

Perceptions, Motivation, and Self-perceived Translational Skill Development in a Blended Translation Course through Peer Assessment

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Abstract: Peer assessment (PA) has long been a prominent educational tool in higher education. However, there is limited evidence regarding technology-facilitated PA in Translation studies. This study addresses this gap by examining students' perceptions and motivation toward a five-week online PA activity in a Translation course. It further explores the correlation between students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their perceived skill enhancement. Thirty-six third-year students participated, responding to Likert-type scale questionnaires. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data analysis. The findings reveal a highly positive perception and motivation among students in the online task. Intrinsic motivational factors were valued more than extrinsic ones, with intrinsic motivation being a significant predictor of self-perceived translation skill improvement. The study suggests potential implications for translation pedagogy and research. This pioneering effort contributes to the limited literature, proposing an alternative to face-to-face peer assessment and paving the way for future research in blended learning courses.

Keywords: Peer assessment; Translation; Online activity; Intrinsic motivation; Blended learning

Introduction

Peer assessment has proved itself as an influential educational approach across the curriculum in higher education. A review of literature carried out by Topping (1998) has pointed out enormous mutual benefits that peer assessment brings to both the assesseees and the assessors in three different domains. These include constructive reflection, increased time on task, the attention on essential elements of high-quality work (cognition and metacognition); a sense of ownership, responsibility, motivation, interactivity and empathy for others (affect); teamwork skills, active learning, social and assertion skills (social and transferable skills). Besides, as diverse technological tools and softwares have gained in popularity, online peer feedback emerges as an effective alternative to the traditional approach, which receives positive responses from language learners (Gao et al, 2023b).

Despite the overwhelming number of studies that confirm the benefits of peer assessment in education, very little attention has been given to technology-facilitated peer assessment in Translation studies to make a shift away from the conventional approach. In the Vietnamese context, there emerge a number of challenges and limitations that teachers and students alike have to confront in a typical translation lesson. Firstly, both students and teachers have to devote much of the class time to theoretical issues and translation tasks, leaving a little time for discussion, feedback and evaluation. Secondly, such a big class size of nearly 40 students makes it almost unfeasible for teachers and students to discuss and feedback all of the translated versions, thus failing to accommodate the learning needs of individual students and to facilitate and monitor collaborative tasks due to in-class time constraints (Gao et al, 2023a). Thirdly, in the conventional peer assessment, the face-to-face and non-anonymous peer feedback is more likely to make students feel uncomfortable, embarrassed and discouraged in the learning process. Therefore, this assessment format may result in students' reluctance to truthfully critique the quality of their peers' translated work.

With the availability of cutting-edge educational technologies, digital and electronic formats have turned out to be a viable solution to the traditional approach in enhancing the efficacy of peer assessment (Moloudi, 2011). In terms of affective perceptions, students engaging in online peer review activity carried out by DiGiovanni & Nagaswami (2001) were found to be more motivated and committed in the whole process.

Against this background, there is a gap, however, in the integration of online peer assessment in Translation training program at the tertiary level in the Vietnamese context. Due to this void, there is limited evidence in verifying whether this educational approach is appropriate in such a training program, thus inhibiting language instructors from reaching an adequate understanding about its benefits and challenges in their EFL teaching environment. For this reason, this current study is considered to be innovative in making a contribution to the body of research of online peer assessment in Translation studies. The purpose of this research is to gather data from a Translation training program to explore students' perceptions towards online peer assessment activity. In order to investigate students' motivations in participating in this activity, data were further collected to examine if students exhibit an intrinsic or extrinsic motivation in their performance and engagement. Additionally, this study is intended to gain an insight into the relationship between students' motivations and skill enhancement by examining whether intrinsic or extrinsic motivation could be a significant predictor of self-perceived translation skill improvement.

Literature Review

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment (PA) is characterized as the evaluation of the products or outcomes of learning by individuals of similar status (Topping, 1998, p. 249). Similarly, Roberts (2006, p.6) defines peer assessment as learners critically reflecting upon and possibly suggesting grades for their peers' learning.

