The Contribution of Collaborative Assessment of Classroom Participation to Learners' Sense of Classroom Community

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Abstract

In the past few decades, developing a sense of classroom community (SCC) in learning environments has gained momentum. It is believed that there is a bond between students' SCC and their interaction and cooperation. SCC and students' collaboration in learning and assessment are well documented in online environments; however, these issues have been overlooked in traditional settings. To fill this gap, the current study investigated the effect of collaborative assessment (CA) of students' classroom participation (CP) on their SCC in face-to-face classes. 18 Iranian intermediate EFL learners of an institute were randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control group with 9 students in each. During 16 sessions, the control group received only conventional instructions while the experimental group additionally engaged in five pair or group activities in each session and had 6 class discussions followed by self- and peer assessments. Two whole-class meetings were also held in which the students collaborated with their teacher to score learners' participation. In order to carry out a validated CA, two observers attended the discussion sessions and monitored the learners' performance. They filled an observation checklist and scored the learners' CP twice. To measure learners' SCC, Rovai's Classroom Community Scale (CCS) was administered to them after the treatment. The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on this scale. In the light of this finding, CA is recommended to enhance SCC.

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Keywords: Classroom participation; Collaborative assessment; Peer assessment; Self-assessment; Sense of Classroom Community

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have highlighted the benefits of developing a strong sense of community in learning environments. Sense of Community Theory, which was originally developed by McMillan and Chavis (1986) in social psychology, has become the framework of many models and measurement scales in educational contexts. According to Watkins (2005), learners who experience a high sense of classroom community (SCC), are able to coordinate their performance with their peers and attempt together to meet the goals of the whole group.

Rovai and Wighting (2005) assert that "sense of community provides a sense of belonging, identity, emotional connection, and wellbeing" (p. 99). However, lack of SCC produces a feeling of alienation, isolation and detachment from the mainstream group (Adler, 1964). Students who suffer from the sense of alienation feel that no one pays attention to them and they have no effect on what occurs in their learning environments. These students often experience a negative student-student relationship and may encounter failure in their learning process (Rovai & Wighting, 2005).

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A review of literature reveals that socio-constructivist practices such as students' communication and collaboration are educational practices that foster classroom community (CC) (Dawson, 2006). According to Rovai (2002a), interaction among the students is the key element of CC since learning occurs through the learners' active participation in class activities. On the other hand, grading learners' classroom participation (CP) is a subjective matter due to the fact that some students are shy or introverted (Jacobs & Chase, 1992). In order to grade the CP fairly, learners should have opportunities to participate equally in contrast to the time when the more extrovert students dominate the class (Bean & Peterson, 1998). One type of assessment by which students can have a monumental influence on their own learning is collaborative assessment (CA) (Fahim, Miri & Najafi, 2014). Furthermore, CA provides the students with continuous and formative feedback "rather than judgmental feedback about their academic performance" (Brookhart, 1994 in Alkharusi, 2008, p. 248).

The bulk of research on SCC has been done in online environments; however, Rovai (2002b) believes that a sense of community is necessary and should be reinforced in all learning contexts including traditional classes. This investigation is an attempt to compensate for the lack of a knowledge base regarding SCC in traditional settings. The procedures adopted in this study can be a good example for the students to learn how to adjust their performance to the standards of CP, observe their own and their peers' performance and finally assess the outcomes. The suggested procedures may facilitate active learning, cooperation among the learners and sense of commitment to CC. Considering the above mentioned points, the following research question was addressed by the current study: Does collaborative assessment of classroom participation have a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' sense of classroom community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

By emphasizing the feelings of connectedness and shared responsibilities among community members, SCC resembles socio-constructivist theories which are briefly described in the following sections.

2.1   Theoretical Framework

2.1.1   Constructivism

Within educational contexts the meaning of constructivism varies according to different fields of study. Philosophical and personal meanings of constructivism are described by Jean Piaget (1967); social constructivism is outlined by Vygotsky (1978) and radical constructivism is defined by von Glasersfeld (1995). Piaget focuses on the development of individual and the active role that one has in constructing the knowledge, i.e. accommodating new knowledge into the existing one. He believes that our understanding of knowledge is revised by means of exposure to new experiences. However, he ignores the influences of socio-cultural contexts (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). The social and participatory aspects of constructivism are described below.

