



Impact of Self-Assessment to Improve Students' Speaking Skill

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Research Report

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Nowadays, English is considered one of the most important languages which allows people to communicate with other people around the world even if it is not their first language. In our country, English is considered as a subject within the curriculum for both children and teenagers whose mother tongue is not English. It is framed according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) where developing speaking skill is one of the ultimate goals. However, for most students who are acquiring the new language, speaking is a skill that presents some difficulties in and out of classrooms since they feel shy to participate in dialogues, role plays, or simple conversations. Although according to the Ministerio de Educación (2016), students should hold the B1.1 level regarding the Common European Framework their performance does not demonstrate that level.

Ecuador remains one of the two Latin American countries with the worst level of English language proficiency, only above Mexico. The score is 440 out of 1000, according to Education First (2021) report. In this context, this research project is focused on speaking skill through the application of self-assessment where students reflect on what they have learned and evaluate themselves based on a checklist. They could improve their speaking skill, establish self-assurance, and consider their success by using audio recordings.

Literature Review

This research project was focused on determining the impact of self-assessment on students' oral communication. The variables described below contain concepts about self-assessment and its impact on the students' speaking skill. The dependent variable is speaking and the independent variable is self- assessment.

Previous Studies

Previous studies were reviewed to enlighten the current research. In this regard, self-assessment is considered as part of alternative assessment (Marzuki et., al 2020) that provides validity and reliability to assess the teaching and learning processes (Cuesta et al., 2021). Self-assessment is addressed to assess students speaking skills taking into consideration their problems at the moment of speaking. According to Basak (2019), students are insecure about their speaking skills; besides, they struggle in the English classroom because they are fearful of making mistakes (Sintayani & Adnyayanti, 2022).

In this context, some researchers aimed to apply self-assessment in the English classroom with the purpose of enhancing the speaking skill (Cuesta et al., 2021; Espinoza, 2021; Lucero & Herrera, 2021; Vera et al., 2023). Those researchers emphasize that the application of self-assessment is positive because students improve their self-confidence (Moncayo & Ramírez, 2022). Others indicate that self-assessment constitutes meaningful classroom activities (Vera et al., 2023). Moreover, students have the opportunity to assess their own speaking skill based on their pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and discourse management (Espinoza, 2021). To achieve the self-assessment goals, teachers and students can use tools such as rubrics, checklists, interview, and speaking performance scales (Başak, 2019).

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment provides an opportunity for self-reflection. It helps students to reflect on how well they achieved their goals. Furthermore, it encourages students to understand their strengths and weaknesses, to direct their effort towards the achievement of goals and to be responsible in the learning process. McDonald and Boud (2010) stated that “it has been demonstrated that self-assessment training can have an impact on student performance” (p.

216). Therefore, teacher can encourage students to record monologues and self-assess themselves. There are some tools that enable self-assessment such as checklists, rubrics, and teacher's plans among others.

Brown (2001) stated that self-assessment demands the learners to be independent in reaching success in their learning process. It is referred to as a method where the teacher-centered method is left behind and changes into a student-centered one to improve learning. Andrade and Du (2007) expressed that self-assessment is a process where learners reflect and evaluate their work using determined criteria; they identify the weakness and strengths of their work and make the necessary adjustment to improve their skills.

Challenges of Self-Assessment

There are some challenges of self-assessment. Firstly, the difficult to innovate education assessment due to the teacher's old-fashioned methodology centered in tests. In this way, both teachers and students are adapted to only one way of assessment. Secondly, teachers use to be the center of the teaching-learning process, therefore, this fact must be changed into a student-centered approach. Lastly, students face a big challenge when they are the ones who judge their own performance. It constitutes a deep self-analysis for them to be active part of their own learning and improvement (Espinoza, 2021).

Speaking Skill

Speaking is a relevant output skill in learning a language in order to communicate ideas, thoughts among people in real life situations. This skill is better understood in terms of oral production and oral interaction. According to the Common European Framework of Reference (2001) oral production is the ability to produce oral text to be listened by an audience; for example, giving a speech or acting out in a role play. On the other hand, oral

interaction belongs to communicative skills for socialization, it can be developed in a dialogue, a conversation; in other words, to speak directly.

The researcher wants to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of self-assessment on students' oral communication?
2. What do students think about self-assessment in order to improve their speaking skill?

