Self– and Peer– Evaluation of Group Discussion

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This paper will highlight the benefits of utilizing self- and peer- evaluation of group discussions. A self- and peer- evaluation process has been found to be effective in both addressing logistical constraints which hinder fair assessment of each student's effort and or contribution to discussion as well as serving as a valuable proactive learning tool that ultimately promotes student autonomy. The various benefits and challenges of incorporating such a system will be explained followed by a description of a set of self- and peer-evaluation forms used to evaluate individual performance in small-group discussions in university level courses.

本論はグループディスカッションにおいて自己及び相互評価のシステムを利用する事の有効性について述べるものである。自己／相互評価のプロセスは、個々の生徒のディスカッションへの努力と貢献に対する適正な評価を妨げる教室内での制限において有効であり、又、生徒の自主性を促進する学習手段としてもその有益性が認められている。ここではその様なシステムを具体化する複数の利点について、添付の大学生レベルでの少人数グループディスカッションにおける個別パフォーマンス評価シートに沿って説明する。

Introduction

Evaluation of individual performance in small-group discussion can be a challenge for teachers. Logistical constraints, such as class size and time limitation, do not always allow for careful or fair assessment of each student's contribution and performance in discussion-based activities. A remedy for these inadequate conditions is to implement a self- and peer-evaluation system. Self- and peer- evaluations also have a number of other benefits, including providing goal orientation, transparency of the grading criteria, and building learner autonomy.

In the past decade, there has been increasing interest in the use of self- and peer-evaluation within second language education. Reflecting recent trends to broaden the forms of assessment available to second language instructors, various types of self- and peer-evaluation have been highlighted in descriptions of alternative assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Huerta-Marcias,

1995).Integrating a variety of assessment provides effective ways for instructors to be more informed of the students' strengths and weaknesses. There is also greater interest in self- and peer evaluation in the area of second language testing, where recent studies have focused on showing that these forms of evaluation have adequate reliability in terms of students assessing their own proficiency level (Painter, 1999; Ross, 1998).

While peer-evaluation has been used within writing courses for a number of years as an important element of the process approach to writing, self- and peer- evaluation have only more recently been shown beneficial in evaluating speaking-based activities (Green, 1997; Patri, 2002). This also includes being effective when used for evaluation of learners in large classes (Ballantyne et al., 2002).

A self- and peer- evaluation system has been successfully used in all required discussion-based courses within the English Language Program (ELP) at Kwansei Gakuin University's School of Policy Studies. Seminar courses in the ELP program are designed for students to learn and practice discussion gambits and discussion management strategies. Discussions are initially based on topics closely connected to the students' lives, such as high school issues and part time jobs, in the first semester course and later develop around readings that cover a variety of current social issues.

Benefits of Self– and Peer– Evaluation

For teachers, the self- and peer-evaluation process releases them from the responsibility of being the sole evaluator. Teachers are, thereby, allowed to take on the role of discussion facilitator. Thus, the teacher is able to assist students and groups and still receive the data necessary for grading. A recent study by Patri (2002) revealed that peer- evaluation scores were similar to the teacher evaluation scores and led the researcher to conclude that implementing peer-evaluation allows teachers to use their time "more productively on issues related to improving their teaching techniques."

For students, self- and peer-evaluation pushes them to take responsibility for their effort and participation and, therefore, for the success of their group's discussion. Since students know they will be evaluating themselves and their peers, and by what criteria that evaluation will be based, groups can better work toward discussion goals.

Another benefit to students is goal orientation and transparency of the evaluation process. Self- and peer-evaluation forms help to clarify the goals and objectives. Furthermore, Stefani (1994) points out the benefit of getting students get involved in deciding of the criteria which they will use. Evaluation forms introduced before discussion with criteria based directly on teaching points covered during the course leading up to discussion make grading more transparent for students.

Finally, self- and peer-evaluation builds learner awareness and autonomy (Armanet & Obese-jecty, (1981); Brown & Hudson, 1998; McNamara & Deane, 1995). It does so by pushing students to thoughtfully reflect on their own effort and performance in discussions. In particular, evaluation forms, which require students to make goals and specific plans for the subsequent discussion, help to develop independent learners. Hill and Ruptic (1994) noted that students gain important lifelong skills when they are asked to "reflect on how they are doing as they complete activities, assignments, or projects". Students value their own reflection and that of their peers as well as the responsibility given to them through this process.

