

Learners' Perspectives of Using Their Video Recordings to Aid in Performing Assessments

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Abstract

With the increased availability of technology, video-making and -sharing for brevity. Applications and online tools allow learners to record their performance of lesson tasks and permit multiple viewings unlike real-time assessments. This exploratory study focuses on students' opinions about self-recording's effects on their ability to self- and peer-assess, in addition to their perceptions of the level of difficulty required to assess. The project participants were 13 first-year university students from English debate classes at a liberal arts university in Tokyo. Students were required to video record homework tasks. In the middle of the semester, they were asked to self-assess by comparing their performances from a previous homework task with a later lesson's task. Throughout the semester, students also peer-assessed debates. The quantitative data were collected from two surveys. The results were that over half of the participants felt that recording their own performance helped them to assess both themselves and others. The students' perceptions about assessment's level of difficulty depended on the skills being assessed and how long the students had been using the skills.

Keywords: *assessment, online tools, peer-assessment, self-assessment, video recordings*

1. Introduction

In 2020, the global pandemic forced those in education to seek out new ways of connecting with their learners through the utilization of online learning tools such as sharing platforms applications and online tools. As conditions for many returned to in-person settings, some, specifically those in language learning, saw the benefits of continuing to use those tools. Having students record their performance can be useful for not only the instructor's assessment but also the students' self- and peer-assessments. Some benefits of student-led assessment are that it can allow the learners to critique their performance, give them more ownership of their learning, and provide more meaningful discussion with the instructor about assessment (Sebba et al., 2008, p. 16). According to Sumardi, Adzima, and Wijaya (2020), video recording can transform foreign-language speaking assessments due to its effectiveness (p. 67). Instructors and students can view performances multiple times for a better understanding of the performances and can provide more accurate grading. Indeed, tasks requiring students to record themselves existed before 2020, as shown in Christianson, Hoskins, and Watanabe's (2010) study. Nonetheless, other educators may have used the recordings solely for their own assessment purposes. However, online video tools allow both students and teachers to easily create recordings anywhere at any time and upload these recordings for the whole class' viewing. These tools also let students decide which recordings to share. This study will explore EFL students' opinions about how making videos affected their ability to assess.

2. Literature Review

The benefits and implementation of self- and peer-assessment have proven to be useful tools in language-learning classrooms. Baleghizadeh and Masoun (2013) stated that foreign language teachers who did incorporate self-assessment in the lessons were in favor of using this type of assessment in their practice (p. 53). In a review of empirical studies about self- and peer-assessments, Joo (2016) asserted that students felt that increased language skills, more critical awareness, and a deeper understanding of their abilities were the advantages of these types of assessments (p. 76). For a successful implementation, it is important that both the students and their instructor view assessment in a different way. Sebba et al. (2008) contented that these assessments change the relationship between the instructor and learner from being hierarchal to parallel, consequently shaping instructor's practice based on how their students respond (p. 2). Moreover, when instructors model how to assess for their learners, thus providing them with more autonomy by sharing the responsibility of assessments, the assessment tasks may result in more success. For those instructors seeking a more egalitarian classroom, allowing students to assess can be a meaningful exercise.

