UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL PENINSULA DE SANTA ELENA

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TEMA

“PEER ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE EFL SPEAKING SKILL IN A2 STUDENTS”

ESTADO DEL ARTE

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AUTOR:

Olga Janet Zurita Baquerizo

TUTOR:

MSc. Elena Niola Sanmartín

La Libertad- Ecuador

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Aprobación del Tutor

En mi calidad de Tutor **del Informe de Investigación**, ‘‘PEER ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE EFL SPEAKING SKILL IN A2 STUDENTS”, elaborado por la maestrante Olga Janet Zurita Baquerizo, egresada de la **MAESTRÍA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS**, de la Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, previo a la obtención del Título de Magíster en **PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS SEGUNDA COHORTE**, me permito declarar que luego de haber orientado, dirigido científica y técnicamente su desarrollo y estructura final del trabajo, cumple y se ajusta a los estándares académicos y científicos, razón por la cual lo apruebo en todas sus partes.

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MSc. Elena Niola Sanmartín

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OLGA JANET ZURITA BAQUERIZO

Olga Janet Zurita Baquerizo

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La Libertad, 10 septiembre de 2023

EL AUTOR

Firmado electrónicamente por:
OLGA JANET ZURITA BAQUERIZO

Olga Janet Zurita Baquerizo

Tribunal de Grado

Firmado electrónicamente por:
ROSA ELENA NIOLA SANMARTIN

. Lic.Elena Niola Sanmartin MSc
DOCENTE - TUTOR

Firmado electrónicamente por:
JENIFFER ELIZABETH GARCIA MENDOZA

Ing. Jennifer García Mendoza, Mgs
COORDINADOR DE POSTGRADO

LEONARDO AUGUSTO CHAVEZ GONZABAY
Digitally signed by LEONARDO AUGUSTO CHAVEZ GONZABAY
Date: 2023.11.01 21:20:39 -04'00'

MSc.Leonardo Chávez Gonzabay
ESPECIALISTA DEL ÁREA

Firmado electrónicamente por:
ROSA TATIANA GARCIA VILLAO

MSc. Tatiana García Villao
ESPECIALISTA DEL ÁREA

Firmado electrónicamente por:
MARIA MARGARITA RIVERA GONZALEZ

Abg. María Rivera González, Mgtr.
SECRETARIA GENERAL

DEDICATION

To my lovely husband Carlos, who has been my motivation and support all my life, and to my children Gabriela, Carla, Alexander, and Carlos, and my mother Olga who showed me their support during this arduous journey. I love them forever.

Janet

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GLOSSARY

Assessment criteria: Specific standards or guidelines used to evaluate student work.

Assessment literacy: The ability to understand, use, and interpret assessment methods and results effectively.

Constructivism: A learning theory that emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their knowledge and understanding through experiences and interactions.

Cooperative learning: An instructional strategy where students work together in groups to achieve common learning objectives.

Critical thinking: The ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to make informed decisions and solve problems.

English as a foreign language (EFL): The process of learning and teaching the English language in a context where it is not the primary language spoken.

Feedback: Information is provided to students about their performance to help them improve.

Formative assessment: Assessment conducted during the learning process to monitor and guide students' progress and provide feedback for improvement.

Language acquisition: The process of acquiring and learning a new language, such as English.

Pedagogical strategy: A specific approach or method used in teaching and learning.

Peer assessment: A specific technique within peer education where students evaluate their peers' work and provide constructive feedback to enhance their learning process.

Speaking skills: The ability to use oral communication effectively to convey meaning and ideas in a particular language.

Summative assessment: Assessment conducted at the end of a specific period, such as a course or academic year, to evaluate overall learning outcomes and achievements.

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PEER ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE EFL SPEAKING SKILL IN A2 STUDENTS

Autor: Olga Janet Zurita Baquerizo

Tutor: MSc. Elena Niola Sanmartin

RESUMEN

El propósito de esta investigación es conocer cómo la evaluación entre iguales, una técnica específica dentro de la educación mejora las destrezas orales en inglés. El estudio investiga los beneficios de esta estrategia en la mejora de la eficacia de los estudiantes en la producción oral y pretende identificar los beneficios de la evaluación por pares para los estudiantes en los procesos de aprendizaje y explorar los procesos de cómo los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera pueden aprovechar esta herramienta. La investigación se centra en la mejora de las destrezas orales a través de la evaluación entre iguales y hace hincapié en la importancia de la evaluación formativa en el aula. El estudio revisa la literatura relevante, analiza la importancia de las habilidades orales, enfatiza el papel de la evaluación y contextualiza el estudio dentro del panorama educativo de Ecuador.

