

**Developing Speaking Skill of the Students from EYU through Peer Assessment in  
EFL classroom**

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**Abstract**

*There are four skills in English and out of these skills, in Myanmar, for most of the students, speaking is one of the most difficult skills to be taught in developing. There are different ways to develop speaking skill of the student. This research paper studies the development of students' speaking skill through peer assessment in EFL classroom. The aim of this research is to study whether the students can be trained to develop their speaking skill through peer assessment within the limited period. This research took eight weeks within a semester. 40 of the Second year Non-English Specialization students studying at East Yangon University were chosen as participants. Students were well-trained to improve their speaking skill through role play activities, discussion and presentation by using functional language drills and exercises prescribed in Straightforward (B1 level). In this study, quantitative research design was employed. In accordance with collecting and analyzing data, boys had more willingness to join and participate with their partners than girls, but, this research was beneficial for all participants that they had become more confident in speaking than before. Besides, their speaking skill became developed within eight weeks and they became successful in speaking skill. This research, therefore, will go on further studies to improve the students' speaking skills.*

*Key terms: peer assessment, role play activities*

**1 .Introduction**

The speaking skill is important in language learning and language teaching because it is a kind of productive skill that can help the students to communicate with their teachers and among themselves very well in the classroom and outside the classroom. Similarly, the development of the students' speaking skill becomes very essential to create the sound interaction with their peers. To develop their speaking skill, peer assessment is very supportive. Concerning peer assessment, the professor Diana Pineda (2003) at University of Jaime (Spain) did a research by means of the title "Feasibility of Assessing Students' Oral English Language Performance with Rubric. The main aim of this study was to analyze students' oral competences such as their English competence and fluency by using role play activities that can affect their peers' English oral production to what extent with the quantitative method. The results and data obtained from this research identified students' preferences in working with other classmates influenced their English oral production to some extent.

Adapting this previous study, I did a research by means of the title "Developing Speaking Skill of the Students from EYU through Peer Assessment". In this paper, it can be seen

that peer assessment was useful to develop the students' speaking skill. The aim of writing this research paper was to study whether the students were able to be trained to develop their speaking skill through peer assessment within the limited period. This period took eight weeks within a semester. To do this research, 40 of the students were chosen as the participants. They were Second Year Non-English specialization students studying at East Yangon University. Participants were specialized in Mathematics. Within eight weeks, they were trained to develop their speaking skill with some role play activities by using functional language drills and exercises prescribed in Straightforward (B1 level) through peer assessment. Then the obtained data were collected and analyzed by the quantitative research design to discuss the findings of doing this research. These findings will support the next better research for further studies to improve the students' speaking skill.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Peer assessment**

Peer assessment is the important aspect of 'assessment for learning' practice. Assessing their own work or that of others can help students to develop their understanding of the Intended Learning Outcomes and the Assessment Criteria. According to the previous research showed that learners became developed when they actively involved in their own learning and assessment.

Peer Assessment will enhance students' active engagement with their studies, increase the amount of feedback students, receive Augment learning as peer feedback invariably requires explanation and justification, help students understand what is considered good work and why, thereby increasing their ability to achieve in language learning.

Developing effective peer assessment takes time and effort. An effective starting point is for teachers to model the process of peer assessment and feedback, for example how to give feedback that is constructive, detailed, linked to assessment criteria, objective, focused etc. Whole-group marking can be a useful method of introducing effective assessment and feedback as it allows for discussion and exchange of ideas.

### **Roles of teachers and students**

In peer assessment, the roles of teachers are facilitators, supporters, motivators, moderators and coordinators vice versa the roles of students are the initiators, performers and leaders.

### **Sample Criteria for Assessment of Team Functioning**

The actual criteria picked for team or group work will depend on the purpose of the assessment. Sometimes the reason for assessment is to check that all of those involved in the group are contributing to the project in hand. Sometimes the focus is the ability of individuals to operate within a team as a specific skill.

