

## **Grading anxiety with self and peer-assessment: A mixed-method study in an Indonesian EFL context**

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Students' anxiety with grading in self and peer-assessment in an EFL context has not been examined extensively in the international literature in educational research. This mixed-method study surveyed English learners (N=100) using Gurbanov's self and peer-assessment questionnaire, and interviewed their teachers in Cambridge English College (N=7) at the end of the College's writing classes. The students were those who had completed the intermediate level in their writing classes and had the same level of anxiety, while the teachers were selected based on the length of teaching time and familiarity with self and peer-assessment practices. An online questionnaire was administered to students, and at about the same time, teachers were interviewed about their perspective upon students' attitudes towards self and peer-assessment. Results showed that these assessments developed students' language and evaluation skills, although anxieties due to English barriers existed when doing self and peer-evaluation in EFL classes. The findings indicated that students were more stressed and anxious in self-assessment compared with peer-assessment. Understanding the nature of students' anxiety and providing a detailed rubric may reduce their hesitation and increase the accuracy of their assessments.

### **Introduction**

Self and peer assessments have been often used in a range of disciplines in higher education, as one contribution to enhancing quality of learning. Different studies have identified some advantages of self and peer-evaluations. For example, some studies have found that self-assessment helps university students develop their cognitive skills, reflect on their work quality, monitor their progress and motivate them to do better (Andrade & Valcheva, 2009; McMillan & Hearn, 2008). Similarly, peer-evaluation also motivates them to learn collaboratively, to make intelligent judgements, to consider mistakes, to give feedback to their peers' work, and to enable deeper learning (Alzaid, 2017; Sahin, 2008; Strijbos & Sluijsmans, 2010). Thomas, Martin and Pleasants (2011), however, suggested that the implementation of both self and peer-assessments should be under teachers' supervision, in order to better analyse how deeply the learners have understood the tasks.

Regarding self and peer evaluation practices in English as foreign language (EFL) classes, Birjandi and Tamjid (2012), for example, investigated the impact of self-assessment on language performance. They found that self-evaluation could improve learners' productive language skills by critically comparing their tasks over time, analysing their mistakes, and measuring their language learning progress. Self-evaluation also heightens EFL students' level of self-efficacy. They can responsibly recognise their strengths, weaknesses and specific aspects of English learning and performance (Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2014). Similar to self-assessment, peer-assessment is also beneficial in English learning. A study conducted by Ahangari, Alqol and Hamed (2013) defined how peer-evaluation helps

English learners witness and understand how their friends learn. In most studies it is similarly agreed that students' peer-evaluation makes them more willing to engage with their peers and enhance their English skills and achievement (Alshammari, 2016; Shams & Tavakoli, 2014).

Despite the helpful benefits of self and peer-assessments in EFL classes, the majority of students are still wary of doing those evaluations, especially in the grading process. This was evidenced by a number of studies which found that anxiety becomes a significant problem faced by non-English learners in doing self and peer-assessment (Weisi & Karimi, 2013; Zakian, Moradan & Naghibi, 2012). Pope (2005) and Gurbanov (2016) revealed that EFL students often feel hesitation and lack confidence when grading themselves and their peers. They feel anxious about the reliability and accuracy of the result in self and peer-assessments, typically due to existing low confidence levels and friendship matters (Alfallay, 2004; Topping, 2009). Additionally, others also found that the level of students' self-esteem (Mustafa, Melonashi, Shkembi, Besimi & Fanaj, 2015) and underestimating issues with their peers (Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2013) significantly influenced students' fears and anxieties in self and peer-evaluations.

The complexities of students' anxiety in self and peer-assessments pose significant challenges for students involved in these processes. For such students, lack of confidence and effects upon friendship bonds have been the main issues when grading in self and peer-assessments, as the literature has indicated. However, in EFL contexts there appear to be fewer investigations of students' attitudes when doing and scoring self and peer-evaluations. Therefore, this research addresses questions concerning the influence of learners' anxiety on the reliability and accuracy of grading in self and peer evaluations, in an EFL context. The aim is to contribute to knowledge and understanding of self and peer evaluation advantages and disadvantages, and assist towards practical solutions for EFL teachers conducting self and peer assessment in the classroom. Additionally, this study also represents some common issues faced by EFL students in non-English speaking countries, which have not been widely examined in the international educational research literature.

## **Literature review**

### **Anxiety**

Generally, anxiety is expressed as psychological phenomena that affect our feelings and behaviour quickly. Various scholars have defined anxiety as a characteristic of unnecessary fears that involve emotion and physical sensations. Swift, Cyhlarova, Goldie, and O'Sullivan (2014), for instance, stated that anxiety is a kind of emotion serving the positive function of notifying us about potentially worrying and harmful things. Studies by Maina, Mauri and Rossi (2016) and Karatas, Alci and Aydin (2013) also revealed that anxiety is a pointless fear, related to behavioural changes which commonly are caused by threat, danger or stress. Anxious people also may more readily incur further stress caused by rejection and an achievement failure (Shiri, Akhavan & Geramian, 2012). Therefore,

anxiety causes frequent worrying and a feeling of being out of control in any stressful situation.

