



Exploring Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives on EFL Speaking Instruction: Peer Assessment and Non-Scripted Role-Play Activities

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Abstract

Improving students' speaking proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts remains a central concern in language education, with numerous approaches discussed in the literature. Among these, peer assessment (PA) and non-scripted role-play (NSRP) activities have been identified as potentially effective strategies. This article reviews theoretical and empirical studies to examine how PA and NSRP may support the development of EFL learners' oral performance. The integration of these pedagogical strategies is frequently associated with enhanced language acquisition, improved communicative competence, and increased learner engagement. The literature suggests that PA can promote critical thinking and self-regulation while fostering collaborative learning, and that NSRP activities offer opportunities for authentic language use. The discussion is grounded in constructivist learning theories, which emphasize the importance of social interaction in the learning process. Definitions and applications of PA and NSRP in EFL settings are explored, and their potential synergy is highlighted. A conceptual framework is proposed to assist educators in considering how these strategies might be implemented in practice. Finally, the review discusses common challenges such as bias, feedback quality, and learner motivation, along with possible ways to address them. The article concludes by suggesting that PA and NSRP hold promise for enhancing oral proficiency in EFL contexts and may warrant further attention in language education research and practice.

Keywords: Peer Assessment (PA), Non-Scripted Role-Play (NSRP) Activities, EFL Learners, English Oral Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by the need for more effective and engaging pedagogical approaches. Traditional methods often emphasized rote memorization and grammar drills, which, while beneficial in certain contexts, failed to prepare learners for real-world communication adequately. In contrast, contemporary approaches prioritize communicative competence, focusing on the ability to use language effectively in various social contexts. Among the myriad strategies available to teachers, peer assessment (PA) and non-scripted role-play (NSRP) activities have emerged as particularly effective tools for enhancing learners' oral performance.

PA involves students evaluating each other's work and providing feedback that can lead to improved understanding and performance. This method not only fosters a sense of accountability among learners but also encourages them to reflect critically on their own language use. Studies

have shown that PA can significantly improve learners' writing and speaking skills, promoting a collaborative learning environment where students actively engage with one another's performances (Birjandi & Hadidi Tamjid, 2012; Omarkaly & Tamer, 2021).

On the other hand, NSRP activities allow learners to practice language skills in authentic contexts, encouraging spontaneity and creativity. Unlike scripted role-plays, which may limit learners' ability to think on their feet, NSRP activities provide a dynamic platform for learners to navigate real-life communication scenarios, thereby enhancing their fluency and confidence (Ho & Savignon, 2007).

This article aims to explore the theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence that support the integration of PA and NSRP in EFL contexts. By synthesizing existing literature, the article explains how these pedagogical strategies can foster language acquisition, improve communicative competence, and promote learner engagement. The subsequent sections delve into the definitions and applications of PA and NSRP, examine their collaborative effects, and propose an operational framework for teachers. Additionally, the article addresses the challenges and considerations associated with implementing these strategies, ultimately concluding with recommendations for future studies and practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF PA AND NSRP ACTIVITIES

The studies on PA reveal a growing recognition of its potential to enhance language learning outcomes. PA is defined as a process in which students evaluate the work of their peers, providing feedback that can lead to improved performance and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This approach aligns with constructivist principles, emphasizing the importance of social interaction in the learning process (Zhang, 2022). Studies have consistently indicated that PA can foster critical thinking, self-regulation, and collaborative learning among EFL learners (Al-Rashidi et al., 2022; Ebrahimi et al., 2021). For instance, studies have demonstrated that students who engage in PA develop a greater awareness of performance criteria and become more reflective in their learning processes (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018).

In addition to its cognitive benefits, PA has been proven to boost learners' motivation and engagement. When students are involved in the assessment process, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning and invest effort into improving their language skills (Nguyen, 2017). Furthermore, the collaborative nature of PA fosters a sense of community among learners, encouraging them to support one another in their language development (Razak & Saeed, 2014). However, challenges such as bias in evaluations and the potential for negative peer dynamics must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of PA in EFL contexts (Rahmatillah & Fajrita, 2022).

NSRP activities, on the other hand, provide a dynamic platform for learners to practice language skills in authentic contexts. NSRP is defined as a pedagogical approach that allows learners to engage in spontaneous, unscripted interactions that mimic real-life communication scenarios. This method encourages learners to think on their feet, adapt their language use to various contexts, and develop their fluency and confidence (Ho & Savignon, 2007). Studies show that NSRP activities can significantly enhance learners' speaking abilities, as they provide opportunities for authentic language use and promote engagement in the learning process (Farrokhi et al., 2012; Ghanbari & Barati, 2020).

