

Self-Assessment to improve speaking skills: a brief action research

Autoevaluación para mejorar las habilidades orales: una breve investigación-acción

Autoavaliação para melhorar as habilidades de fala: uma breve pesquisa-ação

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to demonstrate that “Self-assessment” technique applied with EFL (English as a foreign language) students can improve their speaking skills as well as their self-confidence when speaking. The research was conducted with 34 young male students from the Ecuadorian Navy from Ecuador. The students were trained on how to self-assess their speaking skills focused on the content, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction. They self-assessed using a checklist and the teacher used a rubric to evaluate them. The design of the research was applied through a pretest and a posttest. Between the pretest and a posttest, the researcher implemented an innovation called “The Backward Design” to help students focus on the target which is having a casual conversation in pairs about daily topics in English with self-confidence. A mixed method was used since the data collected during this study were quantitative and qualitative. The results compare the grades from the pretest and the posttest to determine if self-assessment improved or did not improve the students’ speaking skills and their self-confidence at the end of the innovation. Finally, an argument at the end of the research takes place to discuss the similarities and differences with other investigations.

Keywords: Self-assessment, speaking skills, self-confidence, English EFL, research action.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo demostrar que la técnica de "Autoevaluación" aplicada con estudiantes de EFL (Inglés como lengua extranjera) puede mejorar sus habilidades de expresión oral, así como su confianza en sí mismos al hablar. La investigación se realizó con 34 jóvenes estudiantes varones de la Armada del Ecuador de Ecuador. Se capacitó a los estudiantes sobre cómo autoevaluar sus habilidades orales centradas en el contenido, la gramática, el vocabulario, la pronunciación y la interacción. Se autoevaluaron usando una lista de verificación y el maestro usó una rúbrica para evaluarlos. El diseño de la investigación se aplicó a través de un pretest y un posttest. Entre el pretest y el posttest, el investigador implementó una innovación llamada “The Backward Design” para ayudar a los estudiantes a concentrarse en el objetivo que es tener una conversación informal en parejas sobre temas cotidianos en inglés con confianza en sí mismos. Se utilizó un método mixto ya que los datos recopilados durante este estudio fueron cuantitativos y cualitativos. Los resultados comparan las calificaciones de la prueba previa y la prueba posterior para determinar si la autoevaluación mejoró o no mejoró las habilidades orales de los estudiantes y su confianza en sí mismos al final de la innovación. Finalmente, se lleva a cabo una argumentación al final de la investigación para discutir las similitudes y diferencias con otras investigaciones.

Palabras clave: Autoevaluación, habilidades para hablar, confianza en sí mismo, inglés, investigación acción.

RESUMO

O presente estudo tem como objetivo demonstrar que a técnica de “Autoavaliação” aplicada com alunos de EFL (Inglês como Língua Estrangeira) pode melhorar suas habilidades de fala, bem como sua autoconfiança ao falar. A pesquisa foi realizada com 34 jovens estudantes do sexo masculino da Marinha Equatoriana do Equador. Os alunos foram treinados para autoavaliar suas habilidades de fala com foco no conteúdo, gramática, vocabulário, pronúncia e interação. Eles se autoavaliaram usando uma lista de verificação e o professor usou uma rubrica para avaliá-los. O desenho da pesquisa foi aplicado por meio de um pré-teste e um pós-teste. Entre o pré-teste e um pós-teste, a pesquisadora implementou uma inovação chamada “The Backward Design” para ajudar os alunos a se concentrarem no objetivo que é ter uma conversa casual em dupla sobre tópicos diários em inglês com autoconfiança. Foi utilizado um método misto, uma vez que os dados coletados durante este estudo foram quantitativos e qualitativos. Os resultados comparam as notas do pré-teste e do pós-teste para determinar se a autoavaliação melhorou ou não as habilidades de fala dos alunos e sua autoconfiança ao final da inovação. Por fim, um argumento ao final da pesquisa ocorre para discutir as semelhanças e diferenças com outras investigações.

