

BEYOND PAPER-AND-PENCIL TESTS: GOOD ASSESSMENT PRACTICES FOR EFL CLASSES

SANDY T. SOTO / EDER INTRIAGO PALACIOS / JOHNNY VILLAFUERTE HOLGUÍN



Beyond Paper-and-Pencil Tests: Good Assessment Practices for EFL Classes

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Dedication

To all the people who made the publication of this book possible.

To those EFL teachers who, day by day, give the best of their own for helping their students construct their knowledge and learn English in meaningful and effective ways.

Introduction

Individuals' learning of a second or foreign language has been traditionally measured with paper-and-pencil tests. Unfortunately, such assessment practice prevents learners from demonstrating the skills gained throughout the teaching-learning processes and thus, their actual ability to use the target language effectively. It also limits learners from receiving positive feedback; which opens doors for them to improve their language skills.

The language teaching field demands that English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers have a vast knowledge of the fundamental concepts and theories that surround the assessment of EFL learning. It also requires that professionals who teach a foreign language keep up to date with assessment tendencies that go beyond paper-and-pencil tests as is the case of authentic assessments.

Assessment practices that go beyond traditional paper-and-pencil tests provide students with opportunities to be assessed in mental stress-free environments. Teachers who promote this alternative form of assessment prompt learners to perform real-world tasks so that they can demonstrate their capability to apply essential knowledge and skills in creative and meaningful ways. In other words, teachers gain insights about how much students have grasped by

their actual ability to perform in a specific situation instead of the number right or wrong answers they have made on a test.

This book is composed of seven chapters intended to inform pre-service and in-service EFL teachers about good assessment practices that go beyond the bounds of tests that require learners to read questions and respond in writing. The first chapter of this book provides EFL educators with a menu of authentic assessments that can be implemented in their classrooms. It also builds a synopsis of assessment practices in Ecuadorian EFL classes and the educational policies that have been implemented to improve them.

The second chapter of this book digs into the use of role-plays as an alternative to assess students' oral production. The chapter is built upon the results of two studies on the topic and some research conducted by its author, addressing the causes that affect learners' willingness to speak English. The third chapter focuses on the assessment of one of the receptive skills in language learning, reading. This chapter offers a compilation of resources for effectively assessing reading comprehension in EFL programs; detailing how these resources intertwine with the reality of EFL settings.

The fourth chapter discusses a set of strategies that have been evaluated by the authors of this section through action research. Based on their experience, the authors explain how such strategies can be used as tools to gain insights, develop reflective practice, and improve students' outcomes as well as the teaching environment.

In the fifth chapter, the readers will learn about the importance of determining and how to diminish students' test anxiety. This chapter also addresses practical authentic assessment tools and scenarios that give language learners anxiety-free opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge.

The sixth and seventh chapters have been devoted to the use of technology for assessing language learners authentically. Chapter six analyzes the change from traditional pen

and paper tests to those that have incorporated technology. The authors review the evolution of Information and Communication Technologies based evaluation and assessment applications for English as foreign language learning and teaching, as well as their advantages and disadvantages, current developments, and future trends for technology-based assessment practices.

Finally, grounded in an action research intervention, chapter seven examines how the use of Literature Circles, Google Apps, and corrective feedback can help students improve learners' English language level. Each chapter in this book offers EFL teachers with valuable information on good assessment practices. It is expected that the educators who read this work consider the suggestions provided here and implement them in their practice. We are sure that by doing so, these educators will give their students the possibility of being assessed authentically; it is to say, by what they can do instead of by how many items they get right on a test.

07 Chapter Literature circles, Google apps and corrective feedback to assess language learning

Eder Intriago Palacios; Johnny Villafuerte Holguín

Abstract

This action research aims to contribute to the improvement of the evaluation stage of educational projects that use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This project involved undergraduate students' English language acquisition process in Ecuador, during 2016-2017. The participants were 120 students of in the teacher education program. They took part of English language practices that combined Literature Circles and Google Apps to improve participants English language level. The results showed an improvement in all the participants' English knowledge levels. It also introduced a creative, more authentic and intrinsically motiva-

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ting assessment process using ICT, which took into account learners' context and class' goals to generate constructive feedback.

Keywords: Assessment, English as foreign Language learning, Higher education, Information and communication technology, reading.

Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación-acción tiene como objetivo contribuir al fortalecimiento de la etapa de evaluación de los proyectos educativos que utilizan las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación. Este trabajo se centra en el proceso de adquisición del idioma inglés de estudiantes universitarios en Ecuador, durante el período 2016-2017. Los participantes son 120 estudiantes del Programa de Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera de una Universidad Ecuatoriana. Participaron en prácticas de idioma inglés que combinan círculos de literatura y aplicaciones de Google para mejorar el nivel de inglés de los participantes. Los resultados muestran una mejora en todos los niveles de conocimiento de inglés de los participantes. Como resultado, también se introduce un proceso de evaluación creativo, más auténtico e intrínsecamente motivador utilizando las TIC, que tiene en cuenta el contexto de los alumnos y los objetivos de la clase para generar una retroalimentación constructiva.

Palabras clave: evaluación, inglés como aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, educación superior, tecnología de la información y la comunicación, lectura.

Introduction

Teachers need to find creative ways to make sure that what is being taught is being done in a way that really makes students learn it. Both, analog and digital education apply evaluation processes which have to do with type of content. Skills, however, are sometimes harder to assess than content whose assessment involves remembering or repeating activities.

Thus, the present work is motivated out of the necessity of improving assessment procedures on the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) highly required in the education of the century XXI. Such assessment procedures should not only be limited to effectively discovering if a student has learned; it should also reveal how students are learning. In this concern, Google Apps can be very useful because their flexibility to be accessed since a smartphone or tablet (Nevin, 2009).

It is clear that much of the assessment that is done in education today is composed of standardized and multiple-choice tests therefore, teachers are obliged to look for new ways to bring to the surface the information that these standardized tests can't (Brown, 2004). Also, tests and assessments traditionally have been applied to identify and measure the contents students do not know; instead, those instruments should measure the contents students have somewhat mastered (Jabbarifar, 2009).

Thus, following Brown's (2004), Bain (2007), Jabbarifar's (2009) and Najeeb's (2013) lines of thought, this chapter intends to aid teachers in creating more authentic and intrinsically motivating assessment procedures that take into account learners' context and class' goals to generate a constructive feedback, but also keeping in mind learners' personal interests and motivations (Noels, Clement & Pelletier, 1999; Lamb, 2002)

In the same sense, the evaluations must also reflect the needs of students because these are connected with their performance. Teacher need to be careful in not using this information in isolation to make decision in terms of indication of ability or acquisition of knowledge as imprecise (Falout, Elwood & Hood, 2009). Here, the action of evaluation benefits students and teachers in different ways. They will have the certitude that progress is being made and that learning truly is taking place in the classroom (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013).

Teachers are invited to reflect upon what they are doing to assess their students and be critical as to the question "does it really work?"; in this sense, an attitude of openness to new ways of assessment should be adopted. Among the many routes that can be taken, this chapter suggests technology as an

ally in the creating and application of pieces of assessment that help determining whether a student is effectively learning and informing the teachers what is working really well or determine the changes to be made. The questions to answer in this work are:

Is assessment capable of revealing what students had learned and also, how they did it?

How efficient can be ICT in the assessment process?

Assessment as teaching and learning process

Scholars as Miller (1995); Wilson (1999) and Dixon (2011) view assessment as a crucial point in the teaching/learning process. It is central as this process requires of actions and instruments that provide data about how the learning goals set are being reached by the learners; based on this, new curriculum and assessment decisions are made.

This way of looking at assessing is grounded in reflection and learning from teaching, which promotes innovative ways to teach and a true desire to improve the lives of their students (Stone, 1998; and Withford, Ruscoe and Fickel, 2000) present some of the aspects that they discovered as deficiencies revealed through portfolios: Home and family conflicts, Decreased levels of self-esteem, Family isolation, Frequent and disruptive moves from one place to another, Reduced exposure to language (especially academic language).

Teachers and students are actively involved in a process that requires the application of permanent evaluation (Barootchi and Keshavarz, 2002). They combine efforts that produce information and a dynamic that yields results. However, "the anticipation of a test is almost always accompanied by feelings of anxiety and self-doubt-along with a fervent hope that you will come out of it alive" (Brown, 2004, p.1).

Since educational institutions should seek that students incorporate the knowledge, skills and values gained in the learning experiences so that it has a meaningful use in their lives, teachers are challenged to think of ways to create tea-

ching and learning scenarios, resources, content variation and activities that resemble reality (Miller, 1995; Fox, 2008). They are called alternative assessment or nontraditional assessment to separate from the classic, standardized multiple choice tests (Chung, 2008; Rodrigues, 2010). Some examples are observation checklists, portfolios, individual and group presentations, videos, game-based and performance-based assessments can be mentioned as examples of alternative assessment.

However, teachers “develop, administer and analyze the questions, they are more likely to apply the results of the assessment to their own teaching. Therefore, it provides feedback on the effectiveness of instruction and gives students a measure of their progress” (Jabbarifar, 2009, p8). Then, they center on the learning goals, understood as declarations of “observable” knowledge or abilities at the end of period (Dixon, 2011). In this sense, assessment affects grades, placement, and progress as well as curriculum. These ways of assessment make it possible for students to demonstrate their talents, interests and potential involvement with their true dream (Astika, 2014).

