PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS ON COOPERATIVE ASSESSMENT

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Abstract:

Cooperative Learning is an instructional model in which learners work together toward a common goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1986; Slavin, 1993). Research has clearly shown that cooperation results in higher levels of achievement (Johnson, et al., 1993). This article focuses on Cooperative Assessment, two students, one paper, as learning, and proposes viewing assessment as an integral part of the process of learning and teaching by trying to provoke thoughts about positive interdependence, individual accountability and social skill development, three key features of Cooperative Learning. The paper presents pre-service English Language Teachers' reflections on Cooperative Assessment used as part of the final exam for "Individual Differences in Foreign Language Learning" course in Fall Semester of 2018-2019 academic year.

Keywords: cooperative assessment, cooperative learning, student reflection, qualitative, English language teaching

1. Introduction

According to Hargreaves *"learning is particularly valuable if it includes learners making their own meanings in a particular area of knowledge, constructing knowledge of participating and communicating socially and reflecting critically on their learning in diverse contexts, as well as retaining, using and applying information appropriately"* (2007, p. 197) .

Although "learner-centered" instructional methods have been in use and increasingly popular in higher education (Baeten, et al., 2010; Lea, et al., 2003), Altan has been advocating "learning-centered" instruction (Altan, 2009, 2014, 2016, 2019) and one of the methods used for both is Cooperative Learning. Principles and practices of Cooperative Learning were evolved and spread during 1960s (Johnson, et al., 1998) as a response to the ambitious and self-indulgent earning ecosystem common at all levels of educational settings and it is being used since then in various educational contexts.

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Cooperative Learning can revitalize deep approach to learning especially in higher education students (Millis and Cottell, 1998) therefore Cooperative Learning practices have become increasingly popular at the university level, especially in the North American context (Cavanagh, 2011; Hammond, et al., 2010; Hillyard, et.al., 2010). As a result Biggs and Tang (2011) recommend Cooperative Learning as a vital educational practice for university students. However, since many studies were carried out mainly in North American Context, it is clear that more studies are needed especially those conducted in different parts of the world before a more valid conclusion can be reached.

Cooperative Learning methods and procedures could lead the way to better lifelong learning which includes more dynamic participation; better development of high-yielding production skills; better confinement of subject area content; amelioration of cognitive skills, e.g., problem solving, discussing, enquiring, ability to teach others, constructing of cognizance by connecting old and new content, thinking, memorizing, meaning constructing; less inhibition; better empathy and better social and leadership skills; effective student-teacher and student-student relationships; higher levels of intrinsic motivation as well as incremented self-esteem and sense of autonomy (Coyle et al., 2010; Escobar & Sánchez, 2009; Hargreaves, 2007; Johnson & Johnson, 2014; Marsh, et al., 2013; Mehisto 2012; Meyer, 2010).

Despite all these benefits, as highlighted above, Cooperative Learning is yet not so common in classrooms in Higher Education in many parts of the world, except from North America (Ghaith, 2004; Gilles, et al., 2011; Hargreaves, 2007). Long lasting and accepted traditional view of assessment and practices could be blamed as the main reason and challenge keeping teachers away from both Cooperative Learning and Cooperative Assessment practices which is the main focus of this article. Coyle (2007) points out learner-learner interaction and valid teacher support when needed are not common classroom routines of either teachers or learners. And since learning is a collective process, assessment should also be viewed and practiced collectively with a focus on the students' socially active involvement and contribution (Rust, et al., 2005).

2. Assessment as Part of the Learner's Learning Progress

There is significant proof that assessment is a powerful and game changing process for escalating learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998, Popham, 2013). Assessment strongly affects both the educational and the professional lives of individuals. When the results of test and/or assessments are utilized to pass decisions on educators and schools, they too influence the ways how learners are taught. Given their significance, it is fundamental that results of summative assessment ought to reflect and impact school learning in the most ideal way manner.

Assessment can be defined as an on-going, well-connected process and procedure of gathering, reflecting upon, and exploiting data collected out of various data-collection techniques, concentrated on both the enhancement of learners' learning and development (Angelo, 1995; Ewell, 2000; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Pellegrino, et al., 2001; Stassen et al., 2001), which requires the mastery of learner learning outcomes.

