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INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF PEER ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' READINESS AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SAU AND SAT SPEAKING

This study explores the effect of peer assessment on students' readiness and achievement in Summative Assessment of the Unit (SAU) and Summative Assessment of the term (SAT) speaking assessments in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context at Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS) Almaty-Nauryzbay. The aim was to examine whether structured peer assessment could enhance students' understanding of assessment criteria, reduce speaking anxiety, and improve their speaking performance. Peer support and feedback tables based on SAU/SAT speaking rubrics were implemented during several preparatory lessons with 8th- and 10th-grade students. Students were engaged in evaluating each other's speaking tasks, providing constructive feedback, and discussing assessment criteria. Mini online surveys were conducted to capture students' perceptions, while speaking scores from current and previous SAU/SAT assessments were compared to track changes in performance.

The findings suggest that peer assessment fostered greater engagement among less confident students and promoted collaborative support from more proficient peers. Students reported that peer feedback helped them better understand scoring criteria, increased their confidence, and reduced speaking-related anxiety. Moreover, their subsequent SAU/SAT speaking scores showed noticeable improvement compared to earlier results. The findings indicate that peer assessment can be an effective and low-cost strategy to enhance students' readiness and achievement in high-stakes speaking assessments.

Key words: speaking assessment, peer assessment, student readiness, assessment for learning, speaking achievement, SAU, SAT.

Introduction

In language education, peer assessment has become an effective classroom practice that encourages students to take an active role in evaluating and improving their own learning. It is generally understood as a process where learners assess and provide feedback on each other's work based on shared criteria or rubrics. Instead of depending entirely on teacher evaluation, students are encouraged to think critically about what makes a good performance and to apply this understanding to their own work. Research has shown that involving learners in assessment supports self-regulation, engagement, and a deeper understanding of learning goals [1, 2, 3].

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, peer assessment brings particular benefits. It gives students the chance to practise communication, compare their speaking performance with peers, and receive feedback in a more relaxed environment than in formal assessments. Studies have demonstrated that structured peer feedback helps students become more reflective, independent, and responsible for their progress [4, 5]. It also promotes collaboration rather than competition, as students start to see learning improvement as a shared process. When guided by clear rubrics and teacher support, peer assessment can strengthen both speaking ability and confidence [6, 7]. However, in many EFL classrooms, speaking remains one of the main sources of anxiety, especially for learners who worry about being judged or making mistakes. Such anxiety often limits classroom participation and prevents students from reaching their full potential. This issue connects closely to the concept of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) developed by [8]. Their framework highlights that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are two major emotional barriers that interfere with language learning and

speaking performance. When learners experience this type of anxiety, they tend to avoid speaking opportunities and become less confident in assessments, even when they have the necessary knowledge.

Within the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) network in Kazakhstan, assessment practices emphasize reflection, transparency, and learner autonomy. The Summative Assessment of the Term (SAT) plays an important role in measuring students' progress and academic achievement. However, many students still report feeling nervous and uncertain before speaking assessments. These difficulties often arise from a limited understanding of the assessment criteria and a lack of experience in analyzing what makes strong or weak performance. Introducing peer assessment into preparatory speaking lessons can help to address these challenges. By working with rubrics, observing peers, and giving feedback, students can become more familiar with the criteria, more confident in their abilities, and less anxious about the evaluation process.

The main purpose of this research is to explore how peer assessment influences students' readiness and achievement in SAT speaking tasks at NIS Almaty–Nauryzbay. The study focuses on two aspects: changes in students' SAT speaking performance after the introduction of peer assessment and their attitudes toward this approach based on a short online survey.

The *research* addresses the following *questions*:

1. To what extent did the implementation of peer assessment influence students' SAT speaking performance compared to their results prior to its introduction?

2. What insights do students' survey responses provide about their perceptions of peer assessment as a tool for improving readiness and confidence in SAT speaking assessments?

A mixed-method approach was applied to answer these questions. Quantitative data were collected from SAT speaking results before and after the peer assessment activities, while qualitative data came from a mini online survey exploring students' feelings, confidence, and experiences. The teaching tools used included SAT speaking rubrics, peer feedback tables, and short reflection sheets that guided students in observing and commenting on each other's performance. Before the peer review began, students received short instructions on how to use the rubrics and how to give feedback politely and constructively.