Palavras-chave: Autoavaliação, habilidades de fala, inglês, autoconfiança.

INTRODUCTION

For EFL (English as a foreign language) learners, speaking is the most difficult skill to develop when they are learning this language. Many researchers have concluded that by applying the self-assessment technique with their students, they have had positive results regarding their speaking skills.

One researcher from Indonesia (Alfianti, 2022), concluded in his study that the students had a significant improvement in their speaking development compared to the students that were evaluated with regular assessments. Another researcher from the United States, (H. L. Andrade, 2019), presented evidence that shows how self-assessment is beneficial for both achievement and self-regulated learning when students use it formatively and also when they are trained on how to use it. A third study done in Spain by (Ernesto et al., 2017) revealed that self-assessment had a positive influence on students' self-regulated learning and self-efficacy.

Regarding to Ecuador, according to the biggest world ranking in the domain of the English language, Education First English Proficiency Index (2021), Ecuador has the 90th place out of 112 countries. This place leaves Ecuador within the "very low level" group of ranked countries. To overcome this difficulty, the Ecuadorian government has implemented two projects: "Go Teacher", which consisted on preparing the English teachers from public schools with scholarships at countries where English is spoken, and "Time to teach English", which consisted on bringing native English teachers to teach at public schools. Unfortunately, this effort has not been enough to improve the English language skills for the Ecuadorian students. However, some Ecuadorian researchers have individually developed projects to help their own students improve their English language skills.

In relation to self-assessment technique to improve speaking skills in English, some studies have been done here in Ecuador (Buchelli, 2021), mentions in her study that self-assessment improved her students' ability to speak English because they lost the fear of speaking. Also, it made them reflect about their weaknesses and strengths. Another study done by (Quito, 2021), claimed to have obtained positive results with her students toward their speaking skills after applying self-assessment technique. A third study, done by Borja (2022), stated that self-assessment helped students to become autonomous and responsible regarding to their tasks. Finally, (Suquilanda, 2022), mentioned that self-assessment technique helped her students to overcome their difficulties regarding to speaking skills and gave them confidence.

The purpose of this research is to improve the recruits' speaking skills in the third term from the Ecuadorian Navy by applying the self-assessment technique. The researcher applied the self-assessment technique to their daily dialogues or chats in English based on a topic inside the classroom. Additionally, the researcher intends to demonstrate that the self-assessment technique increases the students' self-confidence when speaking English in public.

This research starts with the literature review which describes the importance of speaking when learning a language, what self-assessment is, how to effectively apply self-assessment with students, advantages and disadvantages of using self-assessment.

After that, it describes how the innovation took place during classes. It means how the classes were planned and how the students self-assessed. Then, the researcher describes the methodology used to carry out this investigation. It includes the instruments used to collect the data from the students, the participants, how the data was analyzed and the ethical considerations taken with the participants.

Next, the results of the investigation are presented. They include the results and the interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative data. Immediately after that, the researcher presents the discussion which compares and contrasts the results of this investigation with other researchers' results. Then, the researcher draws her final conclusions based on the results and the interpretation

of the research. Finally, the limitations of the current study and the recommendations for future studies are stated. At the end of the document, the references and the annexes can be seen.

Self-Assessment to Improve Speaking Skills

One of the biggest challenges EFL teachers might face in their profession is get their learners to talk in English using an acceptable level of accuracy for grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. It is definitely not a straightforward task. It takes a lot effort from both teachers and apprentices. At the end of the third term, A1 and A2 level recruits from the third term from the Ecuadorian Navy should be able to maintain simple oral exchanges in English by using the tenses they have been studying. In addition, they have to use the vocabulary and the collocations studied in the course as well as possess an intelligible pronunciation and fluency when they speak. However, they are having some difficulties with the use of these tenses and vocabulary when they talk in English. They struggle a lot when they try to maintain a dialogue transferred from the unit contents to real life scenarios. They cannot use the proper words or grammatical phrases to fully express their ideas.

