Speaking Improvement by Self-assessment of Students' Recordings.

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The English language is currently very important for the development of people since it constitutes a tool for communication with the status of an international language. It is also the only language that is used in almost all fields of knowledge such as science and technology, education, tourism, information and technology, business and commerce, among others; so, it is very important that students develop fluency in this language and achieve adequate communication with international communities (Parupalli, 2019).

Previous studies show that using self-voice recordings as a form of self-assessment helps improve students' speaking skills (Fixmer, 2017; Luoma, 2004; Peng & Wang, 2019). The researchers have addressed the problem of developing the ability to speak in students. Self-evaluation is a challenge for students because they do not use varied vocabulary and their pronunciation is not good.

Speaking is the most difficult skill when learning English as a foreign language, and this causes uncertainty in students (Sun & Yang, 2015; Zhao, 2009). The main reasons are that students are not motivated enough and do not practice because they are afraid of speaking in a foreign language.

In Ecuador, there are few opportunities for students to practice speaking in English, since their practice environment is limited to the classroom, according to Hidalgo (2021). Self-assessment is almost null: "In Ecuador students' opportunities to self-assess and to practice their speaking skills are mostly limited to the confines of the classroom where they have few opportunities to practice with others outside it" (p. 34). The development of spoken fluency in students at the national level is a concern of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, for which the authorities have taken some actions to strengthen the development of English. The main one is the creation of a new curriculum based specifically in listening and speaking.

The English language has also been implemented as a compulsory subject in secondary and elementary schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

This country-wide problem has been detected in our local students. Their fluency in speaking is poor due to low participation and fear of expressing themselves and this causes students not to contribute their opinion in the conversations.

Studies have shown that self-assessment using self-voice recordings helps a lot in improving learning and understanding of the English language, one of them is very interesting since it is done through an artistic activity, music. The study conducted by Fixmer (2017), investigate the effects of self-evaluation, through self-recording and self-listening in the modeling of the melodic singing of second grade students. For which voice singing data were collected before and after treatment with 48 second-grade students from two schools in southern Indiana. The results indicated that the children in the treatment group that used self-assessment using self-voice recordings improved in the modeling of melodic singing and the pronunciation of words (Fixmer, 2017).

Studies have used self-assessment to improve fluency, for example an Apple-Podcast is used to improve both accuracy and fluency (Sato & Lyster, 2012). Another similar case that aimed to improve speaking skills in general through the use of self-assessed videos in different educational levels was implemented by Hidalgo (2021).

A study carried out by Panadero and Jonsson (2017) determined that self-evaluation has a great impact on the performance of students. There is also an agreement with De Saint Léger and Storch (2009), who showed that self-evaluation involves students in their learning process. Also improving English language skills helps students to inquire into the language and identify their own mistakes (Brown & Harries, 2014).

Finally, there are some studies on self-assessment to improve speech but there are not many studies on self-assessment through self-voice recordings. In Ecuador, there are some

studies that have used self-assessment of students' recordings and research have been carried out to determine this limitation, such as the use of peer feedback in the EFL to improve oral skills. It has shown that students improved their oral skills, benefiting both teachers and students (Espinoza, 2019; Yépez, 2019). Therefore, the goal of this paper is to measure the effect of students' self-assessment of their voice recording on their fluency of speaking English.

Literature Review

This section begins by referring to the main issues related to this proposal. The review of the scientific literature addresses different authors and sources related to the speaking skill, self-assessment, communicative learning teaching (CLT) and backward design. Then the ability to speak takes an important role, self-assessment using self-voice recordings and technology as a tool for self-voice recordings.

Speaking Skill

According to Tuğrul (2012), the ability to speak refers to having an effective and fluid communication with the social environment, since it allows us to express ideas and thoughts. It also allows students to express themselves easily and spontaneously. These components help us to master a second language.

The ability to speak is spontaneous unlike other skills such as reading or writing that take a certain time to be processed and understood. Decker (2012) referred to the fact that an immediate response is always expected in the act of communication.

Even after a long time of practice in class, learners still have trouble communicating in the target language (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Researchers have identified that one of the reasons is that they do not have enough opportunities to practice their oral skills in settings other than the classroom.

Fluency.