In the education field, the topic of anxiety in language education has generated a large body of research over a number of decades. Previous research findings have indicated that anxiety has become the main issue faced by students in their language learning and assessment (Abidin, Mohammadi & Alzwari, 2012; Lucas, Miraflores & Go, 2011; Phillips, 1992; Sadiq, 2017). A study conducted by Liu (2007) into causes of language anxiety concluded that fear of making mistakes is the core cause. The learners mostly feel anxious about making mistakes and failing in English learning and assessment situations (Suparna, Padmadewi & Putra, 2013). Various studies have highlighted that anxiety negatively influences students' English learning. Khan (2010), for instance, revealed that when students feel worried, they struggle to express their ideas, due to cognitive and memory deficit. It also impacts on their behavioural and emotional responses. They tend to avoid the task, struggle to concentrate, and experience high confusion levels (Hayden, 2016). Yastiba and Yastiba (2015) described that anxious students encounter discomfort, less confidence, low self-efficacy, and difficulty in sharing their opinions. Thus, anxiety in learning possibly makes the learners passive in English discussion and liable to avoid EFL classes.

### **Self and peer assessment in EFL classes**

Studies in the field of self and peer assessments have often focused on higher education students. Most studies about the advantages of self and peer-evaluations have found that these assessments contribute to students' cognitive abilities as well as the teachers' pedagogical skills development. A study by Spiller (2012), for instance, stated that self and peer-evaluations are able to promote learners' independent learning. The students are allowed to assess and judge their work and their peers' work autonomously. Others also revealed that such assessments can develop students' self-efficacy (McMillan & Hearn, 2008), collaborative learning (Strijbos & Sluijsmans, 2010), learning reflection, and judgement making (Alzaid, 2017). In similar studies, Amo and Jareño (2011) and Thomas et al. (2011) exposed that self and peer-assessments further benefit the teachers' quality of teaching. These assessments help to save their time and more readily assess how deeply their students have understood the learning activities.

In the last decade, the use of self and peer-assessments has also been widely emphasised in EFL contexts. Various studies focusing on self and peer-evaluations in English learning showed that self and peer-assessments significantly improve EFL students' language knowledge and evaluation skills (Ahangari et al., 2013; Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2014; Birjandi & Tamjid, 2012; Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018). Specifically, a study by Butler and Lee (2010) found that self-evaluation can encourage students' confidence in English classes and potentially develop their language skills (Butler & Lee, 2010). Self-assessment can engage EFL learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses in English learning (Mazloomi & Khabiri, 2018; Moqbel, 2018). Self-evaluation also helps students become more responsible for measuring the quality of their work, and more reliable in marking their English tasks (Andrade & Du, 2005). Nevertheless, other research has argued that

the accuracy and subjectivity of grading become the crucial issues when doing self-assessment (Mistar, 2011). This can possibly influence the reliability of the grades given by students in self-evaluation.

Similar to self-evaluation, peer-assessment further contributes several advantages in English classes. Researchers in EFL studies have shown that the implementation of peer-assessment in English learning can enhance students' abilities in English writing, as well as other language skills (Alshammari, 2016; Shams & Tavakoli, 2014; Zhao, 2014). Similar studies, for instance, have revealed that peer-evaluation helps the students to learn English collaboratively. Through peer-assessment, students are able to create more meaningful interactions with their peers (Azarnoosh, 2013). They become more responsible for collaborating to give and receive feedback, and to judge the quality of their peers' works (Karami & Rezaei, 2015; Peng, 2010). This assessment also helps learners to observe and understand how their friends learn and do the tasks (Ahangari et al., 2013; Khabiri, Sabbaghan & Sabbaghan, 2011; Shams & Tavakoli, 2014). However, another study by Azarnoosh (2013) indicated that the existence of friendships creates a weakness in using peer-assessment. This researcher believed that the issue may be a significant contributor to poorer reliability of grades from peer-evaluation.