The most fundamental way of assessing group work is where a mark is given to each member of the group based on a single piece of work submitted by the group. The main advantage of this for the tutor is that it reduces the time spent marking individual student scripts. If this approach is used for formative assessment, where the process of encouraging students to work in a group may be the main objective, then this method can be very effective.

Potential problems may arise when it is used for summative assessment when students often resent other group members for not doing their fair share of the work and so contributing negatively to their own mark. This can be overcome to an extent by making the students aware that they must ensure that all group members participate or by including an additional mark for individual effort. (Web PA an open source online peer assessment tool <http://webpa.ac.uk/> Higher Education Academy)

### **Assessment Criteria for use in assessing an individual contribution to group work**

It could include the following questions:

- Is it engaged in the group and with the group?
- Can it show qualities of leadership?
- Is it able to provide direction for group activity (e.g. project planning)?
- Is it involved in the execution of the project work?
- Can it play a supporting role of others in group activity?
- Can it suggest solutions?
- Is it involved in the presentation of the group's work?
- Does it demonstrate interest in the maintenance of the group functioning?

### **The nature of role play**

According to Tompkins (2001), role play is one of the classroom teaching techniques that encourage students to participate actively in the process of learning English. Therefore, foreign language students practise the target language in context similar to real-life situations where stress and shyness are removed.

According to Blanter (2009), when we talk about role playing as a method of teaching can be considered as a problem can solved consciously which is briefly acted out so that the student can identify with the characters

Keneth (2008) states that role play can be defined as the type of student's behaves in a certain context. In the field of managing, discrepancies in the identifying role that can be seen as role conflict which does not match for a person or by others role playing as a method of teaching which is the conscious practicing and discussion of the role in a group. While in the class, the difficulty can be briefly acted out so that the student can identify with the roles

Arends (1998) assures on the practice of interacting with others as a method of doing teaching style active for teachers. It prevents instructing from being daily routine and out of date. When applying modern techniques, they are not necessarily entertaining new principles.

### **Types of role play activities**

According to Harper-Whalen & Morris (2005), there are three types of role play, they are: fully scripted role-play, semi-scripted role-play and non-scripted role-play.

In a fully scripted role-play, each word is given, and each student should understand or memorize his/her role Such type includes explaining the model conversation in the prescribed textbook and the main aim of the conversation after all is to make each item of the language meaningful and easy to remember.

Byrne (1986) indicates that role play in this type can be appropriate for low level students who do not know the situation in the semi-scripted role play.

According to Livingstone (1983), the second one of role play includes a model conversation with some missing words and students should know how to fill in the blanks in suitable words of these contexts .So, students can change the main conversation to some certain way and establish their own conversation. Such type of role play might be called as semi-controlled or as the teacher or prescribed textbook includes language input, but students should also specify the materials depend on a frame which supplies the situations to establish a real life context.

This type can be used for students with upper-beginner to intermediate levels of proficiency, those students should be familiar with main procedures and seeks to go to higher level of tasks as semi-scripted role-play is less structured and less controlled than fully scripted role-play.

### **Writing Oral-based rubrics: Criteria to evaluate communicative competence**

According to Richards & Rodgers' (1986, p. 72), principles in the Communicative Approach represented a fundamental contribution in the language learning field, since they support learning by means of introducing real-life tasks that involve communication and supply the learners' educational needs. There are three principles in the communicative competence. They are as follows:

#### 1. The principle of communication

Activities involve the real communication that promotes learning. In this principle, discursive competence was one of the dimensions taken into consideration as an optimal tool to promote communicative competence by the first authors who launched the notion of Communicative Competence (Halliday, 1970; Widdowson, 1978; Canale & Swain, 1980).

