



Improving Speaking Skill Through Self-Assessment Technique in A2 level Students

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Research Report

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Have you ever considered the power of the speaking skill? Speaking is a gateway to express thoughts and connect with others. In today's globalized world, speaking skills are present in international mobility, admission to higher education, employment, and numerous facets of daily life (Fan & Yan, 2020). Despite spending over twelve years studying English, the graduated high school students from a public secondary school in Cotocollao are struggling to acquire proficient spoken English skills, including good pronunciation, fluency, and subject-verb agreement. This challenge arose because the learners did not receive activities that offer sufficient input, and these students had only three to two hours of English per week, which was insufficient to develop their English-speaking skills.

Moreover, Self -Assessment and technological tools improve speaking skills since they give students the opportunity to enhance their confidence fluency for speaking tasks (Bonilla, 2022). It fosters a clear mindset for academic and personal growth. For this reason, teachers should implement self-assessment by designing activities with comprehensible input and providing students with a checklist accompanied by a rubric for educators. This aims to help learners to understand the evaluation criteria. Sintayani and Adnyayanti (2022) mentioned that self-assessment in speaking develops students' progress, so student can take an active role in their learning process. This research helped the investigator to verify how self-assessment technique contributed to the progress of graduated high school students, developing speaking fluency and coherent structure in subject verb agreement. Thus, this study addressed the following research question: To what extend will self-assessment technique help the A2 level students to improve their speaking fluency skill? And What are the students' opinions of using the checklist?

Literature Review

Self-Assessment

This research involved the independent variable that is self-assessment. Başak (2019) mentioned that self-assessment not only aids in the development of learner autonomy but also encourages active students' engagement in the learning process; consequently, enhancing their motivation. Shatri et al. (2022) established that self-assessment technique enables students to engage in self-evaluation, promoting structure work, self -exploration, and authenticity. Campoverde (2022) stated that this allows students to identify areas for improvement.

Based in previous studies, self-assessment aims students' motivation because it becomes a potent motivator for students. When they get engage in this technique, they gain awareness of strengths and weaknesses (Bonilla, 2022; Jamrus & Razali, 2019; Jin, 2021; Peña, 2023). In today's educational environment, particularly in Pichincha province, classrooms often accommodate more than forty students per class; in such instance, students become invaluable source of feedback through self-evaluation.

Moncayo and Ramírez-Ávila (2022) said that the implementation of self-assessment technique played a role in upgrading students' confidence in English speaking. Those students who participated in the study showed a decrease in fear of public speaking, demonstrating an expansion in willingness to engage in activities such as dialogues. This transformation implied a diminish in shyness. This technique is valuable for personal development; however, it demands both time and effort to become adept at responsibly assessing one's own work and deriving an

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experience from this process (Bonilla, 2022). Likewise, self-assessment has to be conducted with honesty, openness, and willingness to embrace personal growth and change.

There are some limitations. Andrade (2019) included that hours to teach the innovation, the number of students, and internet issues did not allow learners to have successful results. There were students that did not self-assess with responsibility because the study showed that their self-assigned marks tended to be higher than marks given by the professor. Students' self-assessments were higher because they were told that it counted toward 5% of their final grade (Tejeiro et al., 2012 as cited in Andrade, 2019). Therefore, learners cheated when they knew that self-assessments were counted as a grade for their report. Borja (2022) stated that the absence of consistent internet access and familiarity with voice recorder applications posed a challenge in achieving effective results.

Learners who received self-assessment training were capable of autonomously monitoring their progress (Espinoza, 2022). Being skillful in employing this technique enabled students to enhance in subsequent assignments. This tool allowed them to identify the specific parts that require improvement. Learners gain knowledge and skill of regulation their own learning (Borja, 2022). Moreover, when students are provided with exemplars of self-assessment, they could identify and become familiar when conducting their own assessments. Hence, this technique improves students' understanding and grasp of the assessment process (Jamrus & Razali, 2019). Proper guidance is necessary to train students to use rubrics accurately. "The rubric encourages reflective practice on the part of both students and teachers." (Allen & Tanner, 2006, p. 203)

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Innovation

Firstly, this innovation was focused on improving the speaking skills of volunteers Cotocollao A2 level graduated high school students through self-assessment via zoom. The application was designed for two synchronous hours daily, with a total of ten hours for the entire duration. The students employed the third-year Bachillerato module as they had already graduated from high school.