Although peer assessment has been widely studied internationally, little research has been done in Kazakhstani EFL contexts—especially in relation to official summative assessments like the SAT. Most studies focus on informal classroom activities rather than on structured assessments used for grading. This research fills that gap by exploring how peer assessment affects both students' attitudes and actual SAT speaking results in a real classroom setting.

In conclusion, this study aims to show that peer assessment can serve as an effective and low-cost strategy for improving learners' preparation and confidence in speaking assessments. By combining performance data and students' reflections, the research hopes to offer practical insights for teachers who want to make speaking assessment more transparent, supportive, and inclusive for all learners.

Research design and instruments

This study used a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. This design was chosen because it gives a more complete picture of what happens in a classroom. Numbers alone can show whether students' speaking scores changed, but they cannot explain how students felt about the process or what they learned from it. As Creswell and Plano Clark point out, using mixed methods helps researchers capture both the measurable results and the personal experiences behind them [9]. In this study, the quantitative part focused on comparing SAT speaking scores before and after peer assessment, while the qualitative part explored students' perceptions of peer assessment and speaking anxiety through a short online survey.

Research Design. The study followed a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design, which allowed the comparison of two sets of SAT speaking results — one before and one after peer assessment was introduced. This approach was considered suitable because random group assignment was not possible in a real school environment. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison note that

quasi-experimental designs are often the best option in authentic educational settings where researchers aim to track progress within existing classes [10].

Research Site and Participants. The research was conducted at Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS) Almaty-Nauryzbay, which follows a student-centered approach and uses a criterion-based assessment system. Participants included 48 students: 25 from Grade 8 and 23 from Grade 10. All students studied English as a Foreign Language and had previous experience with SAT speaking assessments. Their proficiency levels ranged from B1 to B2 on the CEFR scale.

The school was selected because it represents a setting where both formative and summative assessments play an important role, and where developing student autonomy is part of the learning culture. Participation in the research was voluntary, and survey responses were anonymous to encourage honesty and openness.

The intervention. The intervention took place over several preparatory lessons before the official SAT speaking assessment. During these sessions, students worked in pairs and small groups to evaluate each other's speaking using peer feedback tables based on the SAT rubric. The table below represents one of the instruments used with the 8th graders after the grammar was introduced and practiced.

While your partner is speaking, listen and check!	
My partner used at least **three** modal verbs.	He used_____
My partner used at least **three** new topic related words/phrases.	He used_____
My partner asked and answered the questions.	
One thing my partner did well:	_____
One thing to improve:	_____

Figure 1 - Peer Assessment Instrument for Speaking

The clear instructions were given before these instruments were applied. They were encouraged to discuss what makes a good answer, identify common challenges, and give constructive comments. The teacher guided the process to ensure feedback was respectful, accurate, and meaningful. Research by Rahmatillah and Fajrita highlights that students' motivation, proficiency level, and relationship bias affect the success of peer assessment [11]. These factors were managed through teacher support, such as explaining its benefits, pairing students of similar levels, and using anonymous evaluation.

Materials and research methods

Two main sources of data were used: 1) SAT speaking results; 2) an online survey.

The SAT speaking results provided the quantitative data for this study. Students' scores from two consecutive SAT speaking assessments were compared: one taken before peer assessment was introduced and one after. Both assessments were graded using the same official SAT rubric, which evaluates task achievement, coherence, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. This allowed a fair comparison and helped identify any improvement that might be linked to the peer assessment practice.

To ensure confidentiality, students' names were not used in the analysis. Instead, each student was assigned a number code so that no personal information could be traced. Only group averages and anonymous scores were presented in the report.

The second instrument was a short online survey that gathered information about students' feelings and experiences. The questions were based on the concept of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, which highlights communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation as key emotional barriers to language learning [8]. The survey aimed to understand whether participating in peer assessment helped reduce these negative feelings and increased confidence before speaking assessments.

The survey included the following six statements rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree):

1. I feel nervous when I have to speak English in front of my classmates.
2. I get worried when I cannot find the right English words.
3. I feel more relaxed if I know my answer is correct before speaking.
4. I feel embarrassed if I make mistakes in English.
5. I get nervous when the teacher asks me to answer without warning.
6. I feel confident speaking English if my partner supports me.

After the peer assessment sessions, students completed the survey online. Their answers helped identify patterns related to anxiety, confidence, and perceived usefulness of peer feedback. As MacIntyre explains, understanding emotional factors alongside performance outcomes provides a more complete view of students' language learning experiences [12].

