Involving Students in Individual and Group Presentation Assessment

Sally Ali

Department of Linguistics, UAE University, Al-Ain

United Arab Emirates

Abstract

This research describes individual & group presentation assessment, and compares teacher, self and peer assessment (TA), (SA) & (PA) to see student involvement. The project was carried out at UAE University (UAEU) and investigated three related research questions. The first research question looked at the differences in students' individual article presentation grades and compared (TA), (SA) & (PA) and showed that the (SA) grade was higher than the (PA) & (TA) grades. The second considered students' individual article presentations & compared them to the individual within the group performance which showed that all individual within the group assessment grades were higher. This indicated that students tended to be more critical of themselves and others they assessed like the teacher. The final research question viewed only (TA) and found that students got higher grades when doing group presentations. In order to explore these questions, the project considered two TSL 421 Continuing Professional Development Practicum classes (fall 2010 & fall 2011), with a total of 31 students giving individual article presentations & 30 students giving group presentations. The IBM SPSS statistics program was used to enter the data and carry out the analysis. Specific assessment criteria were used and the (TA), (SA), (PA) assessment means were calculated, compared, and analyzed in a simplified way and results were noted and shared with the students. The results of the project show the importance of involving students in the presentation assessment process and that students tend to get higher grades when working together in groups. The purpose of this study was to involve students in self and peer assessment to establish life-long learners who are independent and are able to recognize and apply the assessment principles used by teachers. Students' assessment varied considerably.

Key Words: individual & group presentations- teacher assessment-student-self &- peer-assessment

Introduction

Assessment is important because it provides students and teachers with feedback. Bailey introduces 'Self-assessment in language learning' by stating that, "One of the intriguing questions about self-assessment is the extent to which learners can accurately judge their own language abilities." (Bailey, 1998, p. 229).   "Peer assessments give students some idea of how other students perceive their language performance-providing an external, yet relatively unthreatening, perspective." (Brown, 1998, p.54).   Thus, it may be important to refer to authentic/self-& peer-assessment too.

Historical Overview

Although alternative assessment was generally used for students with special needs, it may also provide different approaches to assessing learners' academic achievement. The term authentic assessment is used to describe the various forms of assessments that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally relevant classroom activities (O'Malley, 1996). Self-assessment provides students the opportunity to reflect objectively on their own accomplishments and learning when given the opportunity. Students become more reflective as they learn how to look at themselves and their work in a more productive and critical way.

The focus is to have a student-centered classroom. Self-assessment also provides students the opportunity to understand the grading process. Students may eliminate the controversy regarding subjective grading and gain ownership in their learning process. They can even make their own choices, choose their own learning activities, and plan the time they need to achieve their goals. When students are involved in self-assessment they are better able to work with other students, exchange ideas, get assistance when needed, and be more involved in cooperative and collaborative language learning activities. As these students go about learning, they begin to construct meaning, revise their understandings and share meanings with others. Self-regulated learners monitor their own performance and evaluate their progress and accomplishments (Paris & Ayers, 1994).

As with other techniques, the use of self-assessment may not be so successful, depending on the circumstances under which it is used and the assessment instruments used. Based on a review of sixteen self-assessment studies, Blanche and Merino (1989) identified five factors that can threaten the validity of self-assessment methods, cited in (Cohen, 1994, p. 199):

1. Learners' lack of training in how to perform the types of self-assessment that are asked of them
2. A lack of common criteria for learners self-ratings and for teacher interpretations of these ratings
3. A conflict between the cultural backgrounds of the learners and the culture on which the self- assessment tasks are based
4. Any inabilities that the learners may have in monitoring their behavior (i.e., learners may not be able to report on what is subconscious behavior for them)
5. The intervening effects of subjective influences (past academic record, career aspirations, or expectations of others)

(Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002); cited in (Butt, 2010: 81-82), refer to some strategies which can promote self-assessment:

1. Clarify the assessment criteria for students
2. Clarify the learning objectives for students

3. Establish some key self-assessment questions
4. Support the act of self-assessment
5. Model examples of assessed work
6. Facilitate discussion about assessment

Peer assessment may apply the same principles as self-assessment (Butt, 2010). Students can start to reflect on their own work (SA), then go on to reflect on the work of others (PA) or can start with (PA). Students can also be asked to rate themselves (SA) and others (PA) in individual and in group presentations. (Underhill, 1987) in (O'Malley, 1996, p. 69) "suggests that peer-assessment is an authentic assessment approach because peers are asked to rate the effectiveness of communication by others." Yet students need to be trained, as in this project, to assess others as fairly as possible using specific criteria with a rating scale. To overcome the students' reluctance to do so, we need to provide students with numerous opportunities to assess not only themselves, but also others. Some students tend to be too harsh when assessing others and their (PA) at times can be as accurate and reliable as the (TA).