2.1.2   Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky (1978) introduces Sociocultural Theory in his work, "Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes". In this theory, he asserts that human learning is a social process and social interaction plays an important role in cognitive development of individuals. He also introduces Zone of Proximal Development according to which when a learner who is cognitively prepared is provided with "scaffolding" by a more experienced peer or a tutor, he is able to develop complex skills. By considering the significance of social interaction of students in a language learning context, this study concentrates on learners' contribution to class discussions and interaction with peers and their teacher to create a feeling of learning in a warm and welcoming atmosphere of classroom.

2.2   Sense of Classroom Community

McMillan and Chavis (1986) define psychological sense of classroom community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). In educational context, Rovai and Lucking (2000, 2003) explain SCC as a feeling of personal relatedness that makes the learners do their duties to the whole class and struggle together to achieve common goals. The environment provided by this feeling frees the individuals to express their identities and deal with the changes and challenges of learning (Rovai & Wighting, 2005). In virtual classes, social and academic participation is regarded as an integral part of virtual community and without active participation learners are not considered as a part of CC (Misanchuk & Anderson, 2001). Some characterizations of CP and the effects on the development of SCC are presented in 2.3.

2.3   The Link between Classroom Participation and Sense of Classroom Community

Based on sociocultural theories, cognitive development of learners is co-constructed during their interactions with peers and the tutor. Also, the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogy has emphasized the importance of CP. According to Yu (2009), classroom interaction as a productive teaching technique manages the process of language learning and learners' development in class. These interactions provide opportunities for learners and instructors to have better learning experiences, and also motivate them to communicate and begin to know each other. He further explains that the components of interaction are: (1) collaborative dialogue (2) negotiation, and (3) co-construction. These three components emphasize joint construction of knowledge through collaboration and communication of the learners and teachers and negotiation to find solution to problems. These links between the members of a classroom finally bring about a sense of social learning and social connectedness (Barczyk & Duncan, 2013).

As a general fact, the majority of teachers allocate a proportion of the final grades for learners' class performance and attendance. According to Dawson (2006), learners' interaction and participation in class activities are the most influential factors in the development of SCC. Particularly, holding classroom discussions in which learners' opinions are welcomed and valued increases learners' sense of connection to each other and SCC (Kim, Solomon & Roberts, 1995). From another viewpoint, having a high SCC encourages learners to connect to others, ask questions, participate in class discussions and take part in pair and group works more effectively. Sustained communication of class members and their collaboration in resolving and understanding the content of the course empowers them as members of a community to struggle together to achieve the same goals (Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012). In the current study, in-class participation is accounted for as class attendance, active participation in pair/group activities and class discussions. Learners are required to be prepared for class activities, listen attentively, ask questions and respond to the questions posed by the teacher or other students.

To assess CP fairly and reliably, Heyman and Sailors (2011) recommend self- and peer assessment since these strategies get students involved in assessing their own performance. Therefore, in this study CP assessment is accomplished by multiple raters using CA. In the following section, basic characteristics and the process of CA are presented.

2.4   Collaborative Assessment

According to Chau (2005), CA consists of three phases: a) students go through self-assessment and receive feedback from the tutor; b) learners evaluate each other's performance (through peer assessment) and receive peer feedback; c) collaborative assessment is conducted and learners who are dissatisfied with their grades approach the teacher for a review of their marks. By providing formative feedback, CA helps learners reflect on their performance and encourages them to develop their oral and communicative skills (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005). Moreover, it is believed that CA promotes learning, critical thinking, better retention of material and better performance on various tests (Ioannou & Artino, 2010). Particularly

in virtual settings, many researchers have argued that collaborative learning and assessment techniques can influence CC positively (e.g. McConnell, 1999; Bell & Kahrhoff, 2006). However despite the numerous advantageous, collaborative approaches are not common in the classes around the world (Hargreaves, 2007).