Ethical Considerations. Ethical procedures were carefully followed throughout the study. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary, and students were informed that they could withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. The online survey was anonymous, and no identifying details such as names or email addresses were collected. In analyzing the SAT results, only number codes were used instead of student names to protect confidentiality. All data were stored securely and used only for research purposes. The research was conducted in line with the ethical standards of classroom-based studies, ensuring respect, privacy, and transparency for all participants.

Data Analysis. The SAT scores were analyzed descriptively to see if there was a noticeable improvement in average performance after peer assessment. The survey responses were summarized to identify trends in students' attitudes and feelings. Any written comments students added were reviewed qualitatively to highlight common opinions or recurring themes.

Limitations. Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, because there was no control group, improvements in speaking scores cannot be attributed solely to peer assessment — other factors such as practice or teacher guidance may also have contributed. Second, the sample size was relatively small and limited to one NIS campus, so the findings may not represent all students in other schools. Finally, the survey relied on self-reported data, which may sometimes reflect what students think they should say rather than what they truly feel. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insight into how peer assessment can support both performance and emotional readiness in EFL speaking assessments.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to explore the effect of peer assessment on students' readiness and achievement in speaking. The findings were obtained through students' performance results from the Speaking Assessment Unit (SAU) and the Summative Assessment for the Term (SAT), as well as from a survey that examined learners' attitudes, confidence, and anxiety related to speaking English. Overall, both quantitative and qualitative results indicate that peer assessment had a positive impact on students' speaking performance and emotional readiness to speak in class.

1. Quantitative Findings: Improvement in Speaking Achievement

The comparison of students' SAU and SAT results before and after peer assessment revealed noticeable improvement in speaking performance among both 8th and 10th graders. Although the changes were not dramatic, they showed a consistent upward trend across all groups.

For 10th graders, Class *X* demonstrated slight but meaningful progress. Before peer assessment, two students achieved the highest score (6/6), while after the intervention, this number increased to three. Additionally, the number of low scores decreased, showing that peer evaluation may have helped weaker students perform better. In the SAT results of the same class, there was also a visible improvement in the middle range, as more students achieved 5/6 after peer assessment compared to before.

Class *Z* of the same grade showed even stronger progress. The number of students scoring 5/6 increased from four to six in the SAU results, and fewer students received low marks. In the SAT, the number of students with 5/6 rose from one to seven, which suggests that the overall group performance became more balanced and consistent. These changes imply that peer assessment not only helped high achievers maintain their performance but also supported average learners in improving their scores.

Among 8th graders, similar tendencies were observed. In Class *T*, students' results were already high before peer assessment, but slight improvements were still recorded. More students achieved 6/6 after the intervention, and fewer had lower grades. In Class *S*, the number of students with 5/6 increased slightly, and low scores became less common. Overall, the results of both grades show that peer assessment helped stabilize students' speaking performance and reduced the gap between stronger and weaker learners.

Taken together, the quantitative data demonstrate that peer assessment had a generally positive influence on speaking achievement. The most notable improvements appeared in the middle score range (4–5 out of 6), which means that peer feedback was especially beneficial for students who were not yet fluent but had the potential to improve through regular feedback and observation of their peers.

2. Qualitative Findings: Students' Feelings, Confidence, and Anxiety

The survey results provided additional insight into how students felt about speaking English and how peer assessment might have influenced their emotions. Overall, students showed a mix of confidence and nervousness, which reflects the natural challenges of speaking in a foreign language.

The first item, *"I feel nervous when I have to speak English in front of my classmates,"* revealed that most students (over 70%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that the majority did not feel strong anxiety during speaking tasks. Similarly, in the second item, *"I get worried when I cannot find the right English words,"* responses were more balanced, with about one-third agreeing. This means that while some students still worried about vocabulary, most were learning to handle such situations calmly.

The third statement, *"I feel more relaxed if I know my answer is correct before speaking,"* received the highest level of agreement. Around 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed, showing that preparation and reassurance play a key role in reducing anxiety. Since peer assessment involves checking and discussing answers with partners, this activity likely helped students feel more confident before performing.

