Universidad Casa Grande

Researching Self-Assessment's Impact on Speaking Skills Development in 7th-Grade

Pre-A1 English Level Students

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Research Report

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One of the most widely spoken languages in the world is English, which is the most common way to communicate; as stated by Mastin (2011), "English is the nearest thing there has ever been to a global language." (p. 2). English is very important for work, and it also makes it possible to communicate with people of different backgrounds and customs. It is important to remember that speaking skills are essential to language acquisition since language learners frequently come across new vocabulary. This presents a problem, especially for those for whom English is not their native tongue.

This educational institution in Portoviejo has a problem with students who have low competency levels when developing speaking skills. This problem is related to the absence of techniques for improving oral communication in this group of students. The lack of specialized methods and resources makes it harder for students to improve their speaking abilities, which impedes their capacity to advance in their foreign language learning process.

As such, students find it difficult to explain themselves in English. One of the main challenges is vocabulary, which makes people reluctant to talk since they have trouble pronouncing certain words. Their confidence and willingness to speak are impacted by this language barrier. Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge about the syntax needed to create well-constructed sentences. Furthermore, mispronouncing words in English makes it

difficult to communicate verbally and prevents the development of overall language proficiency.

Thus, the main goal of this study is to explore how self-assessment affects the development of speaking skills in 7th-grade Pre-A1 English language learners. Guided by the research question, To what extent does self-assessment improve speaking skills among 7th Pre-A1 learners? This study endeavors to uncover the relationship between self-assessment and the advancement of speaking abilities.

Literature Review

The importance of speaking and self-assessment in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is examined in this section. Speaking is defined as the ability to communicate ideas and viewpoints. Simultaneously, the notion of self-assessment is presented, highlighting students' assessments of their abilities, shortcomings, and performance.

While there are many advantages to self-assessment, such as better learning opportunities and increased self-awareness, there are drawbacks as well, such as time limits for personalized input. The relationship between speaking proficiency and self-assessment lays the way for a study of how self-assessment impacts second language learners' ability to communicate more fluently.

Speaking

It is a universally known fact that spoken language is one means of human communication. Speaking is defined as "the ability to share ideas or opinions using the structures and concepts of the language" (Lascano & Altamirano, 2022, p. 902). This concept emphasizes the value of developing speaking abilities in EFL contexts, as learners participate in English dialogues to express their thoughts and viewpoints, which improves their language proficiency and communicative competence.

Speaking is a productive skill that facilitates sharing thoughts, opinions, and reflections with others. Although it is a frequent misconception that someone knows a language when they can construct coherent sentences, language is more than that. Other areas covered by speaking abilities are 1. Mechanics, which includes using vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation correctly; and 2. Function, which is centered on engagement and transaction. The interlocutor ascertains whether the receptor understood the message, and if not, he clarifies the concept to establish a strong relationship; 3. Pragmatic social and cultural conventions and guidelines. It teaches people to think carefully about who is speaking to whom, when, what, and why. Speaking with the high school principal requires using a different vocabulary than talking with a friend (Kürüm, 2016).

Certain categories might be applied to represent how students should develop their speaking abilities in the classroom (Brown, 1994).

- Intensive – Students are now prepared to study and practice certain phonological or grammatical components of language.

- Responsive: It consists of brief questions to which students and teachers respond.

- Transactional (dialogue): The sharing of specific information is its primary goal.

- Interpersonal (dialogue): Preserving social ties is the goal. Students use a variety of elements in their discourse, including slang, humor, sarcasm, casual register, and emotionally charged language.

- Extensive (monolog): In this case, the register is more deliberate and formal. It can be prepared or left to chance.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is the process through which people judge their own performance, knowledge, skills, and talents. It entails self-reflection on one's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth. The definition of self-assessment given by Boud and Falchikov (1989) is "The involvement of learners in making judgments about their own learning, particularly about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning" (p. 1). Therefore, students can analyze their own performance and learning development through self-assessment. It motivates people to take charge of their education, identify their areas of weakness, and create development-related objectives.

Gaining knowledge about self-evaluation contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of this significant subject. Self-assessment, according to Saeed et al. (2018), is a tactic in educational development that allows students to evaluate their own performance using a predetermined rubric. As stated by Dolosic (2018), self-assessment is

a subjective assessment of pupils' accomplishments and proficiencies. As noted by Shatri et al. (2022), a key component of formative assessment is the ability of learners to regulate their behavior, which encourages students to become more involved in their studies. Based on Masruria and Anam (2021), self-assessment is an evaluation tool that allows students to examine, improve, and hone their performance.