2.5   Sense of Community in Traditional Courses

According to Solomon, Battistich, Kim, and Watson (1997, p. 237), "teaching practices that promote or require active student involvement, the use of cooperative learning, flexible school rules, and opportunities for students to participate in decision making" enhance the students' SCC. They believe that a well-functioning CC is positively related to learners' intrinsic motivation, self-esteem and academic achievement. According to Summers and Svinicki (2007), those who attend traditional lecture-style courses experience lower sense of community rather than those who take cooperative classes. Davidson (2012) also believes that cooperative practices enhance learners' SCC and bring about academic achievement, psychological development, motivation, retention and decrease in negative behaviors. In this investigation, he concludes that the instructors' intention in conducting community building activities in the classroom leads to higher SCC among the learners.

By comparing online and FTF courses, Tayebinik and Puteh (2012) assert that these two learning types are complementary. Based on the results of their study, combining online and FTF classes foster the benefits of both of these learning environments. A quick comparison of the studies conducted in virtual and FTF classrooms reveals that there is a gap of knowledge considering SCC in traditional classes. Research has been conducted in online environments which have focused on the effects of learners' collaboration and participation on their SCC, whereas there are not such investigations for the participants in traditional classes. However, SCC in traditional classes is also worth attention and should not be taken for granted.

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the contribution of collaborative assessment of classroom participation to learners' sense of classroom community, this study employed a mixed method, which included an experimental setup, observation, and self-and peer-evaluations based on checklists.

3.1   Participants

To carry out the present study, 18 female EFL students of intermediate level from an institute in Tehran were recruited. The small size of the sample can be justified by the fact that class discussions and collaborative assessment entail student-student interaction and may get out of control, particularly in terms of data collection, when there are large classes. The participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control group. In order to do so, the students' names were inserted in an alphabetically ordered list. Then, they were assigned either numbers 1 or 2. Every other student was put in one group; therefore, they were randomly put in two random groups with 9 students in each. These students ranged from 19 to 30 years of age. Their legitimacy for participation and homogeneity was confirmed based on the results of Nelson English Language Tests (intermediate level).

3.2   Research Materials

3.2.1   The course book

The course book taught to both groups was Touchstone edited by Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten and Helen Sandiford published by Cambridge University Press in 2014. This book focuses on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and provides ample opportunities for learners to interact in pair and group activities. The students in both control and experimental groups were taught

three chapters of this book during 16 sessions.

3.2.2 Classroom participation questionnaire

In order to involve the students in self-assessment, the classroom participation (CP) questionnaire by Phillips (2000) was utilized (see Appendix B). In 2009, this questionnaire went through some refinements by de Saint Léger in which 6 items were omitted. This change extended the scope of the instrument and made it applicable to other studies. Therefore, the latter version was adopted in the current research. This instrument was checked by three experts before the treatment to assure its validity; then, it was administered to 20 students similar to the target group, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the consistency among the scores was found to be 0.74, which established the reliability of the questionnaire in the Iranian context.

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 Nelson English Language Tests

Nelson English Language Tests (intermediate level) by Coe and Fowler (1976) were used to homogenize the groups based on the students' language proficiency. The 200A level tests were chosen and administered to the learners. In order to ascertain the similarity of the control group and the experimental group in terms of their English proficiency, a t-test was run on their Nelson test scores. The results did not demonstrate a significant difference between the means of the two groups (see section 5.1).

3.3.2 Classroom Community Scale

The Classroom Community Scale (CCS) by Alfred P. Rovai (2002b) is a Likert-scale questionnaire which is used in the present study to measure SCC (see Appendix A). This instrument consists of 20 items each of which is followed by a five-point Likert-scale of responses: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. These options are reverse-scored with valuing the most favorable choice as four and the least favorable one as zero.