Fue una metodología bibliográfica porque la información se encontró en diferentes fuentes relevantes y académicas.

Palabras clave: English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking skills, peer assessment, language acquisition.

UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL PENINSULA DE SANTA ELENA

INSTITUTO DE POSTGRADO

THEME

PEER-ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS IN A2 STUDENTS

Author: Olga Janet Zurita Baquerizo

Tutor: MSc. Elena Niola Sanmartin

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to learn how peer assessment, a specific technique in education, improves English speaking skills. The study investigates the benefits of this strategy in improving students' speaking efficiency in oral production and aims to identify the benefits of peer assessment for students in the learning processes and to explore the processes of how teachers of English as a foreign language can take advantage of this tool. The research focuses on the improvement of oral skills through peer assessment and emphasizes the significance of formative assessment in the classroom. The study reviews relevant literature, analyzes the importance of oral skills, emphasizes the role of assessment, and contextualizes the study within the educational environment in Ecuador. This study was carried out through a bibliographic methodology because the information was found in different relevant and academic sources.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking skills, peer assessment, language acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized world where interconnectivity prevails, the acquisition of the English language emerges as a pivotal factor in pursuing opportunities and active engagement on the international stage. The process of teaching and learning to speak English as a foreign language (EFL) has experienced a substantial shift; it goes beyond merely uttering purposeless expressions to conveying a message to people. The use of strategies and methods in education provides students with tools in the teaching and learning process. One of these strategies is Peer assessment to improve speaking skills in English as a foreign language in an authentic school context.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the operation of peer education, an innovative pedagogical strategy where students collaborate in small groups to learn and teach each other. Peer assessment, as a specific technique where students evaluate their peers' work and offer constructive feedback to enhance their learning process, fosters self-evaluation and the ability to provide effective constructive criticism. As students lead their learning and contribute to their peers' development, an educational dynamic enhances language skills and promotes greater autonomy.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Burns, A. (2019) the teaching and learning of speaking skills hold great significance in any language education classroom. Spoken language not only provides valuable opportunities for learning as the primary means of communication in the classroom but also represents a crucial element of the curriculum and desired learning achievements. However, many English teachers in Ecuador are facing some challenges in teaching speaking. A key issue here is whether the strategies used by teachers involve students in their own learning process. On the contrary, traditional methods are maintained, many teachers use traditional methods to apply in the class, grammar-translation and audiolingual are examples of them, which leads to memorization and lack of interaction of students in the target language (Solís, 2022); for this reason, peer assessment would be an innovative strategy to improve oral production skills in Ecuadorian public high schools. The importance lies in the need for purposeful integration of peer assessment into teaching practice and adapting peer assessment practices to diverse educational contexts. Additionally, it offers teachers a chance to reimagine traditional assessment methods and promote student-centered learning. Introducing peer assessment into educational settings

that haven't used it before opens doors to distinct views for creativity and enhancement. It provides an opportunity to rethink conventional assessment approaches and recommends student-focused learning. The cooperative aspect of peer assessment can stimulate active participation and a more profound understanding of the English subject, all while fostering a sense of personal responsibility for A2-level students. This literature review will examine how the focus on peer education can enrich effectiveness and reliability as a valid assessment tool for Ecuadorian and local A2-level students in their journey toward improvement and their preparation to play a more active role in the educational field. This research aims to address these processes and provide insights into optimizing the implementation of peer assessment in educational settings. Additionally, it seeks to investigate various approaches, including assessment criteria. The goal is to develop evidence-based recommendations and guidelines to inform teachers, on best practices for implementing peer assessment as an effective educational tool.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

The present study explores the following research question:

How does the peer assessment strategy improve the speaking skills performance of A2 students?

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To describe peer assessment as part of the formative assessment in the improvement of speaking skills of A2-level students

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the use of peer assessment as a strategy to improve speaking skills in the classroom.
- Identify the benefits of peer assessment for students in the learning processes.
- Explore the process of implementing peer assessment in the classroom.