Innovation

This research project was focused on speaking skills through the application of self-assessment for a class of A1 level students from a public High school in Marcelino Maridueña. The teacher explained the research's objective and the benefits of taking part in this intervention. The unit was planned with Backwards design which lasted 3 weeks (40 minutes lesson) 3 hours per week in face-to-face classes.

In the first class, the teacher explained about self-assessing and the use of a checklist. Then, she provided time to train with models. As homework students recorded a one-minute monologue (pre-test) which was assessed by the teacher with a rubric.

Through the time the unit lasted, students practiced their speaking skills with different activities and they were conducted three practices of recording one-minute monologues, which they self-assessed with the checklist. The teacher provided them feedback. Students could practice pronunciation and improve monologue after receiving feedback based on a rubric.

Along with the intervention, students learned and applied vocabulary about family members, adjectives for describing people: appearance and personality, describing places, in grammar they learned simple present tense: affirmative and negative. On the last week, in the performance task (post-test) students made a monologue in a one-minute audio recording to talk about describing the place they live which was assessed by the teacher with a rubric.

Research Methodology

This is an action research study, which uses measurement instruments to gather and analyze quantitative and qualitative data in order to answer the research questions. It is said that “action research is the idea that teachers will begin a cycle of posing questions, gathering data, reflection, and deciding on a course of action” (Ferrance, 2000, p.2). Action research is usually defined as an inquiry conducted by educators in their own settings in order to advance their practice and improve their students’ learning (Cohen et al., 2007). Action research provides educators with a powerful strategy for being active partners in leading school improvement (Latief, 2009).

Pre-test and post-test will be used as quantitative instruments as well as a graded rubric. Participants will fill an open-ended questionnaire in order to say what they think towards self- assessment.

Participants

This action research study took place in a public school in Marcelino Maridueña - Guayas, Ecuador. The population consisted of a convenience sample of teenage students made of ten students from second year of high school. Their ages were between 15-16 years old. The educational population came from a middle-class to low socioeconomic background. Due to the sanitary emergency of Covid 19 and the country's difficult economic situation, some families are currently unemployed who depend on the work in factories.

Instruments

The instruments were a Pre-test and a post-test as quantitative instruments as well as a graded rubric to answer the first research question: What is the impact of self-assessment on students' oral communication? (Appendix 2). Moreover, all the participants will complete a

survey to obtain data from this action research question: What do students think about self-assessment in order to improve their speaking skill? (Appendix 3).

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the collected data for grades according to the results from the rubric to answer the first research question: What is the impact of self-assessment on students' oral communication? Descriptive statistics: minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation were calculated in an excel spreadsheet. Furthermore, data from pre-test and post-test were compared through a paired-sample t-test by using the Analytics Tools Pack in Excel.

On the other hand, all participants completed a survey to obtain data from this action research question: What do students think about self-assessment in order to improve their speaking skill?

Ethical Considerations

This research followed the procedures of ethical considerations (Kaewkungwal & Adams, 2019). First, the researcher asked for permission to work with the students in the high school where the study took place. The permission was granted by the principal of the high school. Later, the author invited the whole 2nd year of Bachillerato class to participate in this study. The author explained the research's objective to the participants and provide all potential participants with all the relevant information about what the study is about, the benefits of taking part, how long the program will take and get consent and authorization from the parents. The author made sure to have only voluntary participation and protect the privacy and anonymity of the research participants through the use of pseudonyms.

Results

This section includes the results gathered from the pre-test and post-test as well as the survey. In this case, data were ordered according to the proposed research questions. Firstly, to answer this question: What is the impact of self-assessment on students' oral communication? The target population the pre-test and the post-test and the results are displayed below.

Table 1

Pretest and posttest descriptive and inferential statistics

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	<i>p</i> value
Pretest	10	0	5	2.90	1.29	0.05
Posttest	10	3	11	6.40	2.80	0.00

Table 2

Descriptive and inferential statistics per construct

Construct	Pretest					Posttest				
	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	<i>p</i> value
Grammar	10	0	1	0.8	0.42	1	3	1.6	0.84	0.00
Vocabulary	10	0	1	0.9	0.32	1	3	2	0.82	0.20
Pronunciation	10	0	1	0.2	0.42	0	2	1	0.82	0.20
Content	10	0	2	1	0.47	1	3	1.8	0.63	0.00

Table 1 clearly shows a difference in the means of the pre-test and the post-test. While in the pre-test students got 2.90, they obtained 6.40 in the post-test. Regarding the data in the pre-test and according to the information in the rubric, students' vocabulary and grammar knowledge was very limited or null. They uttered only isolated words and phrases. Moreover, their pronunciation was unintelligible; and, their monologues were poor without any cohesive devices and out of content.

