**Self-Assessment in Speaking Presentations**

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## Self–Assessment in Speaking Presentations

This research study has been set to determine how students can improve their oral communication skills through the use of self-assessment. Also, they will demonstrate the use of new vocabulary words and grammar tenses while talking about their favorite places to visit in Ecuador by using a poster as support. This research study is centered on oral presentations. It is important to inquire about the difficulties students face when organizing ideas, acquiring new vocabulary words, or speaking in front of the classroom. Always bearing in mind that "Oral presentations have been shown to help bridge the gap between language study and language use" (Brooks & Wilson, 2014, p 203)**.**

Both students and teachers passed through difficult moments in learning because of the pandemic situation where they were forced to move to an online environment. Teachers skipped the application of some speaking techniques, which are comprehensible. I was mostly focused on supporting students emotionally rather than academically. For this reason, this project was focused on demonstrating how self-assessment tools help students to improve the learning process through oral presentations with the goal of establishing a more efficient way of communication.

## Literature Review

The innovation project is based on the application of learning methods to determine how students receive, process and keep new knowledge during their learning path. There are two elements that play important roles in this subject: the dependent variable, which is associated with the speaking skill, and the independent one that is relative to self-assessment.

Self- assessment is considered as an evaluation process where the learners assess their own performance and develop specific learning skills required for educational competences. This evaluation process can be guided by the teacher at the beginning so students can be familiarized with it (Andrade, 2013, p. 17).

The definition of speech might be broad, but it expresses the remarkable influence that such a phenomenon has on human culture: "Speaking is defined as a process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13).

Some authors defined it as "a descriptive and evaluative act carried out by the student concerning his or her own work and academic abilities" (Andrews, 2016, p.8). Self-assessment is also a very powerful tool for teachers. It gives them a more global and holistic view of their student's performance. In fact, the use of self-assessment has been shown to boost student motivation, improve self-confidence and reduce anxiety among learners (Andrews, 2016, p 15).

"Assessments also provide teachers with useful feedback about student learning acquisition" (Tosuncuoglu, 2018, p 163). Adding to that, self-assessment has a vast connection with the theories of learning. Behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism provide convincing rationales for nurturing and enhancing student self-assessment: behaviorism provides a theoretical framework that suggests that students can be taught to self-assess their own behaviors through external reinforcements; cognitive learning theory suggests that students can be taught to assess their own cognitive processes and strategies; and constructivism provides a theoretical basis for teaching students how to reflect on, analyze, interpret and evaluate the knowledge they have gained from their experiences in school and out of school.

Motivation is the key to learning. If a student doesn't have enough motivation, he or she will not learn much at all. When learners are not motivated or self-confident, they tend to give up easily, avoid challenges, and become less willing to learn new things: "A motivated and self-confident learner more actively engages in the process of teaching/learning and varies significantly from a learner, who doubts himself or herself, is afraid to make mistakes and tends to ignore learning activities" (Weeden et al., 2005, p 22).

Evaluative responses are an important part of the learning process because they affect how people think about a topic and what they do with the information. For example, if someone is asked to write down what they know about a specific topic, their evaluative response will influence how much effort they put into writing down that information. "A person's evaluative response to something [is] determined by behavioral beliefs. For example, if a teacher believes that getting students to self-assess will involve more work but strongly believes it will benefit the student, that teacher's attitude will probably be favorable" (Andrews, 2016, p 20).

According to Andrews (2016, p 20), students would struggle by being self-assessed because they are not involved with the learning process, but the teacher's attitude toward the difficulties of applying a self-assessment method can also determine the desired positive outcomes in the assigned activities.

## Innovation

At the beginning of the project, the teacher proposed a self-assessment checklist with the use of emotional faces instead of traditional grading systems. After this part was explained, the students received the final scores of their self-evaluation. Finally, the students received a specific rubric based on the experimented interactions between them and the teachers. The final

rubric was made by the teacher, and it was a product of the self-evaluating students using the new method which involves the application of emotional faces as a grading technique.

