



The Influence of Self-Assessment to Improve Adult Speaking

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The Influence of Self-Assessment to Improve Adult Speaking

Speaking is an aspect of communication and a key goal for many adult students taking English language lessons. As research suggests, speaking and listening are the most frequently used language skills in the classroom and are essential for functioning in English-speaking contexts (Brown, 1994; Rivers, 1981). However, developing these skills is a challenging task that requires focused instruction and attention.

One major issue that adult students face is their lack of confidence and proficiency in speaking, particularly in terms of intonation, pronunciation, linking, and reduction (Van Duzer, 1997). This can result in difficulties communicating effectively with native speakers and participating in conversations. While teachers play a significant role in helping learners develop their speaking skills, it is important for them to take ownership of their own learning and become more autonomous.

As a teacher of English as a foreign language, I have noticed several problems in my adult students' speaking abilities. Pronunciation is often a challenge for them due to differences in their native language sound system and English, resulting in difficulty being understood by native speakers. In addition, fluency can be a struggle as adult learners pause frequently to search for the right words or grammar structures. Vocabulary is also a common issue, as students may lack the necessary words to express themselves accurately. Furthermore, grammar structures can be difficult for adult learners, leading to errors that can affect communication. Anxiety and a lack of confidence can further inhibit their ability to express themselves. Additionally, cultural differences may affect their understanding of English idiomatic expressions and references. Finally, a lack of opportunities for practice outside the classroom can hinder progress in improving their speaking skills. Self-assessment can be a powerful tool in

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enhancing the speaking skills of adult students, as it enables them to self-reflect on their performance, thereby becoming cognizant of both their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they can take proactive measures to address any areas requiring improvement.

This research project aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of self-assessment in improving adult students' speaking and to encourage them to take a more active role in their own language development.

Literature Review

To understand this research, it is essential to review the main important terms used here. This section will introduce Self-assessment. To start with, it is considered that self-assessment is an approach which is used to support the students' learning process, especially when used formatively (Taras, 2010). The role of a teacher is to evaluate students, either qualitatively or quantitatively. However, as education and both learning and teaching techniques evolve, it has been observed that involving students in the process of understanding and appreciating their achievements and outcomes can develop important skills in them in order to become their own assessors of learning. These competences can be used in future professional development and lifelong learning. According to Boud (1995), self-assessment is a process through which students can improve their learning skills, rather than simply assigning themselves grades. However, it's important to note that self-assessment is not meant to replace the role of teachers. (p. 17)

Students should first become familiar with the concept and understand the difference between formative self-assessment (providing feedback for oneself) and summative self-evaluation in order for it to be effective (Andrade & Du, 2007; Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). To be effective in supporting student learning, self-assessment necessitates proper implementation and management. This entails establishing clear

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learning objectives, providing regular feedback and support, utilizing appropriate assessment tools, establishing clear expectations, implementing consistent grading policies, and creating opportunities for reflection and adjustment. In the absence of these factors, self-assessment may fail to achieve its intended outcomes, thus rendering it ineffective. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that self-assessment is implemented and managed effectively to allow students to reflect on their learning, identify areas of improvement, set goals, and track their progress towards achieving those objectives.

After establishing the main concepts, it is important to examine studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of self-assessment. One notable study was conducted by Black and Wiliam (1998), which found that self-assessment can lead to improved learning outcomes.

Another study carried out by Schmulian Et al. (1982), found that self-assessment can be a valid tool for evaluating performance in medical education. For instance, Thawabieh (2017) conducted a study at a university in Jordan to compare how teachers and students assess student learning. The study found that students were capable of accurately assessing their own learning if they were given assessment criteria, trained in how to use them, and provided with feedback on their self-assessments. Additionally, the study revealed that involving students in the assessment process increased their self-confidence, academic achievement, and satisfaction with their test scores. This participation made students feel like they were active partners in the teaching and learning process.

In a recent study conducted by Yan, Zi, and their colleagues in 2022, the impact of self-assessment (SA) and peer-assessment (PA) on academic performance was examined. The research involved analyzing data from 175 studies with 19,383 participants, consisting of 626 effect sizes. The results indicated that SA, PA, and a

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combination of SA and PA interventions had a significant positive impact on academic performance. There was no significant difference between the effects of SA and PA interventions. The use of online technology had a greater impact on PA compared to SA. Participants who were older had greater performance gains from combined SA+PA interventions. Additionally, studies using a repeated measures design generated larger effect sizes than those using experimental/quasi-experimental design. The study findings highlight the advantages of SA and PA interventions on academic performance and suggest implications for future research and practical applications.

