

Peer Assessment in an Interpreting Course with Smartclass Software: Student and Teacher Perspectives

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Abstract

Recently, peer assessment has been paid much attention by language educators as it is regarded as a tool to enhance English teaching and learning quality. Peer assessment is the matter of interest to many researchers such as Fazel (2015), Faridah et al., (2020), Wulandari et al., (2021). More specifically, it was believed to bring a great deal of benefits in interpreting courses at tertiary level (Holewik, 2020; Su, 2019, Lee, 2018). Challenges during peer feedback process, however, were also recorded. There has been little paper on the effect of PA on students' interpreting performance, especially at the simulated interpreting courses at Vietnamese tertiary level. Therefore, this research is an attempt to occupy this gap. This study aims to explore teachers' and students' perspectives of how peer assessment affects students' consecutive interpretation competency in the simulated interpreting course. Data were obtained through survey questionnaires with 120 English majored students and five focus group interviews (seven students/group) as well as semi-structured interviews with four teachers who are in charge of interpretation training courses. Findings showed teachers' and students' positive views on peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course as it could facilitate students to improve their interpretation skills, especially their memory skills, deciphering skills, and public speaking skills. Furthermore, roles of students, roles of teachers and codes of ethics for interpreters were also highlighted. However, some challenges while applying peer assessment were found due to students' English level, students' personality, and face-saving issues. Pedagogical implications were also discussed. Also, codes of ethics for interpreters and cultural awareness in PA are suggested for further research.

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Introduction

Peer assessment (PA) is regarded as a significant part in the language learning process and has been paid much attention to for the past few decades. Pedagogically, it represents “a student-centered activity in which learners apply set criteria to assess peers’ performance and provide feedback” (Faridah et al., 2020, p. 50). PA is viewed as a beneficial tool to enhance the value of educational guidance (Wulandari et al., 2021), giving opportunities for the students to use language in a meaningful way (Shehadeh, 2011). However, challenges during the PA process such as concerns about fairness and qualification were also reported (Fazel, 2015).

Meanwhile, Liu (2023) indicated that PA not only plays an essential role in a smart classroom teaching environment but also enhances learners’ achievement in their learning progress. Madhur et al. (2024) recorded better learning engagement and collaboration among students in a digital environment with smart classes where multimedia advanced tools as well as software were deployed. PA is believed to be valuable in interpreting courses (Holewik, 2020; Lee, 2018). Interestingly, students tended to comment on grammar accuracy and fluency in their peers’ interpretation (Su, 2019) while memorizing skills (Lu & Chen, 2013) and note-taking skills (Harto, 2014) should be focused on in interpreting training. Among pedagogical approaches, simulated-based learning gained positive feedback from students (Hu, 2019; Li, 2015). However, there has been little research on the connection between PA and students’ interpreting performance, especially student and teacher views on implementing PA in a simulated interpreting course (SIC) where Smartclass software (SC) was used. The information of this software with two major applications (SC Hub and SC Live) was on the website of Robotel Inc. As in Nguyen and Nguyen (2023) and Nguyen et al.’s (2024) studies, while SC Hub creates a digital learning space for students, SC Live is a useful platform for teachers to control and facilitate students’ interpreting tasks.

In this study, mixed-method research was applied. Data were obtained through: (1) online survey questionnaires with 120 English senior students who were studying simulated interpreting in their third sequential interpreting course; (2) five focus group interviews (seven students/group); (3) guided reflections, and (4) individual interviews with four teachers who are responsible for interpreting courses with SC. The questionnaire was adapted from White’s (2009) research with 21 closed-ended questions and one open-ended question (see Appendix A). To gain the students’ opinions on PA in SIC with a given interpreting assessment rubric by Tran and Do (2022), student focus group interviews (see Appendix B) were carried out in approximately 45 to 60

minutes. To obtain teacher perspectives, guided reflections (see Appendix C) were collected during the course, then in-depth interviews (see Appendix D) in 30 – 45 minutes each were conducted.

Findings and Discussions

Findings are discussed regarding teacher and student perspectives towards the benefits and challenges in the implementation of PA in a SIC with SC. Students and teachers showed their positive views on PA in a SIC with SC as they believed this kind of feedback could help both feedback givers and receivers improve self-confidence. These findings were consistent with the previous studies as it helped enhance students' confidence and creativity (Ardianti, 2017) and improved students' skills of describing, analyzing, and evaluating what they had experienced (Faridah et al., 2020). Interestingly, this research unveiled that PA increased students' motivation and autonomy. The findings are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Student perspectives towards PA in a SIC with SC software

Item.	Being a Rater/Being Rated by My Peers	N = 120	
		Mean	SD
7	Assessing other students' interpretation helped me plan and deliver my own interpretation.	4.26	0.73
8	Peer assessment scores and comments for my interpretation helped me prepare my next interpretations.	4.22	0.89
3	Relationships with student interpreters (friendships, etc.) may have influenced the overall scores and comments I gave.	4.02	0.86
4	I was comfortable being a judge of my peers' interpretation and giving a score.	3.94	1.02
2	It was difficult to decide the overall score (5,4,3,2,1) for each student interpreter.	3.75	0.96
1	Assessment items in the given rubric (e.g., content fidelity, target language quality and delivery) were easy to understand.	3.39	0.77
5	I was comfortable having my interpretation judged and scored by my peers.	3.27	0.84
6	The overall scores my peers gave me were fair and reasonable.	2.78	1.01