According to Tuğrul (2012), familiarity is an important part of fluency. People can talk easily and comfortably. This is an indicator of the ability of a second language. Cotter (2012) argued that the agility to speak must be fearless and without doubts.

If students do not master other languages, they make many mistakes, repetitions, and corrections. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the pauses, repetitions and improvisations of oral speech to improve the skills of the students. Students with limited language skills are always reluctant to speak in another language (Cotter, 2012).

Pronunciation.

Pronunciation is an important feature of speech. It is the capacity to pronounce a word with the correct emphasis, rhythm, and intonation in a spoken language. It is possible to make a judgment on someone based on how they speak. As a result, someone with poor pronunciation can be labeled as knowing or not knowing L2 or as lacking fluency. (Sardegna et al., 2017).

Pronunciation is crucial not only when learning a language, but also when using it, according to Pawlak (2010). Speech is used to learn as well as to communicate in a language. Although all parts of the language are vital, achieving spoken fluency is the primary focus of this research.

Vocabulary.

Vocabulary is a resource for second language learners because if a student presents a lack of vocabulary. She will not be able to communicate effectively. So, the message that has been transmitted will not get to its destination. This means that there is no communication (Minalla, 2018).

Knowing the meaning of words is one of the fundamental characteristics of education to speak and communicate within the class. In addition, to quickly recognizing letters and

phrases readers must have a rich vocabulary to achieve their ultimate learning goals (Wanpen et al., 2013).

Grammar.

Mohr et al. (2013) defined grammar as a natural structure of a language where different roles are found, especially with regard to the rules of communication. It is the code that humans use to communicate in other ways that are not speaking. Another concept of grammar is that this is the field that studies sounds, words and their structure in a sentence and their conjugations (Erdem & Celik, 2011).

ICT Tools for Speaking through Voice Recordings.

At this point, it is important to note that a tool to improve English is the use of ICT, in the educational context, this tool is excellent due to the large number of especially young users who exchange ideas and all kinds of conversations. Teachers can take this opportunity to improve students' speaking skills (Wulandari, 2019, p.7)

> The potential use of social media-supported learning in educational context, especially in English learning, is great due to the massive number of social media users among the youth. Educators should see this condition as an excellent opportunity to apply this media for improving student's speaking skills outside the classroom (Wulandari, 2019, p.7).

Wulandari (2019) is referring to potential improvements in the way people interact on social media. Teachers often have to use new ICT tools or social networks. These apps have many benefits and teachers need to explore them for use in the classroom. For example, they can use an audio / video recording program to record student voices on any topic, analyze the oral skills of other students, and provide immediate self-assessment through the same medium.

Self-assessment

According to Dunning et al. (2004), students benefit from accurate self-assessment. They will be more effective in deciding where to apply their learning since students will know their strengths and weaknesses. Accurate self-assessment enables students to become more autonomous agents in education, taking responsibility for acquiring and improving knowledge and skills.

De Saint Léger and Storch (2009) declared that the goal of education is to teach self-regulation skills by allowing students to remember and use their knowledge and skills in situations that may be different from the classroom environment in the future. Learning is based on two components retention, which is the ability to remember information or perform long-term skills (Graff, 2011); and, transfer, the ability to apply knowledge or perform skills in a series of related situations (Graff, 2011). The objective is that students can retain and transfer what they have learned in unknown but important circumstances in the future, for which self-assessment plays an important role.

McDonald and Boud (2010) stated that "it has been demonstrated that self-assessment training can have an impact on student performance" (p. 216). Once students practice self-assessment, they are able to reflect on their own learning processes, which helps them better understand their mistakes and motivates students to correct themselves.

Dunning et al. (2004) showed that there is much room for improvement in student self-evaluation. The problem of self-assessment in education is complex, because the imperfections of self-assessment are caused by many different problems, depending on the situation. So, the impact of self-assessment on students and their performance depends on trained teachers.

Disadvantages of Self-Assessment.

Brown and Harris (2014) stated that perhaps the biggest disadvantage of doing a self-assessment is that it is difficult to be objective, students could be subjective and insincere, over-evaluating themselves, causing unreliable grades. There is a tendency to exaggerate students' strengths or focus too much on their weaknesses. For this reason, the students need both themselves and the teacher, and peers to achieve meaningful learning. Another disadvantage could be that it increases the teacher's workload, however the use of evaluation rubrics makes the process efficient (Dunninget et al., 2004).

Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT)

Sjolie et al. (2019) pointed out that CLT is a creative process to build learning, and its development is always related to trial and error. According to the same author, CLT is committed to promoting meaningful and reliable communication. Swanson and Hildebrandt (2017) referred to it as promoting true communication between students being fluent, one of the most important aspects in the classroom.

Backward Design

According to Graff (2011), backward design constitutes a process by which objectives become the most important part of the work focused on achieving a goal. Classes should be planned from the end with the desired outcomes and standards in mind. Unit design by teachers should be based on desired outcomes. All learning experiences must be planned with a view to achieving the objectives with the transfer, construction of meanings and the acquisition of the desired skills. When this design is used by teachers, students transfer their learning to other circumstances in everyday life.

With this proposal, the researcher wants to answer the following research questions:

1. How much do students improve their speaking skills through self-assessment of their self-voice recordings?

2. What are the expectations of the students with the use of the self-assessment of their self-voice recordings?

Innovation

The innovation aims to improve students' speaking skills using a self-assessment approach supported by the application of voice memos. It will be part of the unit of learning obtained from the student's book. It consists of 12 hours of student learning three times a week for the month. Students regularly receive conversational vocabulary and language and communication activities.

All students have mobile devices. These phones come pre-installed with an app called "Voice Notes" that records noise so students can create their own voice recordings and save them on their personal devices.

The unit's innovation strategy is to deploy an innovative instructional design (See Appendix 1). Students use a voice memo app to create four activity-based entries (one per week) lasting one minute for the first three weeks and three minutes for the last entry. Finally, they use a rubric to score their recordings (See Appendix 2).

The voice notes app is a tool that allows students to create a record of their assignments, providing them with the support they need to achieve their goals. This is in line with the main goal of ensuring that students can pronounce correctly, and to do so on their own and in private. This app can hold an unlimited number of recordings and those can be sent using the internet to another person.

This innovation is divided into two phases. In phase1, students are tested for 5 hours before running the experiment. In this workshop they will learn how to download and use the app. They will also understand how rubrics work. They will learn and apply the concepts of self-assessment, how to create a voice note with the app and assess themselves. They will learn how to apply the speaking criteria created by the teacher, how to recognize the

variations between a good, medium, and low quality recording, and how to accurately and properly analyze their own audios. Additionally, they will practice self-assess using a rubric in the right way. It is important that teachers model activities at different times and show students how to do them. The teacher also should include clear examples, models, and patterns of good self-assessment and train students in using the rubric many times during the workshop. The stage number two is the most important where students are the ones who self-assess themselves.

In step 2, the teacher starts introducing the lesson content to the student. Later at the end of each week, they will record their own audios and self-assess their voice notes as an activity at home. Each student has to self-assess themselves at least twice during the weekend. Finally, to finish with the innovation plan, the speaking rubric will be used by students to make their tasks and self-assess their recordings on the following aspects: grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency.

Methodology

Because the author is a participant in the study, it is classified as an action research study. Quantitative and qualitative data, as well as testing techniques, are used in research. Action research, according to Johnson (2012), helps instructors understand some of the tactics they will need to use in the classroom to gather empirical information. As a qualitative tool, a student perspective interview (see Appendix 4) will be employed. The quantitative instruments will be the before and posttests, which will be scored using a rubric: One rubric for students (see Appendix 2), and another rubric for the educator to grade the pretest – posttest (See Appendix 3). All quantitative and qualitative data obtained will be analyzed once this plan is implemented.

Participants

This action research study will take place in a public school in Guayaquil, Ecuador. A convenience sample of 25 students was drawn from the "1A" and "1B" classes. They are students in their third year of high school. A handy sampling, according to Johnson (2012), is a sort of non-random sample that includes participant accessibility. The participants were between the ages of 14 and 16, with 15 males and 10 females making up the sample.

The educational population comes from a middle-class to poor socioeconomic background. Due to the country's difficult economic position, some families are currently experiencing unemployment by both parents. The school day begins in the morning (7:00 a.m. to 13:00 p.m.). The sample selection did not include any pupils with special needs.

