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Young Adult Learners' Self-Assessment of Their Own Vocabulary: How does It Influence Their

Oral Fluency?

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YOUNG ADULT LEARNERS' VOCABULARY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This mixed-method study explores the influence of self-assessment of vocabulary on a group of students' oral fluency. Students' disposition to share their insights suggested that the use of self-assessment as a strategy could foster fluency development. Twenty-four A2 young adult learners agreed to participate in this process and engaged in activities that promoted their oral skills and vocabulary development. Self-assessment was mainly examined through the analysis of students' learning logs in which participants displayed their insights regarding their learning processes. By contrasting and analyzing data sources and the results obtained from pre and post-speaking tasks, it was found that when students self-assess their processes, they are able to acknowledge their learning drawbacks and strengths. This tack enabled students to set learning commitments, and use learning strategies that also allow them to raise awareness about their learning processes by self-monitoring them. Consequently, initial improvements in students' oral fluency development were evinced; moreover, further longitudinal studies may well support the long lasting effects of this strategy in similar educational contexts.

Keywords: self-assessment, vocabulary learning, oral fluency, monitoring, young adult learners.

Resumen

Este estudio de metodología mixta explora la influencia de la autoevaluación de vocabulario sobre la fluidez oral de un grupo de estudiantes. El análisis de las percepciones de los estudiantes sugirió el uso de la autoevaluación como una estrategia que podría fomentar el desarrollo de su fluidez. Veinticuatro adultos jóvenes aceptaron cooperar en este proceso y participaron en diferentes actividades que promovían el desarrollo de sus habilidades de habla y su vocabulario. La autoevaluación fue incluida a través de diarios de aprendizaje en los cuales los participantes plasmaban sus ideas acerca de su proceso. Después de contrastar y analizar las fuentes de datos, al igual que los resultados obtenidos de un pre- y post test de habla, se encontró que cuando los estudiantes autoevalúan su procesos, son capaces de reconocer sus debilidades y fortalezas de aprendizaje, proponer objetivos y usar estrategias que les permiten ser más conscientes acerca de sus procesos a la vez que son capaces de auto-monitorearlo. En consecuencia, algunas mejoras en el desarrollo de la fluidez oral de los estudiantes fueron inicialmente halladas. Aun así, se hace necesario la implementación de estudios longitudinales para apoyar los efectos duraderos que pueda tener esta estrategia en contextos educativos similares.

Palabras claves: autoevaluación, aprendizaje de vocabulario, fluidez oral, monitoreo, estudiantes adultos jóvenes.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The study aims at determining the influence that the implementation of students' vocabulary self-assessment has on the development of oral fluency in a group of young adult learners. This, taking into account that self-assessment has been included in numerous stakeholders' educational research agendas worldwide, and that it is closely related to learners' autonomy development. According to Benson (2001), autonomous learners have the capacity to take control over their own learning processes by judging their language competence and reflecting on their learning results. In this view, autonomy can be shaped in various forms according to the context or the cultural situations in which learners are found (Benson & Voller, 1997). Thus, the concept of self-assessment, viewed as a modality of learner autonomy, should be interpreted based on the context in which it is developed.

Furthermore, one factor from within the autonomy field common for all type of contexts is the importance of granting students a central role through which they monitor and regulate their learning experience (Sánchez, 2012; Liu & Carless, 2006; Race, 2001). Monitoring involves judging difficulties, setting learning objectives, finding strategies, and evaluating one's own progress in search of improvement. If learners were able to appraise their own work in this form, meaningful and lasting learning might also be achieved. Keeping this is mind, self-assessment has been increasingly used in the ELT classrooms as it offers alternatives for engaging students in the enhancement of their own learning (Taras, 2010).

Consequently, learners who self-assess their processes are encouraged, and also intrinsically motivated, to reflect upon goals already achieved and to acknowledge their limitations. However, self-assessment "does not stand alone as the answer to the problems" (Baldwin, 2000, p. 451); it works as a tool for empowering students to reflect

about their performance. From that perspective, it is clear that assessing one's learning processes is not limited to reflective development. Rather, it implies examining aspects such as tasks conditions, engagement with the course or personal stimulus for learning to further analyze the ways actions can be modified for the development of learner autonomy.

