



**The Impact of Self-Assessment on Speaking Skills Among A2 Movers Students**

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## **The Impact of Self-Assessment on Speaking Skills Among A2 Movers Students**

One of the biggest challenges in public institutions is evaluating students' speaking skills in class (Al Hosni, 2014). To avoid the evaluation of this productive skill, teachers tend to forget to use it or relegate it to the end of the lesson if they have time. Generally, the instructor is focused on teaching grammar and vocabulary to complete the exercises provided in the notebook.

Al-Zedjali (2009) mentioned that L2 learners often do not have opportunities to speak English outside the classroom since English is not their first language, and for many of them, the course book is the only place where they are familiarized with English. Moreover, the notebook does not include sufficient tasks specifically designed for speaking. At this point, the teacher has to be in charge of finding activities that promote the use of speaking skills.

Zhang (2009) and Santos et al. (2020) affirmed that L2 students face several difficulties in improving their speaking skills based on three aspects: 1. Inhibition, where students are worried about making mistakes; 2. having a purpose, there are some moments that students do not feel motivated to express their ideas because they do not find a real purpose to use the second language; and 3. mother tongue, students prefer to use their mother language to talk and share ideas since it is easier to have a conversation with others.

Observations made for this study found that students have knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but they do not practice discourse organization or oral production activities since they do not find a practical need to use L2 in class. Also, the

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teacher does not create spaces for interactions to allow students to use the language for specific purposes because, later, the teacher will not have enough time to give reflexive feedback to all of them. Moreover, a large number of students in each class that goes from 35 to 45 students, as well as the limited period of time that students receive English, creates a big barrier to creating authentic spaces where students can use L2 to communicate or express needs and reduces the possibility to provide individual feedback on speaking skills.

To contribute to the learners' autonomy and enhance their self-awareness of using a foreign language to communicate, the teacher will use self-assessment to see if there is any impact on speaking skills in seventh-grade students at the A2 level. In this research, two questions are taken into consideration; 1. Does the implementation of self-assessment impact speaking skills among seventh-grade students in a public school in an urban area of Quito? and 2. What are students' points of view toward using self-assessment to improve their speaking skills?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Self-assessment**

Self-assessment is defined by Boud and Falchikov (1989), as the process by which students make judgments about their learning, particularly their learning outcomes. According to Harris and Brown (2013), self-assessment is a method used in teaching to make the students' role more active, and at the same time, it helps students to improve their learning in a conscious way. This type of assessment is generally used for formative assessment objectives to encourage the students' consideration of their learning process and results.

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### **Training students to self-assess**

According to Goodrich (1996), teachers have to guide students to follow these conditions in order to be successful in self-assessment:

1. Awareness of the value of self-assessment: The teacher will explain to the students that self-assessment is about learning from mistakes and improving.
2. Access to clear criteria on which to base the assessment: the teacher introduces the rubric. This rubric will have valuable information about the task they are going to perform and the expectations for quality work and learning targets.
3. A specific task or performance to assess: The teacher explains the activity that is going to be performed.
4. Models of self-assessment: The teacher will provide examples so that students will understand how to do self-assessment.
5. Practice: The students will perform the activity that was planned in advance, then they will start self-assessing. The teacher will give assistance and guidance during the self-assessment. At the end, the teacher will give individual feedback on the quality of their self-assessments.
6. Give students opportunities to revise and improve the task or performance: students will gradually increase their level of responsibility for their own learning and progress. Students will reflect on their errors and improve the task.

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### **Benefits of self-assessment**

Some studies demonstrated the advantages of using this method. Masruria (2021) indicated that self-assessment assists students in increasing their speaking self-efficacy (confidence and belief in their ability), communication skills, and engagement, as well as allowing them to know their strengths and weaknesses. Awwalien (2019), on the other hand, found that self-assessment done by students can have beneficial effects on them as they understand the assessment criteria and do not underestimate their own abilities. For that reason, it is necessary to create an environment where students do not feel judged by the results.

Nikolovska (2015) highlighted that learners have some benefits from many aspects when they use self-assessment to improve speaking skills, including developing reflective skills, critical thinking, and raising learners' motivation for learning. He also mentioned that besides advantages, self-assessment might involve some problems, such as finding the time to check learners' self-assessment checklists and their perception of self-assessment.

Harris (1997) stated that self-assessment is one of the significant new alternative assessment forms which raises learners' awareness of their individual progress and encourages learners to be conscious of their learning. Furthermore, Pierce (1999) defined self-assessment as a beneficial strategy that allows students to be conscious of their progress in foreign language development, and this would promote their motivation to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and raise their autonomy learning skills.

