



**Self-Assessment of Reading to Improve Comprehension of Texts**

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### **Self-Assessment of Reading to Improve Comprehension of Texts**

Virtual education has become the nightmare of some teachers and learners. Most Latin American countries had to learn fast and adapt to the new style of education (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020). After two years, teachers and learners had rough days, but society is adapting to the new teaching process. The impact of COVID-19 was called crisis learning because the new virtual system was new for instructors and learners (Cervi et al., 2020)

Even more inclusive education where learners required special attention did not have guidelines for how teachers should lead that kind of education. So, as a result, education at the beginning was limited to send the pedagogical sheet (ficha pedagógica) with activities that learners should do at home. The general instructions given by the minister of education were to use the prioritized curriculum (Currículo Priorizado) and the table of contents (tabla de contenidos) to plan the micro-curricular planning (Ministerio de Educación, 2020).

According to Domagała-Zyśk (2015), hard-of-hearing students face many problems acquiring proficiency in learning a second language because of their limited sign language system. In order to acquire understanding, those kinds of learners need many opportunities to demonstrate their performances during the learning process. In addition, Domagała-Zyśk said that many teachers lack the proper knowledge to solve the teaching problems. Therefore, hard-of-hearing learners need additional materials and strategies to understand English foreign language (EFL) content.

Concerning inclusive education in Ecuador, the National Council for Equal Disabilities from Ecuador (CONADIS) monitors compliance with all the rights of people with disabilities. With the necessity of helping hearing impaired students

during the learning process, the Consejo Nacional de Discapacidades (CONADIS) with the aid of Federación Nacional de Sordos del Ecuador (FENASEC) and Universidad Tecnológica Indoamericana (UTI) created the Ecuadorian Sign Language Dictionary called Gabriel Ramón (CONADIS et al., n.d).

On the other hand, one action research was conducted by Delgado (2020), in which 25 participants from a public university in Guayaquil used self-assessment to improve reading comprehension. The study demonstrated that learners improved their level of reading by using self-assessment. As a result, students had a better understanding of the ideas. Also, this study demonstrated that students' use of translators decreased. However, this study was done with regular students but not with hearing-impaired students.

This research report aims to demonstrate that students with special needs (hearing-impaired students) can upgrade their reading comprehension by practicing self-assessment.

### **Literature Review**

Metacognitive strategies are a group of techniques that accompany the process during and after the learning process on the reading skill. The main objective of these strategies is to achieve comprehension when reading by working on weaknesses. Some metacognitive strategies are organizer, self-management, comprehension monitoring, production monitoring, self-assessment, self-evaluation, and self-reflection (Muhid et al., 2020).

Metacognitive strategies do not assess the process, but help improve learners' skills during the process. According to Muhid et al. (2020), "metacognitive ability means to have awareness, knowledge, and control of what he/she has in mind and can regulate it to achieve certain purposes" (p. 850). In other words, metacognitive

strategies help students be aware if they achieve their task during the reading process.

### **Self-assessment**

Metacognitive strategies help learners improve their performance, and it could be a summative or formative process. Summative assessment takes place after some time and measures the students' learning. On the contrary, formative assessment is an ongoing process, and it is used to provide feedback and strengthen the learning process (Baniabdelrahman, 2010).

Self-assessment belongs to the formative group. This strategy helps students to better their performance by monitoring their progress. According to Baniabdelrahman (2010), "self-assessment refers to students' evaluation of his/her strengths and weaknesses in reading" (p. 4). This evaluation increased students' desire to learn and go beyond classroom activities.

Moreover, Baniabdelrahman (2010) reported, "Self-assessment helps students give more accurate and honest responses" (p.15). He said that self-assessment also "helps students direct their learning efforts more effectively" (p.15). In other words, by using self-assessment, learners are conscious of their progress during an activity. Self-assessment makes students feel motivated when they know they are improving their performances. Also, Baniabdelrahman (2010) mentioned that applying self-assessment helped students and the instructor make some changes during the learning process.

Andrade (2019) mentioned that self-assessment includes giving feedback, and it is focused on promoting learning. Also, she added that this learning-oriented strategy is formative and allows students to make adjustments and corrections in their performance without feeling pressure like in the summative process.

On the contrary, many people argue that self-assessment is flawed in its task. For example, Dunning et al. (2004) stated that "although self-assessment of skill and knowledge does tend to bear some relationship to objective performance, the relationship tends to be meager to modest" (p. 85). In other words, there is a meager relationship between what people believe about their skills and the performances they achieve. There are many reasons why people fail to self-assess. One of them is that learners do not possess all the information about how self-assessment is developed.