In the ELT field, self-assessment has been used for assessing and enriching students writing and, to a lesser extent, to examine how speaking abilities evolve (Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2007). De Saint Léger's study (2009) found that self-assessment encourages oral participation in class by promoting "independent learning and personal goal-setting" (p. 159). Results suggested that self-assessment may have positively affected students' self-perceptions after the implementation as they felt more capable of expressing themselves in different ways. This is because the reflective practices undertaken permitted learners to gain confidence about their learning and this reliance was effectively reflected in their own evaluation of speaking abilities. Recent studies on self-assessment (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Panadero & Romero, 2014) have focused on strategy usage and learners' inclusion because personal identities and social contexts are seen as interconnected factors playing important roles in learning.

In Colombia, Ariza (2003), Rodríguez (2007), Sánchez (2012) and Areiza (2013) are included among the few authors who have worked on self-assessment for English language learning. These studies used this type of evaluation and provided evidence that self-assessment may be beneficial for raising students' consciousness regarding their processes as they became interested in their language learning. Recently, Sanchez (2013), Barragan (2013), and Morales, Trujillo, and Zamudio (2013) explored the benefits of self-directed learning, self-monitoring and self-efficacy with regards to oral production in terms of vocabulary and fluency development. These authors reported positive results using the aforesaid strategies which are also metacognitive strategies within self-

assessment. However, no published studies have been identified, to date, which examine vocabulary learning for fluency development. Consequently, this study explores the implementation of self-assessment in an area where little exploration has been conducted thus far. Here the focus specifically addresses the implementation of self-assessment practices for learners' fluency development taking into account vocabulary learning as a tool that might improve oral production among the participants of this study.

The aforementioned research aim was based on observations conducted during the needs analysis stage which suggested that students faced difficulties in expressing themselves within oral communicative tasks. Although it had been observed that learners were always open to reflect upon their learning process, there was neither observable evidence of a defined reflection nor of specific courses of action taken by the learners involved. Based on these results, it was decided that the students might benefit from learning self-assessment strategies as these would encourage them to "take stock of their learning" (Race, 2001, p. 7). Other outcomes suggested that, when required to think about their performance, students were able to uncover their strengths and difficulties to make fair judgments, and, in few cases, to propose further action.

Bearing in mind that self-assessment had had positive initial results, this study thought of its implementation for supporting students' oral performances. Recalling De Saint Léger (2009), self-assessment is a "dynamic tool for reflecting concurrently on past and possible learning behavior" (p. 160). Thus, students who are engaged in self-assessment are likely to set their own learning goals and to self-regulate their actions towards those aims. Such behaviors were expected in the participants of this study and they would be enhanced by fostering autonomous learning conditions that provide students with life-long lasting skills to be used in different areas of their lives.

Problem Statement

The need to involve students in their learning by fostering personal reflection actions has been widely explored. For instance, self-assessment benefits language learners by "providing opportunities to assess and provide feedback on [their] attributes" (Willey & Gadner, 2010, p. 341). Thus, learners are able to examine their performance and respond to special needs evinced from such examination. In a related area, Langan et al. (2008) and Spies (2012) studied the effectiveness of peer assessment in the promotion of oral competence; their interventions permitted students to become aware of their weaknesses in their speaking practices through both their own evaluation and that made by their peers. This study was no exception, as it aimed at determining the impact of self-assessment on its participants' oral competence development as a way to reach effectiveness.

Initially, the researcher observed that students' major flaws were in speaking. This was important since significant impediments were not in evidence in their written work. However, learners were very anxious when they were required to perform orally in target classroom tasks. Students attributed their difficulties to elements such as cohesion, pronunciation, and lack of vocabulary. Nevertheless, since the learners' responses were so varied, further inquiry was needed.