Assessment also reveals information that escapes the limits of the classroom, such as students’ health care and intrapersonal relations at home. Kids that do poor in class, have limited socialization or problems paying attention in class may be an indication that their families do not have access to healthcare services or that their parents may be going through economic or emotional hardships (Herrera, Cabral and Murry, 2013).

When teachers understand that their performance is enriched by looking beyond the performance level, reflecting on the possible causes that, in the first place, lead students to perform at such or such level. In addition, formative assessment can occur “naturally and most often implicitly” (Dyer, 2015, p1.) because learners move from practice to final performance, but during the process (writing drafted and revised) learning occurs. It is also the result of students’ self-motivation and autonomous learning (Cevallos, Intriago, Villafuerte, Molina and Ortega, 2017).

Extensive Reading through Literature Circle

Learning a foreign language requires that the students that take the challenge have opportunities to use the language (Krashen, 1981; Oxford, 1989; Intriago, Villafuerte, Morales, Lema, Echeverria, 2016).

The type of reading that is involved in the Literature Circles is known as Extensive Reading. This is not something new; Elley and Mangubhai (1983) conducted reviews that approach reading since the 80s. This type of reading, which consists in reading great amount for pleasure, has served to meet the individual needs of some learners, and helped in the acquisition processes of a foreign language, especially in the area of activating high frequency vocabulary.

To Collie and Slater (1987) this type of reading stimulates the mind of the readers and causes them to enter in mental dialogues with the text, which promotes the creative development of the readers. Davis (1995) proposed extensive reading of graded books, also known as readers. These books are modified in such a way that learners can understand the content in them. Such modification allows students to engage with the text in ways as similar as they would engage in reading of the same type in their native language.

Harmer (2001) commented that learners need to get exposure to the language repeatedly as this is a key condition for learning it. In countries where English has a status as a second language, learners find opportunities to be exposed to the language in natural and abundant ways.

Conventional Literature Circles are known as discussion groups organized to promote in learners' reading habit as a collaborative act (Obregon, 2006). In the Literature Circle participants assume roles (artist, connector of bridges, diction detective, leader of the discussion and reporter) stimulating their participation, exchanging ideas and understanding (Sanchez and Contreras (2012).

Other benefits of this practice can be: Participants learn to discuss about literature, they speak about the stories that have been read as a group, participants can link literature to their

personal experiences, they achieve a deep understanding of the text, learn to give opinions and respect opinions of others, learning from the different points of view, they link literature with other areas of knowledge such as writing, spelling, style and rhetoric, to know more about the world and contexts of English speaking countries.

Thus, Hames (2012), uses the term peer review to refer to a scrutiny and critical assessment by experts can use to increase emphasis on openness and transparency when dealing with the evaluation of the text. To Najeeb (2013) “Learners need to be able to be aware of and understand their own learning styles and to use these to their advantage” (p. 1242).

Mutwarasibo (2013) made innovative contributions about the importance of collaborative work in writing practices, preparing students for the job market. Regarding Literature Circle, Nguyen (2013); and Aydin and Yildiz (2014) have conducted studies about innovations for collaborative project writing because, It is essential to have students work collaboratively promoting they learn from each other. Typically, literature reading is recommended to readers whose language proficiency can easily dispense the use of a dictionary (Centro Virtual Cervantes, 2017).

On the other hand, in countries like Ecuador, students don't have as many opportunities to use the language for communication (Villafuerte, Carreno, Demera, 2015). However, extensive reading has as its main purpose to read texts completely giving priority to the message over the form. The point is to have a general idea about what is being read.

Literature Circles is a learning strategy that provides students opportunity to get in contact with the language (Intriago, et al, 2016). Literature Circle allows students to produce language when they assume diverse roles (artistic, police of the courtesy, researcher, etc.) before the text. (Villafuerte, Intriago and Romero, 2017). Finally, it is necessary to remember that reading and writing are perhaps the most common communicative ways used by university students. Here, the quality, clearance, and exactitude of a document is highly relevant (Rojas, Villafuerte, Soto, 2017) and it is necessary to work on its improvement.

Google applications as language practice tools

When the technology is used appropriately can be excellent companions for both summative and formative assessment in the foreign language acquisition process (Nevin, 2009).

Thomas (2011) argued that Apps on the cloud computing had reached a significant usage level, especially in higher education because they allow teacher and learners to work on a same document at the same time under an active collaborative dynamic. So, Cloud tools can enhance engagement among teachers, students and researchers.