When students make an oral presentation, they need to be given enough time to prepare what they are going to say. If teachers want oral presentations to be successful, they need to find tasks, too, for the students who are listening and not only for those presenting (Harmer, 2012). This is another reason why (SA) and (PA) are used. Yet, it is difficult to assess a student's ability to speak fluently, accurately and appropriately for two reasons: One reason is that unlike the other three skills, speaking can only normally be tested in individual (or, occasionally, pair-or-small group) interaction. Thus it takes a long time to test the whole class, and it is expensive to pay the testers. The other problem is reliable assessment because there cannot possibly be just 'one right answer' so there is no objective or computer-based grading (Ur, 2012).

Finally, self-assessment is a key tool that provides students with the possibilities for reflection, redirection and reassertion of their learning efforts. They then become more empowered and independent evaluators of their own future learning and progress. In this research project, which involves three related questions, we will be referring to various forms of alternative assessment like authentic assessment, self & peer assessment, and presentation assessment (individual & group) which are consistent with classroom goals & instruction.

Research Questions

1- Are there differences in the grades (TA), (SA) & (PA) that teachers, students and peers give to individual article presentations?
2- Are there differences in the grades given to individuals for their presentations within their groups compared to their solo article presentations?
3- Are students' final grades higher when giving individual article presentations or when giving group presentations with other students based on (TA)?

Research Project

Setting and Instructional Context Promoting Effective Learning and Assessment

The whole project was carried out at UAE University, in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, in the Department of Linguistics where the focus was on involving students in presentations. Many students need to learn how to use their spoken English not only for informal interaction, but also for formal presentations (Ur, 2012).

Long presentations usually last 15 minutes or more and these presentations need to be based on a clear structure with an introduction which tells the audience about the purpose of the presentation; the main body, with clearly ordered sections that include explanations and examples and an ending, which summarizes and draws conclusions and makes recommendations (Ur, 2012).

This project not only investigates the teacher's assessment (TA) of the students in individual presentations, but also looks at students' self-assessment (SA) and extends the investigation to include peer-assessment (PA) to determine the usefulness of having all three components. This will make the students more aware of their own learning and acknowledge them as partners in the teaching and learning process. Also, the researcher looks at the means of students' self & peer-assessment and how reliable they are when compared to the teacher's assessment of students' performance in group presentations.   The hypothesis is, therefore, one of correlation between: (TA), (SA), and (PA).   Finally, the researcher compares grades the same students received from their teacher (TA) in their individual article & group presentations to investigate students' performance when working individually and in groups to see which presentation is more productive.

Participants

The project focused on fourth year-female students taking the Continuing Professional Development Practicum Course (PD Practicum) in the Linguistics Department. This course was offered as a thematic application course and it facilitate students' integration into the professional field of TESOL. Students learn how they can continue to develop their teaching skills once they have graduated and entered the field. Students taking the course were from the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, at UAE University from different departments but mainly from the Applied Linguistics Program, General Linguistics Program, Translation Department, the English Literature Department and the Social Work Department. They were involved in attending conferences, PD sessions, reading research articles & carrying out their own research studies.

This project focused on three related research questions and investigated two classes: with a total of 31 students giving their individual presentations & 30 students giving their group presentations. Below, there are a few examples of the research topics explored by the students doing their Group presentations:

1. Allowing minimal use of L1 in learning L2
2. Vocabulary retention
3. How to motivate students to read for pleasure
4. The attitude of UAEU students toward verbal and non-verbal communication in learning

The above topics were chosen and investigated by the UAEU students themselves.