### **Anxiety towards self and peer assessment in an EFL context**

Although the advantages of self and peer-assessments have been established, several studies have indicated that anxiety is a major problem affecting students' attitudes to these assessments. For example, a study by Weisi and Karimi (2013) found that feeling anxious became a significant factor influencing EFL students' self-assessment processes. The claim is supported in a study by Topping (2003), who implied that feeling worried about peer-assessment affected both assessors and assessees in general. Moreover, some studies on evaluation have indicated that English learners feel worried about self and peer assessments, due to foreign language barriers. According to Nelson and Murphy (1993) and Huberty (2009), students believed that English is a difficult language for learning and assessment. Such a perception possibly increases students' anxiety in learning and evaluation practices. Additionally, Suparna et al. (2013) exposed that another cause of students' hesitation towards self and peer-evaluations in EFL contexts occurs when they are required to give and receive feedback. The researchers indicated that giving or receiving negative feedback makes them anxious, experiencing difficulties in controlling their emotions, a high level of stress, and a struggle to concentrate on assessment activities.

Although previous studies have examined students' anxiety when doing and grading self and peer-assessments, investigations of these issues in EFL contexts are limited (Gurbanov, 2016; Pope, 2005). Students mostly were anxious and hesitant about the subjectivity and reliability of the scores in self and peer-assessments. Aligned studies also showed that anxiety due to low confidence in self-assessment, and friendship issues in peer-assessment, possibly contributes to unreliable grades in evaluation settings (Azarnoosh, 2013; Gurbanov, 2016; Mistar, 2011; Pope, 2005). Students may tend to fear participating actively and tend to avoid self and peer-assessment (Zarei & Usefi, 2015).

It is, therefore, important to increase the reliability of these evaluations. Other studies have suggested that the clear rubric and assessment criteria are essential to improve the accuracy of self-assessment (Andrade, 2008) and peer-assessment (Finch, 2002). Miri and Joia (2018) implied that the teachers should be able to know about students' anxiety in order to help motivate them to struggle with their anxieties, to increase their confidence in assessments. Spiller (2012) concluded that self-assessment can enhance students' learning more effectively when it does not involve marking. Feedback has benefits for practising peer-assessment, but the assigning of grades tends to be fraught with difficulties for students in peer-assessment processes.

In the light of previous literature, this study aimed to provide empirical evidence on common issues faced by English learners in a non-English country. This study is an investigation of EFL students' and teachers' perspectives on anxiety about grading in self and peer-assessment. The specific research question is:

What are EFL students' and teachers' perspectives on their anxieties with grading in self and peer-assessment?

## **Method**

### **Context**

Cambridge English College (CEC) is one of the intensive English courses in Indonesia established in 2006 by the Kamridah Habe Gahu Foundation. CEC has two campuses in Makassar, South Sulawesi, and Kediri, East Java, which welcome secondary and higher education students. CEC offers intensive English classes in grammar, writing, speaking, listening, reading, TOEFL and IELTS. These programs are classified into elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. Students are placed into a level on the basis of their performance in a placement test. Students in the same level and program have passed from the test in the previous level. Those students, therefore, have similar English proficiency. In teaching and learning, CEC promotes student-centred learning as the main teaching approach. Group discussion, role play, collaborative, contextual and cooperative learning are implemented in all programs and levels. In assessment practices, teacher, self and peer-assessments are evaluation types commonly used in CEC to evaluate students' learning achievements. Teacher assessment is used for formative and summative assessments, whilst self and peer-evaluations are used only for formative assessment purposes.

Regarding the focus of this study, the implementation of self and peer-assessment in CEC is generally similar for all classes and levels. The practice of self and peer-assessment in writing classes for intermediate level students may be used as an example. Technically, before commencing the writing task, the teachers firstly explain that their tasks will be assessed by themselves when doing self-evaluation and their peers in peer-assessment. The learners are also informed about the assessment requirements, such as length of essay (350 words) and time (30 minutes). Then, students start the writing based on the given tasks, such as descriptive, narrative, and procedure essays. After that, they are allowed to

assess their tasks in self-assessments and examine their peers' in peer-assessment, based on the rubric (Appendix 3) adapted from Hughes (2005, p. 101). At the end of assessment activities, they should give and receive feedback for the tasks, aligned with the five writing criteria, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency/style, and form. Students are occasionally required to give grades for the writings and provide justifications for the scores given.

**Research design**

In this study, a triangulation mixed methods design (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012) was employed, involving quantitative approaches in the first phase, and qualitative approaches in the second phase.

**Participants**

*Students*

One hundred English as Foreign Language (EFL) students and seven teachers at Cambridge English College (CEC) Makassar Indonesia were chosen from two campuses of CEC. The student participants comprised 39 males and 61 females, aged between 21 and 30 years, from four different writing classes. The selected students were EFL learners who had the same level of writing proficiency and self and peer-assessment understanding. They had completed the intermediate level and had obtained six month's experience with self and peer-assessment in the writing program. They were therefore expected to have a similar level of anxiety in learning and assessment as that indicated by Rodríguez-Sabiote, Serna-Quiles, Álvarez-Rodríguez and Gámez-Durán (2017), who found that EFL learners with the same level of English ability tended to show a similar level of learning anxiety.

