

## Introduction

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, various testing methods have been used in assessing students' English intonation ability. The commonly used testing methods are scripted speech tasks, intonation dictation and reading from texts as a part of the classroom assessment (Maidment, 2013). Tests for intonation ability are designed in forms of multiple-choice tests, written tests or oral tests (Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013). They are functionally used as summative tests with the aims of evaluating how well students have accomplished course objectives and getting a holistic picture of students' ability (Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013). The use of these test tasks does not correspond to students' needs and language use in real-life communication. Darling-Hammond (2014) stressed that a strong reliance on multiple-choice tests leads to "false assurance about what students know and are able to do, not only on other tests, but, more important, in the real world" (p.5). In addition, these tests and assessment methods cannot provide informative feedback on learners' pronunciation, putting students at a disadvantage. Detailed or qualitative feedback from assessments is very important for learning because it can reflect students' performance and progress and point to their strengths and weaknesses, and more importantly guide them on how to improve their English intonation.

Besides, the practice of the current assessments for intonation ability reveals that teachers are the only authorized active agents in charge of assessment or evaluating students' learning whereas students are much less likely to have an active role in the assessment process. Obviously, the practice yields disadvantages to students in some ways. Firstly, inference about students' learning ability obtained from the current assessments (such as scripted speech tasks, intonation dictation and reading from texts) and from teachers' judgment alone will be less accurate and will not provide a complete picture of students' performance. Secondly, products and processes of the current assessments are limited to 'assessment of learning' rather than 'assessment for learning' (Shepard, 2000). Thirdly, the current assessments do not allow students to develop their higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and self-reflection.

The use of alternative forms of assessment such as self- and peer-assessments can complement the traditional assessment which focused only on the product or output students

produced at one point of time. These alternative forms can provide teachers extra or more detailed information about the students' learning process. Teachers can gain a clearer picture of students' ability or performance and are able to make accurate judgments of students' learning performance. Through self- and peer-assessments, teachers can get more information about students' problems or weaknesses and target the problems to find new ways to improve their instruction to respond to the students' needs and promote their learning. When students are encouraged to take an active role in reflecting on their own learning and giving feedback and evaluating their peers' learning performance, this will make them use their higher-order thinking skills. They can get feedback from their peers, be aware of their strengths and weaknesses and, of course, learn to improve their learning (Ross, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to examine if the use of self- and peer-assessment as test methods for assessing students' English intonation ability can promote students' higher-order thinking skills.

### **Self-assessment**

Self-assessment is a kind of alternative or authentic form of assessment which has long been used by classroom teachers (Ross, 2006; O' Malley & Pierce, 1996). Students have an active role in assessing their learning performance or their learning outcomes against criteria identified by teachers or themselves (Boud, 1991; Adeyemi, 2012) and also identifying their strengths and weaknesses with an aim at improving their learning (Klenowski, 1995). Topping (2003) pointed out that the purpose of using self-assessment is usually to increase students' involvement in learning by engaging them as active learners and promoting reflection on their learning processes, styles, and outcomes. It aims to help students "develop the characteristics of good language learners which involve the ability to assess their own performance and the ability to be self-critical" (Hedge, 2000, p. 94). Self-assessment can take different forms such as questionnaires, rating scales, and checklists.

### **Peer-Assessment**

Peer-assessment has been introduced as an alternative form of assessment in higher education (Topping, 2009). It is the process in which students in a class take responsibility for evaluating quality of their peers' work or learning performance based on sets of criteria and giving grades, scores, and feedback for their peers in order to help improve their performance and promote their learning (Falchikov, 2001; Topping, 1998). It can be conducted in different forms such as face-to-face contact, one-way or reciprocal, and online

(Topping, 1998, 2009). Students do the assessment in pairs or groups through various kinds of tasks, for example, oral performances, oral presentations, writing, portfolio, and other skilled behaviors.