Method: Treatment and procedure

Students taking the Continuing Professional Development Course were asked to choose articles in well-known journals and give individual presentations to share their studies with others in class by providing summaries and reflections. First, students were asked to choose the most recent articles with research studies consisting of participants and results to help them get ready to do their own group research studies together afterwards.   Secondly, students were asked to form their own groups, allocate tasks, & give their group presentations. Afterwards, they were informed about how to form groups and divide tasks as well. They were also told they would earn the following: different individual within the group grades, based on each student's actual performance, and one same group grade to show how they were assessed as a group. The

final overall group grade would be the total (student's individual grade within the group + the same group grade given to all students within the group and the total would be divided by two. This was emphasized to show students that they had to work together and not only focus on their separate performance. Students were given the specific criteria for assessment (see criteria below). The criteria were defined and explained to the students in class using a power point presentation & students got a copy of the criteria too after discussing everything in class. Students were informed and trained on how to evaluate and assess themselves and their peers. First, students were told that the purpose of the assessment was not to criticize their peers or give unearned marks, but it was to help each other improve and learn the main principles of assessment. Students were told clearly how each item was rated and assessed based on specific guidelines whether they were giving their own presentations, or assessing others who were presenting. They were shown how to calculate the scores and write comments to justify their assessment too.

Students were then scheduled to give their individual article presentations first. After completing their individual presentations and getting feedback on their performance, i.e. (TA), (SA), & (PA), they proceeded to work together on their group research. Then, they were evaluated on their group presentations based on specific criteria as seen below (McCormack & Slaght, 2005, p. 60):

Individual & Group Presentation Assessment Criteria.

The teacher used the following criteria which were presented and explained to students before starting their presentations. These were used for teacher-assessment (TA), student, self-assessment (SA) & peer-assessment (PA):

(a) Delivery:
- Pronunciation hardly interferes with comprehension.
- Volume and speed are appropriate.
- Rhythm and intonation are varied and appropriate.
- Good eye contact.

(b) Language:
- Clear evidence of ability to express complex ideas, using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary.
- Cohesive devices, where used, contribute to fluency.
- High degree of grammatical accuracy.

(c) Organization:
- Strong introduction, with clear outline.
- Logical ordering of main points.
- Effective conclusion & final wrap-up.

(d) Content:
- Content is appropriate and relevant.
- Topic is explored in sufficient depth.

(e) Evidence of Preparation:
- Evidence of thorough familiarity with topic.
- Fluent delivery, with skillful use of notes.
- Deals well with questions.
- Uses PowerPoint/OHTs, & hand-outs

Students were also given various ideas for group presentations and assessing groups to better form groups and assess group presentations. Today, group-based learning is used in various forms of teaching and changes the dynamics of the classroom. We find that it promotes students' self-esteem and allows students more time to talk.   It also motivates students more by providing a risk-free environment for language practice (Richards, 2011)**.** Groups need to divide the labor because the difficulty comes when students are asked questions at the end and nobody expects an instant answer in a presentation (Blass, 2009).

Data collection

Data were collected after each individual and group presentation. Students and teachers completed the self and teacher assessment grade sheets consisting of a four-point rating scale with 5 areas with a total of 20 points. Students were informed that the overall group grade consisted of both their individual participation which differed based on their solo performance + the performance of their group which was the same for all students. This was emphasized to show students that they needed to work cooperatively & collaboratively with the members of their group (see appendix A). The researcher then calculated the teacher, self &peer assessment grades which were accumulated on a single spread sheet (see appendix B). The students were asked to rate their own performance (SA) and that of their peers (PA) on each area based on the criteria (Delivery-Language-Organization-Content- & Evidence of Preparation).

Results and Analysis

The IBM SPSS statistics program was employed to enter the data and carry out the analysis. Specific assessment criteria were used and the (TA), (SA), (PA) assessment means were calculated, compared, and analyzed in a simplified way and results were noted and shared with the students.   Individual class assessments and combined overall assessment data were calculated.

Research Q #1: Individual Article Presentations: teacher- self-peer-assessment

(TA) vs. (SA), and (PA): Table 1 shows the results of these correlations for the means. The (SA) overall mean is slightly higher than any of the other means (16.84) which is very logical. This is understandable because students tend to assess themselves higher. The (SA) standard deviation (1.57) is higher than that of the (PA) (.84) & (TA) (1.17). Please see Table #1 below:

Table 1. *Individual Article Presentations: teacher-self-peer-assessment*

Report		TEACHER [TA]	SELF [SA]	PEER [PA]
Individual Article Presentation	Mean	16.4516	16.8448	16.3871
	N	31	29	31
	Std. Deviation	1.17157	1.57607	.84370
	Minimum	14.00	12.00	14.00
	Maximum	18.00	19.50	18.00
	Range	4.00	7.50	4.00