*Teachers*

Table 1: Teacher participants (N=7)

Teacher	Gender	Age	Experience in SA and PA	English language background
T1	Female	31	6 years	L2
T2	Female	28	4 years	L2
T3	Male	29	5 years	L2
T4	Male	27	5 years	L2
T5	Female	27	3 years	L2
T6	Female	28	4 years	L2
T7	Female	27	5 years	L2

Table 1 shows that there were two male and five female teachers with age range between 27 and 31 years old selected based on the length of time in teaching in CEC. The criteria for selecting teacher participants included having at least three year's experience with teaching students at intermediate level; at least one year's experience in teaching writing classes; and having an understanding and familiarity with the advantages, disadvantages,

goals, procedures and practices for self and peer evaluations in EFL class. It is important to note that the main criterion for selecting the student and teacher participants was they had familiarity with self and peer-assessment activities. Therefore, the participants were expected to be able to complete the questionnaire and answer the interview questions in a reasonably well-informed way.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher used Gurbanov's self and peer-assessment questionnaire (2016) and interview question guide as research instruments. An online survey (Google Form) using English was delivered to students by email and *WhatsApp*, asking them questions about their anxiety in doing self and peer-assessment. The survey consisted of ten items with a five-point Likert scale, *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Items focused on their perception about the benefits (n=2), their perspectives (n=3) and attitudes (n=5) with self and peer-assessment grading in EFL classes. Gender and age range as demographic items were also included to provide background information. Moreover, similar to the questionnaire, interview questions using English were constructed briefly and clearly. Interview questions focused on teachers' perspectives about students' attitudes towards grading in self and peer-assessment, aiming to achieve an in-depth interpretation of the quantitative data obtained from the survey.

To investigate the reliability and validity of the instruments, reviews were obtained from three EFL teachers. Their suggestions for improvement were taken into consideration. Moreover, to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire in the EFL context, a pilot study was conducted with 25 EFL students randomly selected from the target population. The Cronbach alpha found was 0.72, indicating a reliability of the survey items appropriate for this research (Bhatnagar, Kim & Many (2014).

### **Data collection and procedures**

Permission was obtained from the ethics committee of Cambridge English College (CEC), Indonesia to access students' and teachers' databases from 2012 to 2015. The targeted students were intermediate level students enrolled in the writing class. The teachers were tutors who met the criterion for this study. The accessed data were their personal email and/or phone numbers to ask for individual agreement to participate in this study. Before taking part, the purposes and requirements of this research were explained to participants and they were advised about recording via phone or other devices. They were informed that their privacy would be respected, and given a consent form to sign.

An online *Google Form* questionnaire by was advised to students by email and *WhatsApp* on 6 May 2018, to commence the first phase. The selected students were allowed to complete the survey during the week 6-12 May 2018. For the second phase, at about the same time, semi-structured interviews were conducted in English with seven teachers. Before conducting the interviews, teachers were advised about confidentiality and that their recorded interviews would take about 25 minutes. Raw data from the recordings were transcribed to assist the researcher in coding the themes.

## Data analyses

In quantitative data analysis, descriptive analysis was carried out using *SPSS* version 18.0 software (Carver & Nash, 2012). In qualitative data analysis, identifying, analysing, organising, describing and reporting the research themes (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017) was assisted by *SPSS* text analysis software (SPSS Inc., 2007).