Self-assessment, according to Jamrus and Razali (2019), usually focuses on particular activities and offers clear requirements, illustrations, or instances. As a result, students are aware of the requirements needed to finish the task. Furthermore, self-assessment encourages students to develop self-reliance by allowing them to identify their oral performance strengths and flaws according to predetermined standards. In conclusion, this approach gives students the ability to identify areas that need improvement to meet the spoken learning objective.

According to Zimmerman and Moylan (2009), the development of self-assessment skills entails active engagement in adhering to prior instructions. Individual involvement, creativity, and consistency are integral to this process. The cognitive framework of self-assessment illuminates the connection between metacognitive events and students' motivational perspectives.

The advantages of student self-assessment were underlined by Christianson and Hoskins (2008), who emphasized that it not only improves the learning experience but also engages students in accepting responsibility for their own development. The ability to reflect on their development, pinpoint areas for growth, and establish goals are given to

students through this participation (p. 11). Students improve their critical thinking abilities, self-awareness, and ability to supervise and control their own learning by engaging in self-assessment. These benefits help students learn more as a result of their experiences.

Self-assessment offers students several benefits throughout their education. Panadero et al. (2016) claim that students can improve their learning capacities when they are permitted to use self-assessment in their learning processes. Three benefits of self-assessment on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' speaking ability were noted by Sintayani and Adnyayanti (2022). These effects included an improvement in speaking competency, an identification of strengths and limitations, and a rise in self-efficacy (p.87).

Although self-assessment indeed has many advantages for learning English, there are some disadvantages as well. One of these is that it can be difficult to have enough time to provide feedback to every student, as Khonamri et al. (2021) point out. Due to time constraints, teachers may find it difficult to provide each student with personalized comments and assistance. This could be an issue with self-assessment in educational contexts.

Self-evaluation interest among students varies as well. According to Marzuki et al. (2020), some students showed little interest in self-assessment since they thought it had little value. These students are unsure of their ability to accurately assess their abilities. They lacked confidence in their ability to evaluate their own performance and chose to rely on teachers' knowledge to do so (Marzuki et al., 2020, p. 212).

As per Heilenman (1990), one factor influencing the self-assessment process is the proficiency level of students. In certain instances, less proficient students may overestimate their language abilities, while more proficient students may tend to underestimate their capabilities (Santos & Ramírez-Ávila, 2022). Because they could push themselves over their comfort zones or believe there is no opportunity for improvement, students who make inaccurate assessments of their strengths and shortcomings might experience a negative impact on the outcome of skill development.

However, for students to finish their evaluations, teachers must urge them to adhere to the following requirements, as stated by Goodrich (1996):

1. Recognizing self-evaluation: Teachers need to emphasize the importance of self-evaluation to students where making errors is part of the improvement.

2. Assessment criteria: Teachers need to provide all the information to students about the speaking activities with the help of a rubric.

3. Instructions for assessing performance: Teachers need to explain the speaking activities in detail to the students.

4. Examples of self-assessment: Teachers need to provide students with self-evaluation examples to help them to understand what they have to do.

5. Feedback: At the end of the activities teachers need to provide individual feedback.

6. Learning from their mistakes: Give students the chance to improve their work and performance.

Teaching students about self-regulation requires providing knowledge about how it operates. Students should possess the fundamental knowledge to engage in this process. According to Andrade (2019), the objective of self-assessment (SA) is to offer feedback that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and accomplishments in the learning process. Andrade went on to discuss three key factors that must be taken into account when applying SA: deciding what to evaluate (competence, process, or product), making clear the assessment's goal (formative or summative), and selecting the assessment's methodology, which may or may not include standards.

According to Bueno (2020), reflecting on one's own work through self-assessment is a complex metacognitive talent that needs much training and preparation. When it comes to self-assessment, learners who receive training have a higher degree of cognitive self-control and produce better results than those who do not receive such training (Raaijmakers et al., 2019). According to Masuwai et al. (2021), self-assessment is an essential evaluative technique that teachers should use to help students learn new material, develop interests, and perform better overall. According to Raković et al. (2022), using backward design helps students actively engage in self-evaluation, which improves their academic performance.

An examination of pertinent studies, definitions, advantages, obstacles, and the process of instructing students in self-assessment underpin this investigation. In light of this

information, it is explored, to what extent does self-assessment improve speaking skills among second language learners?

Innovation

The research project entailed the development and implementation of an innovative teaching approach. An element of this approach involved crafting and utilizing a lesson plan to support self-assessment. This instructional blueprint incorporated information, a sequenced set of interconnected tasks, and the required materials to facilitate its execution.

The entire program spanned over eight instructional hours, distributed across a four-week timeframe. Over this period, participants were exposed to vocabulary and grammar concepts and were provided with opportunities to hone their descriptive skills. An instructional framework, as delineated in Appendix 1, was devised for this lesson plan. The backward design approach was followed in all activities, which were divided into phases related to acquisition, meaning-making, or transfer. The main goal was to deliver content that was in line with the learning objectives. To be able to support the learning process in students the researcher needed different resources such as pictures, videos, examples of audio recordings, etc. Besides, the researcher used the paradigm of Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) to engage students and promote cooperative learning.