After observing all the deficiencies these pupils were having when they tried to have oral production, the teacher implemented the self-assessment technique to help them overcome those difficulties to communicate among themselves or with the teacher. The implementation of this innovation lasted two weeks. It took place during face-to-face classes with 34 young male adult learners from the Navy in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This action research focuses on the implementation of the self-assessment technique and how it strengthens the oral performance in an EFL classroom. The following section shows related theories about it.

Speaking

When a person is able to produce oral meaningful utterances in a language, they say that person speaks that language. This is the speaking skill or ability the person possesses. Nevertheless, speaking is not only talking in any language. It involves more aspects such as the correct use of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, transaction, interaction, pragmatics, social and cultural rules (Kurum, 2016). According to (Kuśnierek, 2015), speaking is the most important competence that a person should dominate when learning a new language. Another expert mentioned that:

Of all the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as ‘speakers’ of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing. And many, if not most, language learners are mainly interested in learning to communicate orally (Ur, 2012, p. 17)

Considering these authors, the researcher proposed a way to develop the speaking ability in students when learning or acquiring a new language. In order to achieve a correct performance of this skill, teachers must find a suitable strategy that stimulates learners to talk in English while they are in class. Responding to this necessity, some researchers agree that by applying self-assessment in the classroom, learners could enhance their oral communication.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment in education means the learners evaluating or reflecting about their own learning based on stated goals or criteria. They have to be able to recognize weaknesses and strengths for the purpose of improving their performance at the next level of learning (Rolheiser Karol, Roos Jhon, 2001; Andrade & Du, 2007).

Why to apply self-assessment?

According to (Alek et al., 2020a), self-assessment is one of the different approaches to assess students' speaking skills in English language. They concluded in their study that self-assessment helps increase future oral production as well as motivation. They also stated that it boosts oral communication between learners and teachers.

More benefits of applying self-assessment in a classroom are mentioned by other authors: students receive good feedback from the teacher related to their learning, it increases their autonomy, and they develop critical abilities to evaluate themselves. Additionally, students have the feeling that they can domain their own learning, it develops the value of responsibility in them, it helps them to eliminate the fear about the teacher being the only one who can judge their work, and finally it helps to improve their cognitive level (Jamrus & Razali, 2019, p. 70). Another study revealed that self-assessment increased the level of proficiency in learners during the semester regarding to vocabulary, fluency, and confidence (De Saint Léger, 2009, p. 169).

Ways to use self-assessment effectively

(Rolheiser Karol, Roos Jhon, 2001) stated four stages to use self-assessment with students. First, teachers need to involve students in the elaboration of the criteria from the rubric for self-assessment. This will give both teachers and learners the opportunity to negotiate the criteria of their performance to have a balance between the school objectives and the student's preferences. Second, teachers need to show students how to apply the criteria they created to assess their own work. When students have been involved in the creation of the criteria, the results will be a combination of personal and school goals. If not, they need to be modelled by the teacher on how to use the criteria. Third, teachers have to give feedback about how learners applied the criteria. This feedback should come from the teacher to discuss and obtain better results in their self-assessments. Finally, teachers have to help students to create new goals for their learning and new levels of effort with the data of their current self-assessment.

(Tran, 2019) mentioned that to apply self-assessment effectively learners need time to develop experience with this technique. He also stated that apprentices need to practice a variety of strategies to obtain feedback, training and guide for further learning. Finally, he revealed that in one relevant study with 60 Iranian EFL learners, the self-assessment technique did improve the learners' speaking abilities.

Disadvantages of self-assessment

According to (Başak, 2019), some factors should be considered by researches for the application of the self-assessment technique. These are the students' age, gender, social or cultural background, motivation and their willingness to learn English. This means that if learners are influenced by any of these elements in a negative way, the results might not be positive.