## Findings

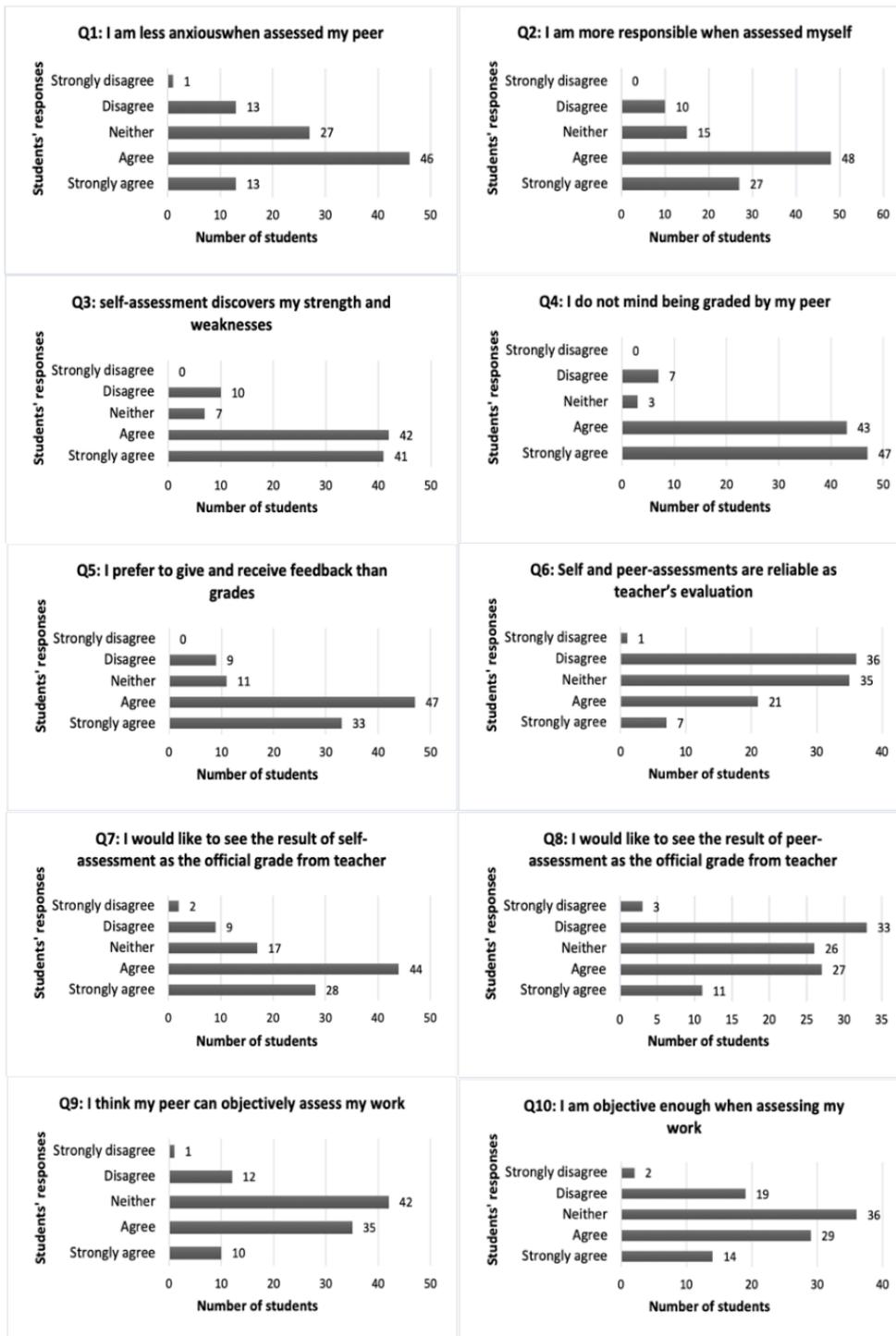
### Students' responses on their attitudes to self and peer-assessment

Figures 1-10 show that most students responded positively about self and peer-assessment in an EFL context. Most agreed that self-assessment benefitted their English learning evaluation, with Figure 2 (Q2), for example, showing that 27 students strongly agreed, and 48 students agreed that they are more responsible for doing self-assessment. Figure 3 (Q3) shows 41 students strongly agreed, and 42 agreed that self-assessments can discover their strengths and weaknesses in the writing class, while 10 disagreed and 7 neither agreed nor disagreed.

To identify students' attitudes towards peer-assessment, participants were asked to about their anxiety when assessing and being assessed by their peers (Q1 and Q4). The results showed that 13 students strongly agreed and 46 agreed that they were less anxious when assessing their peers, whilst only 13 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed, and 27 were neither agreeing or disagreeing. Concerning attitudes when assessed by their peers, 90 responded positively (47 strongly agreed and 43 agreed), with only 7 disagreed and only 3 neither agreed nor disagreed.

Asked about the official grades and self and peer-assessments, 28 students strongly agreed and 44 agreed they would like to see the result of self-assessment as the official grade from the teacher (Q7), with only 2 strongly agreed, 9 disagreed, and 11 neither agreed nor disagreed. However, in peer-evaluation (Q8), 33 students disagreed with the result from peer-assessment becoming the official grade, while 27 agreed and 11 strongly agreed; 26 neither agreed nor disagreed.

Participants were asked about how objectively their peers could assess their works (Q9). A high proportion (42) neither agreed nor disagreed, whilst 35 agreed and 10 strongly agreed that they can assess objectively in peer-evaluation; only 1 strongly disagreed and 12 disagreed. Regarding the reliability of grading in self and peer assessment, most students judged that self and peer-evaluations are not as reliable as the teachers' assessment (Q6); 37 of students (36 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed) responded negatively about the reliability of these assessments, whilst 7 strongly agreed, 21 agreed, and 35 neither agreed nor disagreed. When they were asked their preference in self and peer-assessments (Q5), most students (80) preferred to give and receive feedback instead of giving and receiving grades.