Moreover, NSRP activities can be effectively integrated with PA to create a collaborative effect that maximizes the benefits of both methodologies. When learners engage in role-play and subsequently assess each other's performances, they not only reinforce their language skills but also develop critical thinking and self-regulation (Xu & Peng, 2022). The combination of PA and NSRP fosters a collaborative learning environment where learners can experiment with language use, receive constructive feedback, and reflect on their performances, ultimately leading to improved oral proficiency (Mowlaie & Maftoon, 2015).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in constructivist learning theories, which emphasize the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process. Vygotsky's social constructivism posits that learning occurs through social interactions, where learners co-construct knowledge and skills (Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective aligns with the principles of PA, as learners engage with one another to evaluate and provide feedback on their performances. By participating in PA, learners are encouraged to reflect on their own language use and develop a deeper understanding of performance criteria, ultimately enhancing their language skills (Morgan et al., 2014).

In addition to social constructivism, collaborative learning theory provides a valuable lens through which to examine the integration of PA and NSRP. Collaborative learning emphasizes the importance of peer interaction and dialogue in the learning process, suggesting that learners benefit from working together to achieve common goals (Johnson et al., 2014). This theory supports the notion that PA and NSRP can create a supportive learning environment where learners feel empowered to take risks and experiment with language use.

Furthermore, the integration of PA and NSRP can be understood through the lens of formative assessment theory. Formative assessment is characterized by ongoing feedback and reflection, allowing learners to monitor their progress and adjust their learning strategies (Clark, 2012). By incorporating PA into NSRP activities, teachers can provide learners with immediate feedback that is essential for language development. This approach not only enhances learners' speaking abilities but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and self-regulation (Li et al., 2010).

3.1. PA in EFL Contexts

PA has gained considerable attention in EFL contexts as a valuable pedagogical tool for enhancing language learning outcomes. Defined as a process in which students evaluate the work of their peers and provide feedback, PA fosters a collaborative learning environment that encourages active engagement and critical reflection (van Zundert et al., 2010). Studies have evidenced that PA can significantly improve learners' writing and speaking skills, as it promotes a deeper understanding of performance criteria and encourages learners to take ownership of their learning (Alsehibany, 2024; Khalil, 2018).

In EFL contexts, PA has been confirmed to boost learners' motivation and engagement. Studies specify that when students are involved in the assessment process, they are more likely to invest effort into improving their language skills and take responsibility for their learning (Gan, 2020). Additionally, PA fosters a sense of community among learners, as they support one another in their language development and share insights on their performances (Astuti & Lammers, 2020). However, challenges such as bias in evaluations and the potential for negative peer dynamics must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of PA in EFL contexts (Azarnoosh, 2013).

The implementation of PA in EFL classrooms can take various forms, including peer feedback on writing assignments, oral presentations, and group projects. Studies have demonstrated that PA can lead to significant improvements in learners' writing performance, as students engage in critical evaluation of their peers' work (Omarkaly & Tamer, 2021; Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, studies have shown that PA can enhance learners' speaking abilities, as it encourages them to articulate their thoughts and provide constructive feedback to their peers (Ebrahimi et al., 2021; Nejad & Mahfoodh, 2019).

Despite its numerous benefits, the successful implementation of PA in EFL contexts requires careful planning and facilitation by teachers. Teachers must provide clear guidelines and training to help students understand the assessment criteria and minimize bias in their evaluations (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Additionally, teachers should create a supportive learning environment that encourages open communication and constructive criticism among peers, ultimately fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement (Rahmatillah & Fajrita, 2022).

3.2. NSRP Activities

NSRP activities represent a dynamic pedagogical approach that encourages learners to engage in spontaneous, unscripted interactions that mimic real-life communication scenarios. Unlike scripted role-plays, which may limit learners' ability to think on their feet, NSRP activities provide a platform for learners to navigate authentic language use, enhancing their fluency and confidence in speaking (Ho & Savignon, 2007). Studies suggest that NSRP activities can significantly improve learners' speaking abilities, as they provide opportunities for authentic language use and promote engagement in the learning process (Farrokhi et al., 2012; Ghanbari & Barati, 2020).

The definition of NSRP activities encompasses a range of interactive tasks that allow learners to assume different roles and engage in dialogue with their peers. These activities can take various forms, including simulations, improvisations, and real-life scenarios that require learners to communicate effectively in English. Studies have discovered that NSRP activities can enhance learners' pragmatic competence, allowing them to navigate social interactions more effectively (Alikhani, 2017). Furthermore, NSRP activities provide a safe environment for learners to experiment with language, reducing anxiety associated with speaking in a foreign language (Lee et al., 2018).