CCS was claimed to possess high content and construct validity. For its reliability, split-half and Cronbach's coefficients of 0.91 and 0.93 were respectively reported, demonstrating excellent reliability for this scale (Rovai, 2002b). Before administering this instrument to Iranian learners, its content and format were studied validated by three skilled English teachers at the institute where this study was conducted. Then, it was piloted to 20 students, who were similar to the target participants of the study. An analysis of the pilot data revealed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.81, which is a good reliability indicator.

3.3.3 Observation checklist

An observation checklist was developed to be used by two observers, who attended the treatment sessions (see Appendix C). The items of this checklist were extracted from the class participation questionnaire which means that they shared the same assessment rubrics. There are 10 items in this instrument followed by 9 columns which represent the 9 participants of the class. Each student's CP could be assessed by marking each item either yes (1 point) or no (no points). By adding up the points in each column, a score out of 10 could be obtained for each learner. The two observers attended the class and scored the learners twice.

3.4 Procedures

After the approval from the institute, the study was conducted for one term (16 sessions). One week was devoted to the administration of CCS before and after the main treatment and the treatment ran for 4 weeks. Summary of the data collection procedures is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of data collection procedures.

Treatments	Groups		Number of sessions for the treatments
	Experimental	Control	
Conventional language instructions	Yes	Yes	16
Administration of Nelson English Language Tests	Yes	Yes	1
Discussion	Yes	No	6
Administration of CP questionnaire	Yes	No	6
Peer feedback	Yes	No	6
Teacher feedback	Yes	No	6
Observation	Yes	No	6
Students giving CP scores to their peers	Yes	No	2
Observers assigning CP scores to learners	Yes	No	2
Class Meeting	Yes	No	2
Administration of CCS after treatment	Yes	No	1

Before starting the courses, 18 intermediate students were randomly assigned to two groups of 9. In the first session, an intermediate Nelson test from Nelson English Language Tests, level 200A, was administered to both groups in order to ensure their homogeneity in terms of language proficiency. This test took the learners 45 minutes to complete. An independent sample *t-test* was used to examine the difference between the means of the control and the experimental groups. Since no significant difference was reported, all 18 learners were assumed legible and selected as the participants.

To achieve the aim of the study, which was encouraging the learners' collaboration in CP assessment and recording the variations of SCC, the first step was to familiarize the learners with the process of CA. Therefore, one session after the first administration of CCS, the learners of the experimental group were reminded of the importance of active participation. Then, all the class members contributed to draft a list of the elements of CP on the board. Seven factors were identified as CP rubrics (see section 2.2). The learners were told that they were going to assess their own and their peers' participation based on these factors. The fact that they were allowed to indicate their own CP mark was obviously motivating for them and it facilitated their progress. It was also announced that they were going to negotiate their CP score with their teacher during two class meetings.

Throughout the treatment period, the learners in the experimental group engaged in 5 pair/group activities each session in addition to 6 whole-class discussions. The pair/group activities were parts of the conventional teaching and the topics were taken from the book, but the topics of the whole-class discussions were decided by the learners. To do so, they exchanged messages on an instant messaging application (Telegram) to negotiate and agree on a topic. Sessions 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14 were discussion sessions, each of which lasted for 20 minutes.

After each discussion session (three of which were before the midterm exam and the other three were before the final exam) the students were put in 3 groups of three and the CP questionnaire forms were distributed among them. They were supposed to complete them regarding their own participation (the questionnaire forms were collected by the teacher and were kept as a record). Then the learners were provided with peer feedback as they were asked to write down the strengths and weaknesses of the two peers in their group on two pieces of paper. This activity was done during the last 10 minutes of the class. While the learners were writing peer feedback, the teacher also wrote the major positive or negative points of all the students' performance on small pieces of paper. There were also suggestions for further improvement. This process was repeated 6 times (i.e., after the 6 discussions).

During the 7th and 14th sessions, the students were asked to give a score out of ten to the two peers in their group and report them to the teacher. At the end, a CP score was given as the average of the teacher and the peers' scores. In the 8th and 15th sessions, two class meetings were held for 20 minutes in which the teacher announced the CP scores and discussed them with the learners. The learners could bargain for higher scores by speaking up for their participation in light of the assessment rubrics.