Innovation

The aim of my innovation project is to demonstrate the benefits of self-assessment in enhancing speaking skills among adults. I have designed a program that consists of 4 weeks of both synchronous and asynchronous instruction, with a total of 8 hours of training. The teacher, in this case, plays the role of a researcher and uses the Communicative Language Teaching approach to structure the program activities.

In the program, participants first engage in a discussion of a given topic and are then introduced to a pre-self-assessment rubric. The program activities are designed to promote real-life communication and interaction, thus encouraging the use of self-assessment to improve speaking skills. The participants undergo training to use the self-assessment rubric through video recordings of their pre- and post-test performances.

To facilitate communication and connection between the participants, a WhatsApp chat group was established. As part of the synchronous sessions, the participants were asked to reflect on two essential questions: (1) "How can I better express myself when using the second conditional?" and (2) "How can I connect to

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people using vocabulary related to technology?" By using self-reflection, the participants could apply both grammar and vocabulary to their video recordings.

To promote self-assessment, participants were encouraged to create a video in which they could practice this skill. The researcher provided formative feedback to enhance the quality of the participants' work, and the rubric provided grades and guidelines to support their self-assessment efforts. The final performance assessment was based on three formative monologues and a sustained 2-minutes video recording in which the participants analyzed and discussed the impact of technology on their lives.

The researcher was available to provide support through calls or text messages via WhatsApp to ensure the participants' progress. All questions were promptly answered, fostering engagement during asynchronous sessions. The final video recordings, as well as a complete lesson plan, are available in appendices 1 and 2 for reference.

Research Methodology

For this study, a predefined process was repeated to identify and study a problem, collect data, and later organize and interpret it. This approach is widely known as action research. It is used by educational practitioners and professionals to improve their pedagogy and practice through examination and reflection.

According to Koshy (2010), action research aims to produce practical knowledge for people in their daily lives and to work towards practical outcomes. It also involves creating new forms of understanding and requires collaboration between the researcher and stakeholders for the questioning and decision-making processes, as well as the ultimate focus of the research.

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This study also follows a single-subject case-study approach to find evidence of the influence of self-assessment on speaking in adults through observations

Participants

Ten students were invited to participate in this action research case study, but only five were able to complete all the required activities. The five participants had different backgrounds as English learners, some having studied it for only a few years, while others for over 20 years. They were all private students who hired the researcher's services as a private tutor to improve their English. The students were placed between levels A2 and B2 of the Common European Frame Reference after undergoing an oral evaluation. They were all adult learners, ranging in age from 21 to 56, and all female, with five of them holding managerial positions at multinational companies, and one being a university student.

The five female students were part of the researcher's private online English teaching practice, and the current case study aimed to investigate the impact of self-assessment on adult speaking. The five participants attended four synchronous and four asynchronous sessions during the course of the action research. At the start of lesson 2 and 3, they were asked to give short presentations of 30 to 60 seconds about a product and describe it in terms of technology, and a recording was made as evidence of their improvement.

Finally, in session four, the participants were required to give a 2-minute presentation as part of their post-test and summative assessment, following the Council of Europe (2018) standardized English tests criteria of a 2-minute 'long turn' speaking task, which evaluates the individual's ability to maintain a specific task or behavior for a prolonged period of time, in this case, 2 minutes, in terms of accuracy, efficiency, and

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overall performance. They used a rubric to practice self-assessment before submitting their final product. Due to class cancellations by the participants, there was an average delay of 2 to 3 weeks between pre-tests and post-tests.

Research Questions

While designing this action research, the research question was formulated for testing (RQ1) through a quantitative analysis from the rubric pre-tests and post-test results. The research question for this action research was:

RQ1 To what extent can Self-Assessment influence the improvement of speaking skills in adults?

The hypothesis of Self-assessment in the Improvement of Speaking Skills in Adults was formulated before starting this action research. The researcher carried out an analysis to look for positive or negative evidence to support the hypothesis in the action research.

Hypothesis

As explained before, there are plenty of research projects with theories that support the idea that self-assessment can improve speaking skills in adults by developing metacognitive skills, such as the ability to monitor their own learning, reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas for improvement. Other theories of self-directed learning suggest that individuals who engage in self-assessment are more likely to take an active role in their own development and make more meaningful progress.

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Based on this information I was able to formulate the hypotheses of my research project: It is expected that self-assessment will improve speaking skills in Adults.

Instruments and Data Collection

The pre-tests and post-tests were the instruments used to test RQ1. Additionally, the participants graded the pre-tests and post-tests by utilizing the rubric at both the beginning and end of the action research. The rubric was also employed during formative sessions to aid in the participants' learning.