Figure 1. *Individual Article Presentations: teacher-self-peer-assessment*
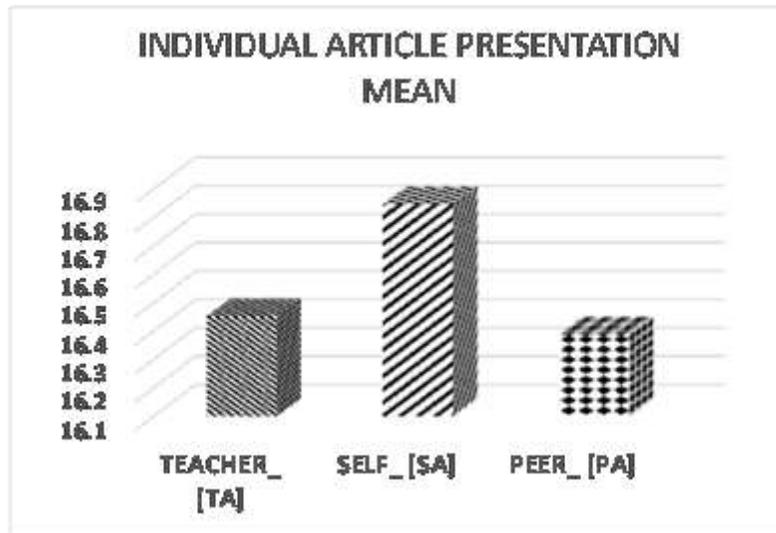
Research Q #2: Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Grade:
When comparing the individual article presentation means to the individual within the group means, we find that all individual within the group means (TA) (18.13), (SA) (17.58), and (PA) (17.42) are higher than the individual article presentation means (TA) (16.45), (SA) (16.84), & (PA) (16.38) which indicates that students tend to get higher grades when working within the group (see Table #2 & Figures,2, 3, & 4) which show that students working in groups get higher grades.

Table 2. Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means

Group Statistics					
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TEACHER_ [TA]	INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION	31	16.4516	1.17157	.21042
	INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP PRESENTATION	30	18.1333	.87033	.15890
SELF_ [SA]	INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION	29	16.8448	1.57607	.29267
	INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP PRESENTATION	30	17.5833	1.87581	.34248
PEER_ [PA]	INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION	31	16.3871	.84370	.15153
	INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP PRESENTATION	30	17.4233	.52698	.09621

Figure 2. *Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means (TA)*
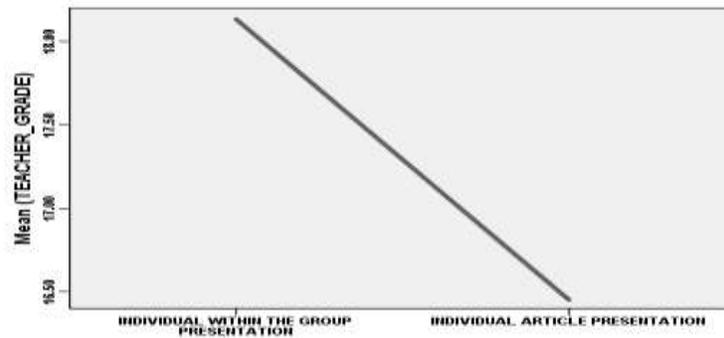
Figure 3. *Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means (SA)*
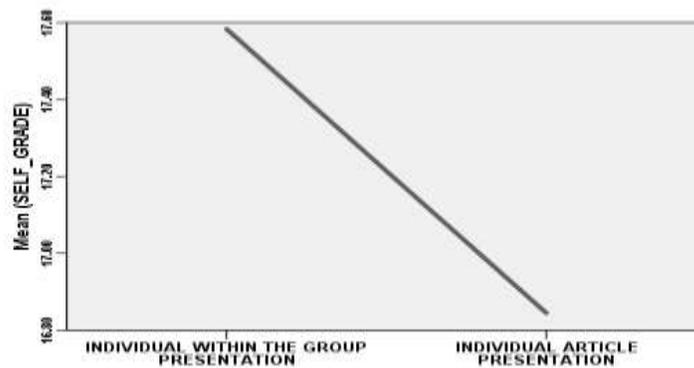
Figure 4. *Individual [Article] vs. Individual within Group Means (PA)*
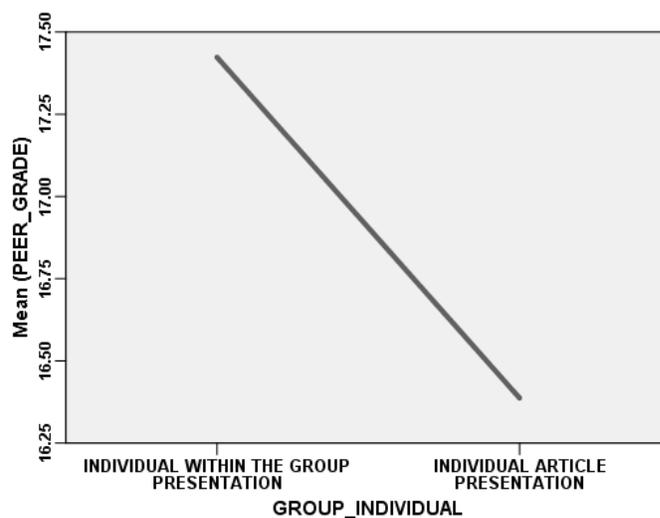
Research Q #3: Final Student Individual Article Presentation vs. Final Overall Group Presentation Means. [TA]

