

Discussion as a Means to Improve Peer Assessment Accuracy

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Abstract : Writing is an important learning activity that cultivates higher level thinking. Effective and immediate feedback is necessary to help improve students' writing skills. Peer assessment can be an effective method in writing tasks because it makes it possible for students not only to receive quick feedback on their writing but also to get a chance to examine different perspectives on the same topic. Peer assessment can be practiced frequently and has the advantage of immediate feedback. However, there is controversy about the accuracy of peer assessment. In this study, we tried to demonstrate experimentally how the accuracy of peer assessment could be improved. Participants (n=76) were randomly assigned to groups of 4 members. All the participant graded two sets of 4 essays on the same topic. They graded the first set twice, and the second set or the posttest once. After the first grading of the first set, each group in the experimental condition 1 (discussion group), were asked to discuss the results of the peer assessment and then to grade the essays again. Each group in the experimental condition 2 (reading group), were asked to read the assessment on each essay by an expert and then to grade the essays again. In the control group, the participants were asked to grade the 4 essays twice in different orders. Afterwards, all the participants graded the second set of 4 essays. The mean score from 4 participants was calculated for each essay. The accuracy of the peer assessment was measured by Pearson correlation with the scores of the expert. The results were analyzed by two-way repeated measure ANOVA. The main effect of grading was observed: Grading accuracy got better as the number of grading experience increased. Analysis of posttest accuracy revealed that the score variations within a group of 4 participants decreased in both discussion and reading conditions but not in the control condition. These results suggest that having students discuss their grading together can be an efficient means to improve peer assessment accuracy. By discussing, students can learn from others about what to consider in grading and whether their grading is too strict or lenient. Further research is needed to examine the exact cause of the grading accuracy.

Keywords : peer assessment, evaluation accuracy, discussion, score variations

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