

# The Impacts of Peer Assessment on Self-efficacy of SFL Learning

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**Abstract:** This research focuses on the acquisition and the evolution of self-efficacy of second foreign language (SFL) learning. With the participatory observation and semi-structured interview method, we conduct a deep-going analysis on three students and aim to explore the effects of use of peer assessment on the improvement of self-efficacy in SFL learning. The results indicate that: (1) In view of the characteristics at different stages of SFL learning, peer assessment may have different impacts on SFL learning. (2) Teacher's interference is essential for the steady improvement of students' self-efficacy. (3) Peer assessment can elevate observably the self-efficacy of students with lower proficiency. This study enriches the research on French teaching strategies as SFL and provides empirical reference and experience for the reform and innovation of French teaching as SFL.

**Keywords:** SFL; Self-efficacy of learning; Peer assessment

DOI: 10.62639/sspjess01.20250203

## 1. Introduction

Language, as the foremost communication tool for humans, holds a significant position in international relations, with the prerequisite of language interoperability being essential for international exchanges<sup>[1]</sup>. Both in terms of personal language proficiency development, namely the development of "trilingual education," and at the national level of language proficiency development, emphasis must be placed on the development of second foreign language proficiency<sup>[2]</sup>. In light of this, domestic universities have introduced second foreign language courses, which have, to some extent, enhanced the multilingual abilities and comprehensive qualities of foreign language majors, facilitating the cultivation of composite language talents for the country<sup>[3]</sup>. However, there are numerous issues, such as traditional teaching modes, insufficient teaching staff, and poor autonomous learning abilities among students in university French courses, leading to significant differences in students' learning outcomes<sup>[4]</sup>. Based on this, there is an urgent need for innovation and reform in university French teaching modes, with evaluation and testing being crucial means to assess teaching quality and promote the construction and development of university French courses<sup>[5]</sup>. Ashton believes that self-efficacy is a psychological attitude of individuals towards their response to a specific environment<sup>[6]</sup>, and evaluating self-efficacy can effectively predict an individual's ability to successfully perform a certain action and related behaviors. This study delves into the impact of peer assessment on self-efficacy in second foreign language French learning.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter delves into two primary areas: peer assessment methods and self-efficacy, aiming to elucidate the role of peer assessment in enhancing students' self-efficacy in learning.

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(Manuscript NO.: JIESS-25-3-62005)

### About the Author

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### **(1) Peer assessment**

Peer assessment, a form of evaluation where individuals critically examine and provide assessments of their peers' work from various perspectives<sup>[7]</sup>, is considered a good indicator of future professional performance<sup>[8]</sup>, as suggested by the Domingues team. It is deemed stable and reliable, offering information that traditional methods cannot capture. Yu & Lee point out that peer assessment involves learners providing or receiving oral or written feedback from their peers<sup>[9]</sup>.

Peer assessment can prompt students to actively engage in knowledge construction, enhance self-directed learning abilities, and cultivate innovative thinking skills<sup>[10]</sup>, maximizing students' potential for autonomous learning<sup>[11]</sup>. However, in competitive learning environments, the use of peer assessment may lead students to focus excessively on competition. Coupled with limited knowledge and skills and concerns about face-saving, the effectiveness of peer feedback may be questioned<sup>[12]</sup>. This necessitates teachers' mediation and professional guidance in peer assessment, adjusting teaching content based on feedback. Teacher and peer feedback are not mutually exclusive but complementary and beneficial<sup>[13]</sup>. Through peer assessment methods such as oral and written evaluations, students' academic performance at specific stages or throughout the entire learning process can be directly reflected, providing a basis for teachers to conduct formative assessments. However, current research indicates a scarcity of studies on its application in French as a second foreign language teaching.

### **(2) Self-Efficacy**

The concept of self-efficacy, introduced in 1977 by renowned American psychologist Bandura, is defined as "individuals' beliefs or confidence in their abilities to succeed in specific performance achievements required in a particular domain"<sup>[14]</sup>. Self-efficacy significantly influences learning motivation, as it affects task selection, persistence, and emotional reactions during task completion<sup>[15]</sup>.

The level of self-efficacy profoundly impacts the extent to which students exercise autonomy in learning. Western scholars, represented by Bandura, argue that individual self-efficacy primarily stems from four types of experiences: direct experience, vicarious or modeling experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states<sup>[16]</sup>. Lin Jie et al. conducted a questionnaire survey among 1,030 college students to explore the mediating role of academic self-efficacy in the learning process. Positive academic emotions can enhance students' academic self-efficacy, thereby increasing learning engagement and achieving a virtuous cycle<sup>[17]</sup>.

