Implementing Self-Assessment to Improve Speaking Skill

David Enrique Castro Ortiz

Coordinator: María Rossana Ramírez Ávila

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A common learning problem in second language learning is the fact that it takes longer to better speaking skills. Seeing students reach a progressive communication interaction where both parties, speaker and listener, are able to understand and negotiate meaning within each other is one of the most rewarding scenarios a teacher can contemplate. The problem encountered in the English academy language institution in level A2 is on Speaking. The little speaking interaction in class affects students' ability to develop and hold English communication in class. Consequently, this sparks several inconveniences, especially the ones focused on the spoken interaction. Introducing activities based on every day student context to enhance and sustain a constant speaking practice would eventually increment students' confidence to build speaking skills inside and outside the classroom.

The advantage of human interaction to gain speaking practice is that it is a natural state and helps develop techniques or tools to reach levels of speaking skills. In research from Verenikina (2003), "Vygotsky emphasized the social and cultural nature of development. He claimed that psychological development happens within social interactions, not through the unfolding of innate structures. Development cannot be separated from its social and cultural context." (p, 2).   Connection to others is merely directly associated with learning and educators understand that peer involvement is key. Rubrics, checklists, among other tools, can help develop speaking practice in the classroom because certain activities involve more than two participants. It is the interaction that can activate a long-term memory in the use of new vocabulary.

Creating or adapting activities based on every day context enhances better results. According to Kareva and Echevarria (2013), "it's necessary to activate students' prior knowledge in order to learn what students already know, to identify misinformation, or

discover when it's necessary to fill in gaps" (p. 241). Apart from the unit's design, one important adaptation can be added for a closer communicative approach. For example, setting temporary scenarios in classroom, such as a fashion and clothing conversation or a bus terminal interaction with the bus driver is necessary to train students when they might deal with real-life situations.

Teachers' important role in today's teaching environment is building speaking skills inside and outside the classroom, and this is by making the student the protagonist of the class and his or her learning. According to Krashen (2013), "we acquire language when we understand what people tell us or when we understand what we read" (p. 3). Students today grasp the idea that the teacher's objective is to promotes interaction in class, and they serve as monitors and guides. Hence teachers should be more prepared and ready to start a class. Several methods and tools have been developed not only to improve the skill but also to boost their willingness to improve for themselves.

Witnessing students progressively better their speaking skills is indeed rewarding and fruitful. Advantages and drawbacks are inevitably necessary to understand a particular scenario in a class or a virtual one. Developing proper and unique techniques and methods to better students' speaking skills is important.

Literature Review

This research will delineate theoretical descriptions of both variables; speaking skill, the dependent variable, and self-assessment rubric, the independent variable. Assessing is a component of second language learning. Therefore, for teachers to approach speaking assessment in a well-founded way and in which rubric creation or adaptation is key, awareness of such processes is a must. In this sense, putting together and figuring out this mission to understand this spectrum and later to be able to transfer it into my professional career is quite fascinating and challenging at the same time.

According to Jamrus and Razali (2019), "Self-assessment can also be effective in English language learning, such as: motivating students to learn and reflect on their own English learning; promoting critical thinking and reflective practices in learning English" (p. 64). Self-Assessment in second language is enabled by creating an innovation and adapting a rubric to get better results and reliable evaluations.

Scrivener (2011) said, "Communication activities are not simple grammar practice activities. Teachers can offer grammar or vocabulary before the activity. The main aim for the students is achieving successful communication rather than accurate use of particular items of language" (p.217). This view on the speaking skill facilitates an understanding of the meaning and a view on the systematic process of it. Also, the author's definition gives an explanation of how meaning is delivered and received at the moment of interacting with others.

Naveed's (2015) study found speaking is described as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking depends on the context or the situation. Context includes the physical environment, the purpose for speaking is more often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving (p. 1).

It is evident that the process of the ability to speaking requires factors that make the interaction possible. There are many scenarios where speaking uses specific context. Settings could constantly vary, like being in a supermarket, pharmacy, airport, mall, and so forth. According to Harmer (2007), "The more students have opportunities to activate the various elements of the language they have stored in their brain, the more automatic their use of these elements becomes" (p. 123).   Harmer's argument on reasons for teaching speaking is that there are three main accounts for getting students to speak in the classroom. The author says that it provides rehearsal chances to practice

real-life interaction in class. Speaking tasks provide feedback to teacher and student because language is used, and his last reason is that students have the opportunities to activate prior knowledge.

Thus, the use of vocabulary on a setting would enhance emphasis in speaking interaction along with communication; it would become easier for the students to understand and recognize key points in their interaction. Furthermore, spontaneity and authenticity come along when proper words and expressions are used. Being competent in using the language in real context involves the four basic skills.