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Studies made by Ariafar and Fatemipour (2013) mentioned that students who received self-assessment practices during the semester had better speaking ability compared to those who did not. Moreover, the students expressed a positive perception of self-assessment as they considered it to be useful. Students were motivated to continue doing self-assessments in the future. Asdar (2017) agreed and reported in his study that there was an increase of 40% in students' speaking ability after they practiced doing self-assessments.

In Imani's study (2021), she took some sessions to teach students nine speaking techniques such as show and tell, reporting, picture describing, question and answer, information gap, interviews, storytelling/story completion, and discussion. Later, she used self-assessment techniques to make students evaluate themselves by using a checklist. The results were compared with the teacher's evaluation, and at the end of the treatment period, students had improved their speaking skills and learned how to do a self-assessment.

### **Disadvantages of self-assessment**

According to Heilenman (1990), there is one factor that may affect the process of self-assessment, and that is the level of proficiency of students. There are some cases in which less proficient students tend to overestimate their language abilities, whereas more proficient students tend to underestimate their abilities (Santos & Ramírez-Ávila, 2022). The incorrect students' perception of their limitations and strengths could affect the results of the progress of various skills since they may think that they do not need to improve even if they have to. On the other hand, they could probably force themselves to do more than they are capable of.

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### **Speaking**

Speaking is a productive skill that helps to communicate ideas, reflections, and opinions with others. It is common to think that people know the language when they can produce meaningful sentences, but the language itself goes beyond that. The speaking skills cover other aspects such as 1. Mechanics, which includes the correct use of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary; and 2. Function, which is based on transaction/interaction. The interlocutor realizes if the message was understood by the receptor, and if it was not, he clarifies the idea to build a solid relationship; 3. Pragmatic social and cultural rules and norms. It teaches people how to consider who is speaking to whom, under what circumstances, about what, and for what reason. It is not the same language used when you talk to the principal of the high school as with a friend.

(Kürüm, 2016).

### **Aspects of teaching speaking**

Pakula (2019) summarized some recommendations to consider at the moment of teaching speaking: teachers should take into consideration fluency, formulaic sequences, spoken language, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence.

Fluency can be taught by using carefully designed fluency-oriented activities (consciousness-raising and rehearsal/repetition activities)

- Formulaic sequences are part of fluent speech, such as: collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, and figures of speech, and they can be taught to improve the speaking skill more naturally.
- Spoken language, for the production of spoken language, students will need to have knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

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- Teaching speaking includes teaching and practicing sociolinguistic competence. It is referred to the appropriate use of language in social situations, for example: (formality and politeness conventions)
- Teaching speaking includes teaching and practicing pragmatic competence. It refers to the way language is used to communicate and express in a variety of different contexts. For example, conversation, turn-taking, and speech acts.

### **Role of students in learning speaking**

There are some categories that can be used as the role of learners in developing speaking skills in the classroom (Brown, 1994)

- Intensive – At this point, students get ready to learn and practice some phonological or grammatical aspects of language.
- Responsive - It consists of short questions and answers replied by teacher and students.
- Transactional (dialogue) – Its main purpose is to convey or exchange particular information.
- Interpersonal (dialogue) - Its objective is to maintain social relationships. Students include in their dialogue some factors such as a casual register, colloquial language, emotionally charged language, slang, jokes, and sarcasm.
- Extensive (monolog) - Here, the register is more formal and deliberative. It can be planned or improvised.



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### **Innovation**

The innovation consisted of using self-assessment through descriptions of pictures to improve speaking skills. It was part of a regular learning unit in which all four language skills were used. The classes were taught in a face-to-face mode.

It lasted eight teaching hours (4 weeks): During the four weeks, the participants were provided with useful vocabulary and grammar as well as several opportunities to practice how to do descriptions. An innovative instructional design was planned to be used for the unit (Appendix A). All of the activities presented in the backward design were classified into acquisition, meaning-making, or transfer, and they were developed to acquire all the necessary content to fulfill the objective. As a part of the reinforcement, the teacher used resources such as videos, pictures, and worksheets. Additionally, the teacher applied the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) to create the students' sense of engagement, curiosity, and collaboration.

The unit had four lessons, and the teacher used a summative evaluation as a final task. Every lesson included content that helped students to improve their verbal fluency to describe, for example, everyday actions, prepositions of place, adjectives to describe places and people, and possessives. Additionally, the students studied and practiced the grammar points required for the final task: Simple Present, there is/there are and Present Continuous.