Therefore, the second phase of the needs analysis revealed a necessity for students to improve their speaking skills since they also claimed having trouble when selecting vocabulary for speaking. This happened because students were unable to draw on appropriate lexicon that permitted them to speak their minds in English as openly as in their mother tongue; additionally, students' vocabulary was quite limited and for that reason they recognized that they were unable to deal with unfamiliar topics. This situation exposed students' short speech production and their revealed frustration.

Based on Willey and Gadner (2010), who consider that self-assessment provides students spaces for "testing their own knowledge to first identify then rectify gaps in their learning" (p. 431) and given that personal reflection was found to be useful for the participants to express their individual learning needs, this study attempted to draw on students' judgment about their own performance. Consequently, the following research question was set: how might A2 young adult students' self-assessment of their own vocabulary influence the development of their oral fluency? Correspondingly, its main objective was to determine the influence that students vocabulary self-assessment had on the development of their oral fluency; specifically, the study aimed at identifying the features of self-assessment that might lead to students' vocabulary and fluency development and to examine students' insights on their use of self-assessment. The research question and objectives are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research question and objectives.

RESEARCH QUESTION: How might A2 young adult students' self-assessment of their own vocabulary influence the development of their oral fluency?

GENERAL OBJECTIVE: To determine the influence that A2 young adult students' vocabulary self-assessment has on the development of their oral fluency.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

-To identify the features of self-assessment that may lead to students' vocabulary and fluency development.

-To examine students' insights on their use of self-assessment

Rationale

When students self-assess, they participate in a process of reflection that allows them to evaluate their individual performance, think deeply about possible constraints, and take a course of action in order to improve (Liu & Carless, 2006). For this reason, self-assessment for learning is advised and its incorporation into the academic context responds to the fact that in this setting students are "already self and peer-assessing their partners quite naturally" (Race, 2001, p. 7). As part of their spontaneous interaction in the classroom, learners usually compare their work with other samples and draw conclusions for their own learning process. From the self-regulated learning perspective, this comparative exercise becomes an opportunity for students to reflect on their weaknesses and strengths and facilitates the selection and usage of possible strategies in overcoming their language difficulties.

Similarly, students who are involved in an assessment culture may gain long-lasting skills useful in several areas of their lives (Sánchez, 2012). In higher educational contexts this is especially true since students are often given the opportunity to identify learning standards and be aware of the ways to approach the attainment of outcomes. In the case of the participants of this study, self-assessment was relevant because its implementation allowed learners to evaluate their performance more closely rather than rely exclusively on the instructor's evaluation. As this class counted with twenty-four students, they might benefit more from both judging their work in advance and sharing their insights with the instructor; at the same time, they could optimize effort, time, and self-control. In doing so, students would be able to assess their reflections and establish a learning path to make positive decisions regarding their current and future progress.

Another important reason to introduce self-assessment in the setting of this study was the lack of clarity in the evaluation procedures of students' oral performance.

Generally, the instructor graded learners' speaking skill based on individual evaluation methodology. Unfortunately, formative assessment that involved students' evaluations throughout their learning processes was not among the most preferred methodologies in the institution. Hence, a major reason to select self-assessment in this study was the premise that this type of formative assessment positively acknowledges learners' individualities as it allows them to be the center of their own learning. The aforementioned arguments were considered significant reasons in response to the evaluation weaknesses found in the institution.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Fluency in language learning is related to the speaker's ability to integrate previously met language into purposeful communication (Nation, 1989). However, students can rarely accomplish this integration without formal guiding. In the present study, self-assessment is seen an alternative for which students can reflect about the way they may become better speakers, initially by improving their vocabulary development and subsequently, by raising their fluency levels.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment has been traditionally associated with the field of formative assessment as they both aim to involve students in understanding their own learning processes (Brown, 2004; Taras, 2010; Walser, 2009). The attention is focused on learning development rather than on production. Thus, the instructor's feedback is addressed to support the student's progressive growth by scaffolding their performance throughout the process. Self-assessment has also been related to the development of autonomy in learners, and it is precisely this link which provides the strongest argument for its contemplation in the present study. Different authors (Blanche & Merino, 1989; Brown, 2004; Gardner, 2000; Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2007; Race, 2001; Tamjid & Birjandi, 2011; Torres, 2009) argue that the procedures followed in this type of assessment, may well encourage learners to become more aware about their own process by self-regulating their own learning and consequently being more responsible as well.