### **Lower- and higher-order thinking skills**

Lower-order thinking skills are the foundation of skills or basic skills individuals require to move into higher-order thinking skills. They include learners' abilities to remember, understand and apply. Higher-order thinking skills refer to the abilities to analyze, evaluate, and create (Cotton, 1997; Crowl et al., 1997; Facione, 1998). It is goal-directed, reasonable and systematic thinking in making arguments for the relevant information (Cotton, 1997). In Bloom's Taxonomy, there are six levels of thinking considered as beneficial guidelines for educators to help students develop their abilities to meet the real life expectations (Nathan, 2010). Nathan (2010) corroborated that it is very important to help our students develop these thinking skills to be able to transfer their knowledge and skills from school to work and get ready to work and deal with dynamic changes and complicated challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It was claimed that the integration of self- and peer-assessments into the language classroom could function as supportive tools for students' learning as well as for promoting a wide range of cognitive skills (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Rolheiser, Bower, & Stevahn, 2000). To date, there is increasing attention to the use of self- and peer-assessments. There is limited availability of research studies investigating these assessments as a means of teaching intonation and also promoting lower-and higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, this study aimed at examining the effects of the self- and peer-assessments on students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills while the students were learning English intonation. The guiding research question was: what are the effects of self-and peer-assessments on students' higher- and lower-order thinking skills?

## **Research Methodology**

### **Participants**

Thirty-five Thai second-year English-major students in a public university in Thailand enrolled in the English Phonetics course participated in the study. These students had taken Introduction to Linguistics, a prerequisite course of the English Phonetics. They were selected to participate in this study inasmuch as they had difficulty in applying English intonation

appropriately when they did the teaching practicum. Seventy-one percent of the participants (N= 27) were female, whereas 22.9% (N= 8) were male. The ages ranged from 18 to 28, and the majority (82.85%) was 20 years old.

## **Research Instruments**

Three research instruments were employed in this study.

### **1. Class assignments and Self- and Peer-assessment forms**

The class assignments included 4 practice exercises for thirteen types of utterances (declarative statements, wh-questions, commands and command-form requests, unfinished statements, unfinished statements creating suspense, tag-questions eliciting agreement, yes-no questions with question word order, open-choice alternative questions, yes-no questions with statements word order (neutral confirmation question/great surprise or disbelief), echo questions, repetition questions (used when speaker could not hear what was said), repetition questions (signaling disbelief) and tag questions signaling uncertainty. The practice exercises used for week 1 and week 2 had a total of 60 items (30 items each). Those used for week 3 and week 4 consisted of 80 items (40 items each). The students were assigned to practice intonation in terms of patterns of pitch contour and asked to do the class assignments. After completing their class assignments, the students were asked to assess their own intonation ability and their peers' by completing the self- and peer-assessment forms.

### **2. Students' Higher- and Lower-Order Thinking (HOT and LOT) Rubric**

The Students' LOT and HOT rubric was adapted from Collins (2010), Eber and Parker (2007) and Menden (2012), and were theoretically developed from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) which involved six thinking skills. The Students' LOT and HOT rubrics were reviewed and validated by experts. The IOC rating was 0.77. The revision of this rubric was based on the experts' comments. While the students were performing self- and peer-assessments for the class assignments, they were being video-recorded. These have been subsequently transcribed, coded and evaluated for the lower-order and the higher-order thinking skills based on the rubric by two raters. The scores of the students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills were calculated for the means and standard deviations. It is important to note that the two raters received a rigorous training on how to code the scripts. The researcher ensured that the raters had a clear

understanding of the rubric, yielding the inter-rater reliability of 0.74.

### **3. Semi-structured Interview**

This research instrument consisted of 14 interview questions adapted from the questions used in Patri's study (2002). The questions were used to collect in-depth information regarding students' improvement on lower- and higher-order thinking skills. The students were invited to the interview after the self- and peer-assessment activities. The researcher interviewed the students individually, and the interview sessions were audio-recorded.

#### **Intervention: The use of self- and peer-assessment in the English Phonetics classroom**

This session presents a brief description of the implementation of self- and peer-assessments in the English Phonetics class in two phases: Phase 1 Preparation and Phase 2 Assessment Cycle. The details of each phase are described as follows.

