MODULE 5
5.4 - THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT

There are thousands of different approaches to assessment, but we decided to start from peer and self-assessment as we think they are essential to enable learners to reflect and become aware of their own skills and competences.

According to several scholars, increasing learner involvement in assessment enhances student-centred learning. Such characteristics are crucial in task-based language teaching since it implies that the learner is actively engaged in the didactic process by performing tasks using the target language.

Peer and self-assessment provide learners with the opportunity of developing a further understanding of their own learning process and evaluating their readiness for a task according to their goals. These procedures allow learners to put themselves to the test as they participate in monitoring and information gathering activities along with teachers.

However, a common consensus on the reliability of such practices has not been reached yet. Concerns have been raised regarding learners' ability to assess themselves and their peers, as well as the accuracy and the objectivity of their own judgements compared to those provided by teachers.

Even though such preoccupation should not be dismissed, we believe that peer and self-assessments could be extremely useful to teachers as they may provide them with new insights and precious data so as to improve their own performances.

Moreover, these strategies go far beyond verifying the success or rating learners' results, since it gives them the opportunity of developing the important skill of making objective judgments about the quality of their own work (and that of their peers) and of generally enhancing their learning skills" (Orsmond et al., 1997).

There are several approaches to peer and self-assessments.

Here, we would like to highlight the relevance of educating learners on how to evaluate the tasks they carry out. For this reason, when we decide to turn to peer and self-assessments we need to have a discussion with our class concerning learning outcomes and assessment criteria in order to find a common ground and make sure they understand what we expect from them.

But let's see how to make peer and self-assessment work.

In the previous module, we have seen together how to implement the activity *Create a catalogue with recommended / worth-seeing films*. In that activity we asked learners to select 3-5 film that represent the genre they chose, show

agreement/disagreement and document their final decision by creating a list to present to the class.

If we decide to make use of peer and self-assessments to evaluate this activity, we should discuss and identify assessment criteria before we start.

For instance, we can invite students to observe carefully their peers' presentation and evaluate it focussing on four criteria:

1) Content (Is the list well-thought and coherent?),
2) Organisation (Is the presentation smooth? Does the presentation include an introduction, a main body and a conclusion?),
3) Language (Is the language use accurate and appropriate?)
4) Delivery (Is the student confident? Do they create rapport with the audience?).

They will then write their observation on a hand-out we have designed together or we have provided them with. As for the self-assessment, we may record each student's performance and ask them to watch or listen to it again at home and assess themselves using the same criteria we have used for peer assessment purposes.

As you can see peer and self-assessment are two extremely valuable tools for evaluating learning performances and measure the efficacy of our own teaching.

In the next video we will go talk about needs analysis and learning outcomes in task-based assessment.

References

Lee, Sang-Ki and Chang, Sumi (2005). Learner involvement in self- and peer-assessment of task-based oral performance. Research Language 41(3), 711-735.

Norris, J. (2014, April). How do we assess task-based performance? Invited LARC/CALPER testing and assessment webinar