PA has been demonstrated to offer numerous benefits for learners, such as improving the overall learning experience, increasing participation, particularly from low-achieving students (Li & Gao, 2016), and fostering active learning (Baker, 2016; Li & Gao, 2016). Additionally, feedback from peers is generally more abundant and immediate than teacher feedback (Topping, 2009). Student evaluators also gain advantages from the peer-assessment process, as it enhances their understanding of other students' ideas (Butler & Hodge, 2001; Falchikov, 1995) and develops their abilities as logical thinkers and writers. This, in turn, improves evaluators' capacity to provide effective feedback (Baker, 2016) and contributes to enhancements in their writing skills (Miao, Badger, & Zhen, 2006).

In recent years, peer assessment (PA) has gained popularity in blended and online learning environments due to their unique advantages. Online settings provide flexibility in terms of time and space for evaluations (Tsai, Lin, & Yuan, 2002). Students in these environments often feel more comfortable providing candid feedback, fostering a collaborative learning community (Roberts, 2006).

Various studies have explored the integration of PA into blended and online courses. Wang & Han (2013) examined students' perceptions in an online translation skill development course. Results indicated that participants found PA beneficial, valued peer feedback, and perceived improvements in critical thinking. However, there was limited appreciation for the effort required to provide feedback. In 2017, Nguyen explored students' feedback on a multi-phase evaluation model in a blended information technology course, revealing positive perceptions and high engagement.

The increasing investigation of peer assessment (PA) in these learning environments highlights its potential as an effective pedagogical approach. A recent study by Kim-Godwin, Turrise, Lawson, & Scott (2018) utilized the Revised Community of Inquiry instrument to comprehensively examine student perceptions of peer evaluation in an online intensive writing course. The findings aligned with previous research, indicating learners' positive views of online PA. Participants also reported perceived enhancements in their writing skills and overall learning outcomes. The study underscored the importance of careful planning and continuous instructor involvement for the successful implementation of online PA activities.

Motivation

A determining factor that affects learners' performance competencies and their interests in learning activities is motivation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Greater motivation enhances students' learning experiences and engagement (Zimmerman, 2000). Motivation is categorized into two orientations: intrinsic and extrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsically motivated learners perform tasks out of interest and curiosity and these tasks are inherently satisfying for them. On the contrary, extrinsic learners are motivated due to external rewards or positive outcomes such as teachers' or parents' approval or career advantage. Performance quality and learning outcomes have been proved to be different for learners with different orientations (Bénabou & Tirole, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Up till now, there have been mixed results about the role of motivation in web-based learning environments. Some research confirmed that motivation was a vital prerequisite for online learning (Hoskins & Van Hoof, 2005; Song, Singleton, Hill, & Koh, 2004) whereas others

claimed that motivation (whether intrinsic or extrinsic) did not affect learning outcomes in online learning (Lin, Zhang, & Zheng, 2017) and a low level of motivation was found among online learners (Jaggars, 2014).

Online Peer Assessment and Motivation

While various studies have concentrated on investigating motivation within web-based settings (Hoskins & Van Hoof, 2005; Jaggars, 2014; Lin et al., 2017; Song et al., 2004), and exploring the reliability and validity of online Peer Assessment (PA) (Kim-Godwin et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2017; Wang & Han, 2013), there is a scarcity of research delving into learners' individual psychological traits, particularly motivation, concerning online PA activities. An interesting study by Tseng & Tsai (2010) stands out, where two questionnaires were crafted to evaluate students' self-efficacy and motivation within an online PA environment. The primary objective was to investigate the intricate relationship between these two variables. The outcomes revealed that students demonstrated high levels of confidence and robust intrinsic motivation when participating in online PA. Furthermore, the study uncovered a reciprocal correlation between learners' self-efficacy and motivation. Increased self-efficacy was linked to a heightened level of intrinsic motivation, and conversely, highly intrinsically motivated students displayed enhanced confidence in their PA activities. In conclusion, both self-efficacy and motivation emerged as crucial predictors of learning performance (Kuo et al, 2023).