### **Phase 1: Preparation**

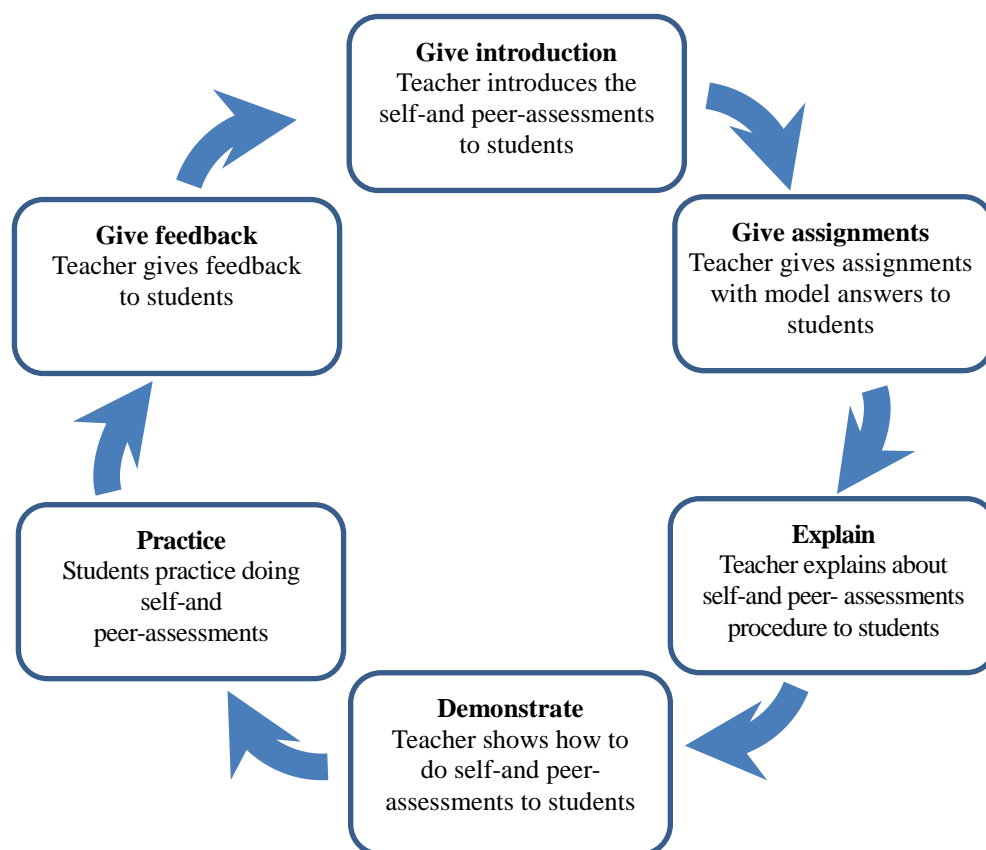
The researcher trained the students to use self- and peer-assessments. This four-week training was aimed at familiarizing the students with the self- and peer-assessments before they attended the English intonation class and implemented the self- and peer-assessments.

### **Phase 2: Assessment cycle**

As presented in Figure 1, the students were engaged in the self- and peer-assessments to promote their intonation abilities and their higher-order thinking skill. After learning and practicing the English intonation in class, the students performed the self- and peer-assessments and gave particular attention to the intonation features.

*Self-assessment.* The students were given recordings of the model English intonation assignment and practiced patterns of pitch contour with their classmates. Then, they received the class assignment and self- and peer-assignment forms. They recorded their utterances and compared them with the model of English intonation patterns. After that, they were asked to give scores and reflect on their own utterances.

*Peer-assessment.* The researcher asked the students to work in pairs and had them exchange their recorded speeches with their partner. The students were asked to listen to their partner's utterance twice and write the pitch contours of their partner's utterance. Then, they were asked to share their results and feedback and discuss whether they agreed with their partner's feedback.