The above definition covers the necessary aim of learner assessment in education that is teaching and learning process. Teachers get an idea on the effectiveness of their teaching through assessment. As a result, teachers are in a position to set and use effective teaching alternatives and revise those which are not helping to reach their educational aims (Altan, 2020). Therefore, the term assessment in education refers to processes related to monitoring of the learner's learning progress. Classroom assessment is an important part of education. Some of the reasons why to assess learners may include; to compare learners with each other, to see if learners meet a particular standard, to help the learner's learning, and to check if the teaching program is doing its job depending on the educational philosophy of teachers, programs or educational systems. (Baxter, 1997).

Common sense generally tells us that teaching influences learners the most. However, researchers working on learner learning found that what influenced learners most was not the teaching but the assessment (Snyder, 1971; Miller & Parlett, 1974). Therefore, Rowntree's statement "*if we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must first look to its assessment procedures*" (Rowntree, 1987, p.1), is an important educational vision and tells us where to concentrate in education. If done properly, assessing learner learning through various assessment techniques is important since it supplies beneficial and necessary feedback to both teachers and learners about the extent to which learners are meeting course learning objectives and teachers are on the right track to meet their course goals and teaching purposes.

Assessment empowers teachers to determine level and the scope of learner understanding according to the learning aims and objectives of the course. Assessment also presents the evidence necessary to document and validate whether meaningful learning has occurred, and learners have attained the desired and aimed understandings in the classroom or not (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005).

3. Types of Assessment, Higher Education and Teacher Education

Assessment is used for many ways at all levels of education. Recently, the main focus of assessment centers on the Trichotomy; assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning (Earl & Katz, 2006).

Assessment of learning is rather a classical view which emphasizes assessment practices to serve an evaluative function, often at the end of a unit or term, such as quizzes, tests, exams, essays, and projects. On the other hand, assessment for learning emphasizes assessment practices that are ongoing and take place during a lesson or unit of study, such as journal reflection, a self-assessment of an oral performance, or a submission of a draft of a final assignment. Through assessment as learning process students are able to learn about themselves as learners and become aware of how they learn – become metacognitive (knowledge of one's own thought processes). Students reflect on their work on a regular basis, usually through self and peer assessment and decide (often with the help of the teacher, particularly in the early stages) what their next learning will be. Assessment as learning helps students to take more responsibility for their own learning and monitoring future directions (Earl& Katz, 2006, p. 25).

There has been quite amount of research concentrating on the significance of learner assessment in higher education (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Carless, 2015; Gilles, et al., 2011). As it is in all forms of education, assessment is also a basic part of the teaching and learning process at undergraduate level at universities. Therefore, it is considerably important for instructors to deliberately assess the viability of their instructing by estimating how learners learn, what they can do with it and how they reflect on the learning, teaching and assessment. Assessment not only ensures learners on what they need to know in order to meet the course's learning objectives, but also allows teachers to see if their teaching has been effective or not . And assessment should be able to help learners reflect on their own learning and making adjustments so that they achieve deeper understanding.

When we consider teacher education and the professional development of teachers, assessment is generally considered as an asset to create meaningful improvement and growth in the profession. For example, Chansarkar & Raut-Roy (1987) studied the possible effects of combinations of various forms of coursework with examinations. They came up with a combination of coursework of varying types with examinations produced better average marks than did examinations alone. However, assessment should definitely have clear and high standards focusing on learning and the growth of learners at the same time. This principle means that assessments need to appear both challenging and at the same time achievable regarding the needs and the growth of learners (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; 1991).

As discussed in NCATE (2010) document, assessment should not only be prioritized but also candidates must be presented with various and purposeful course material in their preparation that will enable them to become assessment-literate and data-wise. Therefore, teacher education programs should make use of a variety of approaches including explicit, integrated, and blended assessment techniques (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010).

The term student/learner-centered education as stated above has also become quite common in teacher education (Carless, 2007). However, Altan (2009, 2014, 2016, 2019) advocates learning- centered education and accordingly learning-centered assessment in teacher education too. Learning-centered assessment puts more importance on the learning components of assessment forms in teacher education such as, the aim for the assessment being to screen and assess pre-service teachers' progress and development. As a result, pre-service teachers attach more emphasis on assessment as a learning process. Learning-centered philosophy of education supported by Cooperative Assessment techniques will eventually establish the vision of assessment as learning.