In Colombia, Sánchez (2012) found that the implementation of self-assessment not only benefits the development of autonomy but it also calls for a more learner-centered classroom where teachers and students share equal responsibility for the learning processes. Hence, this strategy reconsiders the notion of the teacher being the only person in charge of the assessment procedure and rather, students' needs, wants, and thoughts are

evinced in the assessment process making the assessment procedure and the learning processes in general more personalized (Brown, 2004; Sánchez, 2012). In fact, Cardenas (2010) also highlights this point in Colombia; he argues that by means of self-assessment students let their voice be heard by unveiling their inner insights and, in this way, discover tools to improve directing their learning processes.

Self-assessment has also been widely studied based on the premise that it promotes successful results in learning a second language (Black & William, 1998; Blanche & Merino, 1989; Tamjid & Birjandi, 2011; Willey & Gardner, 2010). Research has reported that self-assessment is effective in enhancing the development of specific language skills, including writing and speaking; however, it also encourages language learning as a whole. For instance, Janulevičienė and Kavaliauskienė (2007) argue that self-assessment stands as one of the most effective alternatives to assess language skills since; it involves students in reflecting on their outcomes and then, raising awareness and responsibility. This present study complements these authors' view by indicating that rather than on the results, the efficacy of self-assessment relies on the permanent monitoring carried out on students' progression from the moment they start using this type of strategy.

In this respect, Baldwin (2000) claims that self-assessment by itself fails to produce any changes in language acquisition; instead, it is a facilitator for reflective learning that may eventually convey improvement in students' performance. Baldwin's (2000) perspective (see also Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Gardner, 2000) is important for this study as it clarifies the scope that the implementation of self-assessment is expected to reach in this study; its results depend mostly on the reflective abilities that learners are able to develop and how that reflection is effectively involved into their learning processes.

Furthermore, the present study perceives self-assessment as a process that facilitates learning. From this perspective, self-assessment should be beneficial for students because it promotes a low-anxiety atmosphere.

De Saint Léger (2009) and Ariza (2003) argue that throughout the process of self-assessment, students take ownership of their learning generating a more confident environment. The close relationship that students build with their own performance is highly influenced by the personal goals they set and the self-regulation that they accomplish in order to achieve those aims. Consequently, learners are more intrinsically motivated to share the responsibility for most of their results.

Other Colombian studies (Picón, 2012; Rodríguez, 2001; Torres, 2009) highlight that self-assessment might support students' critical thinking because learners strengthen their abilities to make fair judgments about their role as learners, the responsibilities that such a role conveys, and the benefits of being committed to the whole process. Particularly, students engaged in self-assessment practices develop the ability to understand how language learning can take place according to their own capacities, personal effort, and the authenticity of their commitments (Race, 2001). In this study, self-assessment might support learners understanding of the implications of using varied lexicon while speaking. However, the instructor should be aware of which assessment modality may be used by having a defined purpose in mind.

The Literature in the field of self-assessment categorizes this strategy according to its aims. For instance, Taras (2010) classifies self-assessment modalities as weak and strong. Through weak forms (named *general scales* and *teacher prepared assessment* by Underhill, 1987 and Gardner, 2000) students are required to grade their performance based on the teacher's criteria. Here, the learner is able to rate his language skills by means of a "can do" scale that presents the learner different options of acceptable performance in the

target language. Brown (2004) calls this modality: *assessment of a specific performance* but it differed from Underhill's idea of assessment in that, through this approach, learners are able to use different recording techniques including diaries or journals. Nonetheless, the purpose is always assessing specific language performance rather than global processes.

