



THE INSIGHT OF PEER ASSESSMENT IN WRITING

Yazid Rabahi M.ED. for MoroccoEnglish.com

Similarly to teaching the writing skills, assessing writing assignments can be challenging when there is no clear expectation as well as no thoughtful approach that shows its positive impact on students performance. In fact, while teaching the writing skills at a basic and intermediate levels can be straightforward, assessing it can be time consuming for the teacher in particular when classes have more than 35 students. Nevertheless, assessing students' writing needs to be done one way or another because it motivates students and keeps them on their toes while connecting them with the joy of writing.

Furthermore, writing is a skill that should not be ignored no matter what. Therefore, teacher under no circumstances should neglect students' writing task followed by a constructive assessment that nurtures the relationship between students and the writing skills. We all know that falling into routines can be quite boring, discouraging and will be a killer in the classroom setting. Accordingly, teachers have to be creative in the classroom to help themselves and the students get interested and engaged. In fact, while dealing with writing for learning, teachers have to multiply and alternate the tasks of writing to help such a significant skill to settle itself properly and permanently in the mind of the students.

Also, although the burden of assessing writing might discourage the teacher from taking this approach, teacher may have an alternative such as involving students themselves in the process of assessing. If we really believe in helping students understanding and feeling the ownership of

their learning, we need to give them the opportunity to be in the teacher's shoes from time to time. As a result, using Peer Assessment (PA) will diminish tremendously the load of assessing daily writing for teachers while making students more responsible as they reflect on their own work .

However, this approach requires the teacher to provide students with some mental preparation and some practice in order to set up a deal of rules and understanding before students become themselves assessors. For your information. Peer Assessment (PA) is a process through which learners and teachers share in the evaluation of another student's work. It can have many different forms. Practice such strategy in writing has proven that PA deepens learners' understanding of their own learning and empowers them to become more actively engaged and self-directed in their learning process.

Therefore, by using PA, teacher is not only decreasing the huge strain of checking and correcting every piece of writing by himself, but also providing an opportunity to students to see the variety of errors and mistakes made by their peers and comparing them with the right form that is provided to them by the teacher as a guide. The more practice students gain in assessing each other's work, the better comfortable they become as trust and confidence get established among all students. In addition, this technique will raise the virtue of respect among students to a new level.

Additionally, since teaching the writing skills can start with letters, words and sentences, teacher can entrust students in small portion where they have to swap papers and check each other work guided by the teacher using the board as a reference. Teacher needs to assign students in pair and then alternate them through time. The PA responsibility gets bigger as students get better in their writing skills and its assessment. Still, the teacher remains the sole guide in monitoring and facilitating students assessment by providing them with rubrics or checklists to guide their work. This process keep students reading and concentrated on detecting writing errors while comparing with the right form. Eventually, teacher can even suggest to students to create their own rubrics and checklist.

The other advantage in Peer Assessment is work efficiency when it comes to a speedy response to any writing assignment. Students love to have their work checked quickly in particular when it comes to writing. Indeed, the faster the students get their feedback about their writing, the better impact the assessment is likely to have on students relationship with writing. If students' writing is not acknowledged by the teacher in a timely manner and with constructive advice, they may never try to write again. Therefore, teachers have to be

very sensitive in approaching students when assessing them.

Furthermore, if you are a teacher and you tend to procrastinate in providing feedback to your students about anything they are expecting from you especially writing, such behavior is not only damaging to the subject area you are teaching, but also to yourself as a teacher where you lose your self-respect. One thing you don't want to see in your students is losing interest in your subject and/or your teaching because the moment they reach this level of being absent minded in the classroom, it will be quite hard to get them back. Moreover, if you want students to connect with writing, celebrating their progress in writing after a series of assessment is recommended at least once a month by any means and the rest of the students have to hear that to get motivated and encouraged to take things seriously.

As a conclusion, while assessing the writing skills remains significant, nurturing it with positive feedback will motivate students to improve themselves inside and outside the classroom. From the outset, teachers have to set rules for a solid foundation of respect and positive attitude where students are engaged to trust themselves and each other in writing and assessing their writing work as well as their peers'.

Yazid. Rabahi M.Ed