Today's students should definitely be aware not only the fundamental academic skills, but also, perhaps more importantly, the skills that will allow them to face a world that is continually changing and creating new challenges. They must be able to think critically, analyze, make inferences, make conscientious and just decisions, reflect, take initiatives and risks and have entrepreneurial abilities (Altan, 2014). As a result of the changes in the capabilities and knowledge, learners need new learning goals and these

new learning goals in return ultimately change and define the relationship between assessment and instruction. Therefore, teachers need to take an active role in making decisions touching the purpose of assessment and the content that is being assessed.

The best way to prepare pre-service teachers for their future career is with educating them with the examples that they can apply to their professional lives. Some qualitative studies for example, emphasize the importance of understanding the way learners respond to alternatives and innovations in assessment (Sambell & McDowell, 1998).

The notion that alternative and/or performance assessments can nurture teacher learning and can be found in proficient learning speculations, for example, Schön's (1983) idea of "reflection in action" which places that ordinary individuals and expert practitioners consider what they are doing during the time spent completing an activity and tackling an issue. This notion of the "*reflective practitioner*" is in accordance with Shulman's (1987) notion of teaching as "*educational thinking and action*" which necessitates that instructors reason and thoroughly consider academic choices so as to examine, investigate, and take care of issues as opposed to simply approve "*best practices*".

As for how learners conceptualize learning, Säljö (1982) as cited in Gibbs (2010) describes learners as having one of five conceptions of learning:

1) Learning as passive receipt of information,
2) Learning as active memorization of information,
3) Learning as active memorization of information or procedures, to be used at some time in the future,
4) Learning as understanding,
5) Learning as a change in personal reality: seeing the world differently (p.16).

Learning centered education supported by Cooperative Assessment practices can help learners to experience learning as a change in personal reality which in turn helps them to see the world from a different perspective as listed in the above list.

Learning in many traditional educational contexts deal with lower order thinking skills where learning is seen as passive receipt of information. And as a result, assessment in such contexts usually deals with the three items in the above list. However, in learning-centered contexts, learning and assessment deal with Higher Order Thinking Skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, et al., 1956) and as a result, assessment is based on Higher Order Thinking Questions. Such assessments are highly challenging but achievable and usually require performances of understanding and as a result a change happens in personal view. The goal in such assessments is to articulate clearly for learners the challenging nature of the demands of examination questions in such a way that this re-orients their efforts towards appropriate kinds of learning activity (Pohl, 2001). Higher Order Thinking Questions generally place advanced cognitive demands on students. Such questions, if structured properly, encourage students to think beyond generally met literal questions. Higher Order Thinking Questions nurture critical thinking skills since such questions generally expect students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information instead of memorizing or simply recalling facts.

The answers to such questions cannot be found in one place in a coursebook or course material and as a result it becomes difficult to memorize and cheat easily during the exam as it is usually the case in exams where Lower Order Thinking Questions are preferred.

Pre-service teachers during their undergraduate classes should go from the passive learner to an energetic proprietor of their personal learning by passing beyond finishing the tasks assigned to them by their teachers. As a result, with their teachers' guidance and tools, students learn to monitor if they have understood the learning outcome being studied by employing the metacognitive processes. After acquiring the metacognitive skills, students can start adjusting their learning accordingly and demonstrate the "*self-reflection, self-monitoring and self-adjustment*" on their own (Earl & Katz, 2006, p.85).

4. Cooperative Learning and Cooperative Assessment

Cooperative Learning is a concept of wide-ranging inclusive that refers to a number of methods for organizing and carrying out classroom instruction and practices through conscientiously taught and constructed pair and/or group interaction, for example, Jigsaw, Academic Controversy, Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition, Student-Team-Achievement-Division (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

When learners are working in pairs and/or groups, they collaborate. Therefore, Prince (2004) argues that conceptually Cooperative Learning is a subset of Collaborative Learning which is again a subset of Active Learning. Here, Active Learning includes instructional methods in which the students are motivated to actively participate in discussions and construct meaning (Johnson, et al., 2006). Thus, Collaborative Learning can be described as instructional methods motivating students to involve in Active Learning within pairs or small groups (Barkley, et al., 2014). During Cooperative Learning, pairs and/or groups work together to augment both their own and each other are learning. In cooperative learning, one of the most important goals here is devaluing the social skills.