Figures 1-10: Survey results from students (N=100)  
(use PDF reader 'zoom in' function to view)

### Teachers' perceptions of students' anxieties about self and peer-assessment

Teacher participants were asked to explain the benefits of self and peer-assessments in their previous experience with the teaching of writing. All seven teachers provided similar answers about the advantages in their writing classes. They agreed that self-assessment can identify learners' strengths and weaknesses in English writing. The teachers also explained that peer-assessment gave students experience with collaborative learning and critically judging the quality of their peers' work. To illustrate:

T2: ... peer assessment can create meaningful discussion between, such as discussing grammatical error, misspelling and wrong punctuation on their essay, and try to solve the problems made.

T4: ... in self and peer-assessments, students do not only recognise the mistakes on their and their friends' writing, but the most important thing is they can reflect and learn from the errors that they made. Thus, they can do better for the next task and reduce English writing difficulties.

T7: ... through self and peer-assessments, students independently assess their tasks, however, teachers should make sure about the correctness or reliabilities.

Participants were interviewed about the grading challenges when setting self and peer-assessment in EFL classes. Most teachers agreed that feeling anxious with grading in these assessments was the main issue. Six out of seven participants maintained that students feel more anxious with grading in self-assessment rather than in peer-assessment. The teachers also pointed out that low confidence due to foreign language complexity was a concern when doing self-evaluation. One teacher provided a particular reason:

T1: ... I think that the English barrier becomes the main problem of students in this case. EFL students are not confident when grading in self-assessment. They are not sure whether they are correct or not in assessing their tasks. Therefore, they tend to give low grades for their writing task. This means that they are not objective in assessing themselves.

On the other hand, all participants agreed that the learners are less anxious when assessed by their peers. They also said that students are happier in doing peer-assessment due to friendship considerations.

T5: ... mostly students look very happy in peer-assessment. They can assess their friends' work, discuss some mistakes, and grade objectively. However, only a few of them can give reliable grades. Thus, the grades from students cannot become the accurate grade.

It is important to know when grading in self and peer-assessments is supported by a clear rubric for the writing task. The participants suggested that clear articulation of assessment criteria is important for increasing the accuracy and reducing anxiety in self and peer-evaluation.

T3: As a teacher, I always provide a clear rubric for students in self and peer-assessments. For example, I use the rubric (by Hughes) which explains the specific criteria assessed, such as grammar, mechanic, writing style and form. Therefore, they could feel confident with marking in self and peer-assessments.

T3: ... When setting self and peer-evaluations in the classroom, I encourage them to ignore their hesitation with their assessment mistakes. I always keep the discussion with students when they ask the accuracy and errors of the tasks. Therefore, they will be more confident and less anxiety in assessing themselves and their peers.

Additionally, others suggested:

T6: ... I think that self and peer-assessments could significantly benefit for EFL students when they are not required to give scores.

## **Discussion**

This study addressed the issues regarding students' anxiety with self and peer-assessment in an EFL context. Particularly, it investigated how self and peer-assessments benefit English learners, how anxiety influences students in self and peer-assessment activities, and importantly, how teachers find appropriate solutions for the problems encountered.

The quantitative analysis of students' responses and qualitative analysis of teacher interviews in an EFL context showed that self and peer-assessment contributed significant benefits for students, developing their independent and collaborative learning skills. Through self-evaluation, the students can find independently the strengths and weaknesses of their work. Also, they can learn cooperatively with their peers, by critical discussion of technical errors they made in their writing tasks. Therefore, the findings are in line with studies which have reported that self and peer assessments can encourage students' self-regulation (Spiller, 2012) and cooperative learning skills (Strijbos & Sluijsmans, 2010). In addition, the findings update upon previous studies which reported that self and peer-assessments help students recognise their abilities and challenges (Mazloomi & Khabiri, 2018; Moqbel, 2018), and deal with their peers in doing evaluation collaboratively (Azarnoosh, 2013).

Regarding the students' attitudes towards self and peer-assessments, this study finds that most students feel they exercise responsibility when assessing their work and their peers. However, according to the teachers, students still feel anxious about doing self-evaluation rather than peer-assessment. When setting peer-assessment in the classroom, the students look happier and more confident in assessing their peers' task. However, when doing self-assessment, they seem to encounter more stress and anxiety with the assessment activity. The teachers indicated that students feel more comfortable in evaluating friends' writing tasks rather than their own. These findings are in line with the study of Weisi and Karimi (2013) who reported students' anxiety as the main factor influencing them in self-assessment, but not according with Topping (2003) who found that students feel more anxiety when assessed by their friends.