The unit was divided into four lessons, each lesson was designed to improve student's fluency with an emphasis on vocabulary related to jobs and family, word order, personal pronouns, and the verb "to be", and at the end of the innovation, students had to take a summative assessment as the final task.

It is important to mention that each week had specific objectives that the researcher followed, also the materials used were organized to let students understand the process in which they participated. At the beginning of each week, before starting the class a "Hook" was used to motivate students to participate in the learning process. Moreover, individual, pair, and group exercises were included to gather information.

During the first week of the innovation, students took a pre-assessment which the researcher analyzed carefully and described previously. Furthermore, students were provided with a checklist that was used as a tool for the pre and post-assessment. Check Appendix 1 for more information.

Methodology

Ferrance (2000) defined action research as a series of procedures wherein participants use research methods to thoroughly analyze their instructional practices. Furthermore, action research is meant to assist teachers and groups of teachers in overcoming the difficulties and problems of practice and thoughtfully implementing innovations, according to Altricher et al. (2005).

Action research is a study methodology that involves an active role of participants, cooperative problem-solving, and the establishment of constructive changes within a specific setting. This approach stresses the iterative process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, according to Lewin (1946), who is considered the father of action research. Lewin emphasized the importance of radical transformation, involvement, and teamwork.

Participants

Initially, seventeen students in the seventh grade of Basic General Education—ten females and seven boys—were included in the study. They were of similar origins and ranged in age from eleven to twelve. There were no special needs kids in the sample selection, and these students were enrolled at a Portoviejo public institution. Most of them had not attended any private language schools where they may have obtained additional training in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Two students chose to transfer to a different school for personal reasons, while three children were unable to participate because their parents did not give permission. As a result, the study was conducted with twelve students, guaranteeing a more focused and targeted group for the research.

A diagnostic test was given at the start of the academic year to gauge their starting level of English ability. Based on the Common European Framework, every student demonstrated a level of English ability equivalent to Pre-A1. This indicates that they were capable of using simple vocabulary to describe pictures related to family and professions.

Instruments

To address the research question, "To what extent does self-assessment improve speaking skills among 7th Pre-A1 learners?" Pre and post-tests were conducted and graded using a rubric. This procedure entailed the evaluation of audio recordings submitted by students to accurately assess their progress.

The students performed a monologue in which they focused on learning personal pronouns, the verb "to be," word order, subject-verb agreement, and vocabulary associated with families and professions. While talking about themselves and their family, they were expected to speak coherently, organize their thoughts, and present engaging content. Speaking about their names, ages, families, occupations, and other details about themselves were required for the work. Students did a monologue on their own without interacting with others. In order to track progress, the researcher evaluated the speaking production using a rubric at the start and end of the intervention.

Data Collection Analysis

To assess the influence of self-assessment on the development of speaking skills, a paired-sample t-test was calculated. This statistical method facilitates a comparison between the grades acquired in both the pre-test and post-test for each individual student. The data analysis required the use of Microsoft Excel, including its Analytic Tools Pack. Descriptive statistics were run: mode, median, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation. Similarly, the p-value was computed as inferential statistics.

Ethical Considerations

In order to respect the rights of participants and ensure that the study is carried out with integrity and scientific rigor, ethical considerations were observed, according to Büyüköztürk et al., 2017.

Informed permission, participant anonymity, avoiding damage, maintaining neutrality, and eliminating biases, as well as assuring the validity and dependability of

research findings, are ethical considerations in educational research. Researchers can increase the validity of their research findings and expand the understanding of education by adhering to ethical norms (p. 7).

This study highlighted the ethical considerations that guided the research on the relationship between speaking skill development and self-assessment in 7th-grade students with a Pre-A1 English level. With full disclosure that participation was voluntary, twelve of the fifteen parents of the seventh-graders provided their informed consent.

Enhanced speaking skills, more self-awareness, and the opportunity to expand understanding of self-assessment as a method for speaking skills improvement were highlighted as benefits of attendance. The researcher protected the participants' identities. The consent letter not only emphasized the value of secrecy but also outlined the procedures the researcher would follow to guarantee participant data was kept private.

The researcher made sure that participants were well-prepared and aware of what to expect throughout the inquiry, and the study activities were maintained non-intrusive. Overall, the study complies with ethical standards, continually protecting the dignity, rights, and privacy of the participants. The purpose of the study was to promote language acquisition skills; participants were not in danger or suffered any injuries.

Results

To explore the research question, to what extent does self-assessment improve speaking skills among second language learners?

