

## ***Using Video-Based Self-Assessment to Improve EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency and Autonomy***

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### **Abstract**

The present paper describes an attempt to develop Algerian EFL learners' oral proficiency and learning autonomy throughout the use of video-based self-assessment of speaking performance. The participants (30) were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received the treatment whereas the control group did not receive any special intervention. Learners were pre-tested and then post-tested to identify any progress in their oral proficiency. In addition, two questionnaires were administered. The first aims to explore learners' perceptions towards this learning technique and the second seeks to identify any progress in the participants' learning autonomy. The findings of the study indicate that the experimental group achieved statistically significant improvement in their oral proficiency and learning autonomy and reported positive perceptions toward this technique from the majority of participants.

**Keywords:** Self-assessment, speaking performance, oral proficiency, learning autonomy.

استعمال تقنية التقييم الذاتي باستعمال تسجيل الفيديو لتحسين الكفاءة الشفهية  
و التعلم الذاتي لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية

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الملخص:

البحث المقدم يستعرض محاولة الباحث لتحسين الكفاءة اللغوية الشفهية و التعلم الذاتي لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر عن طريق التقييم الذاتي الأداء الشفهي باستعمال تسجيل الفيديو. شارك في الدراسة ثلاثون (30) طالبا و طالبة تم انتقاؤهم بشكل عشوائي من بين طلبة السنة الثانية ليسانس لقسم اللغة الإنجليزية. لقد تم إجراء هذا البحث في أوائل شهر أكتوبر سنة 2015 بالنسبة للجانب النظري، أما الجانب التطبيقي فقد أنجز في الفترة الممتدة من أوائل شهر ديسمبر إلى غاية شهر أبريل من سنة 2016. تم تقسيم المشاركين في الدراسة لفوجين الأول تجريبي والثاني شاهد بالتساوي و تم استعمال عدد من وسائل البحث لتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة و التي تتمثل في تجربة علمية تتضمن تقييم ومقارنة نتائج الأداء الشفهي للطلبة المشاركين في الدراسة قبل و بعد ممارسة التقييم الذاتي الأداء الشفهي باستعمال تسجيل الفيديو، بالإضافة إلى استبيانين مختلفين لجمع وتحليل معلومات حول آراء الطلبة المشاركين في استعمال هذه التقنية و أثرها في تنمية التعلم الذاتي عندهم. تم استعمال برامج التحليل الإحصائي لمقارنة النتائج و تقييمها المتمثلة في برنامج (21) SPSS و برنامج Factor Anova Single. نتائج البحث تشير إلى وجود تحسن كبير إحصائيا في الكفاءة الشفهية لطلبة الفوج التجريبي بالمقارنة مع الفوج الشاهد. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم الوصول إلى نتائج تؤكد أن طريقة استعمال تسجيل الفيديو لإجراء التقييم الذاتي الأداء الشفهي تعزز و تحسن التعلم الذاتي لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية. و أخيرا، نتائج الدراسة تشير إلى وجود ترحيب و تصور إيجابي لاستعمال هذه التقنية التعليمية عند الطلبة المشاركين في الدراسة. و عليه فإن الباحث يقدم

مقترحات و إرشادات لتعميم استعمال هذه التقنية التعليمية على مستوى أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم الذاتي، الأداء الشفهي، الكفاءة الشفهية، التعلم الذاتي.

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## 1. Introduction

The current state of Algerian EFL learners' lack of oral proficiency and learning autonomy has led the researcher to explore enjoyable and effective ways that can help them improve their level in these important skills. After extensive reading of the literature and exploring the learning context, the researcher endeavoured to explore the use of video-recording, which has become a trend nowadays, to conduct an explorative experimental study and investigate its effectiveness as a learning and assessment tool and learners' perceptions of it.