In summary, the implementation of peer assessment in foreign language teaching represents a significant shift towards a student-centered teaching reform. This approach not only enhances students' self-directed learning abilities but also strengthens their critical thinking and innovative capabilities. While research in this field is abundant, few studies have explored its use from the perspective of enhancing learning self-efficacy. Furthermore, existing domestic research primarily focuses on the application of peer assessment in English teaching, with scant extended research on second foreign language teaching. Given this, this study takes peer assessment as an entry point to explore changes in self-efficacy in second foreign language (French) learning, constituting a novel research perspective. Based on the identified gaps in the above literature review, this study aims to address the following research questions: (1) What is the impact of peer assessment methods on the enhancement of self-efficacy in French as a second foreign language learning? (2) How can teachers leverage peer assessment methods to enhance students' self-efficacy in French as a second foreign language learning?

## **3. Research Design**

This study designs research around two distinct dimensions: peer assessment methods and self-efficacy. Given the social and complex nature of the research questions, the researcher adopts qualitative research methods for descriptive and exploratory research<sup>[18]</sup>, utilizing participatory observation and interviews to explore the impact of

peer assessment on the evolution of self-efficacy in second foreign language (French) learning.

### (1) Research participants

Given the sociocultural context of this study's participants, to directly obtain analytical data required for the research design, the researcher conducted participant observation in Class A of the undergraduate translation program at a university's School of Foreign Languages. Observations were carried out in two consecutive semesters of College French 1 and College French 2 courses. The class consisted of 24 students with no prior French knowledge, taught by the same instructor across both semesters (four weekly French sessions, 72 total hours per semester). Prior to the study, the researcher communicated with the instructor regarding the study's nature, content, and objectives. The instructor expressed strong support and actively collaborated in data collection, enabling the researcher to observe classes without disrupting normal teaching order. To ensure continuity, objectivity, and validity, 30 hours of observation were conducted in College French 1 and 36 hours in College French 2. Key observation areas included student classroom performance, peer assessment (oral feedback and written assignment peer assessment), and teacher interventions, all documented in detail. Additionally, participants were divided into three homogeneous groups (8 students each) based on English proficiency, French proficiency, and personality traits for focus group interviews lasting 80–100 minutes per session. After data processing and analysis, Marie, Juliette, and Pascal were ultimately selected for interview research.

Table 1. Basic information of the study subjects (all names are pseudonyms)

Anonymous	Gender	Native place	English learning background
Marie	Female	Shandong Province	Early English enlightenment with strong interest
Juliette	Female	Hunan Province	Mother an English teacher, strong family English atmosphere
Pascal	Male	Henan Province	Learned English late and dislikes expressing oneself

### (2) Data collection

Interviews in this study were mainly divided into focus group interviews and individual interviews. Subsequently, a semi-structured interview method was used, with each research participant being interviewed individually eight times per semester, each lasting approximately 80 minutes. The study aims to comprehensively and systematically investigate their learning of French as a second foreign language and the role of peer assessment in the evolution of academic self-efficacy. The interview process was objective and scientific, effectively ensuring the reliability and validity of the research<sup>[19]</sup>. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the French teacher, eight times per semester, each lasting approximately 70 minutes. All interview content included the use of peer assessment, processes, teacher feedback, and impacts. Notably, interviews with students and teachers were spaced no more than 48 hours apart. Specific data sources are presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Data Sources

Data Sources	Description	Main Content
Participant Observation	Observation of College French 1 classroom instruction	Students' classroom performance (including responses to classroom questions and classroom presentations), oral peer assessment during classes, and teacher feedback
Interviews	Student interviews & teacher interviews	Students' French learning processes, perceived impact of peer assessment, and teachers' pedagogical insights on in-class peer assessment activities

Textual Materials	Students' class notes & assignments	Independence in completion of assignments and accuracy rate of task performance
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### (3) Data analysis

Based on grounded theory, the researcher compared and refined relevant categories and attributes from data and materials collected during the aforementioned processes. Data analysis was conducted through a three-level coding process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding<sup>[20]</sup>. First, the researcher conducted primary coding based on the frequency of different information in the data, distinguishing and naming several conceptual categories. Secondly, the researcher identified the relationships among these conceptual categories from the primary coding to conduct secondary coding. Finally, combining learning self-efficacy, the researcher further analyzed the systematic relationships between primary and secondary coding to identify core categories and complete tertiary coding. This data analysis was collaboratively completed by the researchers, and after reaching a consensus, each interviewee was invited to verify the results one by one to ensure objectivity. Finally, relevant experts were invited to review and finalize the coding results. Partial data coding is shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Examples of Partial Data Coding