In research from Arends (2014), "Before students can think critically, they must have basic skills associated with logic, such as drawing inferences from data and recognizing bias in presentation" (p. 296). Arends's quote clearly shows that there is a transitional process in which critical thinking is the goal to reach. Learning is an active process and teachers can guide students to manage their skills in such a way that it becomes meaningful. Being aware of the connection between the four skills brings up the advantages of self-assessment.

Teaching Speaking

Richards (2006) concluded the mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (p. 19).

Certainly, one of the goals in teaching speaking is to reach a level of manageable interaction. One advantage in reaching this goal is the awareness of learners on how much they have grasped and what they still need to learn and practice. This encourages students to interact more authentically and perhaps more fluently. Furthermore, the way

learners advance in their skills is through their own assessment. Jamrus and Razali (2019) pointed out providing students with models of self-assessment would make the identification and familiarizing process even smoother when it comes to actually doing their own assessment; students not only understand the criteria, but see how it is applied and done in reality, which would help give them a better grasp of the assessment (p. 65).

The creation and adaptation of rubrics is one tool to construct a better view for a more accurate evaluation. Here two research questions for this research are a must: Does implementation of self-assessment influence students' speaking skills on the topic of clothing and accessories among young adult students in level A2?

Innovation

The innovation is on improving Speaking Skills with the use of self-assessment. The purpose of this innovation is for students to be able to ask and answer questions about fashion items and describe their favorite clothes in a one-minute Flipgrid video. In order to reach this goal, students must learn vocabulary related to clothing items, sentence construction to describe clothing items, present tense using irregular verbs, possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns, clear pronunciation and the ability to ask and answer questions. A checklist was introduced prior to their first speaking activities on clothes and fashion. Later, the checklist was used after speaking production and then discussion. According to The CEFR, A2 students can manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 83).

There are ten A2 young adult participants in this innovation ranging the ages from 17 to 20. The institution where this research was implemented is a private language academy. It is accredited by SETEC, being one of the first in this accreditation among the language academies in Ecuador. The institution applies Active Learning

methodology, an implementation of communicative and cooperative methodology through qualified and recursive instructors with high pedagogical demands and international proficiency balanced with an environment of technological resources.

The length of the innovation was four weeks during which there were five synchronous hours via zoom and three asynchronous hours. The procedure for creating the rubric was first to analyze the checklist once created for self-assessment; it had six statements and a Likert scale of yes, sometimes and not yet. Students were instructed to grade themselves in their pre and posttest as they analyzed their speaking production. At first, their grades did not match their production, but as they gained experience their self-assessment got better.

Research Methodology

In recent findings, Overby (2021) "action research describes a research methodology used to diagnose and address problems. In a school setting, the teacher plays the role of the researcher, and the students represent the study participants" (para. 3). Prior to data analysis, my exploration ran into the need for tools such as checklist, used by students and a rubric, used by the teacher to gather information.

Research Question

Does the implementation of self-assessment influence speaking skills on the topic of clothing and accessories among level A2?

Hypothesis

It is expected that self-assessment will improve speaking skills on the topic of clothing and accessories among level A2

Participants

There were ten A2 young adult participants in this innovation ranging from 17 to 20. They were all Ecuadorians, their socioeconomic factors such as income and

occupation, were that four out of ten students were currently working and the rest were studying the language in the academy since they were still finishing high school. They were six women and four men. Since the English academy has already grouped students in levels, the selection of the participants was convenient.

Instruments

Students were instructed to video record their interaction using the zoom application. The topic of the interaction was fashion and clothes. In this same sense, specific vocabulary and grammar construction was needed to fulfill the goals in their checklist. It is important to mention that once the pair of students were selected, they would remain paired till the end of the innovation. Once they recorded themselves in the pre-test practice, they would review their video and improve in areas they consider necessary. In this same line of practice, they would be ready for the post-test, and this would be uploaded in another application called Flipgrid as their final interaction.

The procedure for creating the speaking skill rubric was first to analyze the checklist created for self-assessment that had six statements and a Likert scale of yes, sometimes and not yet. For the rubric creation and adaptation, four categories were created, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and interaction, to better grade students with a mark reference that would reflect their level more accurately. The scale is from 1, the lowest, to 5, the maximum grade, with detailed descriptors in every category. Scale 2 reads: Some features of 1 and some features of 3 in approximately equal measure; scale 4 reads: Some features of 3 and some features of 5 in approximately equal measure.

Data Analysis

The analysis was done in Microsoft Excel using Analytics tools pack. The validity of the pretest and posttest rubrics has been supported by additional investigations. The

results will be presented as a graph and will specifically answer the research questions.

Descriptive statistics like mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation, and effect

size will be computed after the recommendation has been implemented.

Ethical Considerations

One important thing about ethical issues in action research matters is that it

matters for the simple fact that it is for scientific integrity and the collaboration between

science and society. Planning and conducting research studies is quite challenging.

