

A Qualitative Study on Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment in College Students' Oral English

Xiaolin Liu

Department of Foreign Languages, Harbin Engineering University, China

Fund: The Teaching Reform Project of Harbin Engineering University in 2018(A practical study of college oral English teaching mode under the mechanism of TSCA) Free Exploration Project of Basic Scientific Research of Central Universities in 2020.

Abstract: This article examines the application of Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment in college students' oral English. Qualitative Study data were collected during 16 weeks teaching practice and included the students' and the examiner's interviews. The result indicates that most students' oral English has been improved. They prefer this assessment model, and their English learning interest and proficiency has been enhanced as well.

Keywords: Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment; Oral English; Qualitative Study

Publication date: March, 2020

Publication online: 31 March 2020

***Corresponding author:** Xiaolin Liu, xiaolincelia@163.com

1 Introduction

Oral English has been paid more and more attention in China. But because of class time and the large number of students, it is difficult to improve the college students' oral English. So, it is important to evaluate the students' oral English productions to promote the learning effect. Teacher-student collaborative assessment (TSCA) was put forward by Wen Qiufang (2016)^[1], which is mainly to solve the problem that there are many tasks in teaching practice, and to realize effective assessment of students' spoken or written productions. This paper applies teacher-student collaborative assessment in oral English class of vocational school, to explore the practical effect and

value of teacher-student collaborative assessment in oral English teaching.

2 Theoretical Framework

Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment put forward by Wen (2016) emphasizes the cooperation between teachers and students in assessing students' production. It combines students' self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment, and highlights the concept of collaborative learning. "Teachers and students cooperation evaluation" is the part of Production-oriented Approach (POA) to solve the problem of low efficiency and effectiveness of teachers' evaluation of students' output tasks^[2]. It is a new evaluation in which teachers conduct detailed assessment of typical samples before class, and then students cooperate with each other in class to evaluate typical samples together, thus students must complete many types of output tasks with high frequency^[3]. That can solve the problems of heavy curriculum burden. If we can't feedback students' products in time and effectively, students' output motivation will be frustrated and it is also difficult to guarantee product quality. TSCA is also a supplement to other existing evaluation methods.

As a new evaluation form from PAO, TSCA is divided into three stages: pre class preparation, in class implementation and after class activities. Before class, the teacher reviews the typical samples of students in detail; in class, under the guidance of the teacher's professional guidance, the teacher evaluates the typical samples through the cooperation with the students; after

class, the teacher can know whether the product has been modified and the teaching objectives have been achieved.

TSCA requires students to participate in various forms. TSCA requires students to evaluate typical samples in class from independent thinking, group communication to large class discussion. Students participate in the evaluation in a variety of forms, so that students can learn the same output product for many meaningful times, thus it can help students to improve students' effective learning with long-term memory.

TSCA requires teachers to play a leading role in the evaluation process. It can be said that the whole evaluation process is carried out under the professional guidance of teachers. This is beneficial to improve the quality and effect of evaluation.

TSCA evaluates oral and written products completed by students, such as composition, translation, debate, oral report, etc. Compared with other evaluative methods, TSCA has three significant characteristics: first, from the perspective of evaluation subject, TSCA is not a simple superposition of teachers and students, but is that a teacher corrects typical samples before class and cooperates with students in class to evaluate typical samples. That is, under the guidance of teachers, students evaluate and learn at the same time, taking evaluation as the strengthening stage of learning. Second, the evaluation content is not only limited to the quality of the product itself, but also covers the realization of the teaching objectives. Third, TSCA emphasizes students' self-evaluation or mutual evaluation after class.

3 Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

The study applies teacher-student collaborative assessment in the oral English teaching, and aims to solve the following two questions:

(1) Can teacher-student collaborative assessment improve students' oral English proficiency?

(2) What're the students' attitudes to teacher-student collaborative assessment?

3.2 Research Subjects

The 36 participants of the second grade in this project were from Harbin Engineering University. They were non-English majors. According to the teaching plans

in our university, the students should finish the four topics of the lessons. Each topic includes four weeks. In the fourth week, they had oral examinations, which contained answering questions, group discussions, debates and personal presentations. I taught the participants in person and another teacher would give the oral examinations to the students.