Furthermore, both quantitative and qualitative results also show that students prefer giving and receiving feedback, compared with giving grades in self and peer-evaluation, which contrasts with the findings of Suparna et al. (2013). Particularly, the teachers explained that students tend to avoid and feel anxious with grading in self-assessment because of low self-confidence. The teachers further argued that English difficulties are a main cause of students' low confidence in self-assessment. This was indirectly consistent with the previous studies by Nelson and Murphy (1993) and Huberty (2009), stating that foreign language difficulties influence students' anxiety in English learning and self-assessment. The teachers also added that these difficulties make students feel doubtful about marking their writing objectively. They become unsure with the reliability of grades they give or receive in self-evaluation. Consequently, the grades are not sufficiently accurate to serve official grading purposes. This aligns with other studies (Gurbanov, 2016; Mistar, 2011; Pope, 2005) which found that scores in peer-evaluation tend to lack validity.

Contrasting with self-evaluation, students tend to be less anxious with grading in peer-evaluation. This finding was based on students' answers in the questionnaire, supported by teachers' interview responses. The teachers stated that second language difficulties also affect students' attitudes towards peer-evaluation; however, friendship connections among them help them to be more confident in evaluating. This develops students' engagement to create meaningful discussions between them about mistakes, solutions, and grades that they provided. As a result, they can learn from the evaluation process, and they are further motivated to do better in the next writing task. These results contrast with the studies by Pope (2005) and Gurbanov (2016), which indicated that hesitation significantly affects students in peer-evaluation grading. Moreover, from the quantitative analysis, most students agreed rather than disagreed that their peer can assess them objectively. However, in this case, their teachers emphasised that only a few students can evaluate their peers accurately. They suggested that grades in peer-evaluation cannot become the official marks due to unreliability issues.

When anxiety has become the main factor affecting the learners' self and peer-assessment in English writing classes, educators should consider solutions regarding this issue. This study, for example, indicates that the teachers should engage with their students in the assessment process to decrease their anxieties. Teacher also should control students' evaluations and help to ensure the accuracy of their assessments. This is in line with Miri and Joia (2018) who stated that understanding students' anxieties and stimulating them to avoid these can develop their self-confidence in self and peer-evaluation. Furthermore, providing a clear rubric can improve the accuracy of self and peer-assessment. Rubrics with specific criteria for writing components can reduce students' anxiety and develop their confidence in assessing and judging the quality of their writing and their peers' writing. Consequently, students also can evaluate their work and peers' work with more objective grades, as indicated by Andrade (2008) and Finch (2002) who expressed the importance of rubrics in self and peer-evaluations. However, the teachers in this study concluded that self and peer-assessments could provide various advantages for EFL students, even when marking is not required.

## **Conclusions**

As the results indicated, self and peer-assessments contribute a number of advantages for students' language learning in the EFL context. This study, for instance, found that self and peer-assessments are able to develop students' self-regulated learning, cooperative learning, learning reflection, critical thinking, judgement skills, and problem-solving skills in writing classes. However, feeling anxiety remains a key concern for EFL students when doing gradings in the assessment process. This study indicated that students are more stressed and anxious in self-assessment activities in contrast to peer-assessment activities. Lack of confidence due to English language barriers becomes a main cause of EFL students' anxiety in English assessment. The learners, thus, tend to be hesitant in judging the quality of their writing tasks in self-evaluation. Furthermore, the finding similarly revealed that foreign language complexities also influence the learners' attitudes in peer-evaluation, though in peer-assessment, students are less anxious about assessing and being assessed by their peers. The majority of students are confident about being involved in this evaluation, due to the friendships with peers. They feel more comfortable with their peers evaluating their writing tasks and discussing mistakes in their works, providing solutions, and deciding possible grades. However, this study emphasises that the grades in self and peer-assessment tend to be unreliable, due to the issues of low confidence and friendships. Hence, the students prefer to give and receive feedback, in contrast to grading in these assessments. In this regard, this study suggests that a detailed rubric of writing tasks, understanding the nature of students' anxiety, and encouraging students to avoid anxiety, can reduce the students' hesitation and increase the accuracy of self and peer assessment.

## **Limitations**

It is important to acknowledge that there are several gaps in this current study, specifically in improving the quality and the reliability of grading of self and peer-assessments in EFL context. The research recognises that small sample size (100 students and 7 teachers), the homogeneity of the English learners and tutors (all in one institution, only in the writing program), and the restrictions of previous literature (particularly established about grading self and peer-assessments in English learning settings) are limitations on generalisations from this research.

## **Implications and recommendations**

Notwithstanding the limitations, this research offers new insights about advantages and students' anxieties concerning grading in self and peer-assessments, in EFL contexts. Additionally, this study emphasises needs for clear rubrics as a practical measure for increasing accuracy and decreasing anxiety in self and peer-evaluation processes. Further research is recommended to explore other factors and attitudes that may influence students' anxiety in assessment activities, and to investigate English learners' self and peer assessment experiences in classes for English speaking, reading and grammar.