The students have an English level between A1 - 60% and A2 - 40 % according to a placement test taken by the English area of the high school at the beginning of the second semester before the COVID-19 emergency. According to the Council of Europe (2018), they can express verbally essential details that are produced slowly and clearly, and convey ideas and information about key topics and familiar subjects. Sometimes they need help to express themselves.

These students show lack of fluency, which is the main reason for this proposal. Many of them are good at reading and listening. They have good memories and are very tech savvy. Therefore, the voice memo app will be used as a technical resource to make conversations activities more interesting and engaging, as technology is a very attractive and widely used tool in pedagogy.

Instruments and Data Collection

In this study, the independent variable is self-assessment using voice memorization as a tool and the dependent variable was a component of speech ability, particularly fluency. The instruments are designed to retrieve data and find answers to survey questions such as the following:

1)   How much do students improve their speaking skills through self-assessment of their self-voice recordings? A speech analysis rubric (Appendix 3) will be used to score the pre- and post-experiment using the recordings for the first research topic. Another teacher will assess this section of the study to reduce information distortion. Rojas (2019) adopted the speaking rubric to be compatible with this study and to take into account descriptive tables of four factors: grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

Pretest and posttest

The pre- and post-tests will be audio number one and number four. On the first week, the first audio recording will take place. "How do you do?" will be the topic of the lesson. Students will introduce themselves and discuss personal details. Week four will feature the final audio. "Where do you live?" will be the topic of the lesson. Students will introduce themselves and chat about their neighborhood in this tape.

Rubrics

The "speaking analysis rubric just for the teacher" (see Appendix 3) rates fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar on a scale of 1 to 5. It has been verified by two reviewers. For the best achievement in each component, they award the highest score. As a result, it provides excellent grammar structure, spontaneous fluency, contextual vocabulary, and flawless pronunciation. Then, as mentioned in the - Instruments and Data Collection part - above right before the pretest and posttest section, the lowest score for frequent errors in grammar structure, uncommon use of taught vocabulary, extensive pauses in fluency and self-assessment, and very bad pronunciation.

Regarding the second research question. 2) What are the expectations of the students with the use of the self-assessment of their self-voice recordings? This question relates to the perspective of students who use the voice notes app for self-assessment. To gain the student's perspective, an interview will be done.

Interview

The researcher will choose six students based on the highest post-test score to answer the second question. Six additional students will be chosen based on their average score, and six more students will be chosen based on their lowest score. These pupils will be picked because they have varying levels of progress and can offer suggestions on how to improve the invention. This interview will be conducted in the fifth week and will consist of seven open-ended questions. It will enable the researcher to get a better understanding of the student's viewpoint on the innovation.

Reliability and Data Analysis

Other investigations have confirmed the validity of the pretest and posttest rubrics. The findings will be presented in the form of a graph and will clearly address the study questions. After the suggestion is implemented, descriptive statistics such as mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation, and effect size will be calculated. The interviews will be taped and transcribed into text at the end.

Ethical Considerations

According to Zyphur and Pierides (2017), important questions arise when conducting a survey. What is a component called sensitive data? It is a moral consideration. Researchers know that some methods are treated with close scrutiny. For example, a participant's personal data must be sensitive, and is only accessible to researchers. That is the main reason why in this study participants will use pseudonyms. No photo of any student will be taken. The results of this study will be provided to the organization and its participants upon implementation. Voice recordings are used for research purposes only, and once the research is complete, their personal and related information will be further deleted.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study are in collaboration with ASD[1] students because the material hasn't been adapted to this special need. Another limitation is working with small samples because the larger the sample, the more accurate the results.

Finally, the scope of this proposal is to find conclusive results for the research questions. This study also hopes that teachers could use this innovation, as an example that self-assessment by using the voice notes app works. So they can enhance oral skills among learners and apply this innovation with them.

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[1]**ASD.** Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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Appendix 1

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Rubric: Speaking Rubric for Students' self-assessment.

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Rubric: Speaking analysis rubric only for teachers.

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Instrument: Students' interview.

Available upon request.

Appendix5

Website: María Isabel Pino Mantilla' e-Portfolio

Available upon request.