The pre and post-test audio-recorded messages served as tools for evaluating students' speaking skills, unveiling notable enhancements in their speaking production. A thorough comparison of the pre- and post-test findings after the innovation project was put into practice is shown in Table 1.

Table 1:

Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	12	5	7	6.0000	.65134
Posttest	12	6	9	7.5000	.79296
Valid N (listwise)	12				

Twelve students made up the cohort that took part in this investigation. The minimum score in the pre-test was 5, but it rose to 6 points in the post-test. The highest possible scores showed a noteworthy increase, going from 7 points in the pre-test to 9 points in the post-test. This rise suggests that the individuals' speaking abilities have improved.

The pretest, which consisted of the first audio-recorded message, had an average score of 6.0. On the other hand, the post-test, or final audio recording, showed a noteworthy improvement with an average score of 7.5.

A statistically significant p-value of 0.00 was found by the statistical analysis. This result demonstrates that the innovation project improved the participants' speaking production beneficially.

Discussion

The results of the research project align with the theoretical underpinnings presented in the literature review; the positive outcomes observed in the post-test, in which participants demonstrated a noteworthy improvement in speaking skills. The improvement in average scores from 6.0 in the pretest to 7.5 in the post-test indicates an enhancement in the participants' ability to use vocabulary related to family and professions.

Moreover, the importance of self-assessment in educational development is highlighted by scholars like Saeed et al. (2018) and Dolosic (2018), who see self-assessment as a strategy for students to gauge their achievements.These claims are supported by the research project's outcomes, which show that implementing self-assessment improved students' speaking abilities. The participants' speaking production was enhanced by the innovation project, as evidenced by the statistically significant results (p-value of 0.00). This is in line with research that emphasizes the value of self-evaluation as a practical tactic in the advancement of education (Saeed et al., 2018).

Some benefits of self-assessment include recognizing strengths and weaknesses, increasing self-efficacy, and improving speaking abilities (Panadero et al., 2016; Sintayani & Adnyayanti, 2022). Increases in maximum and minimum scores, which emphasize the participants' areas of strength and growth, support these statements made by the research effort. Because participants actively assessed their speaking abilities, there appears to have been a gain in self-efficacy, as seen by the positive shift in average scores from the pretest to the posttest.

The research project's findings support the literature review by showing how speaking abilities among foreign language learners are influenced by self-assessment.The results demonstrate the usefulness of implementing self-assessment in language learning environments to encourage improvements in oral communication skills.

Conclusions

On the whole, the candidates who participated in this research project were from 7th grade with a Pre-A1 English level. The lack of students' speaking skills was a problem in their school's daily performance. Moreover, the problem was addressed through the use of a self-assessment method to increase speaking production. The results that were obtained suggest that self-assessment improves students' learning by identifying the advantages and disadvantages to improve speaking abilities.

Moreover, when the researcher gave students clear instructions, they were able to understand the assigned tasks, providing them with the opportunity to fulfill the objectives. It was crucial that at the beginning of the innovation project, students were monitored, and they also received feedback, which aided in their learning.

Besides, a great improvement was noticed because of examples, feedback, and audio recordings in which students showed compromise and responsibility with the activities assigned. It is important to mention that not only a good comprehension of the assignments was obtained, but it also increased confidence and promoted positive attitudes towards learning English.

Limitations

One limitation of the research project was that students practiced the foreign language only in the classroom during their English class. Most of them did not have the opportunity to practice at home to reinforce the vocabulary and grammar learned, which made it difficult for them to acquire all the content provided by the teacher in order to complete the tasks.

Moreover, at the beginning of the research project, students were shy and did not want to participate in the exercises proposed during the English class due to their lack of confidence in their speaking skills. This was because they felt afraid to make mistakes in front of the whole class, which was considered an obstacle in their learning process.

Furthermore, when the innovation started, students felt lost and struggled with the techniques applied during the research because they did not have previous knowledge about self-assessment. Additionally, they were more focused on obtaining good grades than realizing that they might improve their speaking skills through this project.

Recommendations

It is advised that the instructor actively encourages practice and individual study outside of the classroom. A student's grasp of the language can be strengthened by implementing teaching strategies that make learning enjoyable. To make language more relevant to them, students need to see a reason for studying it.

It is suggested that the instructor provide the class with additional opportunities to practice speaking. Group, pair, or simulation work can help reduce students' early stages of innovation fear.

It is important to teach students the importance of self-assessing and how it might improve their speaking abilities. increasing students' self-esteem by explaining that despite early challenges, they would soon have opportunities to get over their weaknesses and increase their knowledge, which will eventually result in getting good grades.

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Appendix 1

Lesson plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Rubric

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Checklist

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

eportfolio's link Available upon request.