



**Self-Assessment to Improve Speaking Skills in Tenth Graders**

Willan Stalin Ramirez Tandazo

Guide: Mgtr. Evelyn Carolina Macias Silva

Coordinator: Maria Rossana Ramirez Ávila

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### **Self-Assessment to Improve Speaking skills in Tenth Graders**

English is considered a universal language and the main means of communication. To communicate orally, students must be able to master speaking skills. Then, teachers should introduce activities in their classrooms where students can develop their speaking skills by themselves (Rao, 2019). Generally, most of the time learners do not have enough opportunity either in their classes or outside to speak English (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). So that the only place they practice English is the students' book. In addition, speaking skill is ignored in the classrooms where teachers pay more attention to reading and writing skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Moreover, inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation and mother tongue are factors that do not allow learners to improve their speaking skills (Ur, 1996). It is why learners cannot improve their speaking skills and do not have the chance of real interaction to communicate in class to express their thoughts or needs.

Nevertheless, students have some problems with the use of tenses at the moment they speak in English. They find it difficult when they want to use vocabulary, expression or give a simple description. They cannot describe an object or picture while showing it to others using basic words, phrases and formulaic expressions. Hence, this action research has a goal to determine how speaking improves with self-assessment in tenth graders at Paltas-Catacocha – Ecuador. Jamrus and Razali (2019) affirmed that when students use this strategy “students would reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which their work reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise their work if necessary” (p. 64).

### **Literature Review**

In order to develop the current study, it was necessary to develop a research of literature topics closely related to the theme being studied. In this sense, this section reviews the literature related to self-assessment on the aspect of the oral performance in an EFL classroom with a sustained monologue to improve speaking.

### **Speaking**

Celce-Murcia (2001) affirmed that speaking is a complex skill, which should be taught everywhere, and it is a skill that people can learn in groups. Besides, Gower et al. (1995) said that speaking is the production skill that includes accuracy and fluency. Accuracy consists of using appropriate vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation through some activities; and, fluency refers to the ability to maintain speaking spontaneously. Moreover, speaking is an oral skill that involves the systematic construction of spoken words to convey meaning (Bailey, 2003).

Torky (2006) said that speaking is a means for students to communicate with others to achieve certain goals or express their opinions, intentions, hopes and beliefs. Therefore, Torky (as cited in Burns & Joyce, 1997) argued that speaking can be described as an interactive process of constructing meaning where people can produce, receive and process information. It depends on its form and meaning according to the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking.

### **Self-Assessment**

Brown and Harris (2013) said that self-assessment is the descriptive and evaluative behavior of students about their work and academic abilities. Furthermore, self-assessment is defined as a wide range of mechanisms and techniques by which students describe (assess) and possibly assign merit or worth (evaluate) the quality of their learning processes and products (Panadero et al., 2016). Also Fitzpatrick (2006) said that self-assessment is a reliable procedure that facilitates student reflection to identify needs and overcome weaknesses in order to achieve goals and improve performance.

Dickinson (1987) pointed out that self-assessment is desirable because it is important for a student who is preparing for autonomous learning to be able to judge the accuracy and appropriateness of his own performance, and it emphasizes learning, the process, rather than the results, the product.

Li and Chen (2016) stated that students, with their teacher's guidance, decide what the appropriate assessment criteria are and then check how well they meet those criteria. Then self-assessment can be seen as both a process and an activity that involves reflection, but not all reflection is self-assessment, especially useful for large classes.

Asdar (2017) said that self-assessment is considered one of the various assessments that students can make as they explore, grow, and figure out what they are doing. The author also stated that it is considered an effective tool to help learners understand the functions of assignments and assessment criteria. Ma and Winke (2019) pointed out that self-assessment affects the understanding of students or individuals because it emphasizes their higher-order

thinking, self-reflection and self-regulation, and their ability to achieve goals independently.