The benefits of cooperative learning can be summarized as follows:
1) It helps to raise the achievement of all students
2) It helps to build positive relationships among the students, thus creating learning community in which diversity is valued
3) It gives students the experiences they need for healthy social, psychological and cognitive development (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 1994).

Collaboration is definitely an opportunity for the development of pre-service teachers. Major changes are already occurring at individual levels but a Collaborative Assessment model for change can contribute better for new understandings, stronger actualizations and creating paradigm shifts. The change can be about beliefs, attitudes, understanding, self- awareness and teaching philosophies.

Cooperative assessment requires students to learn by working on a mutual task through reciprocal interdependence aiming to strengthen each individual and make

them both accountable about the process (Johnson, et al., 2008). In such a context, students learn by helping each other, developing social skills, and assessing each other and themselves (Johnson & Johnson, 1999a). Encouraging students to work successfully in cooperative groups is a need in not only for 21st century education but also an ultimate need for 21st century work place and civic life. This becomes even more important for future teachers to practice it during their training so that they easily practice it during their teaching. Working collaboratively with different views is a highly motivational process and pre-service teachers should be able to use this in their classrooms. Here the goal is to have all learners learn and share positive experiences during the entire process including content planning, group composition and presentation (Keefe & Jenkins, 1997). Cooperative groups during Cooperative Assessment help learners to work together toward a shared and mutual objective and during the process group members both build and develop a strong respect for each other' feelings and thoughts (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). While working cooperatively, learners are actively engaged in hearing the ideas and opinions of others along with having the opportunity to react to them. Cooperative work helps learners to experience the individual perceptions that others may have about a topic or a situation. These will help learners to reflect the different personalities and particular abilities of other members in the group and create a bilateral exchange that will result in broadening and deepening individual learner's overall understanding. More importantly, such an experience of Cooperative Learning not only facilitates the learner's both social and personal development, bıt also the practice of working with others helps learners to appreciate the benefits of cooperative effort at an early stage.

As pointed out by Johnson & Johnson (1994) "*A group of learners sitting at the same table and working on a task on their own cannot be considered to be a cooperative group and work, since there is no positive interdependence*" (p. 1). According to Johnson & Johnson (1994), five conditions must be met in order for a Cooperative Learning effort to be more productive than competitive or individualistic methods:

1) Clearly perceived positive interdependence,
2) Considerable promotive (face-to-face) interaction,
3) Clearly perceived individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals,
4) Frequent use of the relevant interpersonal and small-group skills,
5) Frequent and regular group processing of current functioning to improve the group's future effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 1994)

Without these five conditions, the experience cannot be considered as a Cooperative experience. Therefore, Cooperative Learning refers to a relationship in a group of learners that requires Cooperative efforts.

Using pair or group work as a teaching, learning and assessment technique is highly important and useful for preparing the learners to the real life. Through cooperative work, the learners learn from each other, have the opportunity to clarify and build up their thinking and to develop ideas by working as a group (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). Thus, the learners become aware of the thoughts and suppositions of others which will make them aware of diverse recognitions of issues and/or circumstances. The

scope of characters in the group makes the communication more fruitful and expands the learners' comprehension of the area or the topic being studied or researched. And this assists the learners' both language and Higher Order Thinking Skills. It is also highly beneficial for shyer learners who might be hesitant to talk as well as contribute. Participating in cooperative work and assessment also encourage and helps the learners to develop significant social and individual abilities.

5. Assessment is More Than Grading

Assessment is a complicated and at the same time both essential and vital subject for teachers at all levels. Therefore, teachers generally consider it as one of the least liked and preferred aspect of instructing (Millis & Cottell, 1998). Assessment may additionally impact not solely students' academic performances, but at the same time both their affective and psychological development too (Cavilla, 2017). Therefore, assessment alone generally is regarded to have the most efficacious impact on student learning behavior (Price, et al., 2007).

Since we are what we believe in, assessment reflects the theoretical beliefs of teachers which are constructed along a continuum ranging from knowledge retention, knowledge construction, transformation and long-lasting practices.

Assessing pairs, groups and/or individual performance within groups or pairs and how pairs/groups work together becomes highly complicated and time consuming for teachers and as they cannot be present in every group all the time. Therefore, they can just observe or see the end result of the cooperation properly to determine how group members contribute in a group and what the result is. Therefore, if not handled properly and professionally, this might lead to disappointment both for teachers and students (Strom & Strom, 2011).