Items four and five focused on embarrassment about mistakes and nervousness when answering unexpectedly. Here, around half of the students expressed some level of discomfort, showing that while peer assessment helps, fear of public mistakes still exists. Finally, the sixth statement, *"I feel confident speaking English if my partner supports me,"* received very positive responses—around 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed. This result clearly indicates that collaborative work and peer support contributed to higher confidence and motivation.
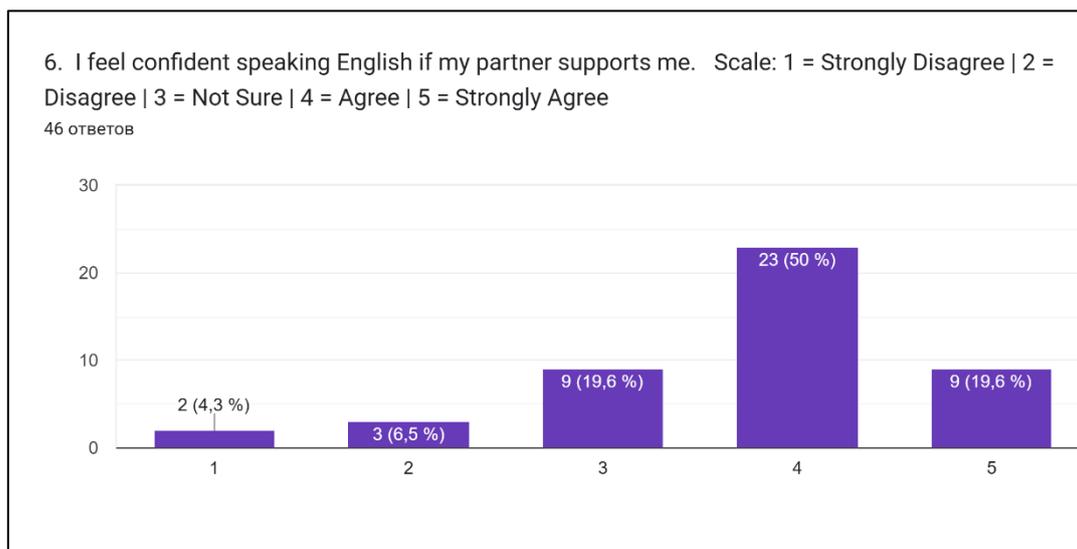
Figure 2 - Online Survey Responses to Question 6

3. Discussion

The combination of test results and survey data indicates that peer assessment had a positive impact on both students' speaking performance and emotional readiness. After participating in peer feedback sessions, students generally achieved slightly higher grades, showed more confidence, and demonstrated reduced nervousness about speaking English.

These findings align with previous research suggesting that peer assessment promotes learner autonomy and reflection [4], [1]. When students take part in evaluating each other's performance, they become more aware of assessment criteria and learn to notice their own strengths and weaknesses. In this study, students benefited from observing their peers, receiving constructive comments, and practicing self-evaluation, all of which contributed to gradual improvement in their speaking skills.

The survey findings also highlight the emotional benefits of peer assessment. The strong agreement with the statement about partner support shows that students valued collaboration and felt more confident when they were not alone. Peer feedback appears to create a friendly and encouraging environment that reduces speaking anxiety and motivates learners to participate more actively. However, the fact that many students still felt nervous when called on unexpectedly suggests that peer assessment does not completely remove communication anxiety. Teachers may therefore continue combining peer feedback with other confidence-building activities.

4. Summary of Key Findings

Consistent improvement – Students' speaking results in both SAU and SAT showed overall progress after peer assessment.

Higher confidence – Most students felt more confident speaking in English, especially when supported by peers.

Reduced anxiety – Nervousness about speaking decreased, although fear of unexpected questions remained.

Positive classroom atmosphere – Peer assessment encouraged cooperation, mutual support, and active participation.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that peer assessment is an effective tool for enhancing both the academic and emotional aspects of speaking development. It helps students not only perform better in formal assessments but also feel more comfortable and motivated when using English in class.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of peer assessment on students' readiness and achievement in SAU and SAT speaking tasks. The results clearly demonstrated that peer assessment had a positive impact on both students' confidence and their overall performance. Most students showed improvement in their post-test results, suggesting that giving and receiving feedback helped them understand the assessment criteria better and focus on specific areas for improvement.

Another important finding was the increase in students' motivation and responsibility. Through the peer assessment process, learners became more active participants in their own learning rather than passive receivers of teacher feedback. They started noticing their own strengths and weaknesses, which made them better prepared for speaking assessments. In addition, students developed stronger collaboration skills and greater awareness of what constitutes effective communication.

Overall, the findings suggest that peer assessment is a valuable and practical approach to enhance both readiness and achievement in speaking tasks. It supports the development of self-reflection, independence, and confidence — skills that are essential for success not only in language learning but also in future academic and professional contexts. Therefore, it can be concluded that implementing peer assessment regularly in speaking classes can significantly improve students' performance and readiness.