Student focus group interviews affirmed that most students were eager to join simulated lessons with SC which offered them chances to show their interpreting performance. This also leads to their gradual self-improvement with awareness of language use and helpful interpreting skills. Specifically, most of the students and teachers in interviews affirmed that PA could facilitate their memory skills, deciphering skills, and speaking proficiency in interpreting assignments.

Figure 1 reflects the impact of PA on students' oral competency and presentation skills (Lee, 2017) as well as analytical and critical thinking skills in interpretation (Holewik, 2020). Interestingly, the role of professional associations of interpreters has been underlined in order to "raise awareness of ethical behavior and best practices" (Horváth & Tryuk, 2021, p.15). Student respondents also mentioned that PA supported them to place more emphasis on codes of ethics for interpreters like the usage of first personal pronouns and interpreter's rights of asking for information repetition and clarification during interpreting performances.

Challenges during PA implementation in a SIC with SC such as English proficiency and cultural issues were also recorded and shown in table 2 below:

Student interviews, teacher interviews and reflections affirmed students' reluctance to give comments on their classmate's work due to the uncertainty about their language accuracy. On the other hand, since students' English

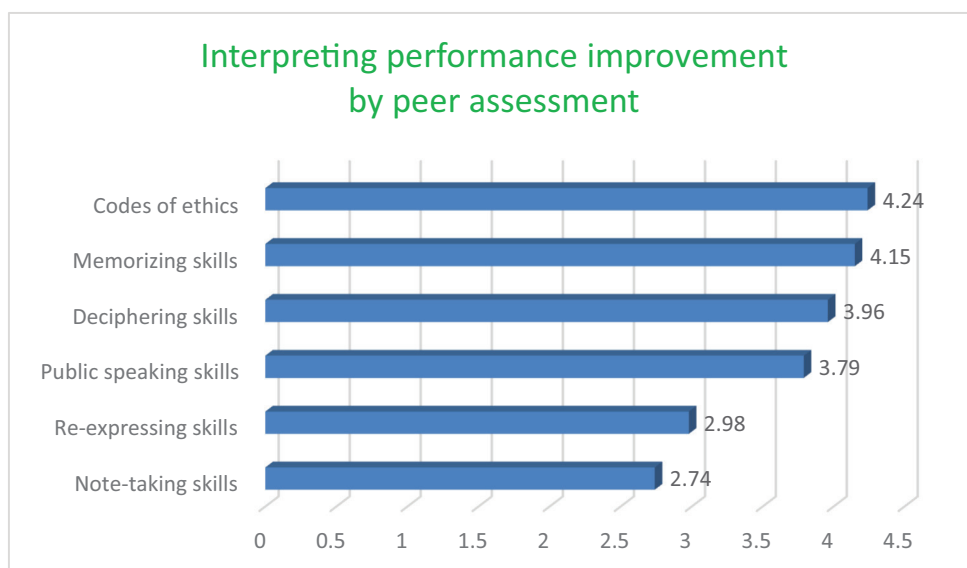


Figure 1. Interpreting performance improvement by PA at a SIC with SC software.

levels were almost the same in language classes, they doubted their peers' contribution to their speaking performance. This finding is in accordance with the ideas of the impact of peers' language proficiency and perspectives on the value and validity of feedback (Husin & Ariffin, 2008), the pressure of proving the reliability of students as assessors (Liu & Carless, 2006).

Additionally, the fear of hurting others was considered in students' assessment, illustrating the influences of cultural values, particularly face-saving on PA (Charoensuk, 2011; Husin & Ariffin, 2008; Yu et al., 2016). However, some student respondents showed their confidence and comfort playing the roles as feedback receivers and givers. This finding supported the results of Yu et al.'s (2016) and Pham et al.'s (2020) studies. Data from the open-ended question in the questionnaire, together with interviews and reflections indicated that both teachers and students sometimes felt demotivated when following interpreting tasks due to bad quality of internet access and software errors.