The innovation was developed in a private school in Daule where the participants were my 6th-grade students who are 9-10 years old. The purpose of this work was to give my students the opportunity to do a small project about the places they visited on vacations. All of them followed many steps to achieve the goal and made a well-structured poster with evidence of their vacation. The main objective of the performance activity was that students had to learn vocabulary related to Unit 9 about cool vacations, places to go and have fun, simple present, and second conditional tenses to structure spoken sentences during their presentations.

The teacher monitored and facilitated the process meanwhile students were self-evaluators. The project had a duration of a month because of the fulfillment of other academic topics in the school's program.  The unit innovation was composed of a total of 4 weeks, divided into 10 synchronous hours. Each week, 2.5 hours were assigned to develop the innovation. The first week was used to explain to students the contents related to the unit, like vocabulary words, grammar tenses, common phrases, and worksheets, in order to get familiar with aspects related to vacations. Also, the teacher explained what self-assessment was, its importance, and its application in activities. To make students understand how it works, the teacher had to show an example of its use. It helped them to understand in a better way its implementation.

In the second week, the teacher explained to students some grammar tenses and proposed an activity where they had to share ideas based on their experiences of traveling to any tourist place in Ecuador that they had visited during vacations. Next, they received a checklist that included points related to speaking skills.

In the third week, students had to prepare a monologue by highlighting things to do in the place that they had chosen for 40 seconds. The same checklist was provided with a few modifications.

In the last week, they had to design a poster with main ideas related to the place to visit in Ecuador and record a video explaining its features about it. Then a complete self-assessment rubric was given to students to be used on their own. After this, students received a checklist as an instrument of evaluation with the objective to be self-assessed.

### Research Methodology

Action research is a method that can be used to investigate changes in the classroom. The main purpose of action research is to find a way to improve student achievement. It can also be used by researchers who are interested in developing new methods of teaching or improving existing ones. In the case of this study, it was implemented in the specific context of a 6th-grade class in Daule, Ecuador. Always bearing in mind that "Action research is a process of systematic inquiry that seeks to improve social issues affecting the lives of everyday people" (Hine, 2013. p 151).

Therefore, a research question was posited in order to clarify the main aim of the research study which is the following:

1. Does the application of self-assessment impact oral communication skills in sixth-grade students from a private school in Guayaquil?

### Participants

The scenario is the following: I am a primary teacher and at the beginning of the school year I was assigned to teach language in the sixth basic. Students from the sixth class at a private school participated in the development of a presentation related to a favorite place to

visit on vacations in Ecuador. Students were between the ages of 9-10 years. The class had 21 participants that formed part to develop this research study. They completed both the pre-presentation and post-presentation. Almost half of the students (12) were male, and half were female (11).

**Instruments**

1. To answer the research question a rubric was used. It was composed of four descriptors: (1) Vocabulary, (2) Grammar, (3) Pronunciation, and (4) Content. The rubric was used to quantify the speaking skill. It was on a 1 to 5 scale. One is considered the lowest score and 5, is the highest. In the speaking rubric, 1 refers to "The candidate cannot achieve the expected goals" and 5 to "The candidates achieve the goals satisfactorily". Whereas the hybrid classes were presented because of the pandemic situation, part of the data was collected via Google Drive and the other, physically.

**Data Analysis**

A specific set of data was gathered and subsequently analyzed to answer (the) research questions:

Nº1: Does the application of self-assessment impact oral communication skills in six grade students from a private school in Guayaquil?

Nº2: What were students' limitations on self-assessment during the implementation?

A paired sample *t-test* was run. The sample *t-test* allows observers to examine a comparison of the pretest and post-test in any single student's scores. In addition, students' self-assessment scores were correlated with their pretest and posttest rubric scores. The analysis was done in Microsoft Excel using the Analytics Tools Pack.

**Ethical Considerations**

Whether on-site or online in a classroom, teachers must communicate to authorities the application of any type of project that involves students' participation. Also, they must

keep confidentiality, and in many cases, parents must know what activities their sons perform at School. Educators must commit to the teaching profession itself. A classroom promotes security, and acceptance and does not approve of offensive conduct.