Further, it was very important to maintain a sense of awareness whilst conducting this

action research. In this same sense, authorization was done verbally since participants

were involved in this study. Participants' confidentiality has been guaranteed since day

one, the same way with academic honesty on their part as well. According to Ravid

(2000), "when you research your own practice, you should ensure the rights, welfare,

and well-being of the study's participants" (p. 227). To framework is to read in detail

and as much as possible the targeted topic. There is a great deal of electronic

information but one has to consult just to get a reliable source. A researcher should be

cognizant of ethical considerations.

Quite some new terminology has been learned in this regard; It is strongly

believed that knowledge and understanding on these terms are essential so as not to fall

into a nescience of this ethics. It is significant that students' personal information

remains accessible to researchers in charge. By the same token, it is advisable that

administrators be ethically aware. In recent research, "putting such decisions in the

hands of administrators who were not grounded in action research might do more harm

than good" (Zeni, 1998).

Results

Providing students with the opportunity to understand self-assessment and their rubrics has revealed effectiveness in the speaking skill in second language learning. To be on the same page, the findings in this work rely on improvement in the speaking productivity since students have been taught how to use a checklist. Student pretest scores on the interaction rubric resulted in a mean of 3. This score corresponded to an average rubric categorization of "Maintain simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Requires prompting and support." While the total range of the interaction rubric was 0 to 5, students' range on the pretest was between 2 and 4. A distribution of scores can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Pretest interaction scores.
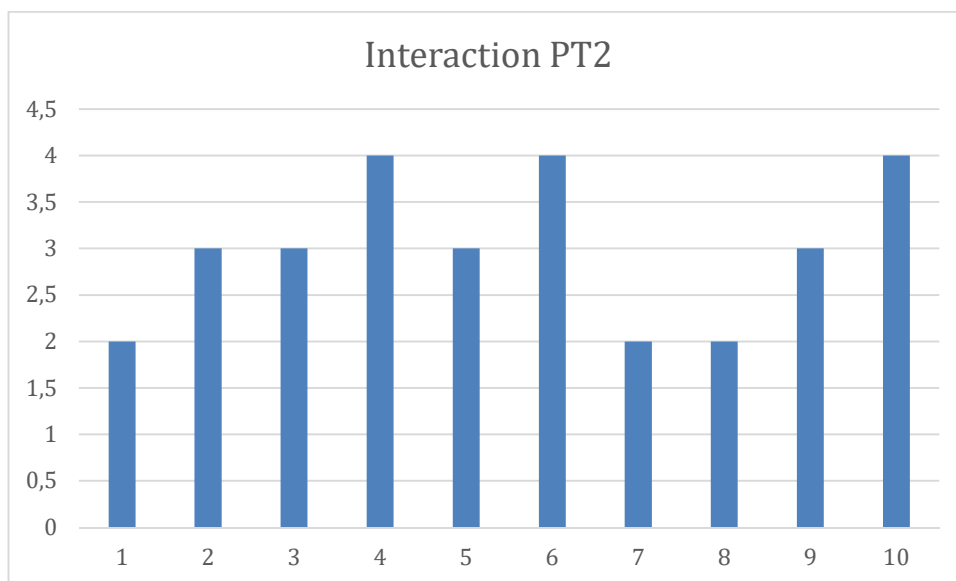
Student posttest scores on the interaction rubric resulted in a mean of 4.1. This score corresponded to an average rubric categorization of "Some features of 3 and some features of 5 in approximately equal measure." While the total range of the interaction rubric was 0 to 5, students' range on the pretest was between 3 and 5. A distribution of scores can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