The teacher planned warm-ups, reading worksheets, flashcards, games, and charts. The lesson plan was adapted on module four, third of Bachillerato, entering on the study of good and bad habits (Appendix 1). Students had to create their monologues and submit their recordings through WhatsApp application.

Learners received feedback before the subsequent class, aligning with the transfer goal to achieve the class objectives. These students were able to create their monologues based on the learning content, ensuring usage of subject-verb agreement, appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and accurate pronunciation. As students were continuously monitored, the teacher was available to address and clarify any doubts they had such as verbs to report, grammar structure or pronunciation of certain words.

Furthermore, in this innovation approach, the researcher had the responsibility of instructing participants on creating a monologue and using a checklist. Therefore, the instructor demonstrated the creation of a monologue by grading her own performance using a checklist. This approach enabled students to observe how a monologue aligned with the checklist

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parameters. Consequently, students initiated the first practice by recording a one-minute monologue audio that featured a reporter- style speech discussing local habits and practices specific to their place of residence. This exercise encouraged learners to gather information from parents, neighbors, or friends adding an element to unknown information to enrich their monologues. To broaden their understanding of global habits, the researcher provided information about this topic. This permitted them to identify both similarities and differences with habits within their own nation.

Next, to enhance understanding of good and bad habits, the researcher designed a chart that allowed learners to categorize habits as either good and bad, enabling them to identify their positive and negative personal habits. Moreover, they were encouraged to explore alternatives to transform their undesirable habits, and to incorporate suggestions from their classmates and friends. Afterward, the author facilitated with information about social media habits to help them to answer questions and to report on their own social media habits using the provided information. Lastly, students were tasked with researching information about the usage of social media in various countries and presenting their findings to the class. Consequently, students recorded the audio, reporting a one-minute monologue about the received information. They did five practices in total.

At the end of their monologues, students were required to evaluate their performance based on the criteria provided in the checklist, using a three-level scale: Yes, Sometimes, and Not yet (Appendix 2). Finally, the teacher graded in the rubric the students' monologues settled on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency, and organized content.

Methodology

Bradbury et al. (2019) argued that action research enriches to action theory /practice and creates explicit links, contributing to a wider body practical knowledge; thus, aiding in making the best decisions in teaching practice. It requires working collaboratively among students and the teacher to identify the problem implementing alternatives to practical challenges.

Participants

This research study was done in a public school in Pichincha Province in Ecuador where the researcher worked. Therefore, twelve graduated students accepted to participate in the innovation; the population consisted of seven female students and five male students. The selected students' age ranged between 18 and 19; eleven students were from Pichincha province and one student was from Venezuela. As they had already graduated from the same high school, I started sending messages and calling them to be part of this intervention, during the innovation six students quit this process due to having other classes to prepare to enter university; others also got a job and could not join to the classes. All the participants took the placement Cambridge exam at the beginning of the investigation, pursuing the A2 level. However, as they were graduated students from high school, they must have B1 level of English according to English as a Foreign Language Curriculum (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

Instrument

In this innovation quantitative and qualitative data were collected to answer the research questions. An analytical rubric was designed to address the first research question, to what

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extend will self-assessment technique help A2 level students to improve their speaking fluency skill? As noted by Groenendijk et al. (2020), rubrics are regarded as assessment tools by both teachers and students. The rubric was subsequently adapted and organized into four distinct categories: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency, and organized content. It allowed to have a precise grading system, with scores ranging from the lowest possible score of 2 to the highest score of 5, accompanied by detailed descriptors for each category. It was adapted from A2 level Cambridge Assessment Scale. The researcher applied it to evaluate the pre and posttest students' monologue (Appendix 3)

To address the qualitative question, what are the students' opinions of using the checklist? a survey was designed with four questions to encourage the participants to express their opinions and perspectives about the benefits and challenges of using a checklist. (Appendix 4). Additionally, the teacher's field notes were incorporated.