## 2. Literature Review

In this part of the paper, the researcher presents the literature relevant to the study. First, the current state of the teaching and assessment of the speaking skill in the Algerian EFL context is described. After that, the researcher provides an overview on the concept of self-assessment and the aspects related to the idea of involving learners in their own assessment. The researcher illustrates with quotes from leading figures in the field of EFL teaching and learning and then links self-assessment with the development of EFL learners' learning autonomy. At the end, the use of video-recording technology as a mean to develop speaking skill, improve self-assessment abilities and enhance EFL learners' learning autonomy is discussed.

### 2.1. *Teaching and Assessing Speaking*

Today, foreign language learners cannot imagine learning a language without practicing it orally. Most frequently, mastering a language for them means mastering the speaking skill. Speaking English\*language proficiently allows them to express their minds freely and spontaneously and success in mastering English as a foreign language is usually measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in that language. However, becoming fluent English speaker is a difficult task. Often, classroom time is limited, the teaching content is extensive, and opportunities to practice are among the main reasons that inhibit the development of this skill Algeria.

Moreover, English speaking skill is also difficult to assess. According to researchers in the field of oral proficiency assessment (Larson, 2000; Luoma, 2004), the fact that speaking skill is an important part of the curriculum in language teaching makes it an important object of assessment as well. However, the assessment of speaking skill is one of the most problematic areas in EFL teaching and learning. There are different reasons that lead to this situation such as large classes, time constraints, loading program, and the absence of special training in this subject matter. Since assessment plays an important role in forwarding the learning process through effective feedback and washback effects, EFL learners in our English Departments do not receive the necessary benefits of the assessment of their speaking skill. This condition has led researchers to seek feasible, efficient and practical tasks, criteria and modes for assessing speaking



skill. Yet, both the immediate and long-term prospects of this assessment are filled with challenges (Bachman, 1996).

## 2.2. *Involving learners in assessment*

The introduction of learner-centred approach in the Algerian educational system has encouraged teachers to put EFL learners at the centre of their teaching and learning process. However, the idea of involving those learners in the assessment process may cause mixed feelings among decision makers, teacher and even learners themselves. Self-assessment is one way to involve learners in assessing their own performance. Underhill (1987) describes it as "*the easiest, cheapest, and quickest form of assessment*" (p. 22). According to Oscarson (1989), the involvement of learner in the assessment process emerges, from the realization that effective learning is best achieved if the students are actively engaged in all phases of the learning process. EFL learners have immense unexploited potentials that can help them achieve learning goals and self-assessment can promote their skills and abilities and positively affect their autonomy, motivation and outcomes. It is asserted that it can help them become acquainted with 'how to learn' (Nunan, 1988) and become mindful of their capacities, strengths, and weaknesses as Benson (2001) claims. In the wake of perceiving their weaknesses, learners are supposed to look for assistance from their teachers in the areas in where they need support and improvement.

Several studies have explored the other effects of self-assessment on EFL learners. Walser (2009) conducted a study in which he proved that 86% of the participants expressed high degree of motivation when practicing self-assessment.

Additionally, there was proof that the self-assessment exercises have improved the learners' reflective skills and provided them with opportunities to self-monitor and self-regulate their learning progress. Other researchers have highlighted the importance of practicing self-assessment accurately in order to promote learners' autonomy. However, to obtain positive results, Blanche and Merino (1989, p. 313) emphasise on the accuracy of self-assessment. According to them, students need to be able to assess their performance accurately in order to understand what more they need to learn and stop their reliance on their teachers. Finally, EFL learners' self-assessment, though rarely practiced in the premises of the Algerian English departments, can be expected to produce positive effects on different aspects of learners' performance if it is practiced on the appropriate norms.

### 2.3. *Self-assessment and learning autonomy*

The present study seeks to establish a positive correlation between self-assessment and learning autonomy since very little research has focused on this field (Little 2007). According to Marshall and Drummond (2006), learning autonomy is rarely promoted in English classroom through self-assessment. The reason behind that, according to some researchers, is that many teachers consider the idea of involving learners in the assessment process to be a major prohibitive step that leads them to relinquish their control over the classroom. Nulty (2011) states that "*for students to be successful in developing an understanding of foundational discipline knowledge, self-assessment is a critical component, as it engages students from the outset in a process that inducts*

*them into a culture of critical scholarly enquiry*". In other words, learners will recognize their strengths and weaknesses when they are given the chance to reflect on, judge, rate, and mark their own work. In addition, the theory of learner autonomy suggests that only when learners take responsibility for their own learning can the learning process develop properly. Therefore, we can assume that the underpinning principle of self-assessment is student' autonomy and a fundamental change in the teacher-learners' relationship and changing ingrained habits and routines are necessary for the development of learning autonomy by means of self-assessment (William, 2006).

