



## **The Effect of Peer-Evaluation on Students' Self-Regulation Development in Iranian EFL Learners**

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### **Introduction**

Many EFL teachers believe that peer-evaluation is regarded as a crucial element to developing the students' ability to evaluate their own and their peer's performance and leads them towards gaining better learning achievement. Students' performance evaluation plays a very significant role in language teaching. Also, one of the most troublesome areas in language teaching is the quality and effectiveness of evaluation. Peer-evaluation is an alternative form of evaluation for teacher-oriented evaluation that involves individuals deciding on what value each of their peers brings to their learning tasks and activities. In addition, the evaluation process can affect the psychological aspects of language learning, such as students' anxiety, motivation, and autonomy, and so on. One of these psychological elements is students' self-regulation. Self-regulation is the process of students' self-directed activities and behaviors that lead to the attainment of learning objectives.

Self-regulation elements include: creating a plan, selecting learning strategies, and then monitoring progress and making adjustments as needed. Peer-evaluation emphasizes the transition of learning responsibility from teachers to students. Self-regulation benefits for students include: the enhancement of the opportunity to create better learning habits, promoting the capability of students to strengthen their learning skills, increasing the ability of students to apply learning strategies to enhance academic achievement, and developing students' monitoring skill for their performance (De Bruin, Thiede, & Camp, 2001; Jarvela & Jarvenoja, 2011; Wolters, 2011; Zimmerman, 2008).

Nowadays, in the Iranian EFL context, evaluation of language performance is a troublesome job for both teachers and students. Problems such as test anxiety, wash-back effect, and test-wiseness training are common in students' language performance evaluation. Also, teachers seek to create a more effective and less anxious situation for evaluating their students' language achievement. Regarding these facts, this study aimed to investigate the effect of peer-evaluation on students' self-regulation development in Iranian EFL learners. Based on this purpose, the following research question was formulated:

RQ: Does peer-evaluation have a statistically significant effect on students' self-regulation development among Iranian EFL learners?

## Literature Review

Reinholz (2016) defined peer-evaluation as a process in which students make judgments about the work of their peers. According to Bourke and Mentis (2011), peer-evaluation refers to a process in which students evaluate their peers' performance against pre-determined standard criteria in the form of actions including goal setting, dynamic evaluation, and reflection. Peer-evaluation can enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. In addition, it has a positive effect on promoting student learning by helping them to reflect critically and think insightfully on their learning tasks and activities (Logan, 2009). Peer-evaluation engages students in active participation in their peers' process of learning. Also, it leads them to better management of learning and tuning of learning by their peers rather than waiting for teachers to intervene. Peer-evaluation has a positive effect on students' achievement and their attitudes towards learning (Topping, 1998).

Peer-evaluation helps students to achieve a better understanding of evaluation agreement and criteria. It brings them a higher opportunity for successful learning (Logan, 2009). According to Min (2006), implementing peer-evaluation in EFL classes has a positive effect on students learning process in cognitive, affective, socialistic, and linguistic perspectives. In addition, when students engage in the peer-evaluation process, their anxiety level reduces, and their self-esteem and motivation increases. It also increases their willingness to take risks and try new tasks (Johnson & Roen, 1989). As Sengupta (1998) argued, peer-evaluation not only brings a well-formed atmosphere for classroom evaluation among peers but is also beneficial for students' self-evaluation process. Peer-evaluation can increase learners' sense of responsibility, motivation level, and reflection. As a result, it improves their learning efficacy (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Saito & Fujita, 2009).

Peer-evaluation develops students' academic learning cognitively and emotionally (Vickerman, 2009). According to Bloxham and West (2004), peer-evaluation helps students to develop their critical thinking skills and enhances their understanding of evaluation standards. The peer-evaluation process engages students in learning tasks, builds essential skills for successful learning, improves their critical thinking and autonomous learning, and inspires innovation and creativity into their performance (Kearney, 2013).

Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) defined learners' self-regulation ability as a self-controlled activity which empowers learners to convert their mental abilities to practical skills related to their learning process. Self-regulated students are intrinsically motivated towards learning and self-satisfied in their language attitudes and beliefs. When students become more self-regulated, the chance of using cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies is enhanced, and they can trust their own abilities in the learning process. Also, they show more flexibility and efficiency in achieving their learning goals and objectives (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Ning & Downing, 2010; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Successful learners tend to monitor and regulate their learning, and it increases their chance to learn more and have greater success in language learning and even academic performance (Andrade & Cizek, 2010). Self-regulated learning allows students to be autonomous and capable of managing their learning process, so it plays an important role in successful academic achievement. When students apply self-regulated strategies in their learning and receive appropriate interventions, this self-regulatory process can help them to achieve higher academic performance (Broadbent & Poon, 2015; Zimmerman, 2008, 2013).