#### 2. The principle of tasks

Activities involve using the language to carry out significant tasks that promote learning. With regards to the second principle, the notion of tasks became central in the Communicative Approach. The materials used for task design were taken from real-life resources and not manipulated at all for pedagogical purposes. The introduction of realia would become an important aspect to be taken into account, since realia are believed to be the most convenient kind of material to promote language learning due to their discursive and cultural context

#### 3. The principle of significant relevance

Language becomes meaningful for learners in order to positively support their learning process. Concerning the third principle, the Communicative Approach places the learner at the center of the learning process. Therefore, learners' needs and objectives are the basis to construct a flexible and dynamic syllabus.

### **3. Previous study**

A research title "Feasibility of Assessing Students' Oral English Language Performance with rubric was done by Diana Pineda (2003) at University of Jaime (Spain). The main aim of this study was to analyze to students' oral competences such as their English competence and fluency by using role play activities that can affect their peers' English oral production. In order to assess the students, a speaking-based rubric as the main instrument was designed for peer assessment. A total number of 10 participants were selected in the 1st year course at University of Jaime (Spain).

In order to carry out the investigation, two different instruments- Students' Questionnaire and Speaking Diagnostic Test' were used for data collection. A 'Student Questionnaire' was to reflect students' preferences towards taking an oral exam with their peers. Speaking Diagnostic Test was to assess students' oral production in English concerning the following variables: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, coherence, and communicative ability. The results and data obtained by quantitative research design method from both questionnaire and Speaking Diagnostic Test' identified students' preferences in working with other classmates influence their English oral production to some extent.

#### **4. Research objectives**

- To train the students to develop their speaking skill with role play activities within the limited period
- To improve the development of their speaking skill with oral-based rubric and questionnaire through peer assessment within that period

#### **5. Research Questions**

- 1 .Can students be trained to develop their speaking skill with role play activities within the limited period?
2. Can they improve the development of their speaking skill with oral-based rubric and questionnaire through peer assessment within that period?

#### **6. Research Methodology**

##### **Participants**

Participants were second year Mathematics Specialization students studying from East Yangon University. The number of participants both males and females were 40 and they were chosen as participants according to their interest. But they had the different language competency.

##### **Research Design**

In this research, the quantitative research design was used. The number and characteristics of the participants were mentioned in this design. According this design, the data obtained from writing feedback on training with role play activities and Oral Achievement Test were recorded, collected and calculated in average group by group, including four students in each group. Collected data were mentioned with tables and figures by quantitative research design to find out outcomes of this research and discuss findings that would be beneficial the further studies.

## **Research Tools**

In this research, as research tools, the oral based-rubric and questionnaire were used to test the development of students' speaking skill within the training period through peer assessment.

## **Research procedure**

In the research procedure, there are four parts.

They are-

- (i) Planning and designing
- (ii) Giving necessary language input and training through Peer Assessment
- (iii) Giving Speaking Achievement Test through Oral-based rubric
- (iv) Giving feedback and polishing their speaking skill

### **(i) Planning and designing**

In this part, forty of the second year Mathematics Specialization students were chosen as the participants. There were 20 boys and 20 girls who participated in this research. These participants were selected based on their willingness to take part in this research and they were the second year Mathematics specialization students studying from East Yangon University. This research took eight weeks in the first semester of last year.

Each week took two hours in average. Within that limited period, the participants were trained to develop their speaking skill with fully-scripted, semi-scripted and non-scripted role play activities using functional language drills and exercise prescribed in Straightforward (B1) through peer assessment including writing oral-based rubric to measure students' communicative competency. For all steps of the research procedure, teacher only acted as the facilitator, supporter, moderator, motivators and coordinators whereas the students or participants did as the initiators, performers and leaders.

### **(ii) Giving necessary language input and training through Peer Assessment**

In this step, it took six weeks including twelve hours. During these weeks, the participants were trained to develop their speaking skill with fully-scripted, semi-scripted and non-scripted role play activities step by step in pairs including males and females. The participants were guided to make checking to their peers who were training the dialogues with their partners for every step. In the first two weeks, before the training, the participants were explained about the peer assessment and taught how to do this assessment with the checking form (oral-based rubric) in the way of writing 1=weak, 2= good, 3= excellent.