Within the local context of this research, while a prior study explored the advantages of online Peer Assessment (PA) in a tertiary-level information technology course in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2017), there has been limited investigation into its application in the development of translation skills. Moreover, little attention has been given to learners' attributes, particularly their motivation within the online peer assessment environment. Therefore, this study is crafted to address the following research inquiries:

How do students perceive the online peer assessment activity within the Translation course?

To what extent are students motivated to engage in the online peer assessment activity? If so, is their motivation predominantly intrinsic or extrinsic?

Can motivation be identified as a predictor of students' perceptions regarding the development of translational skills within the online peer assessment environment?

Method

The study comprised a sample of 36 third-year students (2 males and 34 females), aged between 21 and 22. These students, majoring in English, were enrolled in the 15-week Translation 2 Course during the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019 at the University of Foreign Language Studies in Guangzhou, China. Translation 2 is a mandatory three-credit course for undergraduate students at the Faculty of English, aiming to cultivate intermediate translation skills through activities like text analysis, translation practice, and the critique of authentic English and Chinese texts of various types based on functions. The course covers five text types: advertisements, scientific reports, speeches, regulations, and popular journalism. Online peer assessment, lasting for 5 weeks, was integrated as a post-class activity and a component of the overall course assessment.

Procedures

Moodle, with its pedagogical and technical advantages, has gained global popularity in universities. Its availability, user-friendly interface, and effective communication features contribute to a student-friendly learning process (Lopes, 2011; Kotzer & Elran, 2012; Goyal & Tambe, 2015). The 'Forum' plug-in further enhances communication by providing rapid feedback through automatic notifications for new messages (Jonnavithula, 2008; Martinho, Almeida, & Teixeira-Dias, 2014; Goyal & Tambe, 2015). Given these features, Moodle was chosen as the Learning Management Platform for implementing online peer assessment activities using the 'Discussion Forum' Tool.

At the study's start, students were briefed for clear understanding and efficient navigation of the Peer Assessment on the Moodle Platform. Authentic texts, corresponding to covered types, were uploaded weekly. Students completed two weekly tasks: Translation (English-Chinese) and Peer Evaluation. Anonymity was maintained through student ID numbers, and groups of three were assigned for cross-evaluation on Moodle. Following lecturer-guided criteria, each student evaluated two peers, providing comments, highlighting strengths/weaknesses, explaining potential issues, and suggesting improvements. The forum archived all posts for review before the weekly in-class feedback session.

Conclusion

The current research aimed to investigate students' perceptions of incorporating an online Peer Assessment (PA) activity into a blended Translation course and their motivation to participate in this activity. The study also explored the relationship between motivation and the development of translational skills. The results revealed that students held highly positive perceptions and were motivated to engage in the online peer assessment task (Sukumaran et al, 2023). They expressed a strong interest in participating in a collaborative learning community,

benefiting not only from feedback received from classmates but also from the feedback-giving process itself. Intrinsic motivation was significantly higher than extrinsic motivation, and those with stronger intrinsic motivation perceived greater improvement in their translation competence. External factors were found to have no impact on students' involvement in online PA activity (Yu et al, 2023)

The study's implications suggest that online peer assessment can be a beneficial and meaningful activity for learners, enhancing specialized knowledge, translation skills, writing, and critical thinking. The collaborative learning environment and immediate feedback with straightforward critique from peers add significant value to the learning process. For teachers, online PA empowers them to take on facilitative roles and address challenges in providing feedback to a large number of students. Course designers should consider learners' intrinsic motivation for the optimal integration of online PA activity. While the study had limitations, such as a small sample size and time constraints, it represents the first comprehensive investigation into learners' perceptions and motivation regarding online PA implementation in Translation courses in the local context. Future empirical research with larger samples and longer durations is needed to address these limitations.

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