In self-regulated learning, the focused point is on the process of active participation of students in their learning tasks and activities. It develops their language skills when they are confronting a language assignment (Clark, 2012). Self-regulated students can show proactive competence, monitor and adapt their learning process. Such a student can achieve his/her learning goals by using the regulatory approach, including metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and environmental strategies (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). When students regulate their actions, a process of interaction between their self-control, autonomy, and self-discipline occurred and helped them to achieve their learning objectives and develop their language-related performances (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Pintrich (2004) believed that self-regulated learners could construct their meanings, goals, and strategies from the available information from their learning context. It takes place in their minds and

directs them to develop their learning efficacy. Self-regulation components are included: strategies for goal setting and planning, organizing and transforming, seeking information, rehearsing and memorizing, environmental structuring, seeking social assistance, awareness about self-consequences, keeping records and monitoring, reviewing records, and self-evaluation (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011; Zimmerman, 2013). By applying self-regulation strategies, students become able to obtain and retain practical knowledge. In their mission to develop learning capacity, self-regulation strategies help them to organize and perform their learning duty in more efficient ways (Broadbent & Poon, 2015).

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

To conduct this study, 40 intermediate EFL learners were selected through their OPT scores from a language institute in Sari. They were female learners aged from 16 to 20 years old. All the participants of this study spent at least two years learning English in the institute.

### **Instruments**

#### **Oxford Placement Test (OPT)**

This test was administered to ensure homogenized participants. The original test was developed by Oxford University Press (Allan, 2001). It comprised 60 items in two parts. The first part was designed for vocabulary/grammar (40 items), and the second part was designed for reading comprehension (20 items).

#### **Self-regulation questionnaire**

This questionnaire was used for measuring learners' self-regulation ability. This questionnaire contains 22 items on a Likert scale and was designed by Gaumer-Erickson, Soukup, Noonan, and McGurn (2015). This questionnaire was used twice as pre and post-tests in this study.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

For collecting the required data in order to answer the research question, the researchers randomly divided the homogenized participants into experimental (N = 20) and control groups (N = 20). Before starting the instructional phase, the researchers administered a self-regulation questionnaire as the pre-test of this study. Through the pre-test, the researchers measured the participants' self-regulation level. At the instructional phase, the experimental group was exposed to peer-evaluation for their learning tasks and activities. The control group was exposed to a conventional type of teaching in which the teacher evaluated their learning tasks and activities. Note that the experimental group members were taught how to evaluate their peers' work by using an evaluation checklist. After the instructional phase, the researchers administered a self-regulation questionnaire as the post-test of this study. Through the post-test, the researchers measured the participants' self-regulation level at the end of the instructional period. Then, the researchers recorded obtained data and analyzed them through SPSS software.

## **Result and Data Analysis**

The research question of this study was as follows:

RQ: Does peer-evaluation have a statistically significant effect on students' self-regulation development in Iranian EFL learners?

To answer this research question, the first descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups' pre-tests' data are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
*The Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental and Control Groups Pre-Tests' Data*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Exp Group Pre-test	22	44	80	<b>62.86</b>	10.776
Cont Group Pre-test	22	33	82	<b>60.77</b>	13.299
Valid N (listwise)	22				

As can be seen in Table 1, the means of the experimental and control groups' pre-tests' data are 62.86 and 60.77, respectively. Next, the Shapiro-Wilks test of normality of the experimental and control groups' pre-tests' data is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
*Normality of the Experimental and Control Groups Pre-Tests' Data*

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Exp Group Pre-test	.951	22	<b>.328</b>
Cont Group Pre-test	.979	22	<b>.907</b>

As can be seen in Table 2, the sig values of the experimental and control groups' pre-tests' data are 0.328 and 0.907, respectively, and both are more than 0.05. This means that these data are normally distributed. So, the researchers can use a parametric test (paired samples t-test) for comparison of two groups' means. In Table 3, the t-test calculation for comparison of means is presented.