**Figure 1** The steps of training the participants to do the self-and peer-assessments.

### Procedure

The data collection was conducted between August–November, 2017. The total duration of data collection lasted for 12 weeks. From Week 1 to Week 8, the students received the instruction on the course content of the English Phonetics class. Meanwhile, the researcher trained the students and a co-rater how to use the self- and peer-assessments, the LOT and HOT rubric, and the self- and peer-assessment forms. In the process of self- and peer-assessments, the students were involved in working with their classmates to identify assessment criteria and subsequently learn to understand the assessment criteria. Upon implementing the self- and peer-assessments, they needed to use a wide range of cognitive skills (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996) such as recalling the knowledge of intonation patterns, analyzing strengths and weaknesses, and evaluating their peers' and their own performance against the criteria. The researcher had the students practice assessing their own and peer's responses by using the LOT and HOT rubric and the self- and peer-assessment forms. Then, the researcher gave feedback to the students and the co-rater about their use of the self- and peer-assessments. From Week 9 to Week 12, the intonation instruction was given. During

these weeks, the students attended the classroom activities integrated with self- and peer-assessment activities. The classroom activities included classroom assignments, four progress tests, and final project (drama activities). The data on students' development of higher- and lower-order thinking skills over time were collected using the semi-structured interview and the higher- and lower-order thinking skills rubric.

### **Data Analysis**

The higher- and lower-order thinking skills rubric yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. Two raters used the rubric to assess the students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills, and then the scores obtained from the assessment were analyzed for means and standard deviations. Content analysis was used to analyze the data from the interview and responses on the assessment forms to examine how self- and peer-assessments played a role in developing students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills.

### **Results of the Study**

Research question: What are the effects of self- and peer-assessments on students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills?

The quantitative data on the students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills scores from the two raters were analyzed to provide a picture of how well the students performed in each thinking skill after participating in self- and peer-assessments. Table 1 presented the descriptive statistics of students' lower- and higher-order thinking skills.

**Table 1:** Means and standard deviations of students' LOTs and HOTs scores

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Mean (Total score = 3)</b>	<b>SD</b>
<i>Lower-order thinking (LOTs)</i>		
Remembering	1.70	0.065
Understanding	1.60	0.058
Applying	1.80	0.057
<i>Higher-order thinking (HOTs)</i>		
Analyzing	1.76	0.042
Evaluating	1.76	0.045
Creating	1.67	0.043



As can be seen in Table 1, the mean scores of students' lower-order thinking skills (LOTs) ranged from 1.60 to 1.80 (total score = 3), indicating that they had these skills at a moderate level. The 'Applying' skill was the skill the students performed well with the highest mean score ( $\bar{X} = 1.80$ ,  $SD = 0.057$ ). Their 'Remembering' skill was slightly lower with the mean score ( $\bar{X} = 1.70$ ,  $SD = 0.065$ ). Of the three lower-order thinking skills, the students' skill of 'Understanding' was the lowest, with the mean score of 1.60 ( $SD = 0.058$ ).

Regarding the students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTs), the mean scores ranged from 1.67 to 1.76, indicating that their skills were at a moderate level. The 'Analyzing' and 'Evaluating' skills are the two skills in which the students performed well and had the highest mean of 1.76 ( $SD = 0.042$  and  $SD = 0.045$ ). The mean of the students' creating skill scores was 1.67 ( $SD = 0.043$ ), which was at a moderate level.

Analysis of the qualitative data also illustrated how self- and peer-assessments play a role in developing students' higher- and lower- order thinking skills.

### ***Self- and peer-assessments promote students' lower-order thinking skills***

It was found that self- and peer-assessments contributed to the students' better understanding and application of intonation patterns. While being engaged in evaluating their own and their peers' performance against the criteria and receiving guidance or feedback from peers, the students were able to identify appropriate intonation patterns to use with appropriate meaning. They could explain the attitudinal function of intonation, particularly the rising tone. For example, the students were able to identify which rising tone was used for questions and how the rising tone was used to convey intentions or feelings.