Zhuang (2010) argued there are, dozens of Apps that in the form of games allows teachers to very quickly get a general view of the learning in the class. In additions, Google Apps offer to learners and teachers communicational tools that can be used as collaborative scenarios to introduce, practice and assess any language topic (Railean, 2012).

To Ferres and Piscitelli (2012) the webs 1.0 and 2.0 have facilitated users' interactions and collaborations tools on internet; however, Asterhan and Hever (2015) argue that, teachers and students need help to develop educational projects using the social network sites (SNS). Thus, the experience of Villafuerte, Carreno and Demera (2015) in the Ecuadorian context ratifies that an educative project can promote the learners' responsible participation in open social networks sites as Facebook, surpassing the stage of marking -I like- and taking learners to a process of knowledge production through the exchange of opinions on the usage of a foreign language.

In the same sense, Jones (2015) used Twitter to innovate a University literature class in United States. So, "30 undergraduate students soon embraced Twitter as a collaboration tool to improve learners' attitudes toward readiness for class discussions" (Jones, 2015, p. 91).

Scholars as Cabero (2015); Villafuerte and Romero (2017), etc. argued that Information and Communication Technologies and Internet offer multiple opportunities to bring to the classroom the culture of English speaking community through the

use of authentic reading and listening materials produced around the world. Those materials can be adjusted to the learners' language level. For beginning students, the modifications may include adding images and pre-reading vocabulary activities before starting the first chapter. ICT can help learners to improve the contact with the target language. In this sense, "Websites and resources that involve interaction (chat-rooms, wikis, blogs) on internet should be encouraged and made clear to the learners as complementary" tools for improving their process of learning (Cevallos, et al., 2017). Finally, assessment activities can also be adapted to ICT tools. They had showed to be an educational partner with the power to stimulate the participation and overcome the barriers as physical distance (Cabero and Ruíz, 2018).

Test and Assessment types

Karen Hume (2008) in her book covers four purposes of pre-assessment. She argued that pre-assessment helps teachers to determine which content, skills, and strategies are needed by the students to meet the expected goals, clears up any misconceptions or partial understanding that students start with, tells teacher how to group students so they can learn well, tells teacher which types of activities will best support various learners.

Test

Tests are a source of anxiety and as such may be responsible for underperformance (Krashen, 1981). However, Tests exist because the following reasons: to understand whether a student is ready to go to next level, to know about problematic areas, to figure out what the students have learnt, and to compare the students (Harris and McCann, 1994). Among the types of tests that exist are: pretests, class discussions, questionnaires, student interviews, creative student work, K-W-L charts and others.

In the tests presented in the form of multiple choice or true or false questions, the distress can be minimized and offer an opportunity for objectively assess students' knowledge (Harris & McCann, 1994). Tests, however, fail in presenting themselves as a friendly way for students to demonstrate what they have learned.; and Brown, 2004).

Formal and Informal Assessment

According to Brown (2004), formal assessment is like tournaments, where competitors openly demonstrate they are the best (or the worst) at what they've prepared for a period of time. Brown also makes it clear that tests are always formal but formal assessments are not exclusively presented in the form of tests. In this sense, Jabbarifar (2009) argued when a teacher observes, with the help of a rubric, oral performance on Monday's "what I did over the weekend" assignment, she is formally assessing students.

According to Brown's definition (2004) informal assessment involves unplanned actions and activities that among other forms include comments and short mini-lessons. The type of results could go from "well done to you need to check the use of phrasal verbs using get + particle" These instances are not done in advanced, or involve on the part of the teacher, preparing any materials. Typically, the information that is obtained from this assessment piece is not used to make a final decision, but instead the teacher uses this info to reinforce the final decisions that will be reflected in the report.

Implicit and Explicit Assessment

Bachman and Palmer (2010) sustain that teachers' role as evidence-of-performance collectors, enter in a series of interactions with the students that are evident and on purpose; others can barely be recognized as actions that seek to test or evaluate. Table 1 presented below summarizes the characteristics and purposes of implicit and explicit assessment.

Table 1. Differences between implicit and explicit assessment

| Type of Assessment | Characteristics | Purposes |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Explicit | Explicit Clear: Expressed: | Decision made on summative performance Decision made on formative assessment Teachers focuses more on specific areas of content Student spends more time on one specific linguistic area |
| Implicit | Continuous Instantaneous Cyclical Unexpressed | It is concerned with formative actions The teacher or students may not be aware of it taking place |

Source: adapted from Bachman and Palmer (2010)

Departing from this differentiation, assessment can also be referred in terms of being systematically organized and designed to obtain information about how students are learning (Bachman and Palmer, 2010). These pieces of assessment are contained in the syllabus that teachers deliver at the beginning of a semester or program.