TABLE 3  
*T-Test Calculation of the Experimental and Control Groups Pre-tests' Means Comparison*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig
		Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Exp Pre Cont Pre	2.091	17.757	3.786	-5.782	9.964	.552	21	<b>.587</b>

As can be seen in Table 3, the sig value is 0.587 and more than 0.05, which means that the two groups' pre-tests' means difference is not statistically meaningful or significant. Next, the descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups' post-tests' data are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
*The Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental and Control Groups Post-Tests' Data*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Exp Group Post-test	22	50	85	<b>68.73</b>	10.416
Cont Group Post-test	22	34	75	<b>55.09</b>	11.199
Valid N (listwise)	22				

As can be seen in Table 4, the experimental and control groups' post-tests' means are 68.73 and 55.09, respectively. Next, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality of the experimental and control groups' post-tests' data is presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5

*The Normality Test of the Experimental and Control Groups Pre-Tests' Data*

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Exp Group Pre-test	.960	22	<b>.499</b>
Cont Group Pre-test	.979	22	<b>.905</b>

Table 5 shows the sig values of the experimental and control groups' pre-tests' data which are 0.499 and 0.905, respectively, and both are more than 0.05, which means that these data are normally distributed. So, the researchers used a parametric test (paired samples t-test) for comparison of two groups' means. The t-test calculation for comparison of means is presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6

*T-Test Calculation of the Experimental and Control Groups Post-tests' Means Comparison*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig
		Mean	SD	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Exp Post Cont Post	13.636	17.142	3.655	6.036	21.237	3.731	21	<b>.001</b>

As can be seen in Table 6, the sig value is 0.001 and less than 0.05, which means that the two groups' post-tests' mean difference is statistically meaningful and significant. So, the researchers concluded that peer-evaluation has a statistically significant effect on students' self-regulation development in Iranian EFL learners.

## Discussion

This study revealed that peer-evaluation has a positive effect on students' self-regulation development in Iranian EFL learners. The possible reason for this finding could be that when students engage in the peer-evaluation process, their self-confidence and self-esteem levels increase, and their fear and anxiety levels decrease. It is due to the fact that, the evaluation tasks are their responsibility and not done by their teacher. On the other hand, cooperation between peers brings a positive learning atmosphere around them, and it can make them more motivated towards learning a foreign language. When students successfully evaluate their peers, they can potentially regulate themselves better than other students. This finding is consistent with Johnson and Roen's (1989) opinion in which they believed, when students engage in the peer-evaluation process, their anxiety level reduces, and their self-esteem and motivation increases. It also increases their willingness to take risks and try new tasks. Also, according to Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) and Saito and Fujita (2009), peer-evaluation can increase learners' sense of responsibility, motivation level, and reflection. As a result, it improves their learning efficacy.

## Conclusion

As revealed in this study, peer-evaluation can promote students' self-regulation ability in Iranian EFL learners. The peer-evaluation process can make learning conditions better for students and lead them to more successful learning situations. When students are equipped with a high level of self-regulation ability, they can carry their learning responsibility more than other students who have a lower level of self-regulation ability. This findings of this study can help students, teachers, curriculum developers, and language program policymakers towards better learning situations and programs. So the researchers

recommended language teachers to consider the positive effect of the peer-evaluation process in learning language and their language assessments and evaluations. In addition, self-regulated students have a better chance to become successful learners as is seen in this study. However, applying peer-evaluation in the language classroom and considering self-regulation ability can help language learning chief stakeholders, i.e., students, to acquire better learning experiences.

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## Appendix

### Self-Regulation Questionnaire

Please **Check One** response that best describes you. Be honest, since the information will be used to help you in school and also help you become more prepared for college and careers. There are no right or wrong answers!

Student ID:

Date:

Not Very Like Me		→ Very Like Me				
N	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	I plan out projects that I want to complete.					
2	If an important test is coming up, I create a study plan.					
3	Before I do something fun, I consider all the things that I need to get done.					
4	I can usually estimate how much time my homework will take to complete.					
5	I have trouble making plans to help me reach my goals.					
6	I keep track of how my projects are going.					
7	I know when I'm behind on a project.					
8	I track my progress for reaching my goal.					
9	I know what my grades are at any given time.					
10	Daily, I identify things I need to get done and track what gets done.					
11	I have trouble remembering all the things I need to accomplish.					
12	I do what it takes to get my homework done on time.					
13	I make choices to help me succeed, even when they aren't the most fun right now.					
14	As soon as I see things aren't going right, I want to do something about it.					
15	I keep trying as many different possibilities as necessary to succeed.					
16	I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take a long time to complete.					
17	When I get behind on my work, I often give up.					
18	I think about how well I'm doing on my assignments.					
19	I feel a sense of accomplishment when I get everything done on time.					
20	I think about how well I've done in the past when I set new goals.					
21	When I fail at something, I try to learn from my mistakes.					
22	I keep making the same mistakes over and over again.					