Data Collection

To address the quantitative question; the analysis was performed using Excel spreadsheets, in which the results of the pre-test and post-test of speaking performance were extracted from the rubric and presented graphically. This presentation included the maximum, minimum, mean, *p*-value, and standard deviation for each category. This procedure was employed to assess whether students exhibited any changes, with the aim of collecting evidence to support the implementation of new approaches. Results of the pre and posttest were contrasted.

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In response to the qualitative question: the researcher administered a survey to the students using Google Forms, including four questions. Following this, the collected answers were categorized into four main themes: experience with the innovation, advantages and challenges. Furthermore, the teacher incorporated the field notes from the innovation.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations in this action research were established from the study's outset. The researcher obtained permission from the graduated students, and as all participants were above eighteen, parental consent was not required. The participants were informed of the study's objectives, benefits, procedures, their roles, potential risks, and the commitment to responsible and respectful practices. The participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time (Lachheb et al., 2023). This study was conducted during the afternoon section in the researcher's classes.

Results

Answering to the question what are the students' opinions of using the checklist? the results from the survey revealed that using a checklist to self-assess provided them a positive experience, and the six students thought self-assessment in speaking was beneficial. They appreciated evaluating their knowledge, tracking progress, identifying areas for improvement, and getting feedback before subsequent lessons. Learners noted advancements in pronunciation, fluency, and writing. All six learners agreed that self-assessment enhanced collaborative learning, enriching their knowledge, and offering insights for personal development. Some

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students faced challenges in self-assessment, such as correct pronunciation and understanding certain words. Despite limited prior experience, most students valued self-assessment as an effective tool. Overall, the short study period showed significant development in their speaking skills, supported by observational notes.

Moreover, the process of self-evaluation enables students to streamline the feedback process for teachers. This, in turn, facilitates the provision of precise and tailored feedback based on each student's specific needs. Timely feedback empowers students to refine their monologues, learn from mistakes, and better prepare for future assessments. In essence, the study demonstrates the value of incorporating self-assessment practices as an effective pedagogical tool for fostering continuous improvement in language skills.

Figure 1

Pretest and Posttest General Statistics

Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	p-value
PRE-TEST	6	11.5	16	13.6666667	13.5	12	2.05030486	0.00666728
POST-TEST	6	13.5	19.5	16.75	17.5	18.5	2.52487623	

After gathering the self-assessment pretest data, a tabulation and grading process was conducted the mean of 13.67 was obtained. This score indicates that the students are placed within the rubric at a level demonstrating limited vocabulary, subject-verb agreement, and a lack of pronunciation and fluency regarding habits in their local area.

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Posttest Rubric

The data collected from the posttest reveals that students obtained a mean of 16.75. According to the rubric, this places the students within the category of demonstrating sufficient control in pronunciation and fluency, displaying understandable vocabulary related to global habits, applying grammar structures, and presenting organized content about social media habits worldwide. The rubric's grading scale spans from 2 to 5. In this posttest, students scored within a range of 17.5. The research indicates significance differences between the pretest and posttest results, illustrating marked improvement among the six participants in the innovation program and all the students displayed enhanced scores.

The author conducted a pair- sample *t*-test using a spreadsheet in an Excel document that reveals a statistically significant difference between the pre and post test scores. Supporting in a positive manner the research question to what extend will self-assessment technique help the graduated students to improve their speaking fluency skill? so the author can make conclusions in the testing and the hypothesis. Furthermore, the researcher found, among the six students, a minimum pretest grade of 11.5 as the lowest score and a maximum of 16.00. Following the implementation of the innovation, the calculations demonstrated a minimum post-innovation grade of 13.5 and a maximum of 19.5. Calculations for the standard deviation, determining the distance from the mean, revealed a 2.04 standard deviation for the pretest and a 2.52 standard deviation in the posttest.