This research question is very important because it considers the (TA) only which looks at the individual article presentation means & the final overall group grade means (individual within the group + the same separate group). This was not included in the first two research questions. This question looks at the ((TA) only to determine whether or not there is an actual difference between the students' performance when giving individual article presentations & overall group presentations. Again final individual article mean (16.45) is lower than the group mean (18.20). This indicates that students get higher grades when working in groups. This may be due to the fact that students benefit from each other when working collaboratively/ cooperatively and gain more experience.

Table 3. *Final Student Individual Article Presentation vs. Final Overall Group Presentation Means [TA]*

Report						
TEACHER [TA]						
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Range
FINAL OVERALL GROUP PRESENTATION	18.2250	30	.65439	17.00	19.25	2.25
INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PRESENTATION	16.5333	30	1.09807	14.00	18.00	4.00

Figure 5. *Final Student Individual Article Presentation vs. Final Overall Group Presentation Means [TA]*
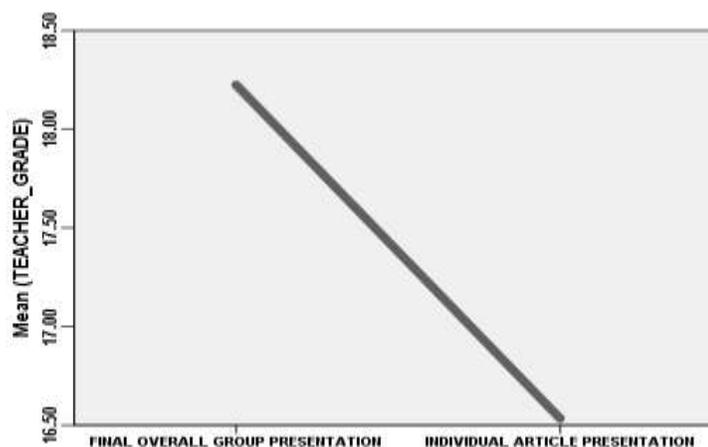
Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The purpose of this study was to involve students in self and peer assessment to establish life-long learners who are independent and are able to recognize and apply the assessment principles used by teachers. Students' assessment varied considerably. Some students gave consistently high ratings while others gave consistently low ratings. This may have been due to some students' lack of experience in judging themselves and others as the previous literature indicated (Blanche & Merino, 1989) cited in (Cohen, 1994, p. 199). To deal with this problem,

students were asked to justify the reasons for their assessment. In other cases, some other students tended to rate themselves lower than the (TA). In this study, the results confirmed the tendency for students to under-rate themselves and others and gave the impression that they were justifying everything to take the same role as the teacher.

Individual work provides students the opportunity to work at their own pace based on their own proficiency level and interest. With individual work there are fewer discipline problems because there is less social interaction (Richards, 2011). Students sometimes prefer to work alone because they cannot rely on others or because they just cannot meet others to work together, so they need to be given the opportunity to work on their papers individually. Some students encounter difficulties even working alone, so it is important to give them time to process information and do an independent search.

(SA) does not appear to be a very reliable indicator when compared to (TA) ratings, as is seen in the literature. If we look at the Standard deviations (SDs), we can see that they tend to be higher when looking at (SA) i.e. 1.87 (individual within group) & 1.57 (individual article) which indicates that students tend to assess themselves differently and their grades are more spread out & dispersed. On the other hand, the standard deviations (SDs) for (TA) i.e. .870 individual within group) &1.171 (individual article) & (PA) i.e. .526 (individual within group) & .843 (individual article) tend to be lower, indicating less dispersion which indicates that the teacher and peers tended to judge other students more objectively. Here in this study, involving students in the assessment process made learners better able to judge their own & other's performance.