For every step, they were asked to do peer assessment practically by using the checking form.

Checking Form(oral- based rubric)

Date----- Step----- (training/ test) Participant's name-----

Language features	Weak	Good	Excellent	Comments
Fluency				
Vocabulary				
Grammar				
Pronunciation				
Communicative ability				

(Sample answer) 1.1.2018 Step-3 (*training/ test*) Participant's name----Min Min-

Language features	Weak	Good	Excellent	Comments
Fluency	*			He should more practise more than before
Vocabulary		*		He is good.
Grammar		*		He is good.
Pronunciation			*	He is hardworking.
Communicative ability			*	He is hardworking.

Then, they were started training with some fully-scripted dialogues in pair. The sample fully-scripted dialogues used in the role play activities are as follow:

**(1)At the restaurant, a guest is ordering food and some drinks**

Man: Excuse me, waiter?

Waiter: Yes, sir?

Man : Can I have the soup?

Waiter: Here you are.

Man : I can't eat this soup. It's too cold.

Waiter: I'm sorry, sir.

Man: I hate cold soup!

Waiter: Will I have to change it?

Man : It doesn't matter. I'll drink it.

Waiter: Thank you, sir.

**(2) At the clinic, a patient (P) is discussing with a doctor (D)**

P: Excuse me.

D: Come in. Take a seat.

P: Thank you.

D: Now, what's the matter?

P: I feel awful. It's my back.

D: Where does it hurt?

P: Here and there.

D: OK. I'll have a look at you. Take off your shirt. Does it hurt?

P: Yes, it does. It's very painful. Is it very serious?

D: Don't worry. I'll give you a prescription.

P: Thank you, sir.

D: You're welcome.

During next two weeks, the participants were trained with semi-scripted role play activities in pairs .In these activities, they were delivered some uses of the functional language prescribed in Straightforward (B1 level) and they were asked to make some dialogues with given uses of the language in their own as follow:

**In a shop (language reference)**

- Can I help you?
- That's +price
- Would you like a bag for that?
- Here you are.
- How much is/ are?
- Do you have any+ noun?
- I'd like +noun

**At the clinic (language reference)**

- What's the matter?
- I feel+ adjective
- Calm down and take out one's jacket
- What's wrong?
- Do you have +N?

During another two weeks, the participants were trained with non-scripted role play activities. In these activities, they were asked to do the practice in the form of discussion based on the topics delivered by the teacher and then they had to do the presentation upon the discussions in groups. Then, they were given instruction in L1 and L2 and then let them brainstorm about the topics that they had to talk about.

Then the teacher decided the proper topics and rhetorical questions that they had to do the practice with their peers. Before their practice, they were delivered the useful language phrases. They are as follows:

1. Are you with me so far?
2. What should we do?
3. I don't think so
4. From my point of view and so on.

**Used topics for presentation are as follow:**

- (i) Good impression is important
- (ii) The duties of a student
- (iii) The importance of English

**Questions used by the participants for discussion are as follow:**

1. Do you think that a good impression is important to you?  
Why or Why not? What can make the good impression for you?
2. How do you behave when you meet someone for the first time?
3. What is the common thing that people in your country do when they meet someone for the first time?
4. How do you spend your leisure time?
5. Do you remember the things that you used to do in your free time when you were young?
6. What is the commonest duty of a student?
7. What benefits can a student obtain if he is a dutiful student?

8. Do you think English is the useful language today? Why or why not?
9. What can he or she do if a student master in English?
10. What are the results of being weak in English?