Educators who regularly combine assessment with grading make a serious mistake. It must be accepted that assessment means more than grading. It mustn't be forgotten that assessment joins leaner performance to explicit learning objectives so as to give valuable data to both educators and learners about leaners' academic accomplishment. However, as Stassen et al. (2001) point out "*Because grades don't tell you about student performance on individual (or specific) learning goals or outcomes, they provide little information on the overall success of your course in helping students to attain the specific and distinct learning objectives of interest.*" (Stassen et al., 2001, p. 6). Teachers, at all levels, therefore, must always keep in mind that grading is just a condition of student assessment and does not form the whole idea of assessment.

Paper-pencil exams can make highly significant demands on students' actual knowledge and can have the side-effect of encouraging loaded surface learning (Beaten, et al., 2010). Surface learning implies that working on the surface of the material being studied without carrying out any deep processing of the material. Students who adopt such a surface approach tend to concentrate solely on the assessment requirements. On the other hand, they can also facilitate student manifestation of deep learning if essay questions or topics are appropriately selected, mainly those requiring Higher Order

Thinking Skills. Different formats might include; in-class tests, open-book, in-class internet use, take-home exams, etc. While designing an exam, instructors should consider some questions, such as, what are the learning objectives that the exam seeks to evaluate? Have learners been adequately prepared to meet exam expectations? What are the skills and abilities that learners need to perform well? How will this exam be utilized to enhance the learning process?

6. Participants, Course and Exam Format

There were 32 girls and four boys with an average year of 23. They were all 4th grade English Language Teaching students having the course called "Individual Differences in Foreign Language Learning". This course aims to familiarize students with research on individual differences in foreign language learning and teaching. Individual differences in learning and teaching such as brain dominance, general intelligence, theory of multiple intelligences, motivation, age, gender, attitude towards foreign language, confidence, risk taking, learning styles and strategies, anxiety, tolerance of ambiguity, beliefs about language learning and teaching and personality are dealt with during the semester.

I generally prefer performance based assessment and have not done any paper-pencil exam with this group of students. Paper-pencil exams, at least in Turkish context, usually include Lower Order Thinking Questions which require students to memorize, recall or remember the basic amount of information of an already learned subject or area. And since the answers to such questions usually available in the books or course materials, cheating is one the main problem of such exams. The proofs of them are available all around including the classrooms!

So, I decided to introduce Higher Order Thinking Questions to students and going a bit further and conduct a cooperative, two students working on one paper, written paper-pencil exam. The students were informed that they will have a written exam, but they did not know that it will be a cooperative one. The students were in the classroom to have their final exam. In the room students were sitting in pairs. Students were not informed that they will work cooperatively on one paper as part of their final exam either. As a result, they sat with the person they feel comfortable or where the seat available and this blocked the bias stated in some literature (Johnson, et al., 1993), such as high-achieving children tend to select other high achievers, or boys tend to choose other boys, etc. Therefore, unintentionally, self-selected group was a good choice.

Students were informed that they will have a cooperative exam which means they will work with the person sitting next to them and work on one paper. That was a typical informal Cooperative Learning group where the aim is having students work together to achieve a joint learning goal in temporary, ad-hoc groups that last from a few minutes to one class period as described elsewhere (Johnson et al., 2008). They were allowed to ask any questions in their minds before the exam started.

There were four questions, and they were supposed to choose three of them to answer. Each question had maximum of 250 words limit. Students were informed that

they have one and a half hours to finish the exam. I did not stay in the exam room but were there to pick the papers at the end of the time deadline.

7. Students' Reflections on Cooperative Exam

Students were asked to reflect their experience on cooperative exam, two students working on one paper, after they finished the exam and send them to me via e-mail. Here fifteen (13 females, 2 males) students' reflections related to the process and procedure of the exam is shared without any interference except from some minor mechanical editing. Students were randomly selected and numbered along with the gender.

#1F

"The most important advantage of the method was decreasing the anxiety. Secondly, my motivation has greatly increased when I thought that if one of us could not remember a word or an answer, the other one could. Furthermore, I realized that when we combined our knowledge, the answers became more satisfying and creative, which made the exam more enjoyable and useful. The motivation is positively correlated with success… Two people one paper method was very useful and enjoyable evaluation method because of the reasons mentioned above. When I become a teacher, I will definitely try this method."