Communicative tasks can be challenging for those learning a foreign language. Many may feel reticent and anxious to speak in front of others, especially when formal assessment is also occurring. Giving assessment tasks to these learners can also be demanding as it is difficult to perform the task, process the performance, and then assess the performance. Students must have a solid awareness of the grading tools as this affects how successfully they can assess themselves or their classmates (Joo, 2016, p. 69). Additionally, utilizing achievable assessment tools is a part of self-assessment (Benson, 2011, p. 168). Therefore, providing students with awareness of grading criteria and opportunities to practice speaking tasks, such as presentations, debates, and speeches using self-recording tools, can lessen negative feelings and provide other positive benefits such as better performances. Self-recording tools let the learners record their performance in an environment of their choosing and allow them to record multiple times before uploading the performance they want to share with others. Sharing rubrics with students to practice their own self-assessment as well as giving instructor feedback about their performance can deepen their understanding of the grading requirements. Furthermore, having students make videos can provide more tangible recognition of grading expectations through the practice of self-assessment, and may make peer-assessment tasks less overwhelming. Having learners upload their recordings of tasks so that the instructor can comment by either written or oral responses can allow for students to review their performance in conjunction with instructor feedback to more concretely understand ways to improve their skills. The advantages of students recording videos allows their own and peer viewing of their performance multiple times, resulting in their ability to more consciously evaluate their delivery and recognize their skill development (Qureshi et al. 2019, p. 21). Not only can students' assessment skills increase through self-recordings, but their feelings about the language being learned and their relationship toward the language may also become more positive. The promotion of self-confidence is another benefit of students using the video recordings of their performance (Sumardi et al., 2020, p. 69). Göktürk (2016) reported that the learners felt making the recordings not only aided with the improvement of their speaking ability but also increased their motivation to use English and resulted in a feeling of satisfaction (2016). Even though it may seem that self-recording done in the foreign language under study could cause stress and be intimidating, the experience can be beneficial to some learners by developing more confidence and providing enjoyment in communicative language tasks.

The literature on the effects of student video recording and students practice of assessment in EFL or ESL settings is scant. However, Christianson et al.'s (2010) study with students at a university in Tokyo used webcams, and the recordings were done by students in groups at the instructor's office for peer- and self-analysis for an academic speaking course. They emphasized that the use of recordings lets the students control the assessment (p. 2). This means that students using their video recordings for assessment may result in more learner autonomy. Christianson et al.' study holds similarities to this study, yet with the changes in technology during these past 10 years, for instance the increased use of laptops and smartphones in language learning, along with online tools and applications that allow for the freedom to video record anywhere and at any time, further exploring student opinions about video recording and student-guided assessment tools is an important area for examination.

3. Research Methodology

This exploratory study used a quantitative approach to analyze the data from the 13 participants. They were first-year students from three mandatory debate classes at a Tokyo liberal arts university. They had TOEIC scores from 480 to 699, with two classes having in-person lessons and one class having online lessons. Though the number of students in all classes was much higher than the number of participants, these participants were selected as they made videos regularly as part of the homework tasks and completed both surveys. The surveys were delivered using a Google Forms link via email and the online learning platform. The first survey was implemented during the middle of the semester and the second survey during the end of the semester. This study analyzes the surveys' three-level Likert scale questions' responses.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Did making videos aid in students' ability to self- and peer-assess?
2. How do students perceive the level of difficulty in assessing?

Context of the Study

Over the 14-week semester in fall of 2021, students were required to make eight videos with a computer online tools as part of their homework tasks for weeks 1–6, 10, and 11. The video tasks were based on the current lesson activities and/or to prepare for the next lesson. Below are two examples of the homework tasks:

Lesson 2's task: For the proposition on page 22: "Skipping breakfast is good for your health." Share your arguments for both Affirmative and Negative with "Useful Expressions for Constructing Arguments" on pages 17 and 18. Use the reflection journal to help you.

Lesson 10's task: Please use your Reflection Journal to help you. Use the summary your team made in the lesson. Remember to include three points from your team, the other team's points, the proposition, and your team's position. Also use Appendix A "Useful Expressions for Debate Skills" on page 58.

Students were given individual and private feedback on the video-making and -sharing online tools by the instructor about their performance based on the appropriate section of the course's rubric. The assigned textbook *Up For Debate* (Mishima et al., 2021) that contained the rubric and skills referenced in the above homework example prompts. It was the instructor's expectation that the students would review the comments about their videos to gain a greater understanding of how to use the rubric. They would be expected to give feedback to their peers as judges during the mid-term and final-term test debates when their team was not debating.