HYPOTHESIS

This study is designed to review the hypothesis that the use of a peer-assessment strategy will improve the speaking skills performance of A2-level students in Ecuadorian public high schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study design is descriptive documentary research, which analyzes and reflects upon a variety of instructional documents thoroughly sought in Google Scholar, research papers, repositories, ERIC, and eBooks to uncover paramount studies that support the implementation of peer assessment to improve speaking skills in A2-level students. A range of studies converge the standards in a detailed review. Consequently, the technique used is a bibliographic review as an essential component of academic and research studies, and some bibliographical records as the instrument. This methodological approach not only lays a solid foundation for the study but also supports the research's credibility and comprehensiveness.

JUSTIFICATION

Nowadays peer assessment (PA) is implemented as an essential component of classroom-based assessment due to its focus on learning and its formative character. Employing peer assessment offers various advantages for student learning. Peer assessment plays a vital role in enhancing English language learning and speaking skills. When students assess each other's language performance, they gain exposure to diverse language styles, accents, and expressions. This exposure expands their understanding of the language and helps them adapt to various communication contexts.

By incorporating peer assessment, educators can create a more inclusive and student-centered learning environment that fosters growth, self-reflection, and meaningful engagement. Peer assessment has been completely discussed and found to promote student-centered education (Tai and Sevenhuysen, 2018; Xiang et al., 2021).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English is considered as the global lingua franca, transcending borders, and gathering people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Rao, P. S. 2019). As the most widely spoken language in the world, it acts as a bridge between individuals and nations, facilitating effective communication, mutual understanding, and cooperation. English proficiency equips individuals to navigate the global market, attract foreign investments, and expand business prospects, while also facilitating access to advanced research, academic exchanges, and diverse cultural experiences (Rao, 2019, p.65). Proficiency in English opens doors to myriad opportunities, including better career prospects, access to a wealth of information and resources online, and collaborations. English empowers individuals to engage with a diverse range of cultures, fostering understanding and promoting cross-cultural communication. Promoting English education in Ecuador strengthens the country's international position and empowers its citizens to effectively interact with the world on various levels.

Assessment in English language learning plays a pivotal role in measuring students' competency and progress. Employing various tools and methods, including project-based assessments, oral presentations, and peer assessments, helps educators identify students' strengths and weaknesses and tailor personalized learning experiences. Peer assessment is a promising approach to assess oral expression skills and enhance oral production. Studies have demonstrated the benefits of peer assessment in EFL classrooms, suggesting its potential to elevate students' oral presentation skills, so “numerous researchers, academics, and instructors recommend a transformation in the field of education, and they emphasize the importance of employing teaching approaches that encourage critical thinking and collaboration, aiming to empower learners to address complex challenges and perceive their surroundings critically. This includes identifying alternatives, gaining insights, and cultivating profound ideas” (Meena, R. S. 2020)

Countless studies published on the benefits of peer assessment in EFL classrooms suggest its implementation to assist students in succeeding and improving their performance in oral production. One of these studies was conducted by Fastabiqul Khairat Nida (2017) at an Islamic Private Senior High School, where the participants were 34 tenth-grade male students. They submitted both tests and questionnaires to collect the necessary data. The results of using peer assessment in effective oral presentations were overall positive, and the process led to an increase in student performance, responsibility,

and excellence in oral presentation. In conclusion, the use of peer assessment is valuable and influential in improving students' oral presentation skills.

The results of another study on peer assessment, conducted by Gualavisi Cangas (2023) from Casa Grande College in 2021, also demonstrated that 15-16-year-old students in the first year of high school with an A2 English level in a private high school in Quito were engaged in activities that included verbal interaction by applying the peer assessment strategy. This helped students become more communicative in English and enhance their oral expression skills. The students were able to develop performance activities that integrated all the topics covered to demonstrate their progress in the unit.