Again, we see that most learners tend to be more critical of themselves and others than when their teachers assess them. Here the (TA) ratings were higher than the (PA) too.   This indicates that they believe that (SA) & (PA) ratings may correlate weakly with (TA) when separate, but may correlate highly with (TA) when united.

Working together in groups can be a valuable resource for students in class and even after they graduate and get jobs because it helps in promoting their responsibilities. Helping students identify strategies as seen in the literature, see (Weeden, Winter & Broadfoot, 2002), cited in (Butt, 2010, pp. 81-82), can help prevent problems at later stages. In this research project, we have seen how group presentations have more advantages than disadvantages when done correctly. Meeting with students to facilitate matters gives them the opportunity to ask questions and be independent and come up with new ideas.

Yes, learners may provide some incorrect input when interacting freely with each other in groups or pair activities. Yet, the benefits of pair and group work far outweigh the disadvantages, especially if there are well designed tasks (Lightbown, 2013). When students look at other students' work, they tend to re-evaluate and assess their own work again and gain insights which help them to improve their own work and look at it with a more critical eye.

Conclusion

This research paper looks at individual presentations and compares scores of student self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-assessment to get students involved in the assessment process. It also looks at Individual roles in group presentations and assessment. Finally, it looks at final individual article & final overall group presentations & teacher scores (TA) to see if students work better alone or in groups.   Criteria for assessment & guidelines have been presented to teachers to facilitate doing such presentations in other teachers' classrooms.   The results show the relevance to the classroom setting. The project is significant because it shows that students and teachers can be partners in the assessment/learning process because they learn

how to work individually as well as together in groups as united teams. In addition, the project indicates the benefits of having self and peer-assessment and shows the effect on students' subsequent developments, their awareness and motivation.   "Using both types of assessment has the advantage of providing two types of information to the students and the teacher: the students' view of themselves and the way their classmates perceive their language performance." (Brown, 1998, p. 55). It is also worth mentioning that when students work in groups as a team, they have shared interests in the outcome and this has been seen in the project when all students received the same group grade. Regardless of the type of assessment, students have had the opportunity to have a voice and have developed as critical, independent thinkers who are capable of dividing labor and making decisions that matter. Yet, students still need further training to become more aware of how to assess themselves and their peers. More future research may provide further possibilities to help students gain additional knowledge, skills, and an understanding of the assessment process.

   We want to emphasize that students need to have a voice in their assessment in order to accept responsibility for their actions and productivity whether they are presenting as individuals or as groups and whether they are assessing themselves or others.   Yes, we want to emphasize that involving students in the assessment process greatly matters today. Self-assessment & peer-assessment challenge, motivate, and place the responsibility where it belongs - with the students.

About the Author:
Sally Youssef Mohamed Ali earned her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Georgetown University and has been teaching English since 1977. She has been a teacher, teacher trainer, curriculum developer and presenter. Dr. Ali is presently an Assistant Professor in the Applied Linguistics Department at UAE University

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Appendix A: Teacher-Self-&Peer Group Grade Sheet.

GROUP ACTION RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS TSL 421 FALL 2011											
PRESENTATION TITLE:				Delivery	Language	Organization	CONTENT	Evidence	Individual Grade OUT OF 20	Average Individual/ group grade	GRADE OUT OF 20
Group"	Group GRADE OUT OF 20	#	Students Name	4	4	4	4	4	20	20	20%
1	0	1							0	0	
		2							0	0	
		3							0	0	
Date:	11-Dec	4							0	0	
PRESENTATION TITLE:				Delivery	Language	Organization	CONTENT	Evidence			
Group"	GRADE OUT OF 20	#	Students Name	4	4	4	4	4			
2	0	1							0	0	
		2							0	0	
		3							0	0	
Date:	11-Dec	4							0	0	
PRESENTATION TITLE:				Delivery	Language	Organization	CONTENT	Evidence			
Group"	GRADE OUT OF 20	#	Students Name	4	4	4	4	4			
3	0	1							0	0	
		2							0	0	
		3							0	0	
Date:	13-Dec	4							0	0	

Appendix B: Calculating the Teacher-Self-&Peer-Assessment Grades

#		#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Teacher	Peer	SELF	G#1	G#2	G#3	
	NAME	ID#																					
1																							
2																							
3																							
4																							
5																							
6																							
7																							
8																							
9																							
10																							
11																							
12																							
13																							
14																							
	PEER Average		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	Group Average