### **Research Methodology**

The study used action research since the teacher considered a common problem identified in the class and tried to find a sustainable solution that could be used by other teachers (Zuber, 2021). According to Ferrance (2000), action research is a set of steps in

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which the participants examine their teaching practice in detail using research techniques. In addition, the research design was mixed since it analyzed quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, Altricher et al. (2005) stated that action research is intended to support teachers, and groups of teachers, in coping with the challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way.

### **Participants**

The present study was carried out with 30 students, 18 of whom were girls and 12 boys. All of them are in seventh grade at Basic General Education. Their ages ranged between 11 and 12 years old, and they had very similar backgrounds. These students belonged to a public institution in the South of Quito. There were no special needs students in the sample selection. There were 2 Venezuelan children and 28 Ecuadorian participants. Most of them have not had additional EFL instruction at English academies.

A diagnostic test at the start of the academic year revealed the participant's English proficiency level. According to the Common European Framework, 90% of students had an A2 English level, and 10% had an A1 English level. This means that they were able to describe in simple terms some pictures of pictures and places that they had not seen before of people and places.

### **Instruments**

#### **Pre and post-test**

Data were collected using various instruments such as pre and posttests. To answer the first research question, does the implementation of self-assessment impact

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speaking skills among seventh-grade students in a public school in an urban area of Quito? There was a comparison between the pre and post-test. In the pre-test, students had to record a one-minute video describing a picture provided by the teacher, and for the post-test, they had to choose a picture from the Metropolitan Gallery and make a one-minute video describing the chosen picture.

As Brown and Hudson (1998) mentioned, to examine students' self-assessment accuracy, the results will need to be compared with the revision of a capable agent, in this case, the teacher. Therefore, the pre- and post-tests were re-graded by the teacher using a rubric (See appendix B). As a result, the pre and posttest grades were used as data to examine the development of speaking abilities through self-evaluation.

The teacher used a speaking rubric adapted from the Cambridge A2 level assessment scales (Appendix B). The speaking rubric considers three descriptors: vocabulary and grammar, pronunciation, and content. Each descriptor was scored over 10 points, and then the results were averaged. It was expected to have grades that were above six at the beginning and then see an improvement of at least one point above their first speaking task with the implementation of self-assessment.

Quantitative data from the pre and posttest were graded with a rubric using the content of a checklist (Appendix C). Due to the age of the students as well as the level, the participants were given a checklist to assess themselves, and the results were contrasted with the teacher's grades by using a rubric. This checklist contained the principal abilities that students should be able to do at the end of each activity.

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### **Interview**

To answer the second question, what are students' points of view toward using self-assessment to improve their speaking skills? Students were interviewed with three questions based on students' perceptions about the application of the innovation and what improvements they were able to notice in their speaking skills when using self-assessment. The interview was done in Spanish due to the level of students (Appendix D).

### **Data Analysis**

To evaluate the impact of self-assessment on speaking skills among A2, a paired-sample *t*-test was conducted. The objective of the paired-sample *t*-test was to compare pre-tests and post-tests scores. Analytics Tools Pack from Microsoft Excel was used to calculate the maximum, minimum, mean, standard deviation, and *p*-value.

To analyze the responses to the research question: What are students' points of view toward using self-assessment to improve their speaking skills? The researcher conducted an individual, face-to-face interview. According to Weiss (1995), the interview has to be planned to understand the points of view of a particular group. For that reason, a sample of ten interviewees was taken into consideration to participate. The group was homogenous, with five boys and five girls. It was a purposeful sampling with five students who obtained the best scores and five who got the worst scores in the final results of the innovation.

In relation to DiCiccoBloom and Crabtree (2006), there is a technical parameter that researchers have to decide in advance referring to the methods for recording

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interviews for documentation and later analysis; that includes videotape recording and note-taking, transcribing tape-recorded interviews into text, and using computer-assisted software. The method used in this research was to videotape and take notes. In reference to this process, Burnard et al. (2008) proposed compiling the information with the most common responses so that the researcher could categorize the answers into positive and challenging outlooks.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All participants were informed about the innovation, and 30 parents gave their children permission to take part in the development of the innovation. The respective authorization of the school's principal (Appendix E) and consent from the students' parents (Appendix F) were needed to implement the innovation. Participants must be appropriately informed about the research, according to Arifin (2018). This means that they will need to understand the information and have the freedom of choice whether to participate or decline. All these permissions were asked through a written request in order to keep evidence and give the parents and students a clear idea about the research.