Code	Core Viewpoint	Primary Coding	Secondary Coding	Tertiary Coding
FTJ003	Everyone's French level is similar	Qualification to evaluate	Peers Identity	Understanding of peer assessment
FTM019	The same issue was given a lower score by our group but a higher score by others	Different evaluation standards	Cognitive level	Difficulties encountered in peer assessment
FTM002	The "ai" in the word "faisons" should be pronounced as [ə]	Ability to accurately point out corrections	Change (pointing out how to modify)	Types of peer feedback
FTP013	After scoring, the teacher would review the peer assessments, correct incorrect scores, and point out how to modify them	Re-evaluation of peer assessment results	Evaluation monitoring	Teacher intervention
FTT015	Students' feedback results can sometimes be unfair	Influence of evaluator subjectivity	Evaluation monitoring	Teacher intervention

Note: FT refers to interviews; M, J, P, and T refer to Marie, Juliette, Pascal, and the French teacher, respectively; numbers represent specific codes.

The researcher annotated peer assessment activities, including classroom and after-class assessments, in chronological order with labels, such as T\_PA116 representing the 16th peer assessment activity in the first semester.

## 4. Research Findings

### (1) Specific operations of peer assessment methods

Combining participatory observation and interview data, the researcher found that the peer assessment methods adopted by second foreign language (French) teachers are mainly embodied in cooperative and competitive learning processes throughout the semester.

## 1) Use of peer assessment methods in cooperative learning

Cooperative learning primarily focuses on the understanding and mastery of basic teaching knowledge points, such as phonetics, grammar, and writing, enabling students to learn together through mutual cooperation and inspiration. Peer assessment within groups adopts a combination of quantitative and descriptive evaluations (see Table 4).

Table 4. Peer Assessment Form for Cooperative Learning

Column	Evaluation Criteria	Specific Implementation Process
Phonetics (Paragraph Reading)	1. Clear and accurate pronunciation of words	1. Classroom peer assessment (15 minutes) 2. Mutual correction of pronunciation and intonation 3. When disagreement arises, refer to teacher's classroom recordings and slides
	2. Short duration	
	3. Beautiful and fluent intonation	
Grammar Points	1. Can accurately and completely describe the knowledge point	1. Classroom peer assessment (20 minutes) 2. Point out knowledge gaps and make corrections 3. Discuss and explain errors
	2. Accurately complete corresponding grammar exercises	
	3. Master problem-solving skills	
Writing	1. Meet word count requirements	1. After-class peer assessment 2. Strictly follow scoring standards, leave traces 3. Provide comments
	2. Relevant to the topic	
	3. Correct spelling of words	
	4. Right use of grammar	
	5. No copy	
Overall Evaluation and Suggestions (with detailed and objective descriptions)	Strengths	Identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide suggestions for further improvement
	Weaknesses	
	Suggestions	

## 2) Use of peer assessment in competitive learning

Competitive learning primarily manifests in the refinement and application of teaching knowledge points, such as explaining key concepts through Problem-Based Learning (PBL) group tasks and conducting bilingual reading in Chinese and French to maximize students' competitive awareness. Peer assessment in this context employs a combination of quantitative and descriptive evaluations (see Table 5), conducted among different groups.

Table 5. Peer Assessment Form for Competitive Learning

Column	Evaluation Criteria	Specific Implementation Process
Knowledge Points Summary and Explanation	1. Knowledge Points Summary and Explanation	1. Peer Evaluation in Class (20 minutes) 2. Listen carefully and point out errors. 3. Raise doubts and confusion.
	2. Expand by referring to relevant teaching materials.	
	3. The lecturer's pronunciation is clear, correct, and the expression is lucid.	
	4. Group members can answer students' questions relatively accurately.	
French-Chinese Bilingual Reading and Explanation	1. Accurately read the original French text, with clear and precise pronunciation and beautiful intonation.	1. Peer Evaluation in Class (20 minutes) 2. Listen carefully and point out errors. 3. Raise doubts and confusion.
	2. Mark the vocabulary and phrases in the French text segments.	
	3. Understand French sentence structures and grammar via Chinese translations, refer to relevant materials, and strive to provide correct analyses and explanations.	
	4. Group members can answer students' questions relatively accurately.	

