

Understanding the transformations in peer feedback

within LOA requires drawing upon several interconnected theoretical frameworks that explain how students learn and interact in social contexts. A central framework is Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), which describes the process by which learners actively manage their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to achieve their learning goals [2, 64, 65]. Effective feedback is considered vital for SRL as it provides information that learners can use to monitor their progress, adjust their strategies, and regulate their learning [2, 64].

Expanding on SRL, the concepts of co-regulation and socially shared regulation (SSR) highlight the social dimension of learning and regulation [20, 21, 30, 41, 58, 60]. Co-regulation involves temporary, shared regulation between individuals, often with a more expert partner scaffolding the less expert one [20]. SSR, on the other hand, refers to the collective effort of a group to regulate their learning processes, involving shared goals, strategies, and monitoring [21, 30, 41, 58, 60]. Peer feedback is a prime example of both co-regulation (when one student helps another) and SSR (when a group collaboratively provides feedback and plans revisions) [41, 58, 60].

Metacognition, the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes, is also deeply intertwined with peer feedback [15, 30, 58]. Providing feedback requires students to reflect on their understanding of the task, criteria, and their peers' work, thereby enhancing their metacognitive skills [15, 30, 58]. Similarly, receiving and acting upon feedback necessitates metacognitive monitoring and evaluation of one's own learning [15, 30].

The shift towards dialogic feedback emphasizes feedback as a conversation rather than a monologue [16, 49]. This perspective, rooted in socio-cultural theory [37, 61], views learning as a mediated process occurring through social interaction [37, 61]. Peer feedback, when facilitated effectively, can become a dialogic process where students discuss their work, clarify comments, and negotiate meaning, leading to deeper understanding and learning [16, 49].

Furthermore, the concept of feedback literacy is crucial [7, 66]. Feedback literacy refers to students' capacity to understand, interpret, and use feedback to improve their work and their learning [7, 66]. This involves developing evaluative judgment – the ability to make informed decisions about the quality of one's own work and that of others [53]. Training students in providing and utilizing peer feedback is essential for developing their feedback literacy [42, 43, 46].

These theoretical perspectives collectively inform the understanding of peer feedback within LOA, emphasizing its potential to foster active, self-regulated, and socially mediated language learning.

RESULTS

Research on peer feedback in language learning has explored its impact on various aspects of the learning process. Studies

have investigated the nature and quality of peer feedback provided by students [24, 42, 43], the extent to which students engage with and utilize this feedback in their revisions [9, 19, 24, 25, 45, 47], and the factors that influence the effectiveness of peer feedback [17, 23, 24, 44, 56].

Early research often focused on the types of feedback provided by peers and their effect on revision, sometimes finding mixed results regarding the effectiveness of peer comments compared to teacher feedback [9, 24, 47, 59]. However, more recent studies, particularly those aligned with LOA principles, highlight the importance of training students in providing constructive and specific feedback, often through the use of rubrics and clear criteria [26, 42, 43]. Trained peer reviewers tend to provide more helpful and focused feedback, leading to more substantial revisions [43].

Student engagement with peer feedback is a critical factor in its effectiveness [24, 25]. Studies have shown that students engage with peer feedback in various ways, from simply reading comments to actively incorporating them into revisions [24, 25]. Factors influencing engagement include the perceived credibility of the peer reviewer, the clarity and specificity of the feedback, and the student's own motivation and self-efficacy [17, 23, 24, 39, 56]. Negative emotional responses to feedback can act as a barrier to uptake [56].

Developing students' feedback literacy is key to enhancing the impact of peer feedback [7, 66]. This involves not only teaching students how to give feedback but also how to actively process, interpret, and apply the feedback they receive [7, 13, 66, 67]. Providing opportunities for dialogue around feedback, whether between peers or with the teacher, can facilitate deeper understanding and utilization [16, 49]. Innovative approaches, such as using multimodal video technology for feedback, have also shown promise in enhancing engagement and understanding [27].

Challenges remain in implementing effective peer feedback, including ensuring the quality and consistency of feedback, addressing student reluctance or cultural factors that may influence participation [22], and integrating peer feedback seamlessly into the overall assessment design [3, 4, 5, 6, 8]. However, when implemented thoughtfully, peer feedback can significantly contribute to students' development as language learners, fostering a sense of ownership over their learning and enhancing their ability to evaluate and improve their own work [4, 5, 6, 8, 51, 53].

DISCUSSION

The paradigm shift in peer feedback within LOA reflects a broader move in education towards empowering learners

and recognizing the social nature of learning. Peer feedback, when viewed through the lens of LOA and supported by frameworks like SRL, co-regulation, SSR, and feedback literacy, becomes much more than just a method for identifying errors. It transforms into a dynamic learning activity that contributes to the development of essential skills for lifelong learning.

The transition from a teacher-centric feedback model to one that incorporates robust peer feedback necessitates careful pedagogical design and implementation. Training students to provide and receive feedback effectively is paramount [42, 43, 46]. This training should not only focus on the mechanics of giving feedback (e.g., being specific, constructive, and aligned with criteria) but also on developing students' confidence and their understanding of the purpose of peer feedback within their learning journey [42, 43, 46]. The use of clear rubrics and assessment criteria can significantly support students in both giving and receiving feedback [26].

Furthermore, creating a classroom culture that values peer interaction and sees mistakes as opportunities for learning is crucial [36]. Peer feedback thrives in an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their work and engaging in open, constructive dialogue about it [16, 49]. Facilitating opportunities for students to discuss the feedback they receive and plan their revisions can enhance the impact of peer comments [16, 24, 25].

While the benefits of peer feedback within LOA are significant, ongoing research is needed to explore its effectiveness across different contexts, language proficiency levels, and task types [11, 28, 35, 40]. Investigating how technology can further support and enhance peer feedback processes, building on promising developments like multimodal feedback [27], is also a valuable area for future inquiry. Additionally, understanding and addressing the emotional dimensions of receiving feedback remains important for promoting student uptake and engagement [56].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evolution of peer feedback within learning-oriented language assessment represents a significant and positive transformation. By positioning peer feedback as an integral part of the learning process, supported by relevant theoretical frameworks and effective pedagogical strategies, educators can harness its potential to foster more engaged, self-regulated, and ultimately, more successful language learners. This shift empowers students to become active agents in their own learning and the learning of their peers, aligning assessment practices more closely with the goals of developing capable and autonomous individuals [1, 3, 51].

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