**(iii) Giving Speaking Achievement Test through Oral-based rubric**

This step is one of the ending parts of the research and it took two days in a week including two hours. During that period, the participants were given the proper speaking Achievement test through peer assessment by giving into two groups. One group took an hour. The teacher let these two groups take two kinds of tests themselves: general speaking test and discussion. In this section, the teacher performed as the facilitator and supporter. Each group having 20 participants took an hour. There are two questions in general speaking test and two questions in discussion. In that period, the participants were given the feedback upon the results obtained from the speaking Achievement test by the teacher.

There were altogether 20 question sets for this test. Each set had four questions – two general questions and two discussed questions. Some of the questions are follows:

**General questions**

1. What kinds of sports do you like?
2. Do you like playing football? Why?
3. Do you go to the pagoda every Sunday? How do you go there?
4. What do you usually do when you visit the pagoda?
5. Do you like wearing jeans? Why?
6. Did you learn riding bicycle when you were young?
7. How did you feel while you were riding?
8. Who did you ride the bicycle with?
9. What is your favourite food?
10. Do you like mohingha? Is it delicious?
11. Do you eat diet every day?
12. What is your everyday diet?
13. Have you been to an ancient city?
14. When and how did you go there?
15. What did you do there?

### **Discussed questions**

1. Do you think playing football is good for health? Why do you think this?
2. Visiting the pagoda is the religious activity. Is this true? Why?
3. English is the useful language in the world? Why do you think this?
4. English is the global language. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Computer is essential for the today's person life. Is this true? Why?
6. Today is the materialistic world. Why do you do think this?
7. Do you think feedback can improve the development of speaking skill? Why?
8. Giving feedback is necessary to improve other language skills of the peers?
9. Speaking skill is more important than other skills. Do you agree? Why?
10. Learning computer is the basic need to learn the advanced IT technology. Do you agree? Why do you think this?
11. Do you think IT Technology become very useful today? Why or why not?
12. Reading a book can give us a lot of knowledge. Do you agree? Why?
13. A book is the true friend of a person. Do you agree? Why?
14. Money can make everything. Is this true? Why?
15. What are the important things in a person's life? Why do you think this?

### **(iv).Giving feedback and polishing their speaking skill**

This was the final step of the research procedure. Then participants were asked to respond the questionnaire for giving all feedback to their peers.

Most of the answers of the participants -----*questionnaires are very useful, helpful, not helpful, not very useful at all, very much, much, little, not at all, always, sometimes, rarely, never.*

A few participants are----*Like, Ok, Dislike.*

### **Questionnaire**

The participants were asked to give the questionnaire to their peers as follows:

1. Do you like role play activities? Why?
2. Do you think these activities are useful for language learning? Why?
3. How do you feel when you are doing these activities?
4. How do you feel when your partner is a boy/ a girl?
5. Why do you feel like this?
6. What did you have to do in each role play activity?
7. Did you enjoy doing this activity?

8. Did you have some difficulties in each role play activity?
9. What kinds of difficulties did you have?
10. Did you have to do the peer assessment during training period?
11. How did you have to assess the activities of your peers during the training period?
12. Do you think the peer assessment is good for all students? Why?

**Some comments of the participants or trained students from questionnaire**

*“I feel embarrassed when I'm being observed by the teacher and I forget what I'm saying.”*

*“I like observing my partner because she always makes eye contact because from eye-contact, I can find self-confidence. But-----”*

*“When I talk with boys, I don't always make eye contact.”*

*“Telling what you need to improve will be more helpful than telling what you are good at.”*

*“I feel satisfied when I understand the questions of my partner.”*

*I feel happy when I can answer for the questions of my partner.”*

*When I discuss with my partners, I really want to talk more than my partner.”*

*Whenever I talk with my partners, I feel worried about my pronunciation.”*

*“I can find improvement of my speaking skill in the training period.”*

*“I think peer assessment can improve my speaking skill.”*

**7. Data Collection**

Table.1 Students’ feedback on each language feature of group of the students from training and Oral Achievement Test (Writing Feedback)

