

Improving Chinese speaking skills through formative peer assessment: within and beyond classroom practices

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The phonological features of Chinese require learners to extensively practice speaking skills and teachers to give regular feedback. Unfortunately, class time and teacher guidance are often limited, making it impractical for the teacher to constantly interact with each student and monitor and give feedback on each individual's speaking. One solution is to involve student peers to practice with each other. However, simply asking learners to talk to each other in Chinese is not sufficient. Learners need both explicit guidance to complete a speaking task and constant feedback to improve their performance. This paper describes two approaches to catering for these needs by integrating *formative peer assessment* in speaking tasks.

Firstly, I describe a didactic design that trains students to carry out formative peer assessment *within* classroom practices. The training starts with communicating intended learning outcomes for a specific task, namely what vocabulary, grammar, and cultural information they will need to practice their speaking skills. To illustrate this training, I use a speaking task including Chinese measure words, shopping and price negotiation culture. When working on a speaking task, students use a checklist to record speaking information, detect problems and formulate feedback. I pay special attention to the design of the checklist, which often determines the success of formative assessments. Secondly, this paper describes how to implement formative peer assessment *beyond* classroom practices using ReLanPro (<http://www.relanpro.nl/>) on their mobile devices.

I conclude by discussing how to use the results of formative peer assessments to feed-forward the whole class' speaking skills and naming some of the challenges for novice learners of Chinese in monitoring each other's speaking.