Overall Evaluation and Suggestions (describe in detail and objectively)	Strengths	Point out advantages, disadvantages, and put forward corrective opinions.
	Weaknesses	
	Suggestions	

## **(2) Dual effects of peer assessment on french learning self-Efficacy**

### **1) Novel form of peer assessment enhances learning motivation**

Initially, students experienced discomfort with the implementation of peer assessment. However, as the practice continued and with teachers' interventions and adjustments, students gradually accepted this form of assessment. They believed that it truly embodies a "student-centered" approach, stimulates learning initiative, and is beneficial for enhancing self-efficacy in French learning.

The approach of using peer assessment for grammar learning is quite novel. Each student presents the knowledge points orally in a clear and straightforward manner, and then proceeds to do exercises on their own. After completing the exercises, students communicate with one another, which has contributed to an improvement in learning efficiency.(FTJ016)

### **2) Peer feedback facilitates academic progress**

Based on the teaching practice of second language French and combined with participatory observation and interview data, the researcher has analyzed feedback in terms of types and characteristics. Through these feedback mechanisms, students can more intuitively identify their knowledge gaps, research additional materials, and fill in these gaps. This process enhances students' abilities for lifelong and autonomous learning in their second language, thereby facilitating continuous academic progress.

In one instance, our group encountered pronunciation discrepancies regarding the French word "pas". We resolved this by referring to our notes and repeatedly listening to the teacher's class recordings. Through this process, we not only identified the correct pronunciation but also honed our self-directed learning skills.(FTM007) Particularly notable was the competitive peer assessment process, which allowed the assessed individuals to identify their weaknesses and make further corrections and improvements. Our group's bilingual reading task centered on "le Noël"(Christmas). After carefully reading the original texts, we conducted extensive research. Peer assessors suggested we perform a short two- to three-minute skit, which effectively enhanced everyone's vivid understanding of Christmas traditions.(FTJ020)

### **3) Negative impact of peer assessment on self-Efficacy**

Students harbor distrust in the fairness and professionalism of their peers as evaluators. On one hand, they fear that evaluators may base their judgments on personal relationships. On the other hand, they worry that evaluators' limited proficiency in French may lead to incorrect evaluations, particularly misunderstandings of teachers' evaluation criteria.

Some students expressed concerns about potential unfairness in peer assessment, requesting that group formation should avoid self-selection. Others questioned the accuracy of peer feedback, citing homogeneous language proficiency levels and varying interpretations of assessment criteria.(FTT005)

Furthermore, some students disagree with incorporating peer assessment scores into their overall grades, primarily due to the perceived arbitrariness in score assignment, especially during competitive learning scenarios. Our group's grammatical focus was "le genre du nom (gender of nouns)", but we merely paraphrased the teacher's explanations. The assessment team of four students split their ratings: two awarded low scores while two gave high marks. The justification for lower scores cited lack of supplementary content, yet when assessing another group, they applied inconsistent criteria.(FTM023)

For students with weaker French skills, peer assessment, particularly in the classroom setting, can erode their learning confidence and make them feel that it negatively impacts their group's performance.

### **(3) Teacher intervention enhance learning self-Efficacy**

Based on participatory observation and interview data, the researcher found that teacher intervention in second language French teaching manifests specifically in the design, implementation, and monitoring of peer assessment tasks.

1) Design of Peer Assessment Tasks. In response to evaluators' misunderstandings of evaluation criteria, French teachers place greater emphasis on enhancing student participation during the design of assessment tasks. Pre-evaluation training is provided to ensure a clear understanding of the evaluation standards. The forms of peer assessment extend beyond mere scoring and grading.

After each peer assessment task release, I allocate 3-5 minutes to clarify scoring criteria and provide illustrative examples, ensuring students fully comprehend and adhere strictly to them.(FTT008) The revised peer assessment system yields better results by shifting focus away from fixating on numerical scores. Both assessors and assessee report greater comfort levels, as they now prioritize knowledge-focused feedback over grades, leading to heightened enthusiasm.(FTJ010)

2) Implementation. With adjustments to the design of peer assessment tasks and observations of the peer assessment process, teachers have shifted their focus during implementation. Initially, the emphasis was on scores and grades, but later it shifted to guiding evaluators to provide multifaceted evaluations, pointing out "strengths and weaknesses," and offering improvement suggestions.