Language Features	S1-S4	S5-S8	S9-S12	S13-S16	S17-S20	S21-S24	S25-28	S29-S32	S33-S36	S37-S40
Fluency	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2
Vocabulary	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Grammar	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3
Pronunciation	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	3
Communicative	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3

ability										
Total	10	11	11	9	11	9	13	11	12	13
Average	2	2.2	2.2	1.8	2.2	1.8	2.6	2.2	2.4	2.6

**1=Weak    2=Good    3=Excellent**

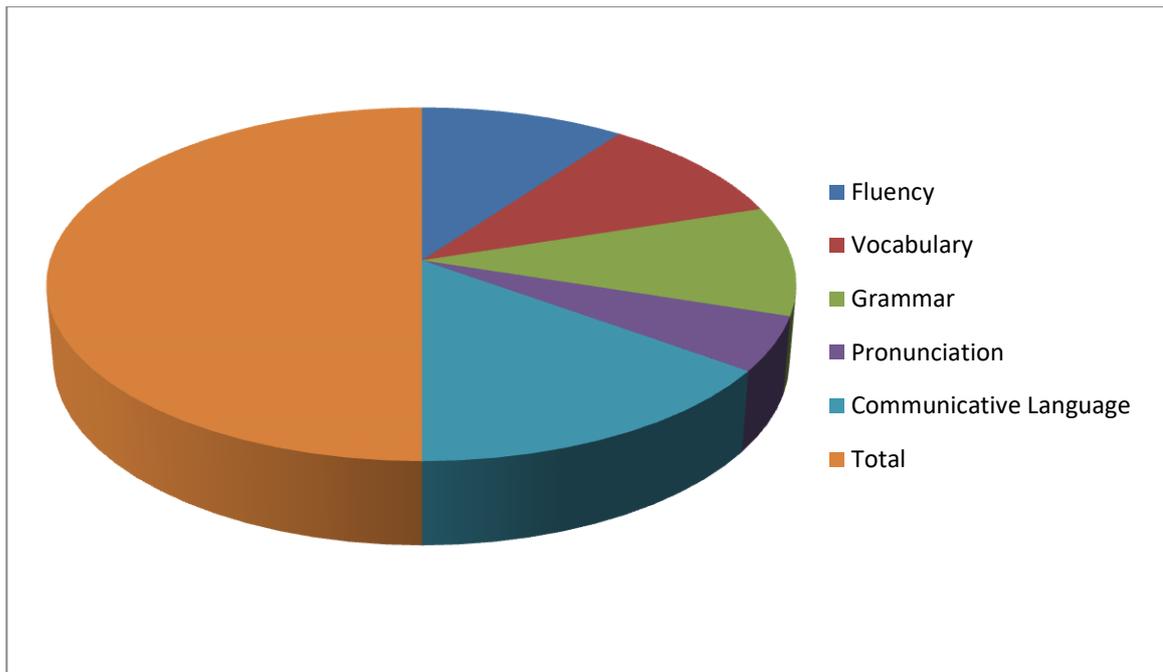


Figure.1 Students' feedback on each language feature of their peers from training and Oral Achievement Test in average. (Written Feedback)