In summary, PA is obviously beneficial in interpreting courses with SC. However, the role of teachers as navigators and facilitators should be underscored. Students should put greater importance on being feedback givers and

Table 2. Student perspectives towards challenges in the implementation of PA in a SIC with SC software

Item.	Challenges in the Implementation of Peer Assessment	N = 120	
		Mean	SD
19	I often received feedback on grammatical inaccuracy and pronunciation errors rather than my interpreting skills.	4,32	0,72
21	I sometimes cannot hear my peers' voice clearly when following their interpreting tasks due to bad quality of the internet.	4,25	0,81
17	I was not happy to give negative feedback on my peers' interpretation because I did not want to hurt their feelings.	3,67	0,93
20	I was not sure whether my peers' assessments were right or not.	3,4	0,83
16	I did not understand what comments my peers made on my interpretation.	3,33	0,79
15	Due to my English competency, I sometimes could not express my comments logically and understandably.	3,27	0,99
18	I sometimes felt embarrassed when my peers recognized my mistakes in interpretation.	2,26	0,81

receivers. Multimedia tools and internet facilities should be checked on a regular basis for effective learning outcomes. Codes of ethics for interpreters and cultural awareness in PA are suggested for further research.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Survey

Part 1: Personal information

a. What is your name?

b. What is your email address/phone number?

c. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Part 2: Survey questions

Please make a check mark from 1 to 5 in the appropriate boxes to indicate your demographics. The order of numbers represents the degree of agreement from low to high.

1	2	3	4	5				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree				
Items			1	2	3	4	5	
I. Being a rater/being rated by my peers								
1. Assessment items in the given rubric (e.g., content fidelity, target language quality and delivery) were easy to understand.								
2. It was difficult to decide the overall score (5,4,3,2,1) for each student interpreter.								
3. Relationships with student interpreters (friendships, etc.) may have influenced the overall scores and comments I gave.								
4. I was comfortable being a judge of my peers' interpretation and giving a score.								
5. I was comfortable having my interpretation judged and scored by my peers.								
6. The overall scores my peers gave me were fair and reasonable.								

7. Assessing other students' interpretations helped me plan and deliver my own interpretation.					
8. Peer assessment scores and comments for my interpretation helped me prepare my next interpretations.					
II. Interpreting performance improvement by peer assessment					
9. I could have better memorizing skills as I needed to remember what and how my peers interpreted.					
10. I could improve my note-taking skills as I needed to write down my comments for my peers' interpretation.					
11. Thanks to peer assessment, I could reorganize my ideas more logically for my next interpretation.					
12. I could recognize my weaknesses in message delivery abilities.					
13. Thanks to my peer assessment, I could analyze the message more effectively.					
14. I could pay more attention to codes of ethics for interpreters for my next interpretation.					
III. Challenges in peer assessment					
15. Due to my English competency, I sometimes could not express my comments logically and understandably.					
16. I did not understand what the comments were for my interpretation.					
17. I was not happy to give negative feedback on my peers' interpretation because I did not wish to hurt their feelings.					
18. I sometimes felt embarrassed when my peers recognized my mistakes in interpretation.					
19. I often received feedback on grammatical inaccuracy and pronunciation errors rather than my interpreting skills.					
20. I was not sure whether my peers' assessments were right or not.					
21. I sometimes cannot hear my peers' voice clearly when following their interpreting tasks due to bad quality of the internet.					

Part 3: Do you have any other comments on the peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix B

Student Focus Group Interview

No.	Items
1.	Do you like peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course? Why?
2.	To some extent, how effective is the peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course? Give some examples.
3.	As a rater, what skills can you improve thanks to peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
4.	As being rated, what skills can you improve thanks to peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
5.	What roles should lecturers play in peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
6.	What are challenges in peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
7.	What are some recommendations to increase the effectiveness of peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix C

Guided Reflection Sheet

Date: Room: Class: Teacher:

1. Use of facilities

Is the equipment used? (Tick if yes)	Computer	TV	Headphone	Amplifier	SC software
Teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SS: Group work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SS: Pair work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SS: Individual work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are there any problems? (Tick if yes)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Problems in the class

What is/are the problem(s) with the PA in a SIC with SC software? <i>Technical concerns (Internet connection/speed, SC software malfunction, multimedia tools)</i> ...	
What could be the cause(s) of the problem(s)? <i>Student English proficiency (being as a rater or being rated by peers)</i> <i>Cultural Issues (the fear of hurting others, face-saving)</i> ...	
What can be done as solutions? <i>The role of teachers and students</i> <i>Facility consideration</i> ...	

3. Class activities

Peer Assessment Activities - group/pair/individual - main steps - outcome (interpreting skills, codes of ethics, cultural awareness)	Estimated time	Good points - Ss Motivation - Ss Autonomy - Interaction Ss-Ss - Interaction Ss-T - Ss performance in interpreting tasks	Need improving - Ss Motivation - Ss Autonomy - Interaction Ss-Ss - Interaction Ss-T - Ss performance in interpreting tasks	How to improve/comment - Ss Motivation - Ss Autonomy - Interaction Ss-Ss - Interaction Ss-T - Ss performance in interpreting tasks
1.				
2.				
3.				

Appendix D

Lecturer Semi-Structured Interview

No.	Items
1.	Do you think your students like peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course? Why?
2.	To some extent, how effective is the peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course? Give some examples.
3.	What interpreting skills can your students improve thanks to peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
4.	What roles should lecturers play in peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
5.	What are challenges in peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?
6.	What are some recommendations to increase the effectiveness of peer assessment in the simulated interpreting course?

Thank you for your cooperation