Formative and Summative Assessment

Lewy (1990) posited that formative assessment is anything that takes during instruction in an ongoing way, between teachers and students that aims at monitoring learning and teaching in the form of adequate feedback. There are two purposes for formative assessment according to Nitko (1995), in the first place it seeks to modify learning procedures and in the second, fixing problems that take place during instruction that were not detected at the beginning.

Because formative assessment has become more and more popular, teachers are being made aware of its benefits and potentials. Black & Wiliam (1998) referred to it as “a moment of learning” (p.11).

Gattullo (2000) says that apart from providing opportunity for immediate action, it also looks to perfect the teaching learning process and produce better outcomes. From this point of view, it can be said that the majority of the assessment actions that take in the classroom is formative.

Summative assessment, as its name suggests, summarizes what the students have learnt during a course and it is usually done at the end of a period of time, typically a semester (Brown, 2004). It is a way of verifying that the objectives set at the beginning of the program have been reached. Examples of a summative exam are midterms and final exams. Even if the teacher has designed a piece of assessment to accompany learning, this is said to be summative if it lacks feedback and seeks instead allocate a score to students. Alderson (2005) associated summative assessment with long traditional tests which were so stressful to students.

In addition, Zhuang (2010) argued that an autonomous learner may need to set learning goals, language content and pace, a learning process, find a suitable learning methodology and assessing learning achievements.

It is indispensable that students receive feedback to analyze and reflect on the positive and negative comments made by their teachers. When this happens, the use that students make of language is reinforced or corrected, and so more progress is made (Najeeb, 2013, p. 1240). However, even teachers and learners are able to assume the opportunities to practice a language using ICT, they need a time to understand all the cultural educational settings that represent to use authentic material (Padilha, 2013).

Authentic Assessment

Many times, our students fail to show what they know through a given assessment, whether this is formal or informal; summative or formative. This by no means must be taken as final. There may be hidden reason why this student wasn't able to show that she learnt the content. It is also a fact of learners' personality as confidence or values as responsibility (Dang,

2010). One possible reason may be the type of assessment used. Although there may be other explanations, this section will be about the type of assessment and its capacity to reveal students' knowledge.

The idea behind authentic assessment is that students apply the knowledge, skills and values learned in their real life. This requires performance that integrates several skills and knowledge in the solution of a problems or completing a task including their abilities for learning autonomously (Sanprasert, 2010). It focuses on students' analytical skills; ability to integrate what they learn; creativity; ability to work collaboratively; and written and oral expression skills. It values the learning process as much as the finished product (Rojas, Villafuerte and Soto, 2017).

Among the previous studies revised on this Project, it is quoted the work of Lamb (2002) who determined how the attributes: personal investment in learning English, willingness and ability to study the language autonomously can influence on the process of EFL acquisition. Those attributes move people to exploit as much as possible the language practice opportunities they find in their location. He also determined that longitudinal ethnographic studies using a limited number of individual allow to determine the way how these personal qualities interact with features of the environment. Meanwhile, "large-scale quantitative research can be used to distinguish successful and unsuccessful learners in concern to learners' aptitudes, gender, and socioeconomic status" (Lamb, 2002, p.50).

In other hand, Najeeb (2013) insisted about the students' necessity of feedback to stimulate their process of analyze and working on their weak points marked by teachers during the corrective process. He ratifies that students' feedback make of the language process an improvement act. However, it is necessary to promote the construction of comfortable learning environment "where the learners feel encouraged, they are more likely to experiment with different learning strategies and not be afraid to ask questions and to ask for assistance when necessary" (p.1240). In addition, ICT can support

teacher to involve learners' direct, and interactive contact with the target language (Fernandez & Torres, 2015).

In the Ecuadorian context, the formative and summative assessment experience of scholars Farfan, Villafuerte, Romero and Intriago (2017), which consisted in the production of digital videos as English class learning project followed by a self-evaluation, reflection and self-correction activities showed, how it is possible to generate assessment procedures and promote in students a creative and memorable positive experience based on the feedback procedure.

Methodology

The methodology applied in this work is action research. It consists in the design of language practices that mixed Literature Reading Circles and Google Applications to implement a process of extensive reading supported with feedback inputs. The educational goal is to improve the participants English language level.

Sample

The sample is composed of 120 students of the Program of English Language at a Public University in Ecuador. It is a heterogeneous sample with 30% male and 70% female; age range 22-40 years old. The criteria of participation were: to be a student officially registered and to attend to the language practices implemented during the execution of the project.