SPEAKING

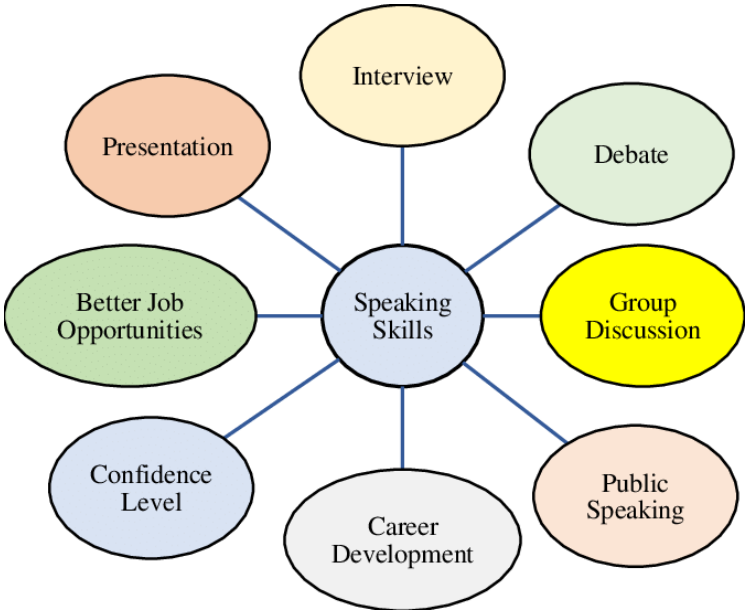
Speaking is an oral production skill that is enhanced during language learning. Communication and language emerged in a social context, through oral communication students can interact with other speakers. According to Burns (2019), there are three components of second language speaking competence, these elements are language knowledge, which includes knowing grammar; core skills in speaking (understanding, correcting, and giving feedback), and strategies (i.e., planning, thinking, and compensating). Speaking is a basic skill to tell and share ideas in communication.

Speaking is the most important skill among all the four language skills to communicate well in this interconnected globe. With English being a global lingua franca, learners need to develop communication skills to achieve success in their specific domains.

In the following figure (N° 1), it emphasizes that speaking is the paramount skill among the four language skills, Speaking skills are the most essential skills for all learners who want to learn English to enhance their career, improve business, build confidence levels, get better job opportunities, make public speeches, attend interviews, participate in debates and group discussions, give presentations and so on, especially in today's interconnected global society.

Figure 1

The Importance of Speaking Skills



Note. Rao, P. S. (2019). The importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. *Alford Council of International English & Literature Journal* (ACIELJ), 2(2), 6-18.

Rao, P. S. (2019) mentions that it is also important that the teachers must change their method of teaching i.e. from a teacher-centered environment to a learner-centered environment so that the ELLs can get loads of opportunities to participate in the teaching-learning activities that go on in the English classrooms. English teachers can introduce various fun activities in the form of language games to get the learners to speak in English classrooms. In general, a greater number of students show enthusiasm for incorporating games into classroom activities. It is common for students to request additional games, because they find the activities enjoyable. When students engage in these games in a fun learning environment, it is evident that their speaking skills experience significant improvement.

One example of these activities that teachers can introduce is "Speaking about themselves". Hence, this activity certainly gives a chance to the learners to acquire speaking skills enjoyably. Activities such as pair or group work like Role-plays also enhance the learners' speaking skills extremely since the learners get an opportunity to work with peers and collaborate actively.

According to Krashen S. (1989), teachers also need to know their roles in teaching speaking. They have specific roles at various stages, as follows:

a. **The presenting stage:** the teachers introduce something new to be learned, the teachers play a role as informants.

b**. The practice stage:** the teachers allow the learners to work under their direction, the teachers have a role as conductors and monitors.

c. **The production stage:** the teachers allow the learners to work on their own.

It can be deduced that teaching speaking involves three distinct roles: introduction, practice, and independent application. During the introduction phase, the instructor introduces new material, providing information and guidance. In the practice phase, the teacher supervises students as they work under their guidance. In the independent application phase, the teacher assigns tasks for students to complete on their own (Krashen S. 1989).

ASSESSMENT

According to Kerma (2019), assessment is a process with two main characteristics. The first characteristic is that assessment produces information, and the second is that assessment involves making decisions and judgments based on the information obtained. Assessment is a fundamental process used in various domains to evaluate and gauge the knowledge, skills, abilities, and performance of individuals, groups, or organizations. It serves as a valuable tool for educators, employers, and professionals to measure learning outcomes, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make informed decisions. According to Tosuncuoglu (2019), assessments of foreign language teaching and learning are conducted for many reasons, whether in educational settings, workplace environments, or healthcare practices. Assessments take different forms, including tests, quizzes, exams, interviews, and observations. The goal of assessment is to gather meaningful and reliable data, enabling the development of tailored strategies for improvement, growth, and success.