Requirements and Challenges

Teachers wanting to implement a self- and peer- evaluation system into their classes will need to model the process. Students need to be shown how to use the evaluation forms and receive guidance during the process. This can be done by providing completed evaluations as models or completing an evaluation together of a videotaped discussion involving students or teachers or both.

It is also necessary to create clear, usable, and appropriate evaluation forms. Appropriateness can be measured by whether or not the criteria reflect the goals of the discussion, and whether or not the students are being asked to evaluate what they really are able to evaluate. Ballantyne et al. (2002) found that it was crucial to have well structured procedures to successfully use peer-evaluation with students encountering it for the first time. Developing such evaluation vehicles takes time and trial.

One of the main challenges of using self- and peer-evaluation is grade inflation and or deflation. Students may take advantage of the system to raise their own grade. On the other hand, some students can also be overly critical of their own performance and deflate their scores (Blanche, 1988). In addition, some students find it difficult to give lower scores, even if appropriate, to their peers, especially if the evaluator lacks confidence in her or his own ability or of her or his performance in the discussion (Falchikov, 1995; Stefani, 1994). In some cases, further guidance or intervention might be necessary.

While grade inflation or deflation is not easy to deal with, there are a few options available if such problems arise. The instructor can either make general comments to the class as a whole, reminding students of the need to accurately evaluate themselves or their classmates, or they can talk with an individual student separately. To avoid open criticism of an individual student in the classroom, it is useful to first provide written feedback on the evaluation form and return it to the student and make personal communication if the situation continues.

The Evaluation Forms

First Semester

In the first semester discussion-based course, students evaluate their performance of discussions using a self-evaluation form, which contains two sections (Appendix A). In the first section, students mark their level of agreement or disagreement to statements about how well they achieved five specified criteria, while in the second section they choose among seven descriptor words the one which best corresponds to their overall participation in the discussion. The descriptor word the student's choose in section two should correspond to the points chosen in section one. For grading purposes, numerical points are later given to each of the descriptor words for the instructor to record. The first semester self-evaluation form is in both English and Japanese to ensure that students clearly understand the process and wording of the form since it is the first time for most of the students to use a self-evaluation system.

Second Semester

In the second semester, the self-evaluation form is noticeably different from the first semester form and has three sections; a section for an overall performance score, a justification section, and a planning section (Appendix B). As students are now familiar with the basic self-evaluation process, the form is

designed to develop more critical thinking of their performance. The inclusion of sections for written comments pushes the students to think about their effort throughout the discussion activity and make concrete plans for future improvement. Students initially choose a performance score from a 10-point scale. Then students justify that performance score and write comments about how they plan to improve their performance in the future. In order to help students know what types of comments to write for the justification and planning, an example of a thoroughly completed evaluation form is provided. Students are told to review their previous planning comments prior to starting the next group discussion to remember what skills they are to be improving on.

Third & Fourth Semesters

The first evaluation done by the students in these courses is a self-assessment of their preparation for the discussion (Appendix C). Students score themselves according to their effort to thoroughly complete the reading passages and to write thoughtful notes for answers to the discussion questions. This evaluation emphasizes the importance of preparation in order to be an active discussion participant. Following the group discussions, students complete a self-evaluation form which takes into account the percentage of English used, their participation, and their effort to improve the discussion by asking questions and helping others when problems arise (Appendix D). Finally, a box for students to write comments about their goals for future discussions is provided. The addition of a multiple score rubric was created to put greater emphasis on each of the specific criteria necessary to have successful discussions. In particular, the box showing the percentage of English used reflects the higher expectations of the students

to perform discussions only in English. Also, the justification section from the previous semester's self-evaluation form has been omitted due to the inclusion of other various self- and peer-evaluation forms within the class. While students no longer have to justify their scores, their comments in the goals section are expected to reflect such justification.

A final set of self- and peer-evaluation forms is used to assess a follow-up discussion task which asks students to research an article related to the discussion topic of the prior week. On the self-evaluation form, students use a 10-point scale to assess their effort in finding an appropriate article and the level of preparation they have done to explain the information to other group members (Appendix E, Top). The peer evaluation form asks students to assess each of their group members' researched information and the notes made to speak about the outside resource (Appendix E, Bottom). Both of these evaluation forms reflect a greater emphasis on the student's preparation for class discussions, particularly in regards to independently finding appropriate materials for the class assignment on their own.