Educators have repeatedly stressed that peer assessment shouldn't be just about assigning scores. Students are required to point out at least one strength and one weakness of their peers' work. Peer assessment is not a task to be done in a careless way; instead, it's a significant and involved activity.(FTM011)

During the assessment process, French teachers strive to simplify peer - review tasks. This helps in reducing the burden and stress on students. In Chinese - French bilingual reading sessions, teachers make peer assessment tasks more specific. Each group member is responsible for evaluating one particular aspect, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and phrases, or giving an overall assessment of strengths and weaknesses. As a result, our tasks become less demanding, and we can focus more intently.(FTJ023) To deal with students' worries about handling interpersonal relationships during peer assessment, French teachers guide students on assessment techniques. I advise students to use "We believe" when conducting cross - group peer reviews. They should follow a certain strategy: begin with specific praise to show what is good about the work, and then point out the problems and suggest how to fix them. (FTT018)

3) Evaluation Monitoring. Evaluation monitoring in this study primarily involves teachers providing feedback on students' evaluation results, including how to interpret, re-evaluate, and adjust teaching plans. After every peer assessment, the teacher reviews all the evaluations. Any inappropriate assessments are re - evaluated. This practice eliminates the students' worries about the fairness of the assessment results. (FTM010) During the T\_PA103 in - class peer assessment, I noticed that most students gave relatively high scores and pointed out few cases of incorrect pronunciation. Later, I found out that the students had not mastered the phonetic knowledge of this lesson. So, I re-scored the assessments, identified and corrected each student's pronunciation errors.Right after that, I promptly adjusted the teaching content and reviewed the previously taught phonetic knowledge.(FTT004) For negative emotions arising from peer assessment, French teachers actively advise and encourage students, prompting them to regain positive emotional experiences.My inadequate French proficiency consistently held the group back, causing repeated disruptions to my peers. Despite feeling discouraged, proactive encouragement and guidance from the instructor restored my confidence, prompting me to rededicate myself to contributing meaningfully to the team. (FTP017)



## 5. Discussion

### (1) Peer assessment effectively promotes the enhancement of self-Efficacy in second language french learning

Through interviews, the researcher found that most students express affirmation and recognition of the peer assessment method, particularly the complementary nature of cooperative and competitive learning, which enriches learning formats and enhances student-student interaction. Cooperative learning strives to create a good and relaxed learning atmosphere for students, fully tapping into learners' personality traits and potential abilities<sup>[11]</sup>, promoting the acquisition of direct experience, enhancing their abilities for lifelong and autonomous learning, improving expression skills and teamwork awareness, and exercising thinking skills<sup>[10]</sup>. In summary, the use of peer assessment can facilitate continuous progress in the four sources of individual self-efficacy, thereby ensuring steady improvements in self-efficacy for French learning.

### (2) Peer Assessment Significantly Enhances Self-Efficacy in Second Language

French Learning for Low-Achieving Students Research data reveals that peer assessment provides low-achieving students with opportunities to discuss with their peers. On one hand, second language learners interact with high-achieving peers, leading to rapid improvements in their foreign language proficiency<sup>[21]</sup>. On the other hand, French teachers require evaluators to point out at least one strength of the evaluate during each assessment. This encouraging approach allows low-achieving students to gain a sense of accomplishment<sup>[6]</sup>, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy in French learning.

### (3) Teacher Intervention is Indispensable in Enhancing Self-Efficacy in Second Language French Learning

The importance of teacher intervention is mainly reflected in three aspects. First, students often experience erroneous transfer at the lexical and syntactic levels when comparing English and French, leading to incorrect peer feedback. Teachers need to correct these errors. Second, some students misunderstand the evaluation criteria or base their evaluations on personal relationships, affecting the objectivity of peer assessment. French teachers need to play a mediating role to enhance the scientific and effective nature of peer assessment<sup>[13]</sup>. Third, competitive learning can trigger student conflicts, impose excessive psychological burdens, and even demotivate some students<sup>[12]</sup>. French teachers need to intervene promptly.

## 6. Conclusion

This study explores the impact of peer assessment on enhancing self-efficacy in second language French learning through participatory observation and semi-structured interviews. The research indicates that peer assessment effectively promotes the enhancement of self-efficacy in second language French learning; for low-achieving students, peer assessment significantly boosts their learning self-efficacy; and teacher intervention, as an important supplement to peer assessment, plays a crucial role in enhancing students' self-efficacy in second language French learning. This study provides a novel research perspective for second language French teaching practices in universities.

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