Another researcher claimed that “self-assessment is not popular among educational institutions because: 1-students feel that assessment is the responsibility of teachers, 2- teachers are not yet ready to trust student’s judgment and, 3- students lack the sufficient assessment skills” Lee, 2016, as cited in (Thawabieh, 2017, p. 15)

Another study concluded that “good students tended to underrate themselves and that weaker students tended to overrate themselves” Boud & Falchikov, 1989, as cited in (Dochy et al., 1999, p. 334). This means that learners might grade themselves with higher or lower scores than they deserve. To avoid this situation, teachers have to guide them on how to evaluate themselves to be fair with their grades and make sure they can properly achieve the next level of learning.

Authors who applied self-assessment

The following chart shows a summary of the authors and their investigations related to self-assessment.

Table 1: Authors who applied self-assessment

Author	Research/ Method	Result
Andrade, H. L. (2019)	“A critical review of research on student self-assessment. In <i>Frontiers in Education</i> ” / Quantitative and Qualitative.	“Self-assessment is most beneficial, in terms of both achievement and self-regulated learning, when it is used formatively and supported by training”.
Alek, A., Marzuki, A. G., Farkhan, M., & Deni, R. (2020)	“Self-assessment in exploring EFL students’ speaking skill” / Qualitative	“Through self-assessment the students can increase their motivation to achieve the learning goal. Besides, students can increase their communication with the teacher. Additionally, self-assessment could stimulate students to learn individually in order to achieve the learning goal and improve students’ capability for future performance”.
Alfianti, M. (2022)	“The implementation of self-Assessment in EFL students’ speaking performance” / Quantitative.	“The students who implemented the self-assessment could outperform the students with conventional assessment. Also, the students with the self-assessment practice result significantly difference from the students without the self-assessment practice”.
Borja, R. (2022)	“Applying Self-Assessment to Improve Speaking Skills in a Secondary School”/ Quantitative and Qualitative.	“It can be concluded that self-assessment significantly improved speaking skills. It gave students the opportunity to judge their learning and identify their weaknesses and strengths”
Bucheli, N. (2021)	“Self-assessment of Roleplays to Improve Speaking” / Quantitative and Qualitative.	“Obtaining positive and favorable results in the students mentioned in the interview after the innovation, students said they had improved their English-speaking skills and they even lost their fear of speaking English. The self-assessment made them reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, improving their ability to speak in English”.
Panadero, E., Jonsson, A., & Botella, J. (2017).	“Effects of self-assessment on self-regulated learning and self-efficacy: Four meta-analyses” / Qualitative and Quantitative.	“The findings from this meta-analytic review suggest that self-assessment interventions have a positive influence on students’ SRL strategies and self-efficacy”.
Suquilanda, J. (2022).	“Self-assessment Influence on Improving Speaking Skills” / Qualitative and Quantitative.	“They got better and better through practice which led them to improve their performances. Self-assessment allowed them to overcome the difficulties they were facing before. It gave them confidence and guidance to find a solution to increase their strength, making it noticeable on the results. Furthermore, their oral skills improved after the application of the innovation, it could be evidenced in the final monologue”.
Thawabieh, A. (2017).	“A Comparison between Students’ Self-Assessment and Teachers’ Assessment” / Quantitative.	“The involvement of students in the assessment process increases students’ self-confidence, achievement, and satisfaction with scores they get for tests prepared by the instructor, subsequently; this makes them feel that they are partners in the process of learning and teaching”.

Source: the authors (2022)

Innovation

This innovation was applied to 34 young male adult learners of the third term from the Ecuadorian Navy. Their English level is between A1 and A2. It lasted two weeks. The classes were taught in a face-to-face modality.