Ethics norms and procedures

Following the ethics norms internationally applied, every participant signed the letter of consent informed down. They had 7 weeks to change their decision of participation. It is warranty the state of anonymous of every participant's identity. The documentation generated in this research will be kept under confidence status for seven years. The results and data generated in this research will be used only for the effect of educational purposes.

Literature Circles organization

Literature Circles are sessions organized in groups from four to six participants. The participating students are assigned some roles that they will use for both reading and sharing ideas and details from the books. Typically, students meet once a week to present and discuss their selections from the reading done during the week. The types of books that work best with Literature Circles are short novels or tales tell a story, as human beings are known for enjoying content from the stories.

The participants' roles

The literature circles expose learners to multiple roles expecting they gain confidence as they have the sense of achievement.

Shelton-Strong (2012) suggest among the most popular roles, the following:

- Discussion's Leader. - The student creates a list of questions that the other students should discuss about the section of the book assigned. The students use their level of English to create questions that generate interpretations of universal nature. He encourages the other students to keep a balance flow of communication.
- Detective of diction. - He or she carefully revises what type of words are used. They locate phrases and passages that are descriptive, powerful, funny, surprising or confusing. The students explain why they selected those words and why the author decided to use them.
- Bridge builder - This role allows the participant to create meaningful connections between the students, places, events, the community and their own life.
- Reporter: The idea here is to present the essential points of the pages or chapters read. The student makes a brief summary describing the setting, the plot, the characters.

- Artist: the artist creates an illustration that is related to a passage, character, event, etc., that the student finds relevant and meaningful. The student is expected to present and explain what the graphic representation means and encourage other to make comments and ask questions.

List of Books Selected

| English levels | Book Title and Author | Publishing Company | Notes |
|------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Level 1 | The Last Photo by Bernard Smith April in Moscow by Stephen Rabley Carnival by Annette Keen Girl Meets Boy by Derek Strange | Longman | All Literature Circles began with Pilot round that permitted learners to get accustomed to the sequence, and were asked to formulate questions and clarify doubts |
| Level 2 | King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table by Deborah Tempest Moby Dick by Herman Melville The Room in the Tower and Other Ghost Stories by Rudyard Kipling Lost Love and Other Stories by Jan Carew | Longman | |
| Level 3, 4 and 6 | American Crime Stories by John Scott The Picture of Dorian Grey by Oscar Wilde The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne | Longman | |

Process of Continuous Feedback

The purpose of the intervention was to continually improve students' level of English from the two types of feedback. The student would first receive input via the graded readers to later on use the contents of the stories to produce new language by interacting in the socialization part of the Literature Circles. With this sample, both teachers and students completed their specific assessments which would give students the opportunity to pay attention to what they needed to improve or correct in the next circles. Students were constantly reminded of the importance of completing the rubrics.

Figure 1. The feedback process through the reading circles

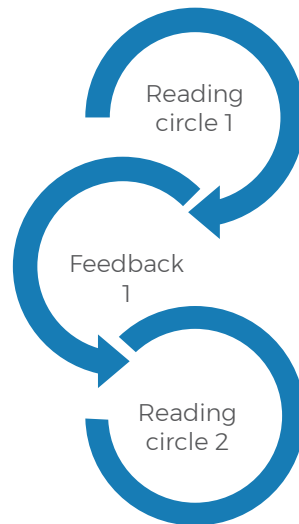


Figure 2. Empty form for students to share the contents of their readings based on some roles assigned.

Online form for peer-reviewing done by the Teacher

The first document to fulfill this purpose was a form that would permit the instructor to make comments on the way students produced language. To do this in a way that was manageable for the teachers, an instrument containing categories of linguistic and communicative performance was created. A spoken interaction performance instrument (see figure 3) was created for the teachers to assess students' linguistic and communicative performance. The document assessed categories that could be observed from the contributions made on the Literature Circle form. The categories used were

- master of vocabulary,
- grammatical accuracy,
- spelling and
- pragmatic knowledge.