The integration of NSRP activities with PA can create a collaborative effect that maximizes the benefits of both methodologies. When learners engage in role-play and subsequently assess each other's performances, they not only reinforce their language skills but

also develop critical thinking and self-regulation (Xu & Peng, 2022). The combination of PA and NSRP fosters a collaborative learning environment where learners can experiment with language use, receive constructive feedback, and reflect on their performances, ultimately leading to improved oral proficiency (Mowlaie & Maftoon, 2015).

Despite the numerous advantages of NSRP activities, challenges related to implementation must be addressed. Teachers must carefully design role-play scenarios that are relevant and engaging for learners, ensuring that they align with the learners' language proficiency levels and interests (Zhao, 2010). Additionally, teachers should provide clear guidelines and support to help learners navigate the role-play process effectively, fostering a positive and productive learning environment (Khalil, 2018).

3.3 The Collaborative Effect of PA and NSRP Activities

The integration of PA and NSRP activities can create a powerful learning environment that fosters language acquisition and develops oral performance. By engaging in role-play, learners can practice language skills in context, while PA allows them to receive constructive feedback on their performances. This dual approach not only reinforces language skills but also promotes critical thinking and self-regulation (Li et al., 2010).

Studies reveal that the combination of PA and NSRP can lead to significant improvements in learners' speaking abilities. For instance, studies have shown that learners who participate in both PA and role-play activities demonstrate greater gains in oral proficiency compared to those who engage in either activity alone (Jhangiani, 2016; Ulla & Winitkun, 2017). The collaborative effect of these methodologies can be attributed to the collaborative nature of the learning experience, where learners support one another in their language development and share insights on their performances (Xu & Peng, 2022).

Moreover, the integration of PA and NSRP activities can boost learners' motivation and engagement. When students are actively involved in both assessing their peers and participating in role-play, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning and invest effort into improving their language skills (Gan, 2020). This sense of agency can lead to increased confidence and a greater willingness to take risks in language use, ultimately contributing to improved oral performance (Astuti & Lammers, 2020).

Despite the numerous benefits associated with the integration of PA and NSRP, challenges related to implementation must be addressed. Teachers must carefully design activities that are relevant and engaging for learners, ensuring that they align with the learners' language proficiency levels and interests (Zhao, 2010). Additionally, teachers should provide clear guidelines and support to help learners navigate the assessment process effectively, fostering a positive and productive learning environment (Khalil, 2018).

3.4. Suggested Operational Framework

To effectively implement PA and NSRP activities in EFL contexts, teachers can adopt this suggested operational framework that includes several key components. First, teachers should

establish clear learning objectives that align with the goals of both PA and NSRP activities. These objectives should focus on enhancing learners' speaking skills, promoting critical thinking, and fostering collaboration among peers (Mowlaie & Maftoon, 2015). Additionally, the incorporation of learner-centered content can significantly boost engagement and motivation, as it allows students to take ownership of their learning process (Lambert & Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, the role of teachers in facilitating active learning environments is crucial; Studies imply that teacher support positively influences academic engagement and motivation among EFL learners (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). Moreover, the use of multimedia and audio-visual materials can stimulate interest and engagement, making the learning experience more dynamic and effective (Bakare, 2024). Engaging students in collaborative learning activities has also been ascertained to boost their motivation and language proficiency, as it encourages peer interaction and support (Zhong, 2024). Lastly, understanding the emotional aspects of student engagement can help teachers tailor their approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners, thereby fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Sun et al., 2021).

Second, teachers should design engaging and relevant role-play scenarios that reflect real-life communication situations. These scenarios should be tailored to the learners' language proficiency levels and interests, ensuring that they provide opportunities for authentic language use. The integration of role-play in language education has been revealed to enhance communicative competence and foster a more interactive learning environment. Studies indicate that role-play activities not only engage students but also promote their confidence and fluency in using the target language (Nikmah & Zami, 2019; Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). Furthermore, the use of authentic contexts and tasks in role-play scenarios allows learners to practice language skills in a meaningful way, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application (Hua & Le, 2024; Sun & Yang, 2013). This approach aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the importance of interaction and practical language use in language acquisition (Ampatuan & Jose, 2016). Additionally, teachers should provide clear guidelines and support to help learners navigate the role-play process effectively, fostering a positive and productive learning environment (Khalil, 2018).