On the other hand, in the post-test, students showed a better degree and control of context, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, their pronunciation was mostly intelligible even though there were some problems in phonological control; and, used simple cohesive devices. Furthermore, monologues focused on content and generally they last the required time.

To answer the second question, students answered a survey after the classroom action research to verify their perceptions on what they think about self-assessment in order to improve their speaking skill. According to the students' responses, they think that pronunciation is the most difficult issue when speaking followed by grammar and vocabulary and discourse management. They also completely agreed in the idea that the implementation of self-assessment supported them to improve their speaking skills. Additionally, learners answered that using checklists was valuable and beneficial to guide their oral productions and self-assess. Moreover, their teacher's feedback after oral productions contributed to learn how to speak in a better way. However, they did not provide any suggestion to change the implementation to make it different. Finally, they suggested to implement this project for longer time.

According to the results in the open questions. Some of the students agree with the idea that applying self-assessment would be beneficial if it were used for longer time; while most of them would not change anything. In the last question, most of the students do not have any suggestion about using self-assessment to improve the speaking skill; however, the student one wrote that this kind of projects must be implemented from the lower grades of school (*Sería bueno que empiecen desde octavo año*). Likewise, the students three, seven, eight, and nine suggested that this implementation should last longer time.

Discussion

Two main research questions had been answered in this process. First, what is the impact of self-assessment on students' oral communication? Regarding this question results from the pre-test and the post-test were positive. It means that there was a significant difference between means. In this case, students improved from 2.90 to 6.40.

These results were similar to some previous research. After gathering and analyzing data, the researcher states that self-assessment is beneficial for students and it positively impacts on speaking skill improvement likewise authors such as Başak (2019), Cuesta et al. (2021), Espinoza (2021), Marzuki et al. (2020), and Moncayo and Ramírez (2022).

Students improved their pronunciation even though they faced some challenges because they faced fear to speak, this result is similar to Espinoza (2021). Furthermore, Vera et al. (2023) suggested the use of tools like rubrics and checklists that were applied with positive results.

The second question referred to the students' way of thinking about self-assessment in order to improve their speaking skill. Mostly, they answered that pronunciation was the most difficult issue in doing their oral productions similar to Marzuki et al. (2020). Mostly, students completely agreed that the application of self-assessment checklist and teacher's feedback were helpful to improve their speaking skill. These results were similar to those found by Cuesta et al. (2021).

Conclusions

After this process, it is concluded that self-assessment significantly impacts on students' speaking skill. It was found that students felt afraid of speaking; however, with the use of motivational classes and checklists to control their oral productions, the results were encouraging.

It was also concluded that students have positive thinking about the implementation of self-assessment to improve their speaking skill. During the classes, it was observed that students were very critical for themselves. In addition, their teacher's feedback was highly helpful for their development. In consequence, it was confirmed that self-assessment positively impacts on students' speaking skill.

Limitations

There were some difficulties to motivate students due to their low self-esteem and fear to speak in English. Students showed fear to pronounce words. This constituted a big challenge that was overcome. Another difficulty was in the time because English classes only lasted three pedagogical hours which was not enough taking into consideration that feedback was personal.

Recommendations

It is highly recommended to apply self-assessment in secondary education to improve students' speaking skill and the rest of language skills. Additionally, the research would have better results or desired higher scores if the implementation would last for longer time.

It is also suggested that teachers start scaffolding their students to high their self-esteem because they are the owners of their own learning. In this scenery, they would be more critical about themselves and their classroom performance would be better. In consequence students would gain both confidence and language skills.

After this process, students learned to trust and help themselves. This fact was a good advancement for the target population and a good starting to be applied in other classrooms for further research.

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Appendix 1

Lesson plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Speaking Rubric (A1)

Available upon request.

Appendix 3.

Checklist for learners' self-assessment

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Survey

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

Permission Letters

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

Grades

Available upon request.

Appendix 7

E-portfolio

Available upon request.