The lesson plan consisted on a backward design. In the backward design, the final task is planned first to identify the desired results in the learning process. Then, the teacher determined the acceptable evidence for those results which was the checklist for the self-assessment. Finally, the activities to be performed by learners to help them reach the objectives of the unit were planned. These activities were classified into acquisition, transfer or meaningful making and they were developed to acquire the vocabulary and grammar required for the unit. To support these activities the teacher used slides, banners, games, videos, audios, E-book, and the student's textbook. Additionally, the teacher applied the Gradual Release of Responsibilities (GRR) when working with the students to help them acquire autonomy in class which consisted first on demonstration of the task, then the guided instruction on the formative activities, after that; the collaborative work among the learners, and finally, the transfer where they had to work on their own.

The unit had four lessons and the summative evaluation which was the final task. Each lesson contained useful vocabulary to practice in everyday situations such as food, adjectives to describe food or activities, leisure, military courses, and colloquial phrases to greet and end conversations. In addition, the students practiced the structures required for the final task: Simple Present, Present Continuous, and Future Going to.

Before the unit, the recruits were instructed on how to self-assess. Then, they had a pretest that consisted on presenting a conversation in pairs related to future plans and the teacher recorded it. They self-assessed using a checklist and were given oral feedback by the teacher.

During the unit, the learners were given a new mentor chat about future plans everyday as a model to create a new one in pairs with the vocabulary and grammar studied through the activities in each lesson. Immediately after that, they presented their own dialogue, they self-assessed and received oral feedback from the teacher. At the end of the unit, the learners were given some minutes to organize the final oral task and present it. They self-assessed and the teacher recorded them and gave them oral feedback

METHODOLOGY

The present study is action research, that is defined as: a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding or a topic or issue. At a general level, research consists of three steps:

1. Pose a question,
2. Collect data to answer the question
3. Present and answer to the question (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p.3).

This action research was conducted using quantitative and qualitative instruments to analyze how self-assessment of the students' dialogues (independent variable) improved their speaking skills (dependent variable). (H. L. Andrade, 2019), concludes that it's not clear yet how self-assessment influences in the cognitive part of the students. She also states that there is an interaction between feelings and thoughts. These statements lead me to conclude that the better the students self-assess, the better they will do at their speaking performances because they gain more self-confidence, therefore; they will improve their speaking skills.

This action research uses a mixed method of investigation, which includes qualitative and quantitative ways to collect and analyze the data. Driessnack et al, Sousa and Costa, 2007 as cited by (Pereira, 2011), state that "mixed methods refer to a unique study that uses multiple or mixed strategies to answer research questions or prove hypothesis". The current action research fits into QUANT + QUAL classification of mixed methods mentioned by these three authors. Additionally, they mention that the "+" means that the secondary method is being used at the same time during the data collection. On the other hand, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie in the 2004, Onwuegbuzie and

Leech in the 2006, as cited by (Pereira, 2011) claim that the mixed methods are classified into equality in status and dominant status. This action research fits into the “equality in status, concurrent: QUANT + QUAL” classification because “the methods were applied simultaneously and none of them prioritizes over the other one”. According to another classification for the type of method design done by Rocco en the 2003, as cited by (Pereira, 2011) this action research fits into the “Simultaneous, exploratory or confirmatory research. quantitative and qualitative with qualitative and quantitative analysis”. Finally, according to an organization of mixed methods stated by Creswell in the 2008, as cited by (Pereira, 2011), this action research uses the concurrent triangulation strategy because “in the same study they confirm, correlate or corroborate. It uses some theoretical perspective; in the interpretation they look for the integration. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously”. Summarizing, this action research is categorized into the following criteria:

Mixed method with equality in status, concurrent: QUANT + QUAL. The type of method design used was the simultaneous, exploratory or confirmatory research. Quantitative and qualitative with qualitative and quantitative analysis. The strategy used was the concurrent triangulation.

Participants

This research was carried out with 34 Ecuadorian male students in the third term from the Ecuadorian Navy. The students’ ages rank between 18 to 23 years old. It was conducted in face-to-face classes. Their English level goes from A1 (3 students) to A2 (31 students) according to the CEFR. The level of the students was determined by applying them an online English test at the Cambridge English Language Assessment page.