#2F

"For the first time in our lives, we have done an exam with a partner. I thought the professor was joking but he was really serious when he told us about it. … My partner and I haven't had many conversations since we met and I was a bit nervous about how we were going to write answers together…. However, when I look on the bright side, I am really glad to have experienced something different in my life. I was both nervous and confident interestingly and I guess I won't have another mixed feelings for such an exam again."

#35M

"In my opinion, doing an exam with a partner was so extraordinary. I can say a lot of positive things about it. However, there were also some negative parts such as lack of time and conflict of knowledge. We could not write everything that we planned due to time restriction."

#4F

"While answering the first question, the ideas began to flow fluently after deciding on the introduction. We were able to write our ideas without any contradiction, and I was surprised to be able to do it. In fact, we completed each other's shortcomings…… Moreover, the professor was not in the class during the exam. I had never seen a teacher who was absent during the exam. It was really great to see a teacher who trusted his students."

#5F

"I think this exam was a big experience for us because sometimes we have to work with somebody or with our colleagues and this experience will help us throughout our lives…. It is an unforgettable day and unforgettable situation in my education life."

#7F

"It was highly interesting to combine what we know about the question…..Considering both positive and negative sides, it was the most different and interesting experience in my university experience. Also, the professor's absence in the classroom during the exam was a very respectful behavior."

#9F

"All in all, doing the exam with a partner provided a stress-free environment and this helped us to answer the questions easily and helped to bring different ideas together."

#12F

"You always told us to look at the buildings around us. Because they are all the same! No difference, no taste!. Teachers also do exams similarly. By using a different assessment technique, you showed us individual differences clearly. I will never forget that day and the experience."

#13M

"The atmosphere in the class during the exam was totally different when I compare it to my previous paper-pencil exams. I felt much comfortable as there wasn't a teacher in the class during the exam. Answering the questions in an environment like that was easier far too easier for me… Absence of the teacher created a stress-free atmosphere in the class thus I talked to my partner without hesitating. It doesn't matter what the result would be, I enjoyed during the exam, I had a different experience and I learnt one more method to apply my students in the future."

#21F

"When I heard that we are going to answer the questions with our partner I was really happy. This was not because I didn't trust in myself, or I wouldn't be able to answer the questions alone but because I thought that it would be more advantageous to share and do brain storm with another person since everybody has different perspectives and every individual has different approaches to an issue…. And it took us some time to make up our minds about what to write. Since there was a time limit to answer the questions, we were supposed to make quick and reasonable decisions about what to write."

#25F

"Two people one paper examination was a great experience for me. First of all, this method reduced the exam anxiety and increased my motivation to answer the questions logically and calmly during the exam. It also contributed to our collaboration skills and

positive communication with a partner…. Professor's absence in the classroom made me feel less pressured during the exam. This also showed us that the professor trusts the students and knows that the students will not cheat. There was a nice and warm atmosphere in the classroom unlike to other standard exams. I really enjoyed working with my partner and experience this memorable exam."

#31F

"All in all, it was an unforgettable experience for me. I will do it with my students in the future too. I think it helps students to feel as a whole, work cooperatively, open to new ideas, share responsibility and make a mutual decision. Most importantly, I think this is one of the best ways to prepare students for their future life and help them build good relationships in society."

#24F

"For the first time, we did not have an authority observing students during the exam in the class. This situation made me proud of myself because I did not feel any pressure on me. Stress free environment also increased my creativity. As for a negative aspect of this way of exam, my partner and I had hard times to choose whose ideas to write as an answer. But this helped us to improve our negotiation skills."

#14F

"If I were to choose an exam method, I would definitely choose two people one paper method."

#24F

"At first, I thought it was a joke, but it was not. I was so excited since this method was probably the first ever applied in Turkey and we were the first witnesses! As I guessed that the questions were not directly from the coursebook or the papers we have presented as part of our Mid-term exam. They [the questions] measured our thinking skills rather than recalling the general information from the texts."

8. Implications of the Study and Conclusion

As one the participants revealed, it was a true pioneer method and as far as I was able to discern, it was the first ever done at least in my context.

The experience revealed that there are clear advantages of pair assessment as described above. The data also confirms the long lasting saying that "*two heads are better one*". From the learning point of view, students are given more opportunities to actively use both their receptive and their productive language and academic skills, including the opportunity to provide and obtain feedback from each other. From the assessment point view, assessing students as pairs (or groups), means that they have the opportunity to demonstrate their interactive negotiating skills in ways not generally available in more traditional solo testing formats.