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the CP scores, two observers, who were also teachers in the institute, attended the class for the 6 sessions in which the discussions were run. They filled in the observation checklist for each student's CP during the 6 sessions. Finally they gave two CP marks to each learner in the 7th and 14th sessions. At last, the CCS was administered to the control and experimental groups after the treatment (i.e. in the 16th session). Analyzing their answers after the treatment helped identifying the influence of CA on SCC among the learners.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the study. In the first part, the results of the Nelson Test are presented to demonstrate the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups. The following part deals with the relationship between the variables and addresses the research question.

4.1   Homogeneity Test

In order to establish the homogeneity of control and experimental groups, Nelson English Language Tests were administered to all participants. An independent sample *t-test* was performed to compare the mean scores of the students in the two groups. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the two groups' proficiency scores.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Nelson English Language Tests.

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	9	.60	.09	.03
Control	9	.58	.16	.05

As shown in Table 2, the mean scores of experimental and control groups are 0.60 and 0.58 respectively. As it is apparent, there is a small difference between the mean scores of the two groups. The results of the independent sample t-test are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of independent sample t-test for Nelson English Language Tests.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t.	df.	Si.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances Assumed	1.325	.267	.231	16	.820	.01443	.06253	-.11813	.14700
Equal variances Not Assumed			.231	12.952	.821	.01443	.06253	-.12071	.14958

According to the above table, there was no significant difference between the means of the experimental and control groups, t (16) = 0.231, p = 0.820 > 0.05. It was concluded that the two groups were homogeneous and comparable in terms of English proficiency.

4.2   Pearson Correlation Analysis of the CP Questionnaire and Observation Data

To investigate the correlation between the scores from the classroom participation questionnaire and those obtained in the two rounds of observation and establish their reliability, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was performed. The results of the two operations are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Correlation of the CP scores obtained through CA and observation 1.

		CA	Observation Scores	
CA	Pearson Correlation	1	.894**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	
	N	9	9	
Observers	Pearson Correlation	.894**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
	N	9	9	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows that there was a positive significant correlation between the scores obtained through CA and those obtained from the observers (r = 0. 894, p <.001) in the first round of observation. Table 5 presents the information about the correlation of the CP scores obtained through CA and those obtained from the second round of the observation of collaboration.

Table 5. Correlation of the CP scores obtained through CA and observation 2.

		CA	Observation scores	
CA	Pearson Correlation	1	.952**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	9	9	
Observers	Pearson Correlation	.952**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	9	9	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 5, there was a positive significant correlation between the scores obtained through CA and those obtained from the observers (r = 0. 952, p <.001) in the second round of observation. A significant relationship between the CP scores obtained through CA and those obtained through observations indicate that the CA data are reliable.

4.3 Does Collaborative Assessment of Classroom Participation Have any Effect on Learners' Sense of Classroom Community?

This study was an attempt to investigate whether collaborative assessment of classroom participation has any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' sense of classroom community. To answer this question, the difference between the control group and the experimental group regarding SCC after the treatment was investigated. Table 6 displays descriptive statistics for data of the data obtained through Rovai's CCS from both groups.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of CCS: After the treatment.

Group	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	9	3.0556	.59079	.19693
Control	9	2.4839	.39533	.13178

As shown in Table 6, the mean score of the experimental group (Mean = 3.05) is different from the mean of the control group (Mean = 2.48). To see whether this difference is significant or not, a t-test was run.