### **Self-Assessment in the Speaking Class**

Enhancing learners' speaking skills can be especially difficult at the highest level in a foreign language environment (Thawabieh, 2017). To help learners to develop their speaking skills, teachers should use classroom activities to improve their speaking skills and selfassessment is one way in which transformation occurs because it allows them to become increasingly self-regulated (Andrade, 2019). Also the author stated that speaking classes have to let students communicate and establish genuine conversations. Moreover, it is important to use the correct strategies, let learners practice, and motivate students to succeed in speaking classes.

EFL teachers have a difficult work to do in class, this is to inspire their students to speak English in class. Some things discourage students like anxiety, fear of disappointment, laziness, being shy and competitiveness can make that students cannot speak in spite of them know what to express (McNatt, 2019). Speaking skills refer to vocal/voice qualities such as volume, intonation, fluency, expression, articulation and projection, but also include rate and pauses. Then, teachers have to give samples, measurable in terms of loud/soft, clear/unclear, fast/slow and acceptable/unacceptable (Ličen & Bogdanović, 2018). Increasing learners' selfconfidence to reduce the fear of making mistakes is a priority that teachers should take into account in order to make students feel comfortable using the language. Appropriate curriculum design, teaching methods, appropriate tasks and materials increase confidence and speaking competence (Wong, 2017).

## **Monologue**

Kumaravadivelu (2006) defined monologues as a dialogue where two or more people are involved, but only controlled by a person. Monologue is suitable for intermediate to advanced students (Brown, 2001). Moreover, Brown (2007) pointed out that spoken language in a monologue is when a speaker uses spoken words of any length, such as in speeches, lectures, readings, news broadcasts, oral presentations, oral presentations, summaries, and stories, without interruption by the audience.

Brown (2001) claimed that speaking can be described in: monologue and dialogue. In a monologue, the presenter is one character with one voice and does not need a colleague, on the other hand in a dialogue the presenters must take turns to talk. The author define monologue as a student's personal spoken work, the purpose of which is to practice the language systems' areas and thus strengthen language abilities and the learner's selfconfidence.

## **Innovation**

This innovation used a comprehensible lesson plan that helped to support the selfassessment technique where 22 learners were involved in the tenth grade during three weeks with 3 periods which means 9 hours in total, it was applied in Catacocha town, Province of Loja in the Unidad Educativa Paltas. Their English level is A1. According to Council of Europe (2021) A1 students can use familiar everyday expressions, basic phrases, introduce him/herself and others ask and answer questions about personal details in the sense that they can interact in a simple way with other people slowly and clearly.

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First, the lesson plan's unit was about "Hobbies and Entertainment". For the application of the lesson plan the student's textbook, flashcards, interactive games, pictures, cellphones (WhatsApp) and computers were used. Besides, the classes were taught in face to face modality. During the first class all the students were involved in the self-assessment technique and how to use the checklist to assess their performance. The lesson plan contained activities that allowed learners to improve their speaking skills in order to practice selfassessment development.

Second, learners were able to learn about vocabulary related hobbies and entertainment, parts of speech, and the simple present tense (affirmative, negative, and interrogative) sentences. To support these the "Gradual Release of Responsibilities" (GRR) was applied that consisted into acquisition, transfer or meaningful making to let students be autonomous in class demonstrating them the tasks, guiding them on formative activities, and transferring where they had to work on their own.

In addition, students practiced with sentence construction to describe a daily routine with the vocabulary learned, with all of this improving the ability to ask, answer questions and write complete sentences following all the structures and rules from the simple present tense. Furthermore, students practiced recording sentences about entertainment activities practiced in Ecuador by people and sending in an audio using whatsApp in the first and second week (pretest) all of these were used based on the lesson plan.

Finally, in the third week students wrote, read and record the monologue (posttest) as a summative assessment; hence, students recorded their monologues in one minute and half as maximum, then they worked in their videos sending all of them using (whatsApp) at the end

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they self-assessed using the checklist that focused on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and content.

### **Research Methodology**

The following study is an action research. Avison et al. (1999) defined that “an action research is an interactive process involving researchers and practitioners acting together on a particular cycle of activities, including problem diagnosis, action intervention, and reflective learning” (p. 94). So that this action research applied quantitative and qualitative instruments to analyze how self-assessment of the students’ monologues (independent variable) improved their speaking skills (dependent variable).