Instruments

Two experts in EFL validated the checklists and another expert in assessment validated the rubric for this action research. After that, the researcher used a pre and a posttest as instruments during the innovation. These two instruments answered the following research question: *to what extent will recruits improve their speaking skills with the implementation of the self-assessment technique?*

To have an overall concept about the impact of the implementation of the self-assessment technique in students, the teacher applied the direct observation of the learners’ attitude toward the innovation. The observation was done class by class. The researcher focused on the reaction of the students toward the innovation, if they looked comfortable or not by doing all the activities performed during the innovation and if they looked less afraid than before of speaking among themselves or in front of others. It helped to answer the following research question: *will the implementation of self-assessment technique increase the students’ self-confidence when they speak English?*

The pretest took place before the unit. The students were asked to create a conversation in pairs related to their immediate future plans based on a model chat provided by the teacher. They presented it to the class and the teacher recorded them. Then, the recruits self-assessed using a checklist. The teacher used a rubric to evaluate aspects in their first oral intervention such as content, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction.

For the posttest, a final task was given the last day of the unit and the students had a few minutes to organize themselves to present it. It consisted on presenting a dialogue between two marines who ran into each other in the street during the upcoming holidays which was Christmas. They had to greet each other showing surprise by using the colloquial phrases they had practiced. They also had to ask about their families and their immediate future plans for the next holidays by

using the vocabulary related to food, adjectives and leisure activities. They had to use the appropriate structure for each question. At the end, they had to close the conversation by using more colloquial phrases learned during the unit. After that, they self-assessed their final oral intervention for that unit and were given oral feedback from the teacher as well. The teacher also evaluated their final oral presentation with the rubric and recorded them.

According to (Ulker, 2017a), “A rubric works on each criterion separately, provides scales for a list of components and a description for each rating. This type of rubric is used to assess important tasks where each component needs to be evaluated separately” (p. 135). The rubric used by the teacher for this action research had four descriptors: Content, Grammar & Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Interaction.

A checklist is “a simple list of items designed for both assessor and student to check if every item is presented” (Ulker, 2017b, p. 135). The checklist used in this action research had four items for the students to self-assess their oral performance: Understands the videos, the worksheets of the unit because the audio content is appropriate, uses some new vocabulary, grammar to express his future plans related to some topic, uses intelligible pronunciation, interacts by asking, and answering questions. Each item of the checklist corresponds to one descriptor from the rubric.

Data Analysis

The data from this action research was analyzed by using Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. To report the first action research question *to what extent will recruits improve their speaking skills with the implementation of the self-assessment technique?* the researcher obtained the maximum, minimum, mean, standard deviation, and the *p-value* from the students’ grades in the pretest and posttest. To report the second action research question *will the implementation of self-assessment technique increase the students’ self-confidence when they speak English?* the researcher took some notes about the students’ reactions.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained the written authorization from the principal of the Marine School from the Navy in Guayaquil to carry out this action research. The participants, who are adults, were also asked to voluntarily participate in this study and they agreed. Both authorities and participants were informed that the objective of this investigation was for academic purposes.

Results

To answer the research question: *to what extent will recruits improve their speaking skills with the implementation of the self-assessment technique?* descriptive statistics was used since the data was collected, classified, ordered and it was used to calculate the results.

Table 2: Calculation of the results

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Pretest	34	7.00	10.00	7.93	0.85
Posttest	34	8.50	10.00	9.40	0.53

Note: N=Sample, Min=Minimum, Max= Maximum, M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows an improvement comparing the results from the pretest and the posttest for the Minimum, and the Mean values. The standard deviation in the posttest is closer to the mean value than in the pretest. The results calculated from the evaluations between ages 19 and 23 will be detailed in the following table.