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### Appendix 1: Google Form questions sent to students' email and/or WhatsApp

- What is your gender?  
 Male  Female
- How old are you?  
 21       22       23       24       25  
 26       26       27       28       29  
 30
- Have you completed an Intermediate level of the writing class at Cambridge English College (CEC)?  
 Yes, I have       No, I have not

4. I am less anxious when my writing task assessed by my peer.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
5. I feel more responsible when assessed my writing task.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
6. Self-assessment discovers my writing strength and weaknesses
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
7. I do not mind my writing work being graded by peers
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
8. I prefer to give and receive feedback than grades in writing class
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
9. Self and peer assessments in writing class are reliable as teacher's evaluation.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
10. I would like to see the result of self-assessment as the official grade from teacher.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

11. I would like to see the result of peer-assessment as the official grade from teacher.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
12. I think my peer can objectively assess my writing work
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
13. I am objective enough when assessing my writing work
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

## **Appendix 2: Teacher interview questions about their experiences with self and peer assessment in the writing class**

1. In your experience, do you think that self and peer-assessment contributed advantages or disadvantages for students in the writing class? Could you explain or give the example the benefits or drawbacks of these assessments during your teaching experience in the writing program?
2. Do you think that anxiety still existed when you setting self and peer-assessment in your class?  
If yes, could you identify the main factor of the existence of anxiety in self and peer-assessment?
3. Did the anxiety significantly influence on your students' performance in self and peer-assessment?  
If yes, could you explain the effects of students' anxiety on their performance when grading in self and peer-assessment?
4. How did you do to reduce the students' anxiety with grading in self and peer-assessment and increase the accuracy of these assessments?
5. Additional question:  
What do you think the practical solutions for the teacher to gain the benefits of self and peer-assessments?

**Appendix 3: Assessment rubric adapted from Hughes (2005, p.101)**

	CLASSIFICATION	SCORE	CRITERIA
<b>G R A M M A R</b>	Excellent	6	- Few (if any) noticeable of grammar or word order.
	Very Good	5	- Some errors of grammar or word order which do not, however, interfere with comprehension.
	Good	4	- Errors of grammar or word order fairly frequent; occasional re-reading necessary for full comprehension.
	Fair	3	- Errors of grammar or word order frequent; efforts of interpretation sometimes required on reader's part.
	Poor	2	- Errors of grammar or word order very frequent; reader often has to rely on own interpretation
	Very poor	1	- Errors of grammar or word order as severe as to make comprehension virtually impossible.
<b>V O C A B U L A R Y</b>	Excellent	6	- Use of vocabulary and idiom rarely (if at all) distinguishable from that of educated native writer.
	Very Good	5	- Occasionally uses inappropriate terms or relies on circumlocutions; expression of ideas hardly impaired.
	Good	4	- Uses wrong or inappropriate words fairly frequently; expression of ideas may be limited because of inadequate vocabulary.
	Fair	3	- Limited vocabulary and frequent errors clearly hinder expression of ideas.
	Poor	2	- Vocabulary so limited and so frequently misused that reader must often rely on own interpretation.
	Very poor	1	- Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make comprehension virtually impossible.
<b>M E C H A N I C S</b>	Excellent	6	- Few (if any) noticeable lapses in punctuation of spelling.
	Very Good	5	- Occasional lapses in punctuation or spelling which does not, however, interfere with comprehension.
	Good	4	- Errors in punctuation or spelling fairly frequent; occasional re-reading necessary for full comprehension.
	Fair	3	- Frequent errors in spelling or punctuation; lead sometimes to obscurity.
	Poor	2	- Errors in spelling or punctuation so frequent that reader must often rely on own interpretation.
	Very poor	1	- Errors in spelling or punctuation so severe as to make comprehension virtually impossible
<b>F L U E N C Y</b>	Excellent	6	- Choice of structures and vocabulary consistently appropriate; like that of educated native writer.
	Very Good	5	- Occasional lack of consistency in choice of structures and vocabulary which does not, however, impair overall ease of communication.
	Good	4	- 'Patchy', with some structure or vocabulary items noticeably inappropriate to general style.
	Fair	3	- Structures or vocabulary items sometimes not only inappropriate but also misused; little sense of ease of communication.
	Poor	2	- Communication often impaired by completely inappropriate or misused structures or vocabulary items.
	Very poor	1	- A 'hotch-potch' of half-learned misused structures and vocabulary items rendering communication almost impossible
<b>F O R M</b>	Excellent	6	- Highly organised; clear progression of ideas well linked; like educated native writer.
	Very Good	5	- Material well organised; links could occasionally be clearer but communication not impaired.
	Good	4	- Some lack of organisation; re-reading required for clarification of ideas.
	Fair	3	- Little or no attempt at connectivity, through reader can deduce some organisation.
	Poor	2	- Individual ideas may be clear, but very difficult to deduce connection between them.
	Very poor	1	- Lack of organisation so severe that communication is seriously impaired.

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