Conclusion

A self- and peer- evaluation system is a valuable alternative to conventional instructor-only assessment of student performance in group discussion. Although there are a number of requirements and challenges in successfully using a self- and peer-evaluation system, there are substantial benefits to both teachers and students alike. It not only serves as an important tool for teachers to better manage and support their discussion-based course, it also provides learners an active role in their learning. Further modifications to the self- and peer-evaluation system are being sought to address not only the problem of

grade-inflation or deflation, but also the possible negative effect of overusing such evaluation tools as well as making sure students have the ability to clearly write well-enough justifications or goals.

References

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Appendix A: Self- and Peer- Evaluation of Discussion

EC1 Seminar

Self-assessment　（自己評価）

1. Think about your effort and participation in today's class activities. Read each statement and circle the number that matches your opinion.
   今日の授業においてのあなたの努力度及び参加度について考えてください。当てはまると思う番号を○で囲んでください。

	disagree （そう思わない）			agree （そう思う）	

（そう思う程度は、1が最も強く数字が上がるにつれて弱くなります）

a.　I tried my best. 　　全力を尽くした。	1	2	3	4	5
b.　I participated actively. 　　積極的に参加した。	1	2	3	4	5
c.　I encouraged and helped others. 　　クラスメートを力づけたり助けたりした。	1	2	3	4	5
d.　I used Communication Tools. 　　Communication Toolsを用いた。	1	2	3	4	5
e.　I did a good job on the homework. 　　宿題の出来は良かった。	1	2	3	4	5

2. Circle the word that best matches your participation in today's activities.
   今日の授業中のアクティビティーへのあなたの参加度について、最もよく当てはまると思うレベルを○で囲んでください。

not at all	poor	fair	good	very good	excellent	outstanding
全く参加 しなかった	あまり参加 しなかった。	普通程度 に参加した	積極的 に参加した	かなり積極的 に参加した	極めて積極的 に参加した	ずば抜けて積極 的に参加した

Appendix B: Self– and Peer– Evaluation of Discussion

EC2 Seminar Name: _____ #: _____

Self-Assessment Class period 1 2 3

1. **Score**

Choose a score based on your effort to reach the goals of the activities.

excellent	= 10	not good	= 4
very good	= 8	bad	= 2
so-so	= 6	no effort	= 0

2. **Justify**

Explain clearly and completely why you chose that score.

3. **Plan**

Think about what you want to improve next time.

Date:	Score:
Justify:	
Plan:	

Appendix C: Self- and Peer-Evaluation of Discussion

Reading and Discussion Preparation: Evaluation

Name _____ # _____

0	5
•————————————————————————•	
not at all	outstanding
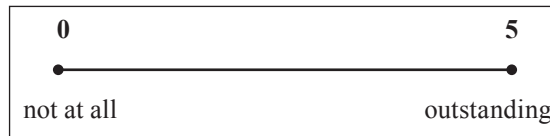
Self-Evaluation

Complete and careful reading of the articles _____x 10 = _____

Complete and thoughtful notes for questions _____1 – 7 x 5 = _____

Teacher Evaluation

Effective opinion questions for discussion _____x 5 = _____

total = _____

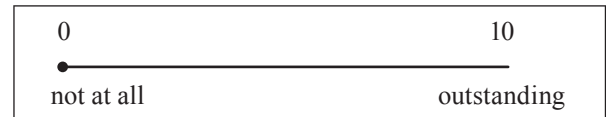# Appendix D: Self– and Peer–Evaluation of Discussion

EC4 Seminar   Name _____ # _____
Graded Discussion Self-Evaluation #

Directions: Evaluate <u>your</u> performance in graded discussions, according to these criteria:

E	English	percentage of English (vs. Japanese) *you* used during discussion
P	Participation	*your* contribution of opinions and ideas to the discussion
M	Membership	*your* effort to improve the discussion by listening, asking, helping

	0				10	
	not at all				outstanding	
topic	E	%	P		M	

goals for next discussion

Appendix E: Self– and Peer– Evaluation of Discussion

Internet Research Evaluation Form

0 (None) ●————————————————————————● 10 (Outsanding)

1. Self-Evaluation	
Effort to find interesting and important material for your classmates	
Preparation for introducing and explaining the material to your classmates	
2. Teacher-Evaluation	
Thoughtful completion of this Internet Research Worksheet	
3. Peer-Evaluation (to be added later)	
Average of your peers' evaluation of the value of the material and of your explanation	
Total (self-, teacher-, and peer-evaluation x 2.5)	

Internet Research Peer–Evaluation

Directions: Evaluate the <u>value</u> of each group member's <u>material</u> and <u>explanation</u>. Give a score in private.

(Not at all) 0 •——————————————————————• 10 (Outstanding)

your name	score
member 1	
member 2	
member 3	