Third, teachers should incorporate structured PA processes that encourage learners to provide constructive feedback on their peers' performances. This can be achieved through the use of rubrics that outline specific criteria for evaluation, ensuring that feedback is focused and actionable (Al-Rashidi et al., 2022). Teachers should also provide training and support to help learners understand the assessment criteria and minimize bias in their evaluations (Rahmatillah & Fajrita, 2022). Furthermore, the implementation of structured feedback mechanisms has been shown to enrich the quality of PA, leading to improved learning outcomes (Bizhang et al., 2024). Studies indicate that when students are trained in the use of rubrics, they are better equipped to deliver constructive feedback, which in turn fosters a more collaborative learning environment (Lertsakulbunlue & Kantiwong, 2024). Additionally, the role of constructive feedback in educational settings cannot be overstated. Al-Hattami (2019) emphasizes that constructive feedback is essential for student development, as it helps learners identify areas for improvement and encourages a growth mindset. Moreover, studies have proven that peer feedback can be as valuable as teachers' feedback, particularly in developing critical thinking and self-assessment skills (Andrews et al., 2019). The integration of PA not only promotes engagement but also enhances students' ability to reflect on their learning processes (Double et al., 2020). Lastly,

ongoing Studies into the psychometric properties of PA tools suggest that well-designed rubrics can significantly improve the reliability and validity of peer evaluations (Xiong et al., 2023).

Finally, teachers should create a supportive classroom environment that encourages open communication and collaboration among learners. This can be achieved through the establishment of ground rules for providing and receiving feedback, as well as fostering a culture of respect and trust within the classroom (Astuti & Lammers, 2020). By implementing this operational framework, teachers can effectively integrate PA and NSRP activities into their EFL instruction, ultimately enhancing learners' oral performance and language skills. Studies signify that a supportive environment significantly augments the effectiveness of PA by reducing anxiety and promoting constructive feedback among peers (Azarnoosh, 2013). Furthermore, the establishment of clear guidelines for feedback can help mitigate biases and improve the reliability of peer evaluations (Saito & Fujita, 2009). Additionally, fostering positive social relationships among students has been indicated to increase engagement and motivation in language learning (Zelenková & Hanesová, 2019). Teachers can also benefit from training in PA strategies to better facilitate these processes and create a more inclusive atmosphere (Kumar et al., 2023). The integration of structured PA processes not only encourages collaboration but also empowers students to take ownership of their learning, leading to improved self-regulation and critical thinking skills (Fathi et al., 2019). Ultimately, by prioritizing a supportive classroom environment, teachers can maximize the benefits of PA and NSRP activities, thereby enhancing the overall language learning experience for their students.

4. CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the numerous benefits associated with PA and NSRP activities, several challenges must be addressed to ensure their effective implementation in EFL contexts. One significant challenge is the potential for bias in peer evaluations, as friendship dynamics and personal relationships can influence the objectivity of assessments (Rahmatillah & Fajrita, 2022). Teachers must provide clear guidelines and training to help students understand the assessment criteria and minimize bias in their evaluations.

Another challenge is the quality of feedback provided during PA. Studies have presented that learners may struggle to provide constructive feedback, particularly if they lack experience or confidence in their own language abilities (Azarnoosh, 2013). To address this issue, teachers should provide training and support to help learners develop their feedback skills, ensuring that they are equipped to provide meaningful and actionable insights to their peers (Khalil, 2018).

Additionally, the implementation of PA and NSRP activities requires careful planning and facilitation by instructors. Teachers must create a supportive learning environment that encourages open communication and constructive criticism among peers, ultimately fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement (Astuti & Lammers, 2020). This may involve establishing ground rules for providing and receiving feedback, as well as fostering a sense of trust and respect within the classroom.

Finally, teachers must consider the diverse needs and backgrounds of their learners when implementing PA and NSRP activities. Factors such as language proficiency, cultural differences, and individual learning styles can all influence the effectiveness of these methodologies (Ghanbari & Barati, 2020). Teachers should strive to create inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of their students, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to benefit from PA and role-play activities.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, integrating PA and NSRP activities presents a promising approach to enhancing EFL learners' oral performance. Both methodologies are grounded in constructivist learning theories and have been supported by empirical evidence demonstrating their effectiveness in improving language skills. By fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and authentic communication, these strategies can significantly contribute to learners' overall language proficiency and confidence. The interactive nature of PA encourages students to engage with each other's work, providing constructive feedback that not only aids their peers but also reinforces their own understanding of language concepts. Similarly, NSRP activities immerse learners in realistic scenarios, allowing them to practice language skills in a context that mirrors real-life interactions. This dual approach not only improves linguistic competencies but also cultivates essential soft skills, such as teamwork and adaptability, which are crucial in today's globalized world.

To maximize the benefits of PA and NSRP, teachers need to create a supportive classroom environment that encourages open communication and trust among learners. Establishing clear guidelines for feedback and fostering a culture of respect will empower students to participate actively in the assessment process. Additionally, providing training on effective PA techniques can help minimize biases and improve the quality of feedback given. As teachers continue to explore innovative pedagogical approaches, the combination of PA and NSRP activities offers a valuable avenue for enhancing EFL instruction and learner outcomes. By prioritizing these strategies, teachers can create dynamic and engaging learning experiences that not only improve language proficiency but also prepare students for real-world communication challenges.

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