The pair assessment, two students, one paper, approach proved that it is a potentially feasible and highly satisfying alternative which addresses some of the concerns surrounding the more traditional ways of assessing learners. And it must be remembered that this method should definitely include Higher Order Thinking Questions in order to reach the aim and objectives of the design.

Learners' reflections strongly suggest that it was worth trying and reached the aim to prepare students to the future by helping them to taste and realize that there are ways to assess without torturing and helping them to be aware the honor of both learning and being a human being. Thus, pair assessment, two learners working on one paper, seems to prompt them to think about assessment in new ways and to enact some of these new ideas in their practice.

Students confess that they were mostly surprised and even could not believe their ears when they first heard that they would have a joint paper. Collaborating negotiating, sharing, discussing for a mutual aim helped learners to experience an unusual assessment format.

Students were so generous sharing their both positive and negative feelings about the process. However, positive feelings and remarks overturned negative ones. They all appreciate this effort, are all satisfied with the procedure, so honored not to have the teacher in the classroom during the exam (they all see this as a sign of respect to them). Honoring students by not being in the classroom could be a regular part of exams if Higher Order Thinking Questions were asked. As for the negative side, mostly time management and pair discussion were mentioned.

This research though limited in generalizability by a small sample has important and promising implications for pre-service teacher education and suggests that pair assessments, like this event, when thoughtfully implemented, can be highly useful learning tools to strengthen the professional preparation of new teachers in ways that lead to more learning-centered assessment.

Assessment is a significant character of any learning procedure. All learners need an input on how effectively they have figured out how to accomplish the points of the procedure or what should be done so as to accomplish all demands and qualifications. Formal instruction needs to give evidences of the results and that is ordinarily composed through tests and persistent appraisal of the course.

The key parts of planning and giving meaningful assessment are to consider the methods along with the learning outcomes during the designing stage. The course syllabus should clearly and unequivocally include what is expected from the learners and how they will be assessed to meet the course objectives.

Cooperative assessment is based on the vision that knowledge is built socially and is both consistently and continually internalized to become an individual act. As students reflect, if learners engage in both Cooperative Learning and assessment techniques on a regular purposeful basis, assessment for learning in return would surely reflect and encourage Cooperative Learning processes and learning outcomes, which will in return be socially appropriate for learners of the 21st century (Hargreaves, 2007).

Since teachers teach the way, they are taught (Altan, 2014) teaching practices usually depend on what teachers have seen and believe in so far. Therefore, the first step towards introducing active use of both Cooperative Learning and Cooperative Assessment in education would be that of connecting with teachers' beliefs. Without changing their beliefs, values and attitudes towards learning and assessment, it is impossible to create the required change in educational settings at all levels starting from the teacher education programs, first. Cooperative assessment has also a great potential to reduce the paper reading load of teachers.

Teacher candidates should be able to focus on student learning and study the effects of their instruction. They should also be able to assess and analyze the quality of learning, make appropriate alterations to instruction, monitor learning, and have a positive effect on learning for all learners. And in order to be able to perform all these qualities, they should be able to observe and experience all these during their education by their instructors.

Assessment is a critical element for preparing future teachers in faculties of education. Here novice teachers should not only be introduced to assessment as a focus of pre-service learning but also, they should be presented with multiple and rich course material during their preparation that will enable them to become assessment-literate for their future career. Therefore, as suggested by DeLuca and Klinger (2010), teacher education programs should utilize a variety of approaches including explicit, integrated, and blended assessment education models.

With the help of Cooperative Assessment teacher candidates became aware to focus on their learning and study the effects of their work. They also became aware to assess and analyze their learning, make appropriate adjustments, monitor their learning, and have positive feelings on learning and assessment and cooperation. This paradigm shift will also help them to change and improve their instruction and assessment in their career. The study might have covered very little, but I am sure that it uncovers and will uncover more. There are hundreds of studies of Cooperative Learning and within higher education the number of studies investigating the impact of Cooperative Learning on student learning is rising. However, not much research is available on Cooperative Assessment. Therefore, it is hoped that this pioneer study could set a good example and trigger teachers at all levels. Extra research from different contexts is needed in relation to detailed aspects of Cooperative Assessment.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflict of interest.

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