“After I have taken this course and got involved in doing self-and peer assessments, I understood the principle of using intonation patterns and learned which intonation patterns I should use for different types of questions and affirmative statements.” [Interview Student 3]

“In this class, I've learned about how to use rising tone in questions to convey feelings. This makes me learn that when interlocutors use a rising tone, they mean to express their feelings such as anger or bad mood. Intonation can make me sense the speakers' feelings. I had never known about this function of intonation until I learned from this class. Now I know how to use rising tone in questions.” [Interview Student 15]

Self- and peer-assessments were found to be useful means of encouraging students to apply intonation knowledge in their real-life communication and to apply what they learned from feedback for learning improvement. After participating in self- and peer-assessment activities, the students gained more recognition of the important functions of intonation and applied intonation patterns to enhance their speaking skill and communication in real-life situations. They reported that their speaking skill improved.

“I can use patterns of utterances to convey my intention at a good level so that listeners will know my feelings.” [Self-assessment form student 2]

“I know my tone and can convey my intention to listeners appropriately.” [Self-assessment form student 8]

“I can convey my intention to make listener understand what I said.” [Self-assessment form student 17]

“I can use patterns of intonation to express my feelings and emotions.” [Self-assessment form student 22]

Apart from application of their intonation knowledge in real-life communication, the self-and peer-assessments provided students with opportunities to receive and apply what they learned from feedback obtained from peers and their own self-reflection in the self-assessment to improve their learning. The feedback from self- and peer-assessments was a useful resource for improving their learning. The participant reported as follows.

“I personally welcomed peer feedback. It pointed out my weak points that I'd overlooked. I followed my peers' advice to improve my intonation ability. Also, I became more confident to tell my peers about their weaknesses and advised them how to improve. [Interview Student 4]

### ***Self- and peer-assessments promote students' higher-order thinking skills***

The findings showed that the self- and peer-assessments promoted students' abilities to analyze, evaluate and create. When performing self- and peer- assessments, most students took an active role in assessing their own and peers' performance against the criteria. This made them analyze their own and peers' strengths and the areas or problems which they needed to improve and carefully give feedback to their peers as can be seen from the following interview:

“At first, I have no basic understanding of English intonation. I don’t know how to use intonation correctly. But after we learn and self-assess our performance, we recognize our weaknesses, learn how to use intonation correctly and then practice and use feedback from self-assessment to improve my learning.” [Interview Student 15]

Moreover, the student assessment forms obtained from the peer assessment activity revealed that the students could analyze and evaluate abilities to produce the English segmental and supra-segmental sounds. For example, Student number 21 gave her feedback in the peer-assessment form that her classmate did not pronounce some final sounds correctly. She found that her classmates dropped final sounds such as /s/ or -ed ending. This reflected that Student number 21 could apply what she learned about intonation principles in analyzing her peer’s performance and giving feedback. Another example also showed how the students applied the principles they learned into analysis. Student number 9 analyzed her classmate’s assignments and provided her classmate with feedback. She found that her classmate could not pronounce consonant and vowel sounds correctly. She pointed out that the cluster /kl/ was dropped in the word ‘class’. Her classmate also mispronounced the vowel sounds /tʃ(ə)n/ in the word ‘education’. Mispronunciation of vowel sounds was another major problem of her classmate. This particular student’s feedback on the assessment sheets showed that doing self- and peer-assessment activities allowed the students to reflect on their own pronunciation, analyze their peer’s pronunciation, and carefully provide feedback to their peers. This demands their analyzing and evaluating skills.