### **Reading**

Since the project focuses on hard-of-hearing students, the reading skill will be used to improve students' comprehension of texts by using self-assessment. According to Marloes et al. (2017), "good text comprehension emerges if a reader can predict what the text may be about" (p.194). In this regard, pre activities play an essential role. Marloes et al. also said that if learners have problems comprehending text, reading strategies must help learners overcome difficulties. Among reading strategies are self-assessment, questioning, and summarizing, among others.

### **Questioning**

According to Sinabariba (2020), students better their reading comprehension if they have a purpose. Also, she said that the questioning technique helped teachers know about learners' knowledge of the text. Questioning can motivate students to participate in discussion actively.

Moreover, Afzali (2012) said that teaching questioning in reading helps learners to foster critical thinking. As learners practice questioning techniques, they can become autonomous readers. Likewise, Wiggins (1993) indicated "it is through students' questions and not just their answer that the teachers are able to

meaningfully assess understanding of subject matter" (as cited in Afzali, 2012. p. 544).

### **Innovation**

With the necessity of creating an environment where hearing-impaired students feel part of the learning process and better their English proficiency level, this research report used self-assessment strategy to demonstrate that students could improve their comprehension of texts in English.

The backward design was used to fulfill all activities (See appendix 1). It lasted eighteen synchronous classes and six asynchronous classes. Students read, answered questions, compared answers, self-assess, and received the teacher's feedback during the synchronous classes. They used google forms, Facebook, and WhatsApp to perform the reading activities. On the other hand, apps like; Liveworksheet and LearningApp were used to do some warm-up activities related to the topics.

All lessons were similar and contained a routine of activities that allowed learners to practice reading and self-assessment. During the first and second classes, students knew about self-assessment purpose and questioning as reading strategies to improve their reading comprehension. After each class, students self-assess their performance by using the checklist. The checklist had eleven items where learners assessed their performance after each reading.

The last activity was posting on Facebook and showing understanding by commenting on the previous readings and activities learners did along the lesson plan. There were some questions that students considered to post their comments, such as

1. When a mobile phone is useful?
2. When a mobile phone is dangerous?

3. How have cell phones helped you learn in daily life?

### **Methodology**

The action research summarizes information for teachers by allowing them the opportunity to redesign their pedagogy or practice (Clark et al., 2020). This action research included the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2012), the qualitative analysis showed the relationship between theory and concepts. Also, it identified relevant aspects of the topic by laying out data that could serve to adapt methodologies, strategies, or lesson planning. Moreover, the qualitative analysis implied the direct observation of a group or groups of people that are doing or performing specific activities by using particular strategies during a period of time.

On the other hand, according to Devi (2009), the quantitative data “starts with word frequencies, space measurements, time counts and key words frequencies” (p.6). This kind of analyzes tried to measure information by using numbers in the description of results of a study.

“All qualitative data can be coded quantitatively, and all quantitative data is based on the qualitative judgment” (Devi, 2009, p. 6). These approaches (qualitative and quantitative) were used to answer the following research questions:

- Which part of reading comprehension will be most impacted by using self-assessment (checklist)?
- How did students improve in reading comprehension after this implementation?

### **Participants**

This project was applied to six hearing-impaired students from the third of Baccalaureate from a public high school. They were between eighteen to nineteen

years old. Three students lived with their parents, and three of them lived with relatives. All students were born with a hearing-impaired disability. To know students' English level of proficiency, a test was applied. The researcher selected a reading from the British Council, LearningEnglish page (<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/>). The results demonstrated that learners are A2 English level students according to the Common European of Reference.

All the students lived in urban neighborhoods from Cuenca and there were three women and three men. Students had economic problems and used cell phones to attend classes.

### **Instruments**

Self-assessment checklist, and an interview were the instruments to collect data. Self-assessment checklist was the instrument applied to answer the first research question, *which part of the reading comprehension will be most impacted by using self-assessment?* The checklist had eleven items related to reading skills. The items from the checklist were formulated concerning the lesson plan activities. It had the purpose of helping learners better their comprehension of texts based on the results, which meant students compared their progress and worked on their weaknesses.

The checklist also included reflective questions about strategies learners used to better their reading comprehension. The reflective questions were *“What strategies do I use to understand the text?”* and *What will I do to improve my reading comprehension next time?*

For the second instrument a standardized open-ended interview was designed; it had eight open questions. The first four are related to reading comprehension and the second four questions to self-assessment. The interview had two parts; the first one was recorded in a video with the student's answers and the second part consisted of



sending a link to the students with the same questions to confirm what they said during the first part.

### **Data Analysis**

The instrument to collect data and answer the first research questions was designed in Google Forms, and the results were extracted from a Microsoft Excel sheet. The results were organized according to the highest statement selected by the students.

The second instrument collected qualitative data. The information was taken from answering eight open questions related to reading comprehension and self-assessment using the model suggested by the grounded theory.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Govin (2013) reported that ethical considerations along history were set as the researcher's commitment to the people involved in the research by respecting their privacy. This research report included the permission of parents and the principal of the high school. A request was sent to the principal and it was approved. Even though all the students were of legal age, parents were informed about the application of the project by a zoom meeting. All parents agreed with the implementation of the project and all the different activities hearing-impaired students did during the project.