Figure 2

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Pretest and Posttest Rubric Criteria Statistics

Criteria	PRE-TEST					POST-TEST				
	N	MIN	MAX	M	S. D	MIN	MAX	M	S. D	p- value
Vocabulary	6	3	4	3.5	0.54772256	3.5	5	4.3333333	0.75277265	0.0005211
Grammar	6	2.5	4	3.3333333	0.60553007	3	5	4.0833333	0.73598007	0.0070776
Organized Content	6	3	4	3.3333333	0.51639778	3.5	4.5	4.1666667	0.51639778	0.108199
Pronunciation and fluency	6	3	4	3.5	0.54772256	3.5	5	4.1666667	0.60553007	0.00145658

Note: N= Sample, MIN=Minimum, MAX=Maximum; M=Mean, *S. D*= *Standard*

Deviation, *p*-value=significance

Discussion

This research question analyzed the benefits of using self-assessment in speaking skills of the graduated students. Despite having level A2 according to the placement test, the students were trained in using a checklist to work independently, improving their speaking abilities resulted in improved monologue production according with the topic studied. As Espinoza (2022) mentioned that self-assessment training empowered learners to autonomously monitor their progress; and aligned with Basak (2019) who emphasized that self-assessment not only aids

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learner autonomy, but also fosters active engagement in the learning process. Therefore, learners actively participated in the teaching process and were willing to ask questions when their feedback was not clear. To enhance understanding, the investigator created additional examples for each topic, allowing the students to address their weaknesses on time.

Furthermore, the application of subject-verb agreement was confusing for students due to forgetting the basic structure of simple present tense. To facilitate comprehension, the researcher employed contextual examples to illustrate how to report messages using this tense. Campoverde (2022) stated that this technique gives favorable outcomes in self-assessment of speaking for learners since they can identify areas for improvement. Thus, it was notable that the students were motivated to search for more information. For instance, they expressed their interest in the topic, mentioning that it was intriguing to learn about various cultures globally. As a result, they actively sought out more information to contribute to class discussions.

While using a checklist to self-assess was new for the learners, they considered it an important tool to monitor their progress. If students participate in assessing their progress, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning (McDowell, 1995). Providing timely feedback allows students to be prepared for subsequent monologues, aided through teacher modeling and self-assessment, fostering self-awareness and personal development (Bonilla, 2022). In addition, students learn to self-assess with honesty to receive good feedback.

Conclusion

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The issue identified with the graduated students from public secondary school in Cotocollao was struggling to acquire proficient spoken English skills, particularly in pronunciation, fluency, and subject-verb agreement. To address this concern, the implementation of self-assessment had positive results, offering students with the opportunity to assess their monologues, thereby contributing to enrich this skill. Actively engaging students in self-evaluating their performance fosters critical thinking and contributing to their overall skill development.

Initially, students graded with higher scores, so the teacher emphasized that honest grading is essential for identifying and developing weak areas. The assurance was given that low scores would not result in penalties, even for those with the lowest score in the class. Prior to assigning the task of creating monologues, learners were equipped with sufficient vocabulary and examples to assist their performance. Providing students with a checklist aims them to understand the evaluation criteria necessary for achieving a good score.

Moreover, self-assessment in speaking enhances students' progress as they accurately employed the parameters outlined in the checklist. The rubric base grading of the initial and final performance indicated improvement in speaking abilities in the graduated students. Additionally, the paired- sample *t*-test illustrated the impact of self-assessment on speaking grades and how it influenced students' motivation to speak freely. Therefore, after the implementation learners demonstrated improvement in their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and fluency, and organized content. To achieve effective results, a teacher must be well prepared with a comprehensive lesson plan.

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Limitations

The primary limitation was that the 12 graduated students enrolled in this innovation but half of the participants dropout due to competing responsibilities, such as public university entrance classes, night shifts, and morning shifts. This disruption affected the schedule to have these classes. Another limitation arose from delayed submissions of recordings by some students, making it difficult to provide timely feedback. Consequently, this resulted in a recurring pattern of the same mistakes in their monologues. For instance, students confused the usage of the verbs “say and tell” and sometimes forgot the correct subject- verb agreement.

Recommendations

This research was carried out with a small group of graduated high school participants. It would be beneficial to implement this innovation with a larger group of students within the classroom to minimize the possibility of missing classes. Ensuring timely recordings submissions, a researcher must have classes every other day to give a chance to the students to organize their ideas in order to create well-structured monologue.

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Appendix 1

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Checklist

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Pre-test and Post-test

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

SURVEY

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

Portfolio

Available upon request.