### **Participants**

This study was carried out with 22 students (9 males and 13 females) in a public high school in Catacocha town, Loja province. The students’ ages were from 14 - 15 years old. This grade was selected because students showed interest after the teacher explained what could be the results when they get involved in the innovation. It is important to mention that it was not necessary to apply authorizations by their representatives. So the innovation was conducted in face to face classes. Their level of English goes from A1 to determine the level of the grade the teacher analyzed the year in which students are enrolled and which modules they use, all modules corresponded to the A1 English level.

### **Instruments**

The instruments applied to obtain the information by the researcher were a pre and post-test and a direct observation, so that with the aim to answer the first research question



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(quantitative) does the implementation of self-assessment improve speaking skills in high school students in tenth grade? a checklist was used to collect data to gather the information the audios were used to assess the students correctly.

In addition, the researcher to have a clear concept about the impact of the implementation of the self-assessment technique, he utilized the direct observation to answer the second question (qualitative), how does the implementation of self-assessment increase the students' confidence to improve speaking skills in tenth grade? In this case the researcher took into account the development of students in class asking, helping, listening and giving feedback in order to observe as much as possible the students' progress applying this instrument to later interpret the information gathered.

### **Data Analysis**

To start with the data analysis of the pretest and posttest of this study was necessary to use the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to provide the quantitative data tabulated. To obtain the descriptive statistics, the maximum, minimum, mean, standard deviation this spreadsheet was needed. Besides, for this study it was necessary to apply a paired-sample t-test. This test gives the chance to make comparisons between two grades in this case the pretest and posttest. Moreover, inferential statistics was used to calculate the p-value of all of this to answer the first research question. On the other hand, to answer the second qualitative research question the researcher used some notes about the students' reactions obtained in class.

### **Ethical Considerations**

First of all the researcher asked the principal of the school for the respective authorization in a formal document. Then the principal was well informed with the

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procedures, objectives of the study to get the agreement. Moreover, students that participated in the innovation were asked before to apply the study in this way to get their agreements, so that it was not necessary to send a consent letter for parents. Finally, both students and authorities were informed that the information obtained will be used for academic purposes.

### Results

With the aim to answer the first research question: *Does the implementation of self-assessment improve speaking skills in high school students in tenth grade?* The pre and posttest data information let to assess the outcomes of students in their speaking skills.

Table1. Pretest and Posttest comparison

Instrument	#SS	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	<i>p-value</i>
Pretest	22	6	9.5	7.6	0.88	0.00
Posttest	22	8.5	10	9.6	0.39	

➤ **S**=Students, **Min**=Minimum, **Max**= Maximum, **M**=Mean, **SD**= Standard Deviation, (*pvalue*)= Statistical significance

Based on all this data, it shows an enhancement in the speaking production comparing the results from the pretest and the posttest. Results show that the pretest reported an average of 7.6 and the posttest showed an average of 9.6. Moreover, comparing the results of the minimum and the maximum these clearly show the improvement in students. Likewise, the *pvalue* in this case was 0.00 showing that the innovation had a positive impact implementing self-assessment to improve speaking.

Regarding to answer the second question, *how does the implementation of selfassessment increase the students' self-confidence to improve speaking skills in tenth*

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*grade?* The direct observation was used by the researcher. The results were the following. When the innovation started it was evident that the students felt nervous and they were not sure how to self-assess. Students all the time in class asked the teacher, thus he proceeded to carry out the respective support. Then, he realized that some of them were taking the activities with responsibility and some of them did not pay attention to the implementation of the selfassessment. In that way the teacher considered providing formative feedback to help them to improve with their performance.

Another observation realized by the researcher was that some learners did not feel comfortable when they had to speak in front of class when the teacher asked them to develop speaking activities, he considered that it could be due to the fact that they felt judged by their classmates or teacher too. In the course of classes, the teacher asked them to record audios and send it to him through WhatsApp. Then he noticed that learners felt less afraid of speaking and learned to self-assess their speaking.