### **Results**

The research report sought to identify if hearing-impaired students increased their comprehension of texts using self-assessment. After the implementation, the quantitative and qualitative instruments provided information to answer the following research questions.

RQ#1: *Which part of reading comprehension will be most impacted by using self-assessment (checklist)?* The results obtained from the Google Form Excel sheet were reported in table 1. It showed that most students improve their reading comprehension by choosing the following items, “My previous knowledge helps me understand the text better,” “I can understand the point of view of the writer,” which had most checks. That meant learners raised their ability to identify some details to understand the reading.

**Table 1**  
*Self-assessment*

GENERAL RESULTS CHECKLIST			
CHECKLIST	YES	SOMETIMES	NO YET
(1) My answers about the reading are correct.	18	13	2
(2) I find difficult to understand the context of the text.	10	18	3
(3) I understand the point of view of the writer	15	15	2
(4) I identify the purpose of the writer.	13	17	2
(5) I can answer questions from the readings.	17	13	2
(6) I can identify the main idea of the reading.	14	14	3
(7) Understand (written) questions related to the topic.	16	15	0
(8) Answer (written) questions related to the topic.	17	14	1
(9) I understand the meaning of the grammar.	12	18	1
(10) My previous knowledge helps me understand the text better.	17	13	2
(11) The punctuation of the text helps me understand the organization of paragraphs.	15	10	4

During the implementation, there were some classes where learners did not attend, they were marked as NA (not applicable), so the number of answers did not have the same number of participants. Comparing grades from the first week with the sixth week, there was evidence that learners raised reading comprehension using self-assessment at the end of the implementation.

On the other hand, there were some students who, during the implementation, got low grades that were because texts had words that they did not even have in their mother tongue. An example of that was the words “invento” and “innovación” did not exist in their sign language, only there was invent or inventor. Another example was that the words “between” or “about” did not exist in sign language. There was the word “cerca de” that had a relation with distance.

**Table 2**  
*Students' grades during the implementation*

Reading grades						
NAMES	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
STUDENT 1	4,28	1,42	5,00	1,42	NA	7,14
STUDENT 2	8,57	5,71	10,00	10,00	10,00	10,00
STUDENT 3	4,29	1,42	4,00	NA	5,00	5,71
STUDENT 4	4,28	8,57	7,00	4,28	10,00	7,14
STUDENT 5	10,00	8,57	10,00	4,28	8,30	10,00
STUDENT 6	NA	7,14	6,00	4,28	6,66	8,57
<b>Average</b>	<b>6,28</b>	<b>5,47</b>	<b>7,00</b>	<b>4,85</b>	<b>7,99</b>	<b>8,09</b>

Also, as part of the first research question, students had reflective questions at the end of each reading and after self-assessment. The teacher-researcher observed that learners need teachers' support most of the time when reading a new text. On the other hand, learners tend to look for the meaning of new words to understand the context of the reading. The answers to the reflective questions indicated that students needed support when faced with a new topic or text.

**Table 3**  
*Reflective questions*

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>What strategies do I use to understand the text?</b>						
- Search for new words						
- Ask the teacher if I don't understand (grammar or vocabulary)		X	X			X
- Work with a peer to compare his/her and mine ideas.						
- See the visuals.			X			
- Understand the title				X		X
- Connect with the ideas I know about the text.	X				X	
<b>What will I do to improve my reading comprehension next time?</b>						
- Reread the text.					X	
- Search for new words			X	X		X
- Understand the grammar.						
- Read texts about the same content to understand.	X	X				

RQ # 2: How did students improve reading comprehension after this implementation? To answer the second research question a standardized open-ended interview was conducted. The interview had two parts, the first referred to self-assessment, and the second was related to reading skill.

The interview was transcribed and reviewed for general themes regarding self-assessment and reading. One of the students reported *“Self-assessment helped me, but I have much to learn.”* Another student’s answer, *“Self-assessment helped me to know which are my weaknesses and strengths.”*

Regarding the second part about reading, some answers from the learners were *“Question helped me because it was like asking myself about the reading.”* *“The questions helped me understand the reading.”*

Five themes emerged during the open coding step (difficulties, challenges, self-assessment, questioning, and observation). Next, the researcher conducted an axial coding step where themes were analyzed and related to each other:

1. The lack of vocabulary affected students' development of reading skills.
2. In the beginning, it was challenging to apply self-assessment because there were many new words.
3. Self-assessment and questioning help learners improve their reading comprehension, but they need to practice more.