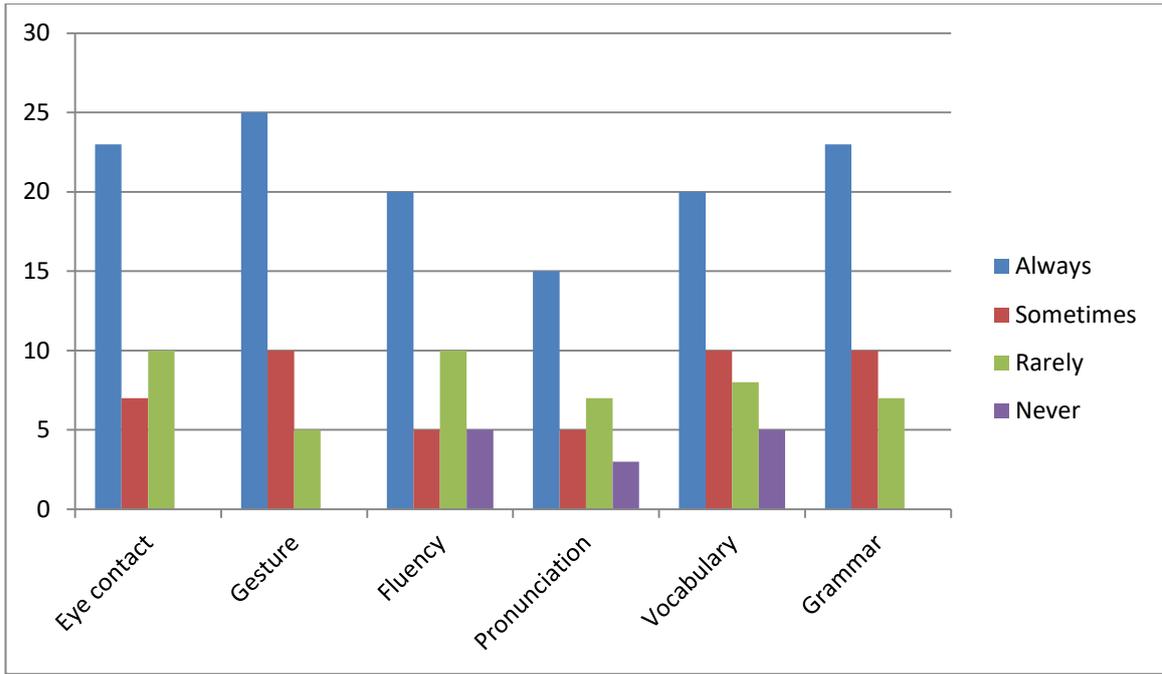


Figure.2 Students' perception towards factors contributing speaking

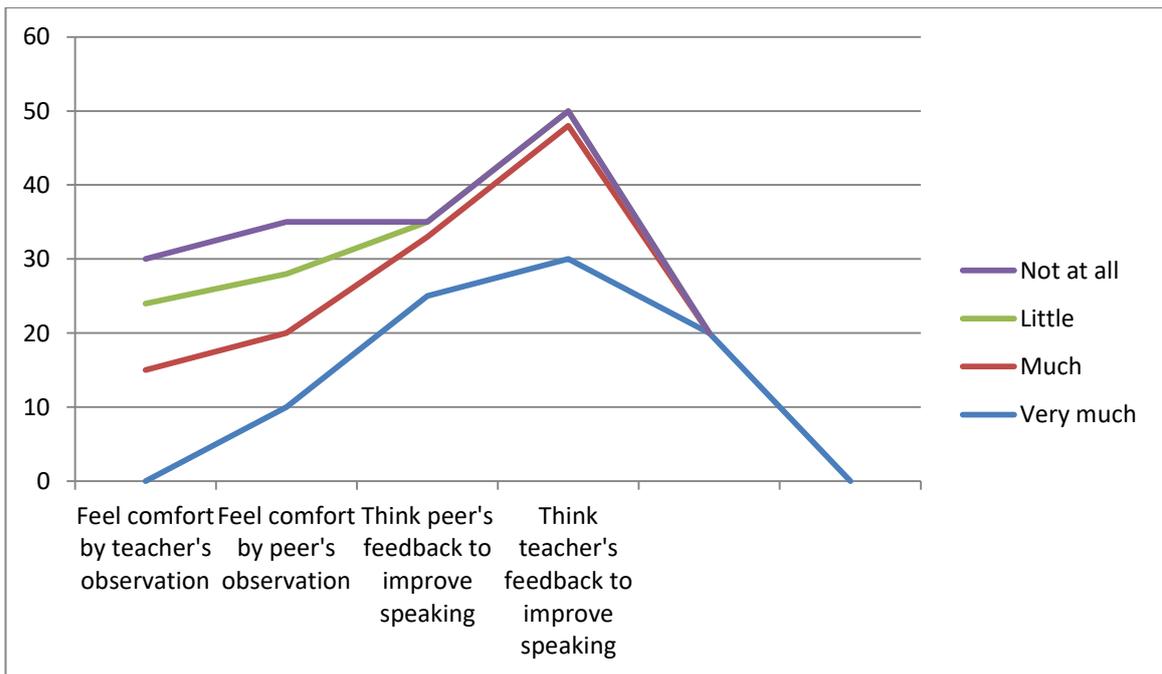


Figure.3 Students' attitudes towards teacher and peer's feedback on their comments

## **8. Data Analysis**

In accordance with the data obtained from the table.1 and figure.1 –participants or trained students’ feedback on training and Speaking Achievement Test, data were collected by four students in each group. There were altogether ten groups. Twenty-four out of forty students, about 49% were excellent in communicative ability, twelve students were excellent in grammar and fluency at 30% respectively whereas eight students, 20% only were excellent in pronunciation but all students , were 50% good at vocabulary while good at grammar , twenty students, 50 %were good at pronunciation , a few students were weak in all language features. Similarly, according to the data obtained from figure. 2, questionnaire about students’ perception towards factors contributing speaking, most of the students always used eye contact, gesture, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar whenever they communicate with the others, it was followed by ‘they did sometimes and rarely’ but the least was ‘they did never’.

Furthermore, due to the data obtained from figure.3, comments of the trained students’ attitudes towards teacher and peer’ observation, there were 30 students who did not feel comfort by the teacher’s observation and peer’s observation and the rest 10 students felt such kind of comfort more or less. Concerning improvement of speaking by teacher and peer’s feedback, most of the students were considered in improving themselves by peer’s feedback than that of teacher. In brief, students in both males and females improved their speaking skill by peer’s feedback more than that of teacher by analyzing all data mentioned from table.1 to figure.3, upto approximately 75% in this research.

## **9. Findings and Discussion**

In accordance with data analysis, participation of students in pairs and in groups was very satisfying and they involved eagerly and interestingly themselves. Comparing to boys and girls, boys had the willingness to join and organize their partners but ,in brief, both of them were very good at participation with great interest. Although