Each component of the form establishes a description of differing levels of performance. For example, the component Grammatical Accuracy presents five levels that go from 1 to 5. Number 1 describes performance as “she or he manifests a limited control over a few simple grammatical and syntactic structures from a repertoire of language learned”

Erick Alarcon ☆ ■

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| | B | C | D | E | F |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| | ACCURACY | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical and syntactical structures within a learned repertoire. | It uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically committing basic errors; for example, often confused tenses and forget maintain consistency; however, it tends to be clear what you are trying to say. | Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of "formulas" and common structures related to the more predictable situations. It communicates with reasonable correction in simple situations; generally has good grammatical control, but with an evident influence of the mother tongue. He makes mistakes, but it is clear what you are trying to express. | Good grammatical control; You can still make occasional "slips" no systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure, but are rare and can often correct in retrospect. Manifests a relatively high degree of grammatical control. No mistakes that produce misunderstandings. | It maintains a high degree of grammatical correctness consistently; errors are rare and hardly noticeable |
| <p>Comentario: Prefiere tomar su tiempo para bucar las palabras adecuadas, con la gramatica y pronunciacion correcta. Identifica sus errores mientras habla y corrige inmediatamente. Intervenciones acertados: Acording to;my reason for selecting this phrase was; tell someone, say to someone. Poner atencion a: You get impressive. Should be: you get impressed and the story is impressive. How does he look like? VIDEO 6: sugiero corregir lo siguiente: If you have the opportunity to open the box, you open? por Would you open it? ; Ivan, you took the map? por Ivan, Would you take the map?; And you Jhon? por what about you Jhon?; Help to someone por help someone. VIDEO 7: Se sugiere cambiar lo siguiente: The story don't have sense by the story does not make any sense. y Help someone CORRECTO. Help to someone, INCORRECTO. VIDEO 8: ATENCION A: If I were Martin, I try to pay a course of photo, or maybe I rent a apartment very big to put photos. Sugiero lo siguiente: If I were Martin, I would try to pay myself a photography course, or maybe, I would rent a big apartment.</p> | | | | | |

Source: Class Literature Circles 2016(1)

The table above presented teachers with the opportunity to act responsibly and technically so their judgments were objective, arguable and fair. This led the group of participating teachers to have sessions where many questions were asked. Teachers presented what they would grade a student and presented it for discussion. This exercise left the teachers better prepared (and feeling less guilty) for applying the rubric.

Online Form for Developing Learning Strategies and Self-regulation

Apart from the teacher engaging in processes of reviewing the students' interactions to orient them towards adjustments to improve performance, the learners got involved in a process of analyzing their own interventions. For this, they used a form that moved them to consider what strategies (if any) they used during the sessions and how this improved their participation or could improve a future participation. The form was designed from Rebecca Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

This inventory divides them into direct and indirect ones. Memory, cognitive and compensation strategies are in the same group. The ones related to memory help students store and retrieve information. Cognitive ones allow students direct involvement with the material used for learning.

Finally, those dealing with compensation are useful when despite of the limited knowledge the student has, he or she can work a way around in understanding or producing language. Fig. 4 displays the description for each the categories described above.

Figure 4. Form containing the strategies to be used and developed by students

Hugo Cano ☆ ■

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| NO | ITEM | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | COMMENTARY |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| Memory strategies | | | | | | | |
| 1 | I used new words in phrases or sentences comoejercicio built to remember. | | | x | | | |
| 2 | I tried to remember a new word by making a mental picture of a situation where I can use that word | | | | x | | |
| 3 | I used rhymes to remember new words of the readings. | | | x | | | |
| Cognitive strategies | | | | | | | |
| 4 | I repeated the new words several times | | x | | | | |
| 5 | I practiced English sounds | | x | | | | |
| 6 | I used the words I know in different ways | | | x | | | |
| 7 | I started conversations in English this week | | | | x | | |
| 8 | I tried not to translate word for word. | | | | x | | |
| 9 | I read in English for pleasure this week | | | | | | |
| 10 | I wrote notes, messages on Whatsapp, Messenger, letters or inforemes in English | | | x | | x | |
| 11 | Summaries of what I read and hear in English | | | | x | | |
| Compensation Strategies | | | | | | | |
| 12 | When I did not know how to say a word in English, the said in Spanish. | | | | x | | |
| 13 | I tried to guess what the other person will say | | | x | | | |

Source: Class Literature Circles 2016(1)

The indirect strategies (fig. 5) in turn are divided into meta-cognitive, affective and social. Metacognitive strategies are related to thinking about learning as it takes place via planning and execution, as well as monitoring and evaluating. Affective strategies make students aware of controlling and taking advantage of emotions to deal with communication tasks. And social strategies refer to those deliberate actions done by the students to interact successfully with other people. We think this kind of tools are examples teachers can follow to create assessment procedures less degrading, artificial, anxiety-provoking (Brown, 2004).