The Principles of Assessment establish the foundation for effective and meaningful evaluation in various fields such as education, professional development, or performance appraisal. These principles reach fundamental guidelines that ensure practicality, reliability, validity, washback, and authenticity in the assessment process, (H. Douglas Brown, 2004). Firstly, assessments should align with clear and specific learning objectives. Secondly, they must be fair, treating all individuals equitably and free from any bias or discrimination. Thirdly, assessments should possess reliability, generating consistent

results over time. Additionally, validity ensures that assessments accurately measure what they are intended to assess. Lastly, authenticity encourages real-world application and context, providing a genuine representation of skills and knowledge. When these principles are upheld to measure learners, assessments become powerful tools for providing feedback and enhancing performance. Brown (2010) stated that quizzes, tests, final exams, and standardized proficiency tests can all be scrutinized through these five principles. In other words, Brown (2010) stated that integrating assessment with its instruction is crucial to designing effective tests in language testing.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment is employed to recognize the knowledge, and skills that learners have possessed. This data is valuable for teachers as it aids in determining their students' requirements and determining the direction of instruction. The assessment process consists of three main approaches: Diagnostic, Formative, and Summative assessments, which are conducted at various stages of the learning process (Kerma,2019).

Summative assessment is a crucial evaluative method employed in education to assess students' overall learning outcomes and achievements at the end of a specific period, such as a semester, course, or academic year. Kerma (2019), claims that summative assessment marks the important stages of learners' development which is formally recorded in the form of scores and marks. Teachers must plan the summative assessment so that learners have enough time to prepare themselves and gain confidence in whatever area they are assessed for the sake of knowing the students' level of acquiring the target skills as it gives a clear picture of learners' performance. (P.33). Unlike formative assessment, which occurs during the learning process, summative assessment provides a comprehensive snapshot of students' knowledge, skills, and understanding of the subject matter. Typically, it takes the form of standardized tests, final exams, or culminating projects. Summative assessment outcomes are used to assign grades, measure the effectiveness of instructional methods, and determine whether learners have met the desired learning objectives. While it is a vital tool for determining academic proficiency, it is important to complement summative assessment with formative assessment for a better understanding of students' progress.

Formative assessment is an essential educational approach aimed at continuously monitoring and guiding students' learning progress throughout the learning process. Unlike

summative assessment which occurs at the end of a course or unit, formative assessment is used by teachers on an ongoing basis to help their students achieve to the best their abilities and is a very important part of the learning process (Renard, 2017). Teachers use a variety of methods, such as quizzes, discussions, polls, and classroom observations, to gather real-time feedback on students' comprehension, skills, and areas of improvement. This timely feedback allows educators to adjust their teaching strategies, offer personalized support, and address students' individual needs. The purpose of formative assessment is to determine if the students perceive the intended instructions and to encourage them to reflect on what they have achieved and what they still need to do (Kerma, 2019). By promoting active student engagement and self-reflection, formative assessment empowers learners to take ownership of their education and enhance their overall learning outcomes. Its focus on improvement and growth makes formative assessment a powerful tool for fostering a dynamic and effective learning environment. Also, it promotes effective thinking of classroom instructions. Encourages ongoing feedback that enhances learning. “Prevents motivation for learner cheating.” (p.39) as cited in Kerma (2019).

The previous theory outlined emphasizes the significance of formative assessment in the classroom, which serves as a valuable tool for estimating student understanding and fostering self-reflection. In practical terms, implementing formative assessment strategies in the classroom can lead to more effective teaching and learning experiences. Teachers can adapt their instruction based on formative feedback, and students can take a more active role in their learning by using assessment information to set goals and monitor their progress.

PEER-ASSESSMENT

Chien et al. (2020) highlight that "Peer assessment is a teaching strategy that involves students in evaluating the work and outcomes of their peers, assigning grades or providing verbal feedback." According to Zheng, Chen, Cui, and Zhang (2019), peer assessment is a method through which learners evaluate aspects of their classmates’ tasks. Peer assessment is a valuable educational practice that involves students evaluating the work of their peers. Through this process, students can provide constructive feedback, assess each other's strengths and weaknesses, and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Aligned with the previous concept, it is valuable to mention that "The social constructivist theory of learning aims to enhance interpersonal connections among students while creating and exchanging knowledge" (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Ketonen et al., 2023) (p.103).