On the other hand, strong models of self-assessment (Taras, 2010) involve learners in setting the standards for evaluation, receiving feedback from others and then, permitting students to reflect upon the whole process. The author calls this "completing the cycle of learning" (p. 206), based on the principles of the social construction of knowledge. However, Tara's strong model of self-assessment is not always suitable. Recently, Spies (2012) suggested that including peer feedback into the evaluation process may be a challenging task since not all learners are willing to provide it because they may feel unprepared to do so. In addition, when including other's than the teacher's and learner's judgments into the self-assessment process, there should be complete eagerness and agreement on the part of the participants to undertake that task.

Even without the participation of peers, the strong model of self-assessment proposed by Taras (2010) seems to compile most of the features presented by other authors regarding learners' assessment of general abilities. For instance, Brown (2004) describes two types of self-assessment in which the process, instead of a specific performance, is addressed. One type is called *indirect assessment of a general competence*; it is conducted with the objective of evaluating language competence in a broad sense by means of students' reflective entries. An example of this type of self-assessment is the exploration done by Coronado (2008) in which self-assessment focused on broad areas of learning such as the topics studied, the procedures followed in class, and the learner's study routines. Coronado is aware that his study failed to impact a specific learners'

performance because the intervention was not addressed to such a purpose. At this point, the second process-focused assessment described by Brown (2004) becomes relevant for this study: this is labelled *metacognitive assessment* and it seems to have a strong emphasis on the goal-setting task carried out by the learners after self-reflection has been completed; its relevance and implications for this study are discussed below.

Research in the field of self-assessment has recently reported an increasing focus on goal-setting to enhance self-regulated learning (De Saint Léger, 2009; Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2007; Walser, 2009). This is because goal-setting permits learners to keep track of their achievements at the same time that the global process of learning is being analyzed. Schunk (2003) argues that personal goal-setting may raise students' self-efficacy by directing their attention (observing, judging, and reacting) to their learning and performance. Castrillón, Jaramillo, and Lopez (2013), whose study focused on the smart goal-setting in a similar context to this study, reaffirmed Schunk's view. Effective outcomes provide students with a sense of realization; in other words, if their efforts have been worthy for their learning, they are willing to commit themselves to continue assessing their general performance making the process more authentic at every new stage.

Chamot and Robins (2006) also highlight the value of goal-setting to enhance students' self-directed learning. Their argument is justified by the development of intrinsic motivation. When students work towards achieving their selected objectives, not only those dictated by the teacher, real learning occurs as their initiative is authentic. Moreover, the authors insist in offering continuous guidance to learners as they become skilled in setting appropriate and realistic goals

Strategy-setting is also part of the self-assessment process that students undertake when reflecting and judging on their performance. Oxford (2003) defined learning strategies as "specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their

own L2 learning" (p. 8). Such steps, according to the same author, become effective

conditional on the context they are used; strategies should respond to students' learning

styles, task demands and their interrelation with other approaches. In self-assessment,

learning strategies are selected by learners under tutor's advice based on the language

elements which are to be tackled.

Altogether, the use of self-assessment in this study is seen as a means for students

to reflect about their entire language learning process, their efforts for improving, and the

form in which they may become better learners, initially by improving their vocabulary

development.

Vocabulary in language learning

The role of vocabulary knowledge in language learning has recently been the focus

of various studies; for instance, Amiryousefi and Ketabi (2011), Mokhtar et al., (2009),

Oya, Manalo, and Greenwood (2009). The rising interest in this language element has

been mediated in part, by the positive findings reported by authors such as those named

above; they have claimed a strong influence of vocabulary learning on successful language

performance, especially for writing and speaking. In fact, different studies have found a

positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and speaking skills (Janulevičienė &

Kavaliauskienė, 2007; Schmitt, 2000; Alemi & Tayebi, 2011) suggesting that the wider the

vocabulary, the more proficient is the person expected to become.

Furthermore, depending on the emphasis place on enriching learners' vocabulary,

there will be elements in the speaking competence that will be better reinforced. For

instance, Spies (2012) reported that by expanding students' lexical variety in terms of

connectors, learners were able to improve their cohesion in oral tasks. On the other hand,

if students learn sufficient words to maintain a conversation or contribution, they can

improve their fluency (Oya et al., 2009). Thus, these findings suggest that, even when

speaking involves different competences that are difficult to enhance for no more than the sake of vocabulary knowledge, the focus given by the researcher will determine the outcomes; in this study, oral fluency turns to be the target.