One of the required activities at Casa Grande is to apply my innovation project in class. However, before its application, I had to present the following documents to the authorities where I currently work: A copy of my innovation in physic, a letter directed to the principal indicating the purpose of it, a list of the students involved, and a note that proof that I am studying to obtain my master's degree.

Then, it was proven by the school, so I had to start sending letters to parents whose students were going to participate. My students are around 10-11 years old; parents needed to sign the letters so I could have their permission, too. Finally, I could apply my innovation after the acceptance process.

Through this application, I had to record my students, take photos, and collect activities done in class. It is important to mention that the resources used were original and approved by my coordinator. Once I finished, a meeting was conducted by the school, so I took the advantage to socialize with parents about some main points and results of the project.

As an educator, I also model character traits like perseverance, honesty, respect, and unity. Good treatment, kindness, and respect without showing any favoritism or partiality were shown to participants at all moments.

The application of my innovation was not easy to conduct. There were some requirements that I had to deliver before its performance. Best of all, students behave and respect their partners all the time, parents were proud of them, and some congratulations were received.

To conclude, Ethical considerations required everyone in the classroom to practice respect and well-being as core motivations for learning. "Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals

with the conduct of people and guides the norms or standards of behavior of people and relationships with each other" ( Ifedha S. Akaranga & Kavutha, 2016. p 1).

## Results

To examine the research question, does the application of self-assessment impact oral communication skills in six grade students from a private school in Guayaquil? A paired-sample *t-test* was employed on the rubric scores. In a paired-sample *t-test*, the null hypothesis is that there were no differences between dependent groups. The paired-sample *t-test*, on the other side, identified a statistical difference between pretest and post-test scores. Descriptive statistics were run which results are displayed below in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics based on the rubric.*

|                     | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Deviation |
|---------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|---------------|
| **Pre-Test**        | 21  | 2       | 5       | 2.65 | 0.87          |
| **Post-Test**       | 21  | 2       | 5       | 3.91 | 1.45          |
| **Valid N(listwise)** | **21** |         |         |      |               |

Students felt motivated and full of confidence by using this kind of instrument because they did not feel stressed. They comprehended that making mistakes while speaking is a way to improve pronunciation and use the content with coherence. If they do not make mistakes, they would not know what to improve.

It is significant to report that, at the beginning of the process, students did not know how to self-assess, they received scores from teachers. When they understood the checklist to self-assess, some of them mentioned: "This kind of evaluation lets us become confident and be aware of our mistakes without any type of judgment".

The students first struggled with the self-assessment method: they did not understand the purpose of the exercise, but as they became more familiar with it and had more practice with it, they reported feeling comfortable and understanding the benefits of the process. One student reported the following message: "We were used to being evaluated just by the teacher. However, this new way of self-evaluation lets me realize my mistakes by not worrying about the results because it is part of my learning".

On the other hand, during this process the teacher had to intervene in some self-assessments because not all the students understood the importance or simply, they did not figure out the benefits to support them positively. The pedagogic success of this type of exercise depends on the motivation, attitude, behavior, and maturity of the students, no matter their age they are.

Consequently, there were few cases where the teacher had to support them to get satisfactory results. Students were able to improve their oral communication skills through self-assessment rubrics generating an impact in sixth graders students. Based on my experience, the application of this instrument lets students feel confident and motivated while performing activities related to this case, improving their speaking skills.

During the classroom practices, students showed changes thanks to the benefits of the applied method. Some benefits were:

- Critical reflection of the own learning process which provides a framework for self-improvement and growth. It helps students understand why they learn what they do, and how to improve their ability to learn more efficiently in future classes.

- More responsible for their learning, means that students are more likely to take responsibility for their own education and learn independently.

- Development of judgment abilities is important because it helps students prepare for adulthood. It is also important because it helps them to understand how to think about situations and make decisions based on what they know about them.

- Development of self-confidence within a classroom which is important when teaching students how to work well together as a team because it increases collaboration and communication skills within the classroom setting, which can benefit all involved parties in the classroom setting.