The pre-test was conducted individually with each participant during the first synchronous session, where they were asked to talk about the latest technology they knew about for at least 30 seconds. Afterwards, they self-assessed using a rubric, and the researcher discussed with them the advantages of using the rubric to measure their progress during the action research. The participants then re-graded their pre-test by using the rubric once again. During the fourth and last synchronous session, the post-test was carried out, where the students were asked to submit their final 2-minute presentation about a product with the latest technology and answer specific questions. They then graded their presentation against the rubric. The questions were:

1. How have these products impacted our lives positively and negatively?
2. If you had the money to buy any of them, which would you buy or wouldn't buy and why?

The subjects were tasked with submitting their final summative assignment, also known as the post-test. The researcher reviewed each submission to guarantee that the final work was of good quality.

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Once all the volunteers had completed their presentations, the researcher created a WhatsApp group for everyone to share their recordings. They then evaluated their final videos using the provided rubric.

To ensure that the results could be analyzed in the future, the researcher documented them carefully. The videos were stored, and the post-test rubric results were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet for future reference.

Rubric

The rubric used to measure the speaking production skills in the pretest and formative assessment was composed of four descriptors: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication. The rubric was designed on a 0 to 5 scale, with zero being the lowest score and five being the highest. A score of 0 indicated that the performance did not satisfy the descriptor, while a score of 5 indicated that the performance properly satisfied the descriptor. The design of the rubric was based on the principles of backward design.

The participants were encouraged to engage in self-assessment using the rubric during both synchronous and asynchronous sessions. An expert in the field from Universidad Casa Grande reviewed and approved the rubric. The complete rubric can be found in Appendix 3.

Data Analysis

Due to the small sample size of the study, the researcher chose to use a Single-subject design to analyze the data from the rubric during the pre-test and post-test. This design involved collecting data on a target behavior before and after an intervention, then analyzing the changes in the behavior to determine the effectiveness of the

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intervention. In this case, the pre-test and post-test assessments using the rubric provided data on the target behavior, and the single-subject design was used to analyze the changes between the pre-test and post-test scores.

The grades from the pre-test and post-test were recorded in an Excel document for further analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated, including the mean, standard deviation, mean difference, and size effect. Additionally, a paired sample T-test was performed to examine the effect of self-assessment on the improvement of speaking in adults, which addressed Research Question 1. The T-test permitted a comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores.

The researcher provided the participants with necessary support to reach the goals set for each lesson, which led to the final outcome of posting the video on the WhatsApp group for feedback.

In conclusion, the use of a single-subject design and the application of the rubric during the pre-test and post-test, allowed the researcher to gather and analyze data to address the Research Question. The findings of the study will provide insight into the impact of self-assessment on the improvement of speaking in adults.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important to address when conducting research, especially when working with human subjects. In this research project, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants before collecting any data. This means that participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their roles, and their rights as participants. Additionally, the researcher ensured that all data was kept confidential and that participants were not subjected to any harm or discomfort during the study.

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Finally, the researcher ensured that all participants had access to any necessary resources or support throughout the study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

A statistical study was conducted to determine the effect of self-assessment on students' grades. The results showed that there was an increase in the minimum and maximum values after the students took the pretest. The table of total averages supports this conclusion, with the average grades rising after the students went through self-assessment.

A difference of means test was used to determine if there was a change in the students' grades. The results showed that there was a difference of 1.45 between the pre and post-mean, which translates to a 30% increase in the students' grades in the posttest.

The size effect, a parameter that measures the relationship between variables, was 1.54, indicating a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

A paired T-test was also performed to test the hypothesis that students' grades would improve after taking self-assessment tests. The test statistic was calculated and compared to the quantile with 4 degrees of freedom and 5% significance. The results showed that the test statistic was greater than the quantile value and was within the rejection region of the null hypothesis, providing strong evidence that self-assessment does improve students' grades.

To conclude, the statistical study provides compelling evidence that self-assessment improves students' grades. The results show that there was an increase in the

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minimum and maximum values after the self-assessment tests, and the difference of means test and paired T-test both provided strong evidence that the students' grades improved after the intervention.