Figure 5. Form containing the strategies to be used and developed by students

Hugo Cano ☆

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| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Metacognitive strategies | | | | | | |
| 20 | | | I paid attention to how my classmates spoke English. | | | x | | | |
| 21 | | | I'm thinking and asking others how to be a better learner of English | | | | x | | |
| 22 | | | I planned my schedule to have enough time to study and perform well | | | | x | | |
| 23 | | | I have clear goals to improve my English skills. | | | | x | | |
| 24 | | | I know exactly how to improve my knowledge and skills in English | | x | | | | |
| 25 | | | I tried reading in English as much as possible | | | x | | | |
| 26 | | | I tried to find as many ways as possible to use and practice English. | | | | x | | |
| 27 | | | I reflected on my progress in learning English | | x | | | | |
| 28 | | | I noticed my mistakes and use that information to help improve. | | | | | x | |
| 29 | | | I understand that part of learning English involves making mistakes | | | | x | | |
| | | | Affective strategies | | | | | | |
| 30 | | | I tried to relax when I was talking tens @ English. | | x | | | | |
| 31 | | | I ventured to speak English even when I was afraid to make mistakes. | | | | x | | |
| 32 | | | I reward myself when I did mism @ good. | | | x | | | |
| 33 | | | I noticed when I started studying @ nerves or use English. | | | | x | | |
| 34 | | | I wrote down my feelings about learning English in a journal. | | | | | x | |
| 35 | | | I talked to someone about how I feel to learn English. | | | | | x | |
| | | | Social strategies | | | | | | |
| 36 | | | I asked others to correct me when I speak | | | | x | | |
| 37 | | | I have practiced English with others | | | | x | | |
| 38 | | | I have asked questions in English | | | | x | | |
| 39 | | | I have been learning about the culture of English | | | | x | | |
| 40 | | | When I did not understand something, I asked to speak more slowly or to repeat. | | | | x | | |

Source: Class Literature Circles 2016(1)

Findings and Discussion

Effective classroom assessment and evaluation requires an understanding of the role of evaluation in planning and delivering instruction. It calls for the collection and interpretation of a wide range of information, familiarity with a variety of different methods of assessment and for competence in using these methods creatively, careful and systematic record keeping and judgment. Also, an effective classroom assessment and evaluation calls on teachers to become agents of change in their classrooms actively using the results of assessment to modify and improve the learning environments they create.

One of the main challenges that language teachers face is making students aware that a language is not a piece of knowledge or a set of skills whose mastery depends primarily on the teacher, the textbook, the method or any other external factor. This applies even more so when it comes to assessing the gains made from being in contact with a learning activity. First, we had hypothesized that if we include our students in the reviewing of their oral performances, we could start in them a process of reflexivity and becoming aware of the advantages that exist in observing how one speaks. Second, thinking about what strategies they used or could have used becomes a crucial thinking routine in students' coping with challenging communicative situations that they might face.

Teachers gain valuable insight and feedback that can be used to make adjustments, continue practices or change ones that don't work. This dynamic process may also yield information that produces the setting of new learning goals, re-stating weak ones, and eliminating impractical or meaningless ones.

It can be said that informal assessment takes place during the whole instructional process because it is a quick way of checking not only whether students are paying attention, but also whether you are being effective with the way you have designed the lessons. Looked at from this perspective,

and in consonance with Brown's definition, informal assessment is concerned more with giving feedback rather than making a decision. One safer and fairer route that can be taken by teachers is to combine these beforehand organized assessments with ones that are less formal and involve the aid of the students themselves. In this way, our promoting or failing a student will be based on a more fair and reliable decision.

In our experience as instructors, generating and receiving feedback is an academic practice that helps learners to improve the quality of a product. To reach its maximum benefits, it is required that the readers assume the role of motivating and guide leaders whom accompany permanently to learners in their process of dialogue construction. Also, it is necessary lecturers promote in learners the capabilities to assume an "open mind" or "receptive" position before their texts observations and viewers' critics.

Conclusions

It is concluded that the combination of Literature Circles and Google Apps has the flexibility required to support learners to improve their language skills in their foreign language acquisition process. Receiving feedback either from self or more knowledgeable others has been globally applied for a long time; and it is still an efficient technique that allows to improve the way people use the language. It is a practice that should be promoted and led by teachers, especially in the university setting as learners prepare to interact in a world that requires of collaborative work and a sincere act of self-evaluation and reflexivity.

The revision of oral production demands of challenges such as experience, style, effective communication, and knowledge about specific topics, etc. This work constitutes an initial step in sampling more complex processes of assessment for learning in a university context. In this case, the benefit has been twofold because apart from bringing the review

experience to the students, they benefited from having the chance to be assessed and to assess themselves while learning English. The main advantage that Google Docs in combination with Literature Circles has, lies on their allowing shareability and collaboration. Participants shared with the teachers so that they could engage in the assessment process to improve their use of English overall.

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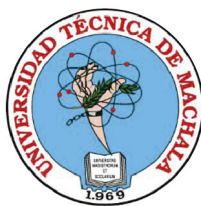
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