#### *2.4. Video-recordings for Oral Proficiency Development and Assessment*

The use of video technique or video recordings in teaching and learning contexts has long been in practice (Porter & King, 1972). Its dates back to at least 40 years ago when the price of video recording equipment declined to a level that was no longer cost-prohibitive (Bradley, 1970). This tool was used to help the teachers to explain lessons and to motivate and engage students. Nowadays, things have taken a different turn. While some students as well as teachers enjoy taking note using pen and paper during lectures, some others prefer photographing the presentation note or video-recording the lectures using video cameras. Wachob (2011) argues that video tools, including camera as separate tools or the ones available on mobile phones, are effective to be utilized to enhance learning because they are practical and easy to use to videotape, download, and store any important moments being captured.



Nowadays, every teacher and every student know the need for using video technology as educational aid, but this technological tool can also be used in assessment. The technological development of software and hardware has increased EFL learners and teachers' opportunities to use this tool for assessing speaking abilities (Godwin-Jones, 2009). McNulty and Lazarevic (2012) state that video merits the learners with additional instructional value for being able to help them recognize aspects of their performance such as tone, gestures, and facial expressions. Thus, it allows them to reflect on the importance of those paralinguistic elements derived from the recorded video and boost the development of their knowledge and awareness particularly on spoken language. In addition, Video technology can serve as a reporting medium for self-assessment through regular entries of oral performance via recording tools (Healey, 2007). By self-monitoring language learners can improve their pronunciation, grammar, and verbal expression for oral proficiency development as well as foster significant improvement in speaking relative to articulation and accuracy (Tholin, 2007). Unfortunately, in the Algerian context, video technology is not always used for educational purposes. EFL learners use cameras to record themselves, each other and even teachers but not for learning purposes as much as for having fun. That is why the present research attempts to change this situation and help teachers and learners use this technological tool for developing language speaking skill and self-assessment abilities, and push them to improve their learning autonomy.

### 3.Method

The main objective of this study is to identify the effects of using video-based self-assessment of speaking performance on EFL learners' oral proficiency and learning autonomy. In order to achieve this objective, the researcher followed an experimental research design, used a set of research tools on a sample of participants, and employed statistical analysis packages to analyse the data and answer the research questions. In this section of the paper, all these elements are described and discussed.

### *3.1. Participants*

It's eventually acknowledged that the sample is a major tenet in any given research. Research methodologists assert that when the population under investigation is large, we can resort to sampling. The informants composing the sample of the present study are 30 ( $n=30$ ) second year English students of Lounici Ali University at Blida, Algeria. These students are believed to have had enough exposure to English language and are able to cope with English lectures at the university level. This sample of the participants aged from nineteen to thirty years old, with a majority of girls' presence (70%) which is not uncommon in most educational institutions across the country. Both age and gender variables are not important for this study and thus they were not taken into account.

### *3.2. Instrumentation*

The research tools are an important segment of any inquiry. Each research tool provides another way of exploring the phenomenon under investigation and provides variety of data and together all research tools form a methodological

triangulation that constructs a form of validation. The first and the main research tool of the present study is an experiment. Throughout several months, the researcher conducts an experiment of several phases with the experimental and control group in order to test the research hypothesis and answer the research questions. The experiment involves the use of pre-testing and post-testing procedures, speaking assessment, writing reflective journals and self-assessment practice. The other research tool is the learners' questionnaires, which are directed to all the learners participating in this study from the English department. The first questionnaire aims at gathering data from respondents about their attitudes and reactions towards the practice of video-based self-assessment and whether they feel that it has helped them identify problematic issues in their speaking skill. The other research questionnaire, which is also directed to all the participants of the study, aims at exploring their autonomy level prior to and post the practice of video-based self-assessment of speaking performance.