The findings also revealed that the students put their learning experience obtained from the self- and peer-assessments into planning for learning improvement. After receiving feedback from peers and self-assessing their own performance, the students planned to use peers as learning resource persons who could give them guidance on intonation. They made choices of strategy and planned how to improve their performance as can be seen from the following:

“We learn from each other. If there are any words that I am confident that I can pronounce correctly, I would share my friends a correct way of pronouncing them. And they would do vice versa.” [Interview Student 1]

In addition, the participants eventually demonstrated a skill to create in their final project (drama activity). During the final project, the participants collaboratively brainstormed and made a plan to create drama scripts and applied knowledge of intonation patterns in the drama project. In addition to improving higher-order thinking skills, the scripted dialogue through drama activities also encouraged students to work in a team collaboratively. For example, while working in a team to create the script, the students had to plan and organize their work together. They needed to choose which topic they wanted and created the script with the correct use of utterances. They also organized a group meeting to discuss and share ideas to each other, allowing them to have opportunities to make decisions and find solutions to problems. Finally, when the scripts were done, they would do a rehearsal of their play. This provided them with an opportunity to give feedback, both self-feedback and peer-feedback to correct their work properly. Throughout the activities, the students could see and realize the importance of working in a team and giving and receiving feedback. Consequently, they could work together effectively.

In sum, self-and peer-assessments can promote the lower- and higher-order thinking skills. Being engaged in the self- and peer-assessments in this class helped the students learn and understand English intonation better, get opportunities to put theories and principles of English intonation they learned in class, from peers and from self-reflection into practice. Before students could give feedback to their peers, they had to understand the assessment criteria used to assess their peers and themselves, and then carefully think, analyze and evaluate their own and peers' strengths and weaknesses. And of course, giving feedback to their peers and doing self-reflection demands different higher-order thinking, such as abilities to analyze, evaluate and create, in order to come up with strategies and make plans for improvement.

## **Discussions**

The results of this study have proven that the use of self- and peer-assessments had a significant impact on the lower- and higher-order thinking skills (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating). The self- and peer-assessments became the catalyst for the students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning and to work collaboratively with their peers to measure their peers' English intonation production. As a result, their lower- and higher-order thinking skills were fostered and developed.

When being involved in self- and peer-assessments, the students were required to take active roles in taking responsibility for evaluating their own and peers' intonation performance and constructing their own knowledge from their learning experience (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000) and through social interaction with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). In order to complete self- or peer-assessment tasks, firstly, students were required to learn and understand the scoring criteria of English intonation. They analyzed their own and peers' production of pitch contours and intonation patterns and made evaluation against the criteria. They were engaged in interaction and discussion and needed to work with other peers collaboratively in groups to make decisions on the evaluation results and then give feedback to the assessees. In light of self- and peer-assessments, they shared what they learned about intonation patterns to their peers and gave useful suggestions to help their peers overcome difficulties. These tasks are cognitively demanding because students are required to integrate different cognitive skills: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. These processes repeatedly occurred during the period of the treatment, which was reflected in the scores on the lower- and higher-order thinking skills. It was also found that the students received the highest score on the analyzing skill, which was essential for analyzing and learning the English intonation patterns and pitch contours. These results were consistent with many previous studies which reported that peer assessment activities could promote direct involvement in learning and the integration of cognitive abilities (O'Malley, & Pierce, 1996) and help students develop their lower and higher order reasoning and lower and higher levels of thinking (Birdsong & Sharplin, 1986), and facilitate deeper language learning (Falchikov, 1986; Cheng & Warren, 2005).

## **Implications**

Self- and peer-assessments have been proven to contribute to lower- and higher-order thinking skills and thus should be integrated as learning activities in our EFL classroom. It is important to note that individual students should be encouraged to take responsibility in developing assessment criteria. This will make them have ownership of planning their own goals of learning. In this context where they need to work collaboratively with their peers, they have opportunities to use a wide range of higher-order thinking skills in performing self-and peer-assessing tasks, learn how to work in a team and develop their communicative and social skills such as active listening and peer negotiation.

In addition, training is the key to success in implementing self- and peer-assessments. Therefore, teachers must carefully provide students with training on how to do the self- and peer-assessments. Students should have clear understanding about criteria, procedures of doing the assessments, and how to give feedback. Teachers need to demonstrate how to give feedback and allow them to have hand-on experience giving feedback to their peers. It is important that teachers should observe how students perform the task and provide them with guidance and assistance needed to help solve their problems. Subsequently, teachers need to give feedback about the students' use of self- and peer-assessments.

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