Table 1. Students' grades and descriptive statistical parameters during Pretest Self-Assessment

<i>Pretest Self-Assessment</i>					
Students	GV	DM	PR	IC	Total
Student 1	3.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	3.75
Student 2	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.00
Student 3	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.75
Student 4	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50
Student 5	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.25
Parameter	GV	DM	PR	IC	Total
Min	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	N/A
Max	3.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	N/A
Mean	2.80	2.80	3.60	3.00	3.05
Dev	0.447	1.095	1,140	0.707	0.694

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Table 2. Students' grades and descriptive statistical parameters during Posttest Self-Assessment

<i>Posttest Self-Assessment</i>					
Students	GV	DM	PR	IC	Total
Student 1	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.25
Student 2	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Student 3	4.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	4.00
Student 4	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Student 5	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.25
Parameter	GV	DM	PR	IC	Total
Min	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	N/A
Max	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	N/A
Mean	4.40	4.40	4.60	4.60	4.50
Desv	0.548	0.548	0.894	0.548	0.468

Table 3. Average difference between each of the parameters to be assessed and the final grade

Mean Difference

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GV	DM	PR	IC	Total
1.60	1.60	1.00	1.60	1.45

All participants reported that their speaking improved due to self-assessment and use of the rubric. For example, participant 1 said their pronunciation and overall speaking improved greatly from the start to end, and the rubric was helpful as a guide. Participant 2 appreciated being responsible for their learning, and felt more involved. Participant 3 attributed their improved oral production to recordings and self-assessment. Participant 4 found that the videos showed areas for improvement, motivating them to correct their speech. Participant 5 feels more confident about what to improve and can use self-assessment in their professional life. However, limitations were noted such as lack of practice with the rubric and potential for over/under rating due to lack of understanding. Some participants admitted to giving themselves too high or low grades at the start or end.

Discussion

The study of the quantitative data revealed that self-assessment was an effective tool in helping participants improve their speaking skills. This finding is consistent with various theoretical and empirical studies that support the importance of self-assessment in language teaching, such as "A meta-analysis" by Black and Wiliam (1998) , and "The validity of self-assessment in medical education: a systematic review" by Schmulic Et al. (1982), as well as the project carried out by Yan, Zi, Hongling Lao, Ernesto Panadero, and Min Yang. (2022), which investigated the impact of self-assessment (SA) and/or peer-assessment (PA) on academic performance, whose results

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confirmed that self-assessment leads to positive changes in fluency, vocabulary, and confidence in L2 speaking.

A sample T-test was performed and showed a significant improvement in rubric scores from the pretest to post-test. This improvement can be attributed to the use of a rubric and the support of the researcher. Similar results have been observed in previous studies by Universidad Casa Grande.

Conclusions

Self-assessment has a positive effect on students' grades: The statistical analysis showed that there was a significant increase in the students' grades after they took the self-assessment tests. Both the difference of means test and the paired T-test provided strong evidence that self-assessment improves students' grades.

Self-assessment is an effective tool for improving speaking skills: The qualitative data revealed that all participants reported that their speaking improved due to self-assessment and the use of the rubric. The study's findings are consistent with previous studies that support the importance of self-assessment in language teaching.

The use of a rubric and researcher support enhances self-assessment. The participants felt that the responsibility of the learning process was shared, which made them more comfortable and confident when speaking.

Limitations

Limitations of self-assessment should be acknowledged: Some participants admitted to giving themselves too high or low grades at the start or end, indicating potential for over/under rating due to a lack of understanding. Additionally, lack of

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practice with the rubric may have affected the accuracy of self-assessment. Finally, when planning future research projects, it is important to consider timing as well, as a duration of just 4 weeks may not provide sufficient time to gather enough data.

Recommendations

Overall, the research project provides compelling evidence that self-assessment is an effective tool for improving students' grades and speaking skills. However, limitations should be acknowledged and addressed to ensure accurate self-assessment. To address the limitation of potential over/under rating due to a lack of understanding, future research could include more detailed instructions and examples to clarify how to use the rubric. Researchers could also consider providing training or practice opportunities for participants to increase their familiarity with the rubric.

To address the limitation of lack of practice with the rubric affecting accuracy of self-assessment, future research could include more opportunities for participants to use the rubric in a variety of contexts. For example, researchers could provide feedback on participants' self-assessment and give them opportunities to revise their work, or they could ask participants to assess a variety of different tasks or projects.

To address the limitation of insufficient data collection time, future research could consider extending the duration of data collection to allow for a more comprehensive assessment. Researchers could also consider using multiple data collection methods, such as interviews or observations, to gather additional data and provide a more complete picture of the participants' performance. Additionally, researchers could consider recruiting a larger sample size to increase the amount of data collected within the given timeframe.

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Appendix 1

Lesson plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Recordings of Videos

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Rubrics

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Portfolio Link

Available upon request.