From the earliest stages of a child's development, their actions take on significance within a framework of social behavior, as they are guided toward a specific objective, and are frequently refracted through the prism of the child's environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

The roles of the teacher and students are switched because the teacher ought to support his or her scholars to make them get meaningful development. Therefore, the learning experience becomes an exchange among them.

This approach promotes a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment, where students can develop critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills. According to Efrilia (2019), "Peer assessment contributed to the development of a more supportive learning environment" (p.32).

Consequently, students should be enabled to monitor their spoken language for problems as they will need to do so in real-life situations when they no longer have a teacher to rely on. Nevertheless, Ecuadorian A2 level students show limitations in speaking accuracy and fluency, Statistics show that Ecuador has fallen in its position of the index of knowledge of English worldwide, going down from position 80 in 2011 to 93 in 2020 (EF, 2020), which motivates the analysis of this study. Regarding those difficulties in speaking, peer assessment is implemented in class to help students produce language and even give themselves feedback. Peer assessment can be employed in various ways to support students in improving their speaking skills. One such approach involves the utilization of scoring tools like checklists. A good example of this is, during the development of the assigned activity, students are working on comparing two cities in Ecuador, using adjectives as well as comparatives. Students receive their teacher's feedback and necessary guidelines to use a checklist where they must grade pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and body language with a "yes, sometimes, no" scale. Students employ this instrument as an effective tool and assess the criteria in it. As explained by Su (2020), these scoring tools delineate the criteria and standards for an assignment and its components, also they offer exhaustive explanations of what the evaluator considers acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance, guiding students in their speaking tasks.

However, peer assessment has also its drawbacks, in terms of students' friendships might influence the reliability of grades given by students. Sridharan et al. (2019) observed that students may lack enthusiasm for providing honest peer assessments if they believe that their feedback doesn't positively impact their peers' progress. In a related context, Ratminingsih et al. (2017) found that if students don't perceive themselves as integral to the peer assessment process, they are less likely to develop a sense of autonomy or the ability to impartially evaluate their peers. Perhaps, when comparing two cities, students demonstrate difficulty in articulating their ideas with clarity and organization and will have difficulty identifying the proper usage of comparatives. In addition, there will be problems in grammar and spelling, as well as a lack of vocabulary in the activity. However, they feel confident working with peers which determines that peer assessment will help students improve their speaking skills when comparing the two cities. In addition, it remarks the value of good feedback (Aljohani, 2017; Wulandari et al., 2021) to guide others to identify the areas to improve.

Wride (2017) highlighted the necessity of several key elements for a successful implementation. These include students engaging in reflection regarding both the process and outcomes, providing training to equip learners with guidance for group work, effective management of learning tasks, and addressing group conflicts. Strategies for facilitating student reflection and the continuous monitoring and self-assessment of their progress are also crucial components.

Additionally, other authors have recommended specific activities to be considered in this context. These activities involve informing learners about their expected roles and responsibilities, ensuring they understand the purpose of the evaluation, familiarizing them with the criteria they should follow, and facilitating practice in these areas. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on teachers playing a role in training students how to provide constructive feedback, appropriate behavior during collaborative processes, and the clear and proper utilization of evaluation criteria (Muñoz, 2017).

FINAL REFLECTIONS

While further research is required, current studies suggest that peer assessment possesses inherent motivational qualities that enhance the enthusiasm and engagement of

EFL students in speaking tasks, leading to improved language proficiency and skills. This highlights the importance of incorporating peer assessment into teaching methods, as they align effectively with collaborative and constructivist learning principles.

In summary, this study illustrates the efficacy of peer assessment as a valuable addition to traditional speaking instruction for EFL students. Its effectiveness supports the development of various aspects of speaking skills. Educators should consider the power of peer assessment to create an effective speaking learning environment that complements speaking production activities. Students may encounter difficulties due to their limited prior experience with peer assessment. While students generally show enthusiasm for engaging with novel approaches, some may encounter challenges when it comes to understanding the correct use of checklists, providing constructive feedback, and effectively evaluating their peers. Topping (2017) emphasized in his study that within the peer assessment process, both the assessors and the assesses may experience significant discomfort when it comes to measuring the quality of the work. This discomfort arises not only from the requirement for critical thinking but also from the demand for social skills.