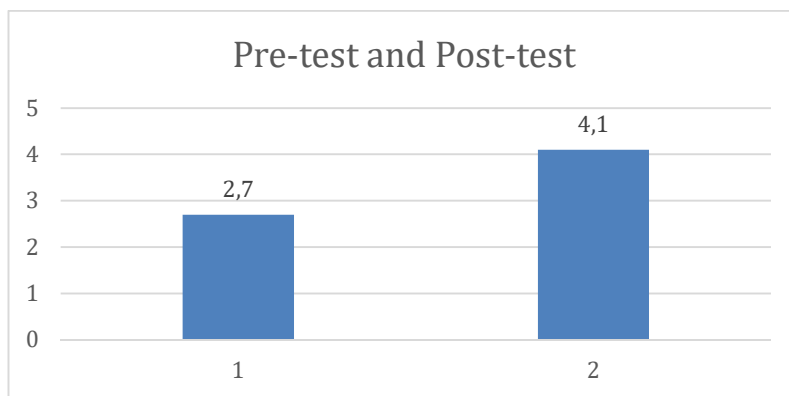*Pretest interaction scores.*

Interaction POST TEST
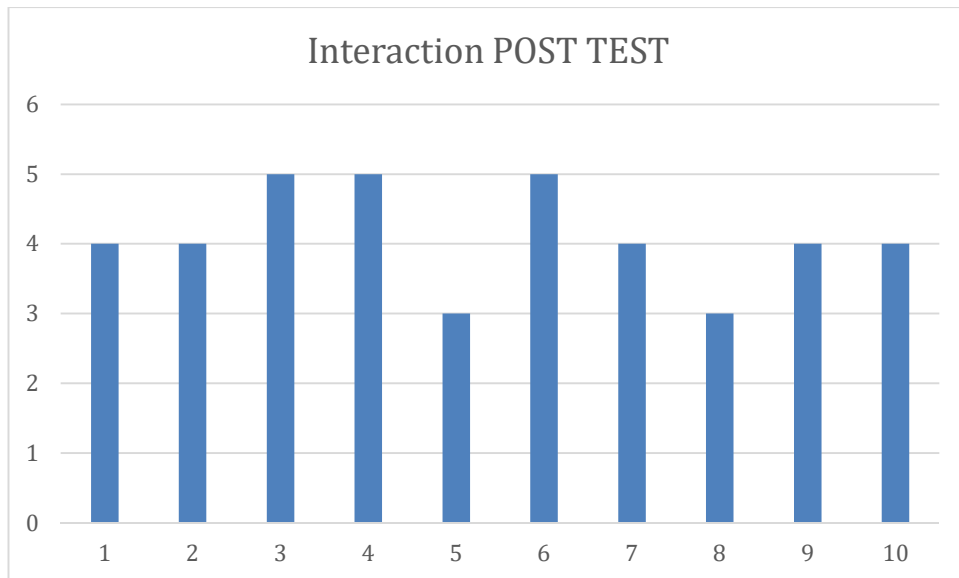
A paired-sample test was used to explore the research question, "Does
implementation of self-assessment improve students' speaking skills on the topic of
clothing and accessories among young adult students, level A2?" In a paired-sample *t*-
test, the null hypothesis is that there is no difference between dependent groups.

The paired-sample t-test identified a statistically significant difference between
pretest and posttest scores (t = -4.7, *p* < 0.001). The test indicated support for the
alternative hypothesis.

Figure 3.

Comparison of mean pretest and posttest interaction grades.

Pre-test and Post-test

As shown in the graph, the results between the pre-tests and post-test depict an improvement in their skills. This is the Comparison of mean pretest and posttest interaction grades. The pre-tests show a grade of 2.7 shows the post-test a result of 4.1.

Discussion

The answer to the research question formulated at the beginning of this investigation was positive; the implementation of self-assessment influences students' speaking skills on the topic of clothing and accessories among students in level A2. According to Krashen (2013), We learn a language when we understand what people say to us or what we read. This means that the interaction and self-evaluation of peers would help increase understanding of a foreign language. The paired-sample t-test provided evidence that self-assessment significantly improved interaction grades. This aligns with the theories of self-assessment because Self-Assessment in second language learning is enabled by creating an innovation and adapting a rubric to get better results and healthy evaluations.

Self-assessment and rubric scores for the pretest and posttest were not correlated. As students studied and practiced their interactions, their self-assessment would deviate from the pretest and posttest. It is also possible that because students were not familiar with the concept of self-assessment. This probably made their assessment not accurate at the beginning. According to Jamrus and Razali (2019), Self-assessment can be a helpful way to motivate students to learn and reflect on their English language learning. It can also help promote critical thinking and reflective practices process.

Conclusions

By and large, assessing is a skill beneficial for the trainer and trainees. To get to manage it, the purpose has to be clear to the students, and the goal to be reached as well. The number of participants and their level are very important so that it can be

manageable to cherry-pick strategies and approaches. Every group of students is unique in many aspects. For instance, the length of the innovation is practically goal-dependent, such as the amount of synchronous and asynchronous hours to be put into the process.

The creation and adaptation of rubrics is one tool to construct a better view to a more accurate evaluation. Providing my students with the opportunity to understand self-assessment and their rubrics has revealed effectiveness in the speaking skill in second language learning.

Limitation and Future Directions

Perhaps one important limitation was first to introduce and get familiar with the procedure of this innovation. It takes some trial-and-error scenario till the process is understood enough. Another important limitation was the little experience working in this process; this also took important time in class to deliver friendly instructions. However, with more practice and more experience I am sure scientific research would go more smoothly.

In the future, it would be helpful to begin self-assessment instructions early in time since details would be covered. Also, the interaction rubric could always have a little more adjustment since every group of students is unique for research. It would also help the researcher understand how students study between pretest, self-assessment, and posttest time points.

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    research*, 6(1), 9-19

Appendix 1

Lesson plan.

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Rubric

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Checklist

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

E-portfolio

Available upon request.