Nation (1993) and McCarten (2007) proposed a number of words required to reach full oral competence in everyday conversation. However, the reality is that not even a target of one thousand words could be productively reached if the only source of learning comes from the instructor. Consequently, it is imperative that students adopt a "self-sufficient learner" posture (McCarten, 2007, p. 2) in which they extend their vocabulary learning out of the classroom. In this way, they personalize their process by keeping track of their own learning and by testing it in other situations.

Thus, vocabulary learning is not only the teacher's responsibility but is also related to learners' efforts; however, teachers are called to promote the importance of learning new words. In this regard, Smith (2000) argues that when teaching vocabulary the emphasis should be on the words that are already familiar to students. This statement seems to have an underlying coherent rationale, given that learners should be trained to internalize new words and not only to recognize items. Thus, focusing on the lexicon that has been already studied might be an opportunity for students to increase their encounters with certain given words. Similarly, Mokhtar et al. (2009) and Gu (2003), indicated that vocabulary learning should be a dual-purpose task in which learning a new word requires students as to recall the word as to apply it to a determined situation. Hence, as found by Morales (2012), recycling vocabulary, using appropriate material which addresses students' learning styles, and setting meaningful context in which vocabulary is embedded, are strategies to foster students' vocabulary development.

Correspondingly, instructors should be aware of the required information to really *know* a word. Janulevičienė and Kavaliauskienė (2007) indicated some of the features in a

word which should be managed by learners which are, "propositional meaning, register, metaphorical meaning, connotational meaning, and the representation of meaning such as definition, relationships" (p. 11). In this respect, Nation (2005) argues that one of the biggest drawbacks in vocabulary learning is that not all the information implying word knowledge can be taught through direct instructions, which he also believed can be alleviated when independent study is carried out by learners. Schmitt (2000), for his part, argues that spelling and meaning may be enough for a learner to start learning vocabulary.

Unfortunately, the real problem at this point is not how many items are required for learners to know a word but the fact that students are usually not even aware of these features (Dóczi, 2011; Jiménez & Terrazas, 2005). Thus, vocabulary development, especially when taught to adult learners, should also involve meta-language instruction aimed at helping learners to understand the variety of elements surrounding word knowledge.

All things considered, what most of the authors discussed above agree on is that vocabulary learning is a cumulative process and, for that reason, frequent exposure to the target lexicon should be given for authentic learning. Consequently, the emerging inquiry is how students are able to know a varied number of words and still be able to identify at least two basic characteristics (spelling and meaning) to successfully use those words in real contexts, such as the classroom setting. In response to this question, Alemi and Tayebi (2011) studied three popular modalities of vocabulary learning: incidental learning, explicit instruction and strategy training. The first of these has been largely explored, for instance in Mohamed (2009), who argue that the unconscious process in which vocabulary acquisition occurs is due to the repetitive encounter that students have with that lexicon by means of selected readings. The core idea is that the more students are exposed to a word, the better they will know that word. Nevertheless, Nation (2005) argues that there is no

evidence to affirm that learners can better know a word by incidental learning than through direct instruction.

As explained before, explicit instruction should be supported by the students' ability to take charge of their own learning (McCarten, 2007). One of the best ways to approach such demand is by instructing learners in strategy use. This is, actually, the third modality of vocabulary learning cited by Alemi and Tayebi (2011) and that which, together with direct instruction, have proved to yield the most effective results in learners' performance.

A large number of authors of whom the most relevant are Oxford (2003), Chamot and Robins (2006), and Nation (2005) have sought to understand how learning strategies function, as well as their influence on different contexts and areas of language. Of these, Oxford (2003) has provided a generally accepted definition of *strategy* as the actions taken by students in order to enhance their own learning. She argued that learning strategies foster in students autonomous connection to their learning process which is critical for developing an effective communicative competence. By the same token, Amiryousefi and Ketabi (2011) claimed that strategy use for vocabulary learning provide students with sufficient tools to understand the meaning of a word and strengthen its use in different contexts. Thus, strategy training clearly promotes students' self-initiated vocabulary development by means of their own efforts which they then see as a more meaningful process.