Additionally, participation was voluntary, and student identities were kept private and anonymous. It was necessary to supply participants' names with numbers to ensure the objectivity of the results.

### **Results**

To answer the first research question: "Does the implementation of self-assessment impact speaking skills among seventh-grade students in a public school in an urban area of Quito?" The descriptive statistics were calculated using the findings of the pre and post-tests (maximum, minimum, mean, standard deviations, and *p*-value).

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**Table 1**

Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Pre-test and Post-test

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Pretest</b>	30	3.0	8.00	4.47	1.548	0.00
<b>Post-test</b>	30	5.0	10.00	7.70	1.208	

Note: N= Sample. Min= Minimum. Max= Maximum. M= Mean. SD= Standard Deviation.

Table 1 shows the general results collected from the pre and post-tests after applying the innovation project. The implementation of the innovation had a positive impact on students, according to the numerical outcomes. In the pre-test, the minimum grade was three, and in the post-test, it was five points. The maximum grade was eight points on the pretest and ten points on the post-test, which shows a significant improvement.

The *p*-value is less than 0.05, which means the students improved their grades by comparing the pretest and the posttest. The standard deviation in the posttest is closer to the mean value than in the pretest. The null hypothesis is rejected since it has been proven that the difference between the two means of each test is statistically significant. Consequently, the quantitative results showed that students could improve in speaking skills by using self-assessment and innovation.

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For qualitative data based on the research question: What are students' points of view toward using self-assessment to improve their speaking skills? Three open-ended questions were used to interview the participants. These questions were focused on knowing students' feelings and perceptions before and after the pretest, and the improvements they realized after the posttest. The most representative answers were written after each question.

Question 1. Did you notice any difference between the first and the last activity?

The students agreed that there was a significant improvement between the first and the last activity; they realized that their pronunciation was better and that they were more prepared to do complete and organized descriptions. For example, in some extracts of the students' interview, they mentioned the following:

- “The first activity was a disaster. I had bad pronunciation. In the last activity, I felt happy because my pronunciation was better”.
- “In the first activity, I could say three sentences of a picture, but in the last activity, I was able to do a one-minute description without any problem”.
- “In the first activity, I just mentioned simple phrases or words to do the description, and in the last activity, I was capable of formulating phrases and sentences with coherency, and my description improved a lot.”

Question 2. Describe how you felt about the self-assessment that you had after each task?

In the first activity, the common feeling about self-assessment was fear and nervousness. Students needed to practice and do more exercises to feel comfortable using self-assessment. They mentioned some ideas about this feeling.

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- “In the first activity, I was afraid of making mistakes. Then I felt more comfortable because we practiced with different exercises, and I learned more vocabulary that allowed me to express myself in a better way.”
- “It was not easy at the beginning; I felt nervous, but after some practice, I think I improved my final activity”.
- “It is not common to do these exercises. For me, it was a little bit difficult because I didn’t feel prepared. I felt that I was not doing a good job. Later, I started to feel confident about my answers.”

Question 3. Did self-assessment help you to take some actions for improving your speaking in the next task? Was it useful?

The teacher's explanation about the importance of self-assessing consciously was very necessary for students to give real results. They took the activity seriously and learned from their mistakes, so in the last activity they used the checklist to reflect on their own work and have better results in the activity. The errors that students made in the previous activities allow them to see the mistakes as opportunities to learn. There were some insights provided by the students based on the question.

- “The first activity was a little bit difficult because I didn't know how to start with the description of the picture. I didn't know how to self-assess”. Then, in the last activity, I felt comfortable using the checklist”.
- “In the first activity, I realized that I made several mistakes; nevertheless, I graded myself with positive results because I didn't want to decrease my general average. Then, the teacher explained to us that errors are part of the learning process, and I took my final exercise with more responsibility. That aspect helped me to see my errors and improve them”.



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- “I liked using self-assessment in class because I learned to understand my mistakes and solve them. The teacher allowed us to give our points of view about our weaknesses, and that facilitated my improvement in the last activity. I think that self-assessment was very useful for understanding our errors”.

### **Discussion**

Regarding the first research question, does the implementation of self-assessment impact speaking skills among seventh-grade students in a public school in an urban area of Quito? This study determined that the application of self-assessment had a positive impact on improving speaking skills. This is consistent with findings from related investigations. One of them stated that the learners have some benefits from many aspects when they use self-assessment to improve speaking skills, including developing reflective skills, critical thinking, and raising learners' motivation for learning (Nikolovska, 2015). Another researcher that encountered positive results when applying self-assessment was Harris (1997), who stated that self-assessment is one of the significant new alternative assessment forms which raises learners' awareness of their individual progress and encourages learners to become autonomous learners.