both boys and girls participated in this research equally in percentage with 50% each, according to the data, boys had more interest in participating than girls. However, both boys and girls preferred more or less the peer’s feedback than the teacher’ observation and also they had more comfort with peers in training and taking test than with teachers.

Furthermore, they progressed in speaking skill more than before and they became more active in participation in classroom activities. But, they felt bored with writing rubric for feedback. But peer assessment helped the development of students’ speaking skill. In

brief, according to data analysis, the improvement of the speaking skill of these students became really significant and they gained the success in the development of speaking skill, approximately upto 75%. This success can support to do another research for improving students' speaking skill in future.

## **10. Conclusion**

Peer assessment is very useful and supportive in studying improvement of speaking skill of the students. Therefore, in this research, 40 of the Second Year Non-English Specialization Students studying at East Yangon University who were specialized in Mathematics were selected, trained, guided and encouraged to participate in the eight-week training course in which they were made better in the improvement of their speaking skill through peer assessment by using functional language drills and exercise prescribed in Straightforward (B1 level) in some role play activities in pairs and in groups, discussions in pairs and in groups as well as making presentation in groups or in individuals. This research was done with the quantitative method. As the research tools, the oral-based rubric (peer checking form) and questionnaire were used.

According to the findings from the research, the students became confident and developed in speaking skill more than before. Furthermore, their team spirits and relationship with the classmates became better. To sum up, the speaking skill of the trained students or participants was improved within limited period and they became developed in the speaking skill through peer assessment, approximately upto 75%. This research will go on further studies to develop the students' speaking skill.

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