Table 3: Calculation of the results by the age of 19 to 23 years

	Age	Pretest	Posttest	Correlation
Mean	20,58	7,91	9,18	
Median	20	8,00	9,25	0,22
Mode	20	8,5	8,5	

Source: the authors

Table 2 shows the value of the correlation between the pretest and the posttest for the age with more frequency which is 20. The value of the correlation (0,22) is higher than 0 which means there is not too much correlation between the pretest and the posttest.

To answer the second research question *will the implementation of self-assessment technique increase the students' self-confidence when they speak English?* the researcher took into consideration the observation of the students' reactions during the implementation of the innovation. The following notes are some of those reactions.

At the beginning of the implementation of the self-assessment technique, the recruits were not sure of how to self-assess. They kept asking the teacher how to do it even though she had taught them how. She monitored the students and realized that some of them overestimated their scores and others underestimated them. Consequently, the teacher proceeded to give the learners formative feedback about their self-assessment to help them be fairer with their performance.

Another observation made by the researcher was that at the beginning of the implementation, the students were afraid of talking in front of the whole class, they felt judged not only by the teacher, but also by their peers and by the fact that they were being recorded. As the lessons passed by, they felt less afraid of speaking in front of others and at some point, they managed to know how to self-assess their speaking skills fairly.

In general, the pupils had a more positive attitude as the unit continued compared to the beginning of the innovation. In the recordings, the researcher had the opportunity to watch and listen again the students' performance in the pretest and posttests. In the pretest they looked doubtful while in the posttest they spoke with more self-confidence.

Discussion

Regarding the first research question, to what extent will recruits improve their speaking skills with the implementation of the self-assessment technique? this study found out that the application of self-assessment improved speaking skills. This is consistent with other studies that showed similar results. One of them stated that, "self-assessment helps improve future performance, increase motivation and stimulates them during their speaking performance, and increase communication between student and teacher" (Alek et al., 2020b, p. 211). Other researchers that encountered positive results when applying self-assessment were (Ariafar & Fatemipour, 2013),

they claimed that in a sample of 60 Iranian participants, the implementation of self-assessment technique did help the participants to upgrade their speaking skills.

For the second research question, will the implementation of self-assessment technique increase the students' self-confidence when they speak English? this study revealed that students showed more self-confidence with the implementation of self-assessment technique when speaking English because the teacher could observe that they were less afraid of talking in front of an audience. In the same way, (De Saint Léger, 2009), concluded in her research that self-assessment enhanced the proficiency of the learners regarding to vocabulary, fluency, and confidence.

Another finding in this research was the development of autonomy in the recruits. In this study, the teacher observed that they managed to self-assess more fairly after practicing for many days and receiving formative feedback from the teacher. This is consistent with (Jamrus & Razali, 2019), who found out in their study that self-assessment increased the students' autonomy and developed critical abilities to evaluate themselves.

Finally, another similarity with other study was the observation of some students overestimating or underestimating their scores when they self-assessed their oral abilities. The researchers stated that "good students tended to underrate themselves and that weaker students tended to overrate themselves" Boud & Falchikov in the 1989, as cited in (Dochy et al., 1999, p. 334). The only difference with this study was that good students overestimated their grades and weak students underestimated them when the self-assessed. The following chart compares and contrasts the results of this action research with another similar action researches.

Table 4: Comparison of results with other investigations

Aspect	Literature review	Result	Implication	Suggested new researches
Autonomy	"Self-assessment increased the students' autonomy and developed critical abilities to evaluate themselves" Jamrus and Razali (2019).	"Students managed to self-assess more fairly after practicing for many days and receiving formative feedback from the teacher".	The results are the same with the study from Jamrus and Razali (2019)	Self-assessment to improve autonomy for writing skills.
Performance	"Self-assessment helps improve future performance, increase motivation and stimulates them during their speaking performance, and increase communication between student and teacher" Alek et al. (2020).	"This study found out that the application of self-assessment improved speaking skills".	The evidence is consistent with a study from Alek et al. (2020).	Self-assessment to improve writing skills.
Self-confidence	"The involvement of students in the assessment process increases students' self-confidence, achievement, and satisfaction". Thawabieh, A. (2017).	"This study revealed that students showed more self-confidence with the implementation of self-assessment technique when speaking English because the teacher could observe that they were less afraid of talking in front of an audience".	There is a coincidence with the evidence from Thawabieh, A. (2017) and this study.	Self-assessment to improve self-confidence to make oral presentations.