Through careful implementation, peer assessment offers innovative tools to enhance EFL teaching methods and outcomes in speaking. The implementation of this strategy made students improve and realize how important is to take part of their learning. Wride (2017) highlighted the necessity of several key elements for a successful implementation. These include students engaging in reflection regarding both the process and outcomes, providing training to equip learners with guidance for group work, effective management of learning tasks, and addressing group conflicts. Strategies for facilitating student reflection and the continuous monitoring of their progress are also crucial components.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Resultado de Urkund

ANTI-PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE

In my capacity as Tutor of the Research Report, " PEER-ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILL IN FIRST YEAR BACCALAUREATE STUDENTS ", prepared by the graduate student OLGA JANET ZURITA BAQUERIZO, before obtaining the Master's Degree in PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES. I declare that once I have analyzed the anti-plagiarism COMPILATION, after having met the required evaluation requirements, the presently executed project is 2% of the allowed evaluation, therefore I proceed to issue this report. A similarity report is attached.

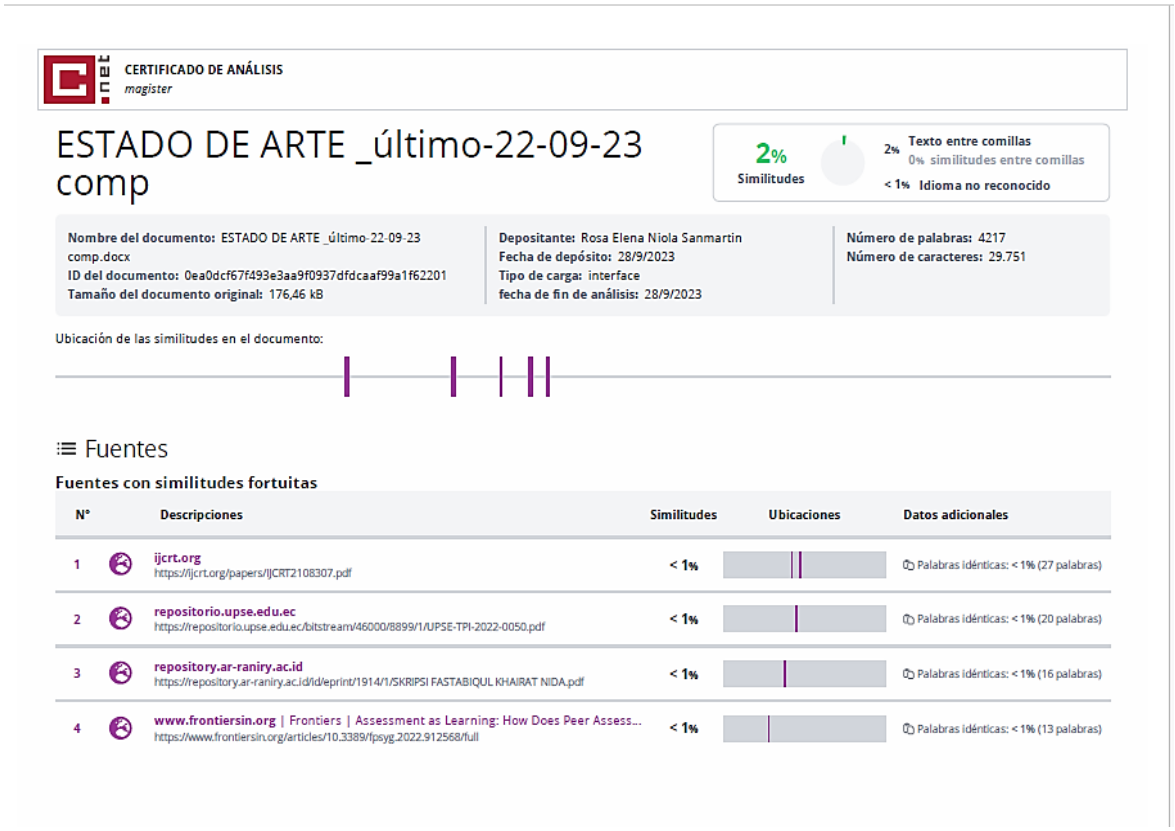
Sincerely,

MSc. Elena Niola Sanmartin

C.I.: 0105193676

ADVISOR

Appendix 2. Urkund Plagiarism Image Result



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Fecha de depósito: 28/9/2023
Tipo de carga: interface
fecha de fin de análisis: 28/9/2023

Número de palabras: 4217
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