### 3.3. *Procedure.*

To achieve the research objective and answer the research questions, the researcher followed several steps. First, the participants of experimental and control group of this study passed a pre-test of their speaking skills with two teacher-raters who assessed their performance both holistically and analytically. The aim of this assessment is to identify their oral proficiency prior to the treatment. In addition to that, the researchers administered the autonomy questionnaire to assess the participants' autonomy level before receiving the treatment. Then, the experimental and control group were

separated. While the first trains and practice video-based self-assessment which evolve around the use of video-recordings to self-assess their speaking performance, the use of reflective journals to examine their performance and decisions-making to amend the shortcomings and improve performance. The control group received no special treatment. At the end of the experiment, both experimental and control groups were post-tested to explore any significant difference between them in term of oral proficiency and learning autonomy. Finally, in order to explore learners' perception of this learning technique, the researcher administered another questionnaire with the experimental group only. This final questionnaire is aimed to shed light on the respondents' personal experience in this study and report their perceptions of effectiveness in building their oral proficiency and learning autonomy.

#### **3.4. Data analysis**

The process of data analysis and interpretation is a major step in gaining a comprehensive insight of the research and crystallizing plausible findings. The researcher in this phase seeks to form an understanding by looking for patterns and relationships that emerge from the data, which Punch (2005, p48) described as the process of linking data with concepts. In order to achieve the aims of this research, answer its questions and provide empirical documentation, different types of data are required. Integrating qualitative and quantitative data analysis is believed to provide more reliable research findings since, according to the latter are not compressed into a single dimension of measurement Hamzaoui (2006 : 130).



The data gathered from the respondents are transformed into scores, which are quantitative in nature, and summary of learners' comments and entries in the reflective journals as well as in the open-ended questionnaire items, are considered as qualitative data. Therefore, the analysis is divided into two types: an analysis of quantitative data and an analysis of qualitative data. The proper data collection, classification and analysis were taken. The researcher used spreadsheets, Statistical analysis software, and different hypotheses testing means like ANOVA and T-tests to analyse the significance of the results and then interpret them in accordance to the literature tackled earlier.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

After conducting an in-depth study, the findings of the research allow the researcher to prove the pre-established research hypotheses and answer the research questions upon which the current study is based. Based on these findings and ANOVA single factor analysis report, the practice of video based self-assessment was proven to have a significant positive effect on some of EFL learners' oral proficiency aspects while it was proven to have slight or no effect on other aspects. First, data gathered indicate that the practice of video-based self-assessment have strong effect on the participants' speaking performance in the aspects of pronunciation and fluency with P-values of 0,0119 and 0,0105 respectively. These values are less than the significance threshold  $\alpha$  of 0,05 which means that the treatment that the participants received has had a significant effect on them.



**Table 1:** One-sample Independent T-Test results for pre-treatment

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
experiemtal group	15	2,3030	,29889	,07717
control group	15	2,1273	,42889	,11074

autonomy questionnaire

The examination of the report table proves several facts. First, the number of the participants is equal for both control and experimental groups and the mean value is almost the same too. However, the most important value is the Significance Value *Sig. (2-tailed)* which is equal to 0.203. This value is much higher than the significance threshold  $\alpha=0.05$  indicating the absence of any difference between the experimental group and the control group. i.e. there is no significant difference between experimental and control groups at the onset of study which further proves the homogeneity of the two groups of the sample.

The next phase of this study took place after the treatment. In order to check the effect of the video-based self-assessment of speaking performance on EFL learners' autonomy, the researcher conducted the same questionnaire with the participants of both experimental and control groups after enrolling in the suggested practice for several weeks. The following table (table2) represent the analysis report of the post treatment data.

**Table 2:** One sample Independent T-Test results for Post-treatment autonomy questionnaire.

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