Source: authors (2022)

CONCLUSION

Learning a new language is quite difficult for any EFL learner especially if they do not have the time and opportunities for extra practice outside the classroom as in the case of the recruits from

the Ecuadorian Navy since they have a tough routine from the dawn until late at night. They also lack the motivation to practice their English lessons due to the tiredness they feel every day for the extreme physical exercises. Nevertheless, they have to at least be able to communicate at the A2 level when they graduate as marines.

After observing this enormous difficulty, the teacher tried to overcome this problem with other techniques but without too many positive results. The students felt no motivation to learn English since it is a basic subject for their profession. However, they have the necessity to approve it in order to graduate. Consequently, this study was carried out to help them feel the motivation to learn English and improve their oral abilities and not only to pass a subject.

The implementation of the self-assessment technique with the recruits to improve their oral performance had quite positive results towards the English language. They went from “I cannot do that” to “I am doing it” when they were taught to self-assess with critical thinking and honesty. Indeed, no one knows better than one how they are progressing in their work or tasks. Besides, the significant improvement shown in the results of the evaluation made by the teacher with the rubric in the posttest proved that they really increased their speaking skills at least for that unit.

As a conclusion, after observing the students’ pretest and posttest during the implementation of the self-assessment technique, they did improve their self-confidence when speaking English because they were able to self-assess with a higher score during the posttest and they were less afraid of speaking in public. Additionally, they were more willing to work on the activities and the dialogues as the unit continued which means they were more motivated to learn and speak English.

Limitations

Initially, the estimated number of participants were forty recruits, but six of them could not participate due to a variety of factors. One of them had a car accident right just before the innovation and the other five were on their mandatory shifts when the teacher applied the pretest. As a result, they were taken out of the research for that first part and this situation made them feel out of place. However, they participated in the rest of the innovation and the posttest. The ideal situation would have been having all of them within the study, but the teacher could not wait too much time to implement the innovation because there were due dates for this research.

Another problem was the fact that the students did not have enough time in their autonomous learning at nights to practice their lessons because of the strict routines they have that do not allow them to practice as they desired. Therefore, the teacher had to make them practice in their face-to-face classes during the day which extended the length of the unit more than it should. In conclusion, the time was a limitation for this study.

Finally, some resources were limited inside the classroom such as the internet to make students do extra online activities that could have helped them better to acquire the vocabulary and structures needed for the unit. In addition, some technological devices such as the projector and the speakers were not always available to play the audios or videos, thereby; the teacher had to use her cellphone to make them listen to the mentor chats that serve as models for them to create a new one.

Recommendations

For future researchers, it is advisable to apply the study to all the students from the group to have more precise results about the whole class to obtain the Maximum, Minimum, Media, and Standard Deviation when collecting and analyzing the data. Another suggestion is planning all the activities with enough time in advance to avoid any delay in the unit. If the learners do not have

enough time to practice their lessons, if it is possible, try to give them virtual tutorial sessions with the consent of the school authorities at a different time than their regular classes to give them extra formative feedback that improves their next level of learning. Another recommendation when the technological resources are not available to develop all the planned activities, it is suggested to self-manage in advance what it is needed to carry out all the tasks successfully.

As final recommendation, it is suggested to develop similar studies related to self-assessment to enhance other Language skills in students such as self-assessment to improve writing skills, self-assessment to improve autonomy for writing skills, and self-assessment to improve self-confidence to make oral presentations. It would also be very advisable to practice peer-assessment for any of the skills after applying self-assessment for the students to learn how to give feedback to their classmates.

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