In order to guarantee the reliability and validity, before the class, I asked the oral examiner to test the whole class' oral proficiency according to the scoring standard of CET 4 oral English test. This scoring standard can assess the students' oral English from the aspects of grammar, lexical resources, coherence and pronunciation. I chose a typical sample of a girl's recording of oral English, which could stand for the average performances of the whole class.

During the class, I divided the whole class into 8 groups and assigned evaluation tasks to guide students to complete the evaluation, and clarify the forms of students' participation in activities. And then I asked them to have a group discussion about the chosen sample. After the discussion, each group should make a report about their assessment of the sample in front of the class. At last, I summarized the 8 groups' reports and shared my own assessments with the whole class.

After class, I made clear the after-school tasks, and let the students complete the modification according to the teacher's requirements independently. It embodies the concept of TSCA: evaluation requires teachers' professional guidance and all students' participation in various forms^[1].

3.3 Research Methods

To ensure the reliability and validity of this study, the case study draws on qualitative research strategies, including tests and interviews^[4].

For every fourth week, the students would be required to take part in an oral examination and the examiner would take down the each student's scores. The purpose of doing that is to know whether the students' oral English proficiency has improved.

The interviews were semistructured with openended questions to elicit students' attitudes to teacher-student collaborative assessment. The writer conducted a content analysis on the transcripts to understand the students' attitudes in relation to the key sources of their changes in attitude towards the assessment method. Data from the tests and the interviews were analysed for strategy development is managed in practice. At the

same time, the writer has interviewed the examiner about the situation of the students' oral examination so as to ensure the reliability and validity of the students' interviews. In order to facilitate the interview, teachers and students used Chinese to communicate during the whole process and the interview was done under a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere. At the same time, the writer took notes and recorded the interview.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collected in this paper include: (a) classroom evaluation recording, students' classroom discussion recording, and teachers' classroom teaching lesson plans, electronic courseware and Reflections for recording TSCA. (b) The whole process of classroom operation, students' participation in discussion and teachers' reflection on evaluation. These electronic texts are also used to inspect students' oral changes before and after evaluation. (c) Students' reflection logs and interviews are used for collection of students' feedback on TSCA. Data from multiple sources are verified to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Through the four tests, the average scores of the grammar and lexical resources has been increased from 2.5 to 4; the average scores of coherence has been increased from 1.5 to 2.5; and the average scores of pronunciation has been increased from 0.5 to 1.5. That means the students' oral English proficiency has been improved.

From the summary of the students' interview, we can conclude that the students have benefited a lot from TSCA. In the process of TSCA, they were more sensitive to the problems discussed in class and paid more attention to the mistakes in the oral expression. And they would like to spend more time preparing their oral English test because they were afraid of losing face. They tried their best not to let the other students pick up more mistakes. And they thought it was easy for them to correct grammar mistakes. But it was difficult for them to assess the pronunciation of the sample. They also said they only assessed the pronunciation according to the speed of speech and the amount of hesitation. To tell the truth, they did not know whether the pronunciation of the sample was right or not. And they thought the teacher should pay more attention to the assessment of pronunciation. When asked about whether they could understand the recording of the sample without written script, some of them expressed sometimes they could only guess the meaning because

of their poor listening ability. And the students also said that their oral works may be evaluated, so they would seriously complete the oral works.

But five students expressed that they were a little nervous when doing the group assessment because they were poor in English and they had no confidence in themselves and they were afraid that they would give the wrong opinion about the sample. So they believed it is the teacher who should do the assessment.

And the examiner also gave her opinions about the students' oral English proficiency. From her interview, we can know that most students have made great progress in the aspect of grammar, structure of the expression and coherence. However, only a few students have improved a lot about their pronunciation, and some students only made a little progress in their pronunciation. The examiner's interview has proved the reliability and validity of the students' interview.

From the analysis of the interview data, students hold positive views towards TSCA. On the whole, they recognize the effectiveness brought by this assessment method. But the advantage can also be drawn that students make little or no mistake on the problems discussed in class, and they have had certain problem awareness, knew how to check the errors and they knew what factors a good piece of oral works should contain. Besides, through discussion in class with other people, students' cooperation and consciousness to cooperate were improved, but they still believed that teacher should be the main body to evaluate students. They agreed with the authority of teachers in oral teaching and believed that they could improve more if their oral performance was evaluated by teachers, especially the assessment of their pronunciation.