For the second research question, what are students' points of view toward using self-assessment to improve their speaking skills? The results of this study showed that when self-assessment procedures were used, students spoke more confidently since they were aware of their mistakes and could correct them in order to improve in the subsequent tasks. In the same position, Ariaifar and Fatemipour (2013) mentioned that students who received self-assessment practices during the semester had better speaking ability compared to those who did not. Moreover, the students expressed a positive

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perception of self-assessment as they considered it to be useful. Students were motivated to continue doing self-assessments in the future.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of self-assessment on speaking skills among A2 movers' students. The analysis of the data revealed that the use of self-assessment has a favorable effect on the students' speaking abilities. The innovation's implementation allowed students to complete practical tasks of all kinds. They demonstrated that they were able to use the content in a real context. Moreover, students became more confident in their performance as every day went by. They incorporated the reflection to be conscious of their learning thanks to self-assessment. They understood their errors and tried to enhance their level of preparation to obtain better results.

Students had active participation in the learning process since they reflected on their weaknesses and strengths. At that point, they took responsibility for all the steps planned in the innovation because they tested their effort and progress in each activity. Furthermore, the significant improvement shown in the results of the evaluation made by the teacher with the rubric in the pre and posttest demonstrated that students increased their speaking skills in the final part of the unit.

After having seen the students' pretest and posttest during the implementation of the self-assessment technique, students increased their self-confidence when speaking. Self-assessment helped students take necessary actions and corrective measures to be more prepared for doing speaking exercises. In other words, students enhanced capacity building to promote the learners' autonomy.

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According to students' perspectives, self-assessment helped them to improve their speaking skills because they were able to identify those areas of speaking that needed to be improved and little by little, they could reinforce their speech to give better descriptions about places and people.

### **Limitations**

The only place that students used to practice the language was in class. Some of the students did not find a moment at home to reinforce the learned vocabulary, grammar, or content. In several cases, this aspect slowed down the process of learning because they were not able to remember important information that was needed to perform the task.

The school did not have an academic platform to store all the recordings or tasks that were done by students. Also, there were some children that did not have internet connection in their houses, so they had to go to a cybercafe and pay to send the tasks. The use of technology, in this case, was difficult. The only app that was useful in that situation was WhatsApp, and there were moments when the teacher had to spend extra time organizing the students' tasks in one folder and then evaluating them. Additionally, the teacher had to wait until all the children sent the activity because they mentioned that their parents did not have money to pay for the internet.

Students were not used to doing speaking exercises during English classes; they were just focused on solving grammar exercises, so, at the beginning of the innovation, they were afraid of talking and making oral mistakes.

At the beginning of the innovation, students did not know how to self-assess since they had never practiced the strategy. They were confused and wanted to have

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good grades. Perhaps they were not worried about what they needed to improve, but they were interested in having the best scores.

### **Recommendations**

The teacher should encourage students to study, practice, and reinforce the learned content using ludic strategies and methods that make the students feel the sense of learning. Students have to understand and find a purpose for learning so that language will become meaningful for them.

The teacher should be flexible and comprehensible with students because there are some economic and personal situations that do not allow the student to accomplish the task at a specific time. The teacher could probably set up agreements with those students who do not have permanent internet connections and give them a second chance to fulfill the task.

The teacher should create more opportunities in class to practice speaking using simulations, group work, or pair work in order to decrease the level of anxiety that students demonstrate at the beginning of the innovation.

The teacher should explain to the students the importance of self-assessment and the benefits that this strategy has for improving speaking skills. Students need to feel confident in themselves and understand that even if they had bad results at the beginning of the innovation, they will have more opportunities to overcome their weaknesses and not only improve their grades but also their knowledge.

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For future studies, it is recommended that teachers should do an analysis with different levels of education to see which groups work better with the implementation of this innovation. Also, to check if there is a difference in the age of the students, such as young learners and adults. Furthermore, it is recommended to use this technique with another skill in order to see its advantage for the learner.

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# SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SPEAKING

## **Appendix A**

### **Backward design of the innovation**

Available upon request.

## Appendix B Rubric

Available upon request.



Appendix C  
Checklist used by students to Self-assess

Available upon request.

Appendix D  
Students' interview.

Available upon request.

Appendix E  
Principal's Authorization.

Available upon request.

APPENDIX F  
Parents' consent

Available upon request.

APPENDIX G  
E-portfolio

Available upon request.