Summarizing the above, strategies, self-assessment, and questioning were helpful, and learners felt comfortable using them. The student's lack of vocabulary represented a difficulty during the implementation. Moreover, by analyzing the answers, it was clear that students needed more time to practice self-assessment and questioning.

### **Discussion**

After six weeks of implementation, the results explained in the section above demonstrated that self-assessment of reading helped students improve their comprehension of texts.

Question 1. Which part of reading comprehension will be most impacted by using self-assessment checklist? Results demonstrated that learners raised their reading comprehension at the end of the implementation by getting an overall grade of 8,09. The study results agreed with Baniabdelrahman's research (2010), who reported that learners felt more motivated after using self-assessment. Self-assessment helped learners to identify students' weaknesses and work on them. Andrade (2019) mentioned that self-assessment allowed students to have a clear idea about their progress and made adjustments if necessary. The theory of self-assessment and the results of this research work connected by demonstrating that self-assessment raised students' desire to learn and better students' comprehension of texts.

After the implementation, there was evidence that the bottom-up (knowing about language grammar elements) and top-down (using learners' previous knowledge) processes mentioned by Sinabariba (2020) were used by the students according to the results from the checklist. Learners at the beginning focused their attention on the grammar and then connected their ideas using the previous knowledge.

Furthermore, Baniabdelrahman (2010) mentioned that self-assessment helped work on students' strengths and weaknesses. A student said the same after the implementation, arguing that the self-assessment helped her be conscious of the areas she had to work hard.

Concerning the second research question: how did students improve reading comprehension after this implementation? Most of the students' answers were "Self-assessment and questioning strategies helped enhance the understanding of texts; however, it was hard to understand a text because of my lack of vocabulary". Also, they mentioned that their sign language limited learning another language because the texts had words that did not exist in their sign language as was explained in the

result section. The biggest problem is that in the sign language exist 5.000 words meanwhile in a common dictionary there are 88.000 words (CONADIS, n.d).

Besides, regarding the questioning technique, students said that questioning after each reading helped them better comprehend the texts. To support these answers, Sinabarida (2020) and Afzali (2012) also mentioned that questioning makes learners become autonomous readers, which happened during the implementation.

Questioning helped students to identify specific details and made the text more comprehensible.

On the other hand, even though self-assessment and questioning positively affected students, they argued that more time was needed to practice reading and the strategies mentioned above. That was because students needed to get familiar with the new vocabulary.

In addition, as Baniabdelrahman (2010) said, self-assessment also helped teachers realize the changes he or she must make in the lesson plan to help students achieve the goal. At the beginning of the implementation, 50% of the students chose the sometimes option when they had to mark in the checklist, but for the end of the innovation, 55% of the students chose the option yes; that meant that only a few students still had difficulties when reading and maybe it was because of the lack of practice since they only have 2 hours of English class a week because of the virtual modality.

### **Conclusion**

This research report aimed to determine if self-assessment of reading strategy increase students' comprehension of texts. By the end of the innovation, there was evidence that learners felt confident when using self-assessment because they

understood that it served as a formative evaluation to know about their progress while reading about a new topic.

Concerning the first research question, comprehension was the most impacted part when reading. Learners better comprehend texts because they were more conscious of which areas they had to practice. Questioning strategy also helped them to have clear ideas about the text.

About research question two, this research report demonstrated that hearing-impaired students face many difficulties when reading in a second language because of their lack of vocabulary and practice. Some students were still struggling when reading, but most of them raised their grades by the end of the implementation.

### **Limitations**

During the implementation some of the limitations were:

- Students' A2 was one of the limitations hearing-impaired students faced.

Students had problems with the new words from a text.

- Hearing-impaired sign language was another limitation. Students argued that it was complicated to understand some words because they do not exist in their sign language.

- During the implementation, there were some days when students did not attend class because they faced internet connection problems.

- The innovation was applied in a public high school, and according to the national curriculum, students from the third of Bachillerato only had three English hours of class. This situation limited students' practice.

- The innovation was applied to six students that limited the amount of data the researcher got at the end.

### **Recommendations**

For future applications is suggested to take into account the time of application because learners need more time to acquire a new strategy or technique. Moreover, time is required to practice the new vocabulary from the second language.

This research report focused on special education, so teachers must be aware of students' difficulties in their native tongue and more when acquiring a second language. Another recommendation is to apply this innovation to a large class to make data more reliable.



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**Appendix 1**

**Lesson Plan**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 2**

**Placement test**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 3**

**Self-assessment – Checklist**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 4**

**Open-ended interview**

Available upon request.

**Appendix 5**

**Checklist Results**

Available upon request.

**APPENDIX 6**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT FROM HEARING-IMPAIRED**

**STUDENTS**

Available upon request.

**APPENDIX 7**

**GROUNDING THEORY**

Available upon request.

**APPENDIX 8**

**STUDENTS LESSONS**

Available upon request.