Afterward, with the use of the recordings, learners had a good improvement, they could identify their grammar mistakes, even though the mispronunciation of some words. Furthermore, the teacher heard students talk among them and say that they felt comfortable recording and when they noticed a mistake they had the chance to record as many times as they could. At this way the teacher had the opportunity to listen and watch the learners' improvement again. In general, with the use of pretest and posttest pupils had a significant enhancement, so in the pretest they felt nervous at the beginning, but with respect to the posttest they showed more confidence at the moment to speak.

### **Discussion**

Results obtained in this study to answer the first research question, does the implementation of self-assessment improve speaking skills in high school students in tenth grade? showed that self-assessment helped students to improve their speaking skills. Therefore, the positive results obtained exposed a great impact on the development of speaking like Fitzpatrick (2006) said in his study that self-assessment is a reliable procedure that facilitates students' reflection to identify needs and overcome weaknesses in order to achieve goals and improve performance. Another researcher as Andrade (2019) manifested that to give learners to develop their speaking skills, teachers should use classroom activities to improve their speaking skills and self-assessment is one way in which transformation occurs because it allows them to become increasingly self-regulated.

Regarding the second research question, how does the implementation of selfassessment increase the students' self-confidence to improve speaking skills in tenth grade? after the application of the innovation this question was answered and revealed that students at the beginning did not feel comfortable when they had to speak or when the teacher asked them to develop speaking activities. Thawabieh (2017) mentioned that enhancing learners' speaking skills can be especially difficult at the highest level in a foreign language environment. Therefore, with the implementation of self-assessment the teacher with the use of recordings could observe in the final task (monologue) that students showed more selfconfidence when they speak English. Wong (2017) manifested that the implementation of self-assessment increases learners' self-confidence to reduce the fear of making mistakes and it is a priority that teachers should take into account in order to make students feel comfortable using the language. Furthermore, Dickinson (1987) pointed out that

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selfassessment is desirable because it is important for a student who is preparing for autonomous learning to be able to judge the accuracy and appropriateness of his own performance, and because self-assessment emphasizes learning, the process, rather than the results, the product.

### **Conclusions**

The research revealed that self-assessment significantly improved speaking skills; Moreover, most of participating students learned to judge their performance and identify their weaknesses and strengths; self-assessment allowed students to evaluate their behavior, work and academic abilities improving their speaking skills.

The majority of students needed constant support by the teacher on the innovation; hence, monitoring processes helped students to improve their progress. Thus, with the teacher's guidance, students were able to explore, grow, and figure out what they were doing, improving their oral performance giving positive results towards the English language.

Applying self-assessment allowed students to feel more comfortable and motivated to participate in speaking activities; in this sense, the use of whatsApp devices, made that students had more opportunities to practice. Therefore, self-assessment promotes positive in students' feelings and attitudes in learning English for improving themselves.

### **Limitations**

Although this study showed positive results, future studies should consider some limitations. One of them was the lack of knowledge by students, some of them said that during the (covid-19) pandemic they did not have the opportunity to practice English, in spite

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of have virtual classes they did not have access to the internet; hence, the teacher had to teach them from the beginning the parts of speech and some grammatical rules, so it made that the innovation was a little difficult to apply. Another limitation was that students did not have time. It is considered that three hours per week is not enough to apply the innovation because also students had to follow the chronogram of activities established by the English area that were carried out at the same time. Finally, students were not experienced in SA technique, students may have to assign the same mark; so, they felt uncomfortable when assessing themselves.

### **Recommendations**

For future studies, the application of the self-assessment technique to improve the students' speaking skills is totally recommended, but to put in this technique is necessary to take into account the level of students and the time that the school can provide to the researcher, so that three weeks are not sufficient for students to self-assessment. Besides, use material suitable to get better results in students such as projectors, internet and so on; moreover, let them have more opportunities to practice with self-assessment in class. Finally, guide and support students to acquire self-assessment techniques as a habit to improve their learning.

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### **Appendix 1**

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

### **Appendix 2**

**Student's self-assessment Checklist**

Available upon request.

### **Appendix 3**

Consent letter

Available upon request.

### **Appendix 4**

Students' grades

Available upon request.

### **Appendix 5**

E-portfolio

Available upon request.