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Д.Р. Алиева

БЖБ ЖӘНЕ ТЖБ АЙТЫЛЫМ БӨЛІМДЕРІНДЕГІ СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ ДАЙЫНДЫҚ ДЕҢГЕЙІ МЕН ЖЕТІСТІКТЕРІНЕ ӨЗАРА БАҒАЛАУДЫҢ ӘСЕРІН ЗЕРТТЕУ

Бұл зерттеу Алматы қаласындағы, Наурызбай ауданындағы Назарбаев Зияткерлік мектебінде (НЗМ) ағылшын тілі шет тілі ретінде оқытылатын ортада Бөлім бойынша бағалау (БЖБ) және Тоқсан бойынша бағалау (ТЖБ) емтихандарында айтылым бойынша өзара бағалаудың оқушылардың дайындық деңгейі мен жетістіктеріне әсерін зерттейді. Зерттеудің мақсаты – құрылымдалған өзара бағалау оқушылардың бағалау критерийлерін түсінуін арттырып, сөйлеу мазасыздығын азайтып, сөйлеу дағдыларын жақсарту деңгейін анықтау. 8 және 10-сынып оқушыларымен дайындық сабақтарында БЖБ және ТЖБ рубрикалары негізінде құрылған кері байланыс кестелері қолданылды. Оқушылар бір-бірінің сөйлеу тапсырмаларын бағалап, кері байланыс беріп, бағалау критерийлерін талқылады. Олардың пікірлерін анықтау үшін онлайн сауалнамалар жүргізіліп, ағымдағы және бұрынғы емтихан нәтижелері салыстырылды.

Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, өзара бағалау сенімсіз оқушылардың белсенділігін арттырып, үлгерімі жоғары сыныптастарынан қолдау алуға мүмкіндік берді. Оқушылар кері байланыстың критерийлерді жақсы түсінуге, өзіне сенімді болуға және сөйлеу кезінде мазасыздықты азайтуға көмектескенін айтты. Сонымен қатар, кейінгі SAU/SAT нәтижелері жақсарғаны байқалды. Демек, өзара бағалау жоғары деңгейлі сөйлеу емтихандарына дайындық пен жетістіктерді арттырудың тиімді әрі үнемді әдісі бола алады.

Түйінді сөздер: айтылымды бағалау, өзара бағалау, дайындық деңгейі, оқыту үшін бағалау, сөйлеу жетістігі, БЖБ, ТЖБ.

Д.Р. Алиева

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ВЛИЯНИЯ ВЗАИМНОГО ОЦЕНИВАНИЯ НА ГОТОВНОСТЬ И УСПЕВАЕМОСТЬ СТУДЕНТОВ В УСТНОЙ ЧАСТИ ЭКЗАМЕНОВ СОР И СОЧ

Данное исследование рассматривает влияние взаимного оценивания на готовность и успеваемость учащихся в устных экзаменах Суммативного оценивания раздела (СОР) и Суммативного оценивания четверти (СОЧ) в контексте обучения английскому как иностранному языку в Назарбаев Интеллектуальной школе (НИШ) города Алматы. Целью исследования было определить, может ли структурированное взаимное оценивание повысить понимание критериев оценивания, снизить уровень тревожности при говорении и улучшить результаты устной речи. Во время подготовительных занятий с учащимися 8-х и 10-х классов использовались таблицы обратной связи на основе рубрик СОЧ/СОР. Учащиеся оценивали ответы друг друга, давали конструктивную обратную связь и обсуждали критерии оценивания. Для сбора мнений были проведены онлайн-опросы, а результаты говорения сравнивались с предыдущими показателями.

Результаты показали, что взаимное оценивание повысило вовлеченность менее уверенных учащихся и способствовало поддержке со стороны более сильных сверстников. Учащиеся отметили, что обратная связь помогла им лучше понять критерии оценивания, повысила уверенность и снизила тревожность. Итоговые баллы за устную часть SAU/SAT улучшились по сравнению с предыдущими. Таким образом, взаимное оценивание может рассматриваться как эффективная и экономичная стратегия повышения готовности и достижений учащихся в устных экзаменах высокого уровня.

Ключевые слова: оценивание говорения, взаимное оценивание, готовность учеников, оценивание для обучения, успехи в говорении, СОР, СОЧ.

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