4 Discussions

I proposed to discuss some of the insights I saw emerging from my analyses of the oral productions and interviews. The results of this study show that after one semester of oral English teaching, students' scores in fluency, coherence and vocabulary have been improved. Most of the students are satisfied with TSCA, and think that this evaluation model can help them improve their oral English. According to the output driven hypothesis of Production-oriented Approach (POA), output is not only the driving force of language learning, but also the goal of language learning. Once students make clear the meaning of output tasks and their own shortcomings, they will be more active in input learning to complete

output tasks to make up for their own shortcomings, that is, learners' awareness of the lack is the internal driving force of learning new language knowledge.

In addition, students also expect to get more evaluation from teachers, the main reason may be: in TSCA "Expert guidance" requires teachers to review students' oral production before class and analyze typical samples in class, which breaks down the oral output task in traditional oral teaching into two modules: expression and pronunciation, taking the content evaluation into account, so that the focus of teachers' feedback in oral teaching is shifted from the original focus on the correction of grammar, vocabulary and other basic knowledge to the ideological content and the improvement of logical thinking ability. As Wen Qiufang(2018) pointed out, selective evaluation is more effective than comprehensive evaluation^[5]. Targeted teacher evaluation in oral English class can effectively improve the poor structure, lack of thinking, loose logic of the students' oral production and so on, and effectively improve the coherence of students' oral presentation.

Therefore, the dominant position of teachers cannot be ignored in TSCA. The leading role of teachers lies in setting appropriate evaluation objectives, arranging appropriate evaluation tasks and necessary explanation for completing tasks^[6]. The explanation for the focus of evaluation embodies the concept of "integration of evaluation and teaching"^[7]. By doing that, the teachers can further teach in the "evaluation" so as to create opportunities for students to learn in-depth. The process of completing the evaluation task is also the process of learning, which is, evaluation Learning Integration. Teachers' evaluation of college students is a summary of college students' learning knowledge, and also a necessary link to promote the follow-up work of college students. Teachers should ensure the difference and pertinence of evaluation so as to achieve the effectiveness and guidance of evaluation^[8]. As for the output, due to the differences between the personality and learning ability of college students, the outputs of college students are not the same. If teachers use the same evaluation mechanism, it will affect the improvement of college student' English listening and speaking ability. In addition, the adoption of different and targeted English evaluation mechanism can set up self-confidence for college students, enable them to speak English better, and then promote the all-round development of college students. The students would

develop a sense of error awareness. And the students will memorize deeply the questions raised in oral works and try to avoid making the same mistakes next time.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, TSCA is applied to college oral English class for 16 weeks. It is found that TSCA has improved the efficiency of college oral English teaching, and has stimulated the initiative and creativity of students in oral English learning. TSCA has helped students to achieve the significant improvement of oral English ability through the combination of "learning" and "evaluation"^[9] by adopting the cooperative evaluation through the methods of students' independent thinking, peer communication and the teacher's cooperation with the students.

However, there are still some limitations of the present study. First, the sample size is small, which only has 36 non-English major students. Secondly, this study is limited by the duration of the teaching, which only last for 16 weeks. Furthermore, the research findings are limited by the instruments. The results would be more convincing and comprehensive, if they are combined with other instruments such as quantitative study and so on. Despite of some limitations of the study, it is hoped that it can provide some insights and proofs for the further research on the application of TSCA in English language teaching and learning.

References

- [1] Wen, QF. Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment: A new form of assessment for the production-oriented approach[J]. *Foreign Language World*, 2016, 7 (5): 37-43.
- [2] Wen, QF. Developing the theoretical system of production-oriented approach in language teaching[J]. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 2015, 10(4): 547-558.
- [3] Sun SG. Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment in classroom teaching: A reflective practice[J]. *Modern Foreign Languages*, 2017, 5(3): 397-406.
- [4] Wiliam D. What is assessment for learning? [J]. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 2011, 37(1): 3-14.
- [5] Wen QF. Dialectical research paradigm: Theory and application[J]. *Foreign Language World*, 2018, 6 (2): 2-10.
- [6] Berry R. *Assessment for Learning*[M]. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008.
- [7] Lantolf JP, Poehner MF. *Sociocultural Theory and the Pedagogical Imperative*[J]. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- [8] Hanjani AM. Collaborative revision in L2 writing: Learners reflections[J]. *ELT Journal* , 2016, 70(3): 296-307.
- [9] Wen, QF. Production-oriented approach in Chinese as a second language[J]. *Chinese Teaching in the World*, 2018, 10 (3): 387-400.