Table 7. Independent sample t-test concerning CCS: After the treatment.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t.	df.	Si.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances Assumed	.428	.522	2.412	16	.028	.57164	.23695	0.69	1.07
Equal variances Not Assumed			2.412	13.968	.030	.57164	.23695	0.63	1.07

Table 7 shows that the difference between the experimental group and the control group with regard to t (16) = 2.41, P = 0.028 < 0.05 is statistically significant. In other words, the participants of the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group in developing SCC.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the participants of the experimental group who went through self-assessment, peer assessment and CA developed higher SCC than their counterparts in the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded from the results that learners' collaboration in assessing their in-class participation enhances their sense of cohesion and community. Communication opportunities which were provided in this study enabled the learners to collaborate with each other and with their instructor; therefore, they got involved in more interactive tasks and developed their communicative skills. The results of these communication opportunities are in line with the socio-constructivist notions advocated by Vygotsky (1978) who emphasized the construction of knowledge through social interactions and defined learning in the light of peer collaboration.

Previous studies established the positive effects of a focus on participation and collaboration in online environments (e.g., Misanchuk & Anderson, 2001; Rovai, 2002a; Rovai, 2002b; Melkun, 2012; Chatterjee, 2015). This study, which targeted a traditional instructional setting, showed that such effects are more wide-ranging and also realize face-to-face classes when instruction focuses on communal potentials and teachers employ collaborative strategies such as peer assessment.

The application of CA to a language learning situation which was explored in the present study seems to be an educationally right decision and can be justified by a variety of reasons, some of which may seem self-evident. Firstly, the global shift to learner-centered pedagogy requires the learners' involvement in their own learning process. Due to this fact, the learners who were traditionally accepted as passive recipients of knowledge should change their roles to active participants who take the responsibility of their own education. Secondly, in this study the learners were engaged in several pair/group activities and class discussions with topics which they had cooperatively chosen; therefore, the results were expected to be assessed by the learners themselves. Going against this mind set and violating this expectation could have negative effects. And thirdly, a number of researchers (e.g. Heyman & Sailors, 2011) believe that personal attitudes are involved in CP assessment; therefore, it is recommended to incorporate extra raters' decisions in assessment. This fact is also in line with Klecker's (2003) assertion that cooperative group activities, as formative classroom assessments, are valid and relevant educational attempts.

Through CA, the subjects of this study received timely feedback which is of paramount importance in formative assessments. The influence of feedback from peers and the teacher on the learners approve the fact that efficient feedback "builds confidence among learners, motivates them to improve learning and helps them to identify both their strengths and weaknesses" (Nasab, 2015, p. 168). It also agrees with Dancer and Kamvounias' (2005) research who claimed that self- and peer assessments accompanied by teacher assessment are reliable techniques and provide considerable opportunities for the learners to receive comments from their peers and teacher. The reason to decide not to have discussions in every session of this study was to avoid students' frustration. This decision is also consistent with Kerr and Hiltz's (1982) ideas. They believe that if communication load is beyond the learners' abilities, the learners' performance will be negatively affected. Intensive interactions that engage a large number of partners in discussions, conferences and other tasks reduce the students' SCC.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in this study the difference of the control and experimental groups in their sense of community and group cohesion is significant but the significance is to a moderate degree. One reason could be the fact that not all the participants liked to do peer assessments. This finding is in line with Rovai's (2002c) claim that "Interactions build community when learners trust each other and view other learners as colleagues or collaborators. Conversely, interactions can weaken community when learners view each other as competitors or critics" (p. 44). In fact, this was the reason that in this study the learners were provided with and consulted about the standards of assessment. Creating assessment rubrics in the beginning of the term made it clear for the learners how their class performance is expected to be and how it is going to be evaluated.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this study make the researchers come to the conclusion that by assessing themselves and their peers, the learners get accustomed to the standards of assessment and learn how to provide their group members with useful feedback. This communication makes the learners feel needed in the class and generates stronger SCC. As they frequently self-assess their performance in a sustained manner, they pay attention to the rubrics more consciously and gradually start to observe the rubrics while performing in the class. Another positive point is that since the students are allowed to assess themselves, they become more punctual, diligent, and spend more time on tasks, trying to approach the standards in their performance and attendance.