However, there is one that was more evident. Students felt non-stress, but kind of nervous at the moment to be evaluated. They check and identify the points they have to improve or correct by themselves. Students also felt better and were not afraid of making mistakes because they realized it is part of the learning process and will not be highly affected.  Students' self-assessment outcomes were correlated with their pre-test and post-test language rubric scores.

## Discussion

Findings from the study revealed that the application of self-assessment through checklists and rubrics impacts oral communication skills in young learners. The outcomes of students were relatively effective, and their improvements were evidenced through the instruments of evaluation.

As I mentioned in the literature review, this innovation had the purpose to determine how students receive, process, and keep new knowledge during their learning process. However, there were two main variables associated: Speaking skills and self-assessment. Both were rightly seen as fundamental elements in acquiring a foreign language.

Regard to the first variable gives us the ability to have effective communication in the second language and was not usually used or improved during English classes and the second variable refers to the importance of how students can self-assess their advance while developing speaking activities in class. The author Andrew said that self-assessment is an act

where students carry out their work and academic abilities. In the beginning, this kind of evaluation was not known by students. However, during its application, they realized their own mistakes, parts to improve, and things to become better speakers. I also provide the right feedback with the purpose to obtain better outcomes at the end of their presentations or speaking tasks.

Besides, to get better results, I had to motivate them to prove this new evaluation tool. Motivation is considered the key to learning. If a student doesn't have enough motivation, he or she will not learn much at all and tend to give up easily. Weeden et al. (2005) said that a motivated and self-confident learner actively engages in the process of learning and is not afraid to make mistakes or ignore learning activities.

Based on the results, after the application of a self-assessment rubric, I could evidence that it had a positive impact in both parts: In their oral presentations and attitude. Students felt motivated and full of confidence at the end of the innovation. They had a great opportunity to be self-assessed of course, with the guidance of the teacher till they could do it by themselves.

Students first struggle with this method and they did not understand how to use it, but as they become familiar with it, they reported feeling comfortable and showed understanding of the benefits of being self-assess. According to Andrews, a person`s evaluative response to something is determined by behavioral beliefs. It implied more effort as a teacher, but I believe that it benefited my students in an overall way.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, there were advantages and disadvantages that formed part of the innovation project. The most gratifying part of it was to see my students creating something new, being part of something, learning not only contents or grammar but techniques and skills to do projects. I learned new ways to assess my students and how they can be self-evaluated. Teaching my students about assessment was great. As they are young learners, they were able

to understand the importance of this evaluation process.  In future events, I would like to apply the innovation project format to get better results. In addition, I will do some changes because I had students with special needs that require some adaptations, not only in their individual activities but in the format so it will be understood by their parents.

**Limitations**

There were three limitations involved: Time, contents covering and hybrid classes. Because of the emergency curriculum, teachers had to cover important contents in sixth grade and a short time was designated to the project so managing these things was a challenge, but not impossible to fulfill.

One of the most prevalent limitations inside the teaching-learning process is the hybrid scenario which in some cases it was difficult to manage. Developing this innovation in hybrid classes was a challenge because of the creation of varied materials. Quantitative data will be gathered in the future, through surveys as a positive way and only through one scenario. I mean, on site or virtual classes. Also, it is necessary to mention that I had to follow the school plans to cover other contents.

**Recommendations**

During the progressive return, most of the schools implemented hybrid classes where part of the students was at school and others at home connected in a platform. Teachers found it difficult to manage it because of the double effort it required. However, because of the vast number of recursive materials, it was not difficult at all. I recommend using the same activities for both scenarios (virtual and on-site) and including a box with instructions for those students that are taking virtual classes so the teacher can provide oral instructions for the others.

In addition, I suggest teaching students how a self-assessment rubric works and the benefits it has. To conclude, do not forget about students with special needs. Every single activity should have adequate adaptations so they can be motivated or provide personalized explanations in advance.

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**Appendix A**

**Lesson Plan**

Available upon request.

**Appendix B**

**Rubric**

Available upon request.

**Appendix C**

**Checklist**

Available upon request.

**Appendix D**

**Eportfolio**

Available upon request.