4. Results and Discussion

The students' perspectives about making videos' effectiveness on their ability to assess will be shared. In response to the survey question, "Did watching the two videos help you to learn how to judge your performance?," 7 students agreed, 5 were not sure, and 1 disagreed. The process of making a video was viewed as having value to aid in self-assessment for over half of these students. Regarding the question, "Do you think watching your own video helps you to judge other students' performances?," 7 students agreed, 4 were not sure, and 2 disagreed. It appears that watching their own video-recorded performances was beneficial to these students during peer assessment. Potential reasons for agreement could be the level of exposure that they had with the rubric on a weekly basis and how the instructor gave written feedback for each video based on the rubric. This echoes what both Joo (2016) and Benson (2011) maintained that a good understanding of an achievable rubric will aid in students' ability to achieve assessment tasks. However, the instructor cannot confirm if the students reviewed the written feedback of their video performances. It was hoped that if the students could view their videos again after reading the feedback, they would better understand how the rubric was used for assessments. In future uses of video recording tasks when written feedback is given, it will be important to establish how learners review it? Activities such as reflections tasks or discussions about the feedback could be used to confirm this.

The level of difficulty in assessing given by students will be examined. As different skills needed to be assessed, students' opinions about the level of difficulty in assessing, both themselves and their classmates, also differed. Self-assessing more concrete skills such as a debate's organization that followed a clear pattern was viewed as having a moderate level of difficulty by nearly all students. Furthermore, when asked about generally assessing organization skills of debates, such as in peer-assessment settings, over half of the students responded that the task was easy. A possible reason is that students felt that assessing themselves was a task with less pressure as regards accuracy than assessing others, possibly making self-assessment easier than peer-assessment. With more abstract skills, such as when self-assessing a debate's strength, over half of the students felt it was a moderate to difficult task. Yet, when asked about generally assessing a debate's strength, 10 students agreed that it was an easy task. There could be a few factors for this. Data were collected about self-assessment in the middle of the semester, while the data about general assessment were collected at the end of the semester. This means students had more exposure to the skills as well as familiarity with assessments. Additionally, students assessed their peers with their debate team members during the test lessons at the middle and end of the semester. It could be that students had more confidence to assess with their teammates than by themselves, potentially lessening the perceived level of difficulty. In addition, as Sumardi et al. (2020) write about increased confidence in relation to recordings, it could be that as students completed more self-recorded videos for homework tasks by the end of the semester, they felt more sure of in their assessment abilities.

In future uses of video-recording and assessment tasks, it will be beneficial to have students, either individually or in the teams, submit a written peer-evaluation form, which would be collected, instead of only giving oral comments to their classmates about their test performance. Then the instructor can better understand how students assess their peers. This will be helpful to know more about students' opinions concerning the assessment task's level of difficulty. Then the instructor can share with the students their assessments' strengths and weaknesses, providing students with more certainty of their ability to assess and possibly decreasing the level of difficulty to perform assessments.

5. Conclusion

Video-making and sharing tools and applications are becoming increasingly accessible and can be a useful tool for students to practice their own self- and peer-assessments. Having students perform assessments can allow for students to have more autonomy in their learning. Unlike real-time assessments, video recordings can allow for multiple viewings. Using video-making and online-sharing applications tools also gives students more control over deciding/choosing which performances to share with others as well as the freedom to record at any time and anywhere. Instructors can provide feedback on the learner's performance with more certainty, and learners can view their performance again along with the feedback. This could allow for the learner to have a better understanding of how their performance was graded, possibly giving them more understanding of the grading tools.

In this exploratory study, more than half of the participants agreed that making videos helped them learn how to assess their own performance and their classmates' performances. The participants responded that the level of difficulty required to assess varies. Possible factors on the level of difficulty might be the type of skills to be assessed and their familiarity with the skills. Furthermore, assessment done by a learner individually versus assessing as part of a team may also influence differences in assessment's level of difficulty. A better understanding of how students assess compared with the instructor could aid in more effectively using student-recorded videos and student-assessment activities. More research needs to be done about having students use their own self-recorded videos and perform assessments as this is a timely area for exploration.

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