There were some factors which may limit the generalizability of the findings of this research. In this study, a small sample was utilized, so the findings are not liberally applicable to larger groups. Moreover, all the participants were female students; therefore, generalizing the results to classes with male students should be done with much caution. Since students' participation in class differs at various levels of language proficiency, learners at lower or higher levels may be different in terms of class participation, collaborative assessment, and developing a sense of classroom community. Future researchers can consider a wider range of conditions for self-, peer and collaborative assessments. Moreover, they can assign other collaborative learning activities such as group projects to foster CA.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix A. Classroom Community Scale

Directions:

Below, you will see a series of statements concerning a specific course or program you are presently taking or have recently completed. Read each statement carefully and place an X in the parentheses to the right of the statement that comes closest to indicate how you feel about the course or program. You may use a pencil or pen. There are no correct or incorrect responses. If you neither agree nor disagree with a statement or are uncertain, place an X in the neutral (N) area. Do not spend too much time on any one statement, but give the response that seems to describe how you feel.

Please respond to all items.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I feel that students in this course care about each other	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
2. I feel that I am encouraged to ask questions	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
3. I feel connected to others in this course	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
4. I feel that it is hard to get help when I have a question	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
5. I do not feel a spirit of community	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
6. I feel that I receive timely feedback	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
7. I feel that this course is like a family	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
8. I feel uneasy exposing gaps in my understanding	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
9. I feel isolated in this course	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
10. I feel reluctant to speak openly	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
11. I trust others in this course	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
12. I feel that this course results in only modest learning	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
13. I feel that I can rely on others in this course	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
14. I feel that other students do not help me learn	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
15. I feel that members of this course depend on me	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
16. I feel that I am given ample opportunities to learn	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
17. I feel uncertain about others in this course	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
18. I feel that my educational needs are not being met	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
19. I feel confident that others will support me	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)
20. I feel that this course does not promote a desire to learn	(SA)	(A)	(N)	(D)	(SD)

Appendix B. Class Participation Questionnaire

Please fill out this section by checking the appropriate box:
Yes, definitely (Y)   Sometimes (S)   Not yet (N)

A. Class attendance
I come to class...(Y)   (S)   (N)
I come to class on time .... (Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: . . ………...
B. I ask questions in class
I ask the teacher questions...(Y)   (S)   (N)
I ask my classmates questions...(Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: . . …………...
C. I answer questions in class
I answer questions that the teacher asks...(Y)   (S)   (N)
I answer questions that my classmates ask..(Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: . . ……….……
D. I participate in group-work
I offer my opinion ....(Y)   (S)   (N)
I cooperate with my group members..(Y)   (S)   (N)
I communicate in English with my group members...(Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: . . ……………..
E. I participate in pair-work
I offer my opinion ....(Y)   (S)   (N)
I cooperate with my partner .... (Y)   (S)   (N)
I communicate in English with my partner .... (Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: . . ……….……
F. I participate in whole-class discussion
I make comments .... (Y)   (S)   (N)
I ask questions... (Y)   (S)   (N)
I answer questions... (Y)   (S)   (N)
I respond to other comments made by my classmates .... (Y)   (S)   (N)
I clarify comments made by someone else... (Y)   (S)   (N)
I use new vocabulary... (Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: . . ……….……
G. I listen actively in class
I listen actively to the teacher.. (Y)   (S)   (N)
I listen actively to my classmates .... (Y)   (S)   (N)
Comments: ……………...

Appendix C. Observation Checklist

Observation checklist

Observer's name: ....   **Date:** …………………….

The present checklist is developed to measure students' classroom participation. The numbers one to nine represent the nine students who attend this class. Please read the following participation assessment criteria and check Y (yes) or N (no) for each student. Then calculate each student's participation mark.

Yes = 1 point, No = 0.

Participation assessment criteria	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		comments
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	
1. The learner comes to class on time.																			
2. The learner asks questions in class.																			
3. The learner answers questions in class.																			
4. The learner communicates in English in class.																			
5. The learner uses new vocabulary.																			
6. The learner listens actively in class.																			
7. The learner clarifies comments made in class.																			
8. The learner participates in group work.																			
9. The learner participates in pair work.																			
10. The learner participates in whole-class discussion.																			
Total																			