At this point it is worth returning to the definition of strategy provided by Oxford (2003), the actions taken by students can be as varied as their nature. In this respect Alemi and Tayebi (2011) suggest two specific categories related to vocabulary learning strategies which are relevant for this study, as they represent the focus of the exploration: cognitive and metacognitive strategies. On the one hand, cognitive strategies demand the

manipulation of information at a basic level as in the exercise of writing a vocabulary notebook (McCarten, 2007); among the most common strategies in this category are memorization strategies, inferencing strategy, repetition strategies, association strategies, key word method, dictionary use, semantic grid strategies, word lists (Alemi & Tayebi, 2011). Several of these strategies were also validated in this study by using a pre-designed vocabulary notebook in which students registered new words according to their relevance. On the other hand, metacognitive strategies are related to planning, monitoring and evaluating steps followed by learners in which self-reflection is always included (Chamot & Robins, 2006). Hence, self-assessment of vocabulary learning, including that encouraged in the present study, may be thoroughly examined and typified as a metacognitive strategy for vocabulary learning.

Strategy training needs to ensure that students are acquainted with different possibilities to recall and manage new words, and it should also help students to become more aware of using these strategies on their own initiative (Chamot & Robins, 2006). When learners are able to use strategies by themselves, they are more likely to become more self-directed learners who will manage the course of their own learning. Medani (1988) reported that learners who apply their own strategies (good learners) are more successful than those who are provided the content by their teachers (poor learners). This study sees self-assessment as the means for students to regulate and monitor their vocabulary learning since they are encouraged to assess their specific difficulties, fostered to think about possible strategies to set study goals and re-evaluate their whole performance in order to know if based on the results the approach followed should be modified or not. All these actions take place with the purpose of enhancing students' oral fluency in order to express their opinions about a given topic.

Fluency in oral production

The speaking ability is probably one of the most intricate skills when it comes to language learning. This perception has been shared by various authors including Thornbury (2005) who claims that learner's drawbacks with the speaking competence are mainly due to the ineffective instruction on part of the teachers. Prieto Castillo (2007) argues that speaking implies much more than simply articulating correctly or constructing coherent sentences. She considers that different competences —grammatical, strategic, socio-linguistic, and discourse—which are interrelated at all stages of the speaking process, are required in order to achieve speaking proficiency. Thus, speaking is also related to the capacity that learners develop for making successful transaction of meaning with others, to understand the messages from their peers properly, and to use the correct words according to the functional purpose of a given conversation, among others.

The ideas above are also shared by Gutiérrez (2005), who affirmed that oral communication should be treated as a medium for "social interaction" (p. 84). This statement summarizes the scope speaking may reach as well as its importance and helps the reader understand how oral development can be dependent on many alternative factors other than simply grammar or pronunciation. However, Bygate (1987) argued that for students to learn a language, a certain amount of grammar and vocabulary should be included so that they go beyond the simple fact of recognizing that code and actually being able to use the language. Furthermore, accuracy is not the only element involved in oral production, another component that also plays an important role is fluency.

Fluency by itself would fail to guarantee optimal language command; however, it is an important measurement of what learners are expected to reach in terms of speaking proficiency. It is therefore necessary to know what fluency is and how it is seen in the language learning field. Thornbury (2000) argues that fluency is not only about conveying

message but about a balance between "the demands of real-time processing [and] the need to be reasonably accurate" (p. 4); this view had previously been presented by Nation (1989) who related fluency in language learning with the speaker's ability to integrate previously met language into purposeful communication. In this sense, fluency is tied not only to how fast speech is but also to retrieving appropriate language in order to successfully speak one's mind.

Fluency has been related to various factors, from the task-related (Derwing, Rossiter, Munro, & Thomson, 2004) to the cognitive (Dewaele, 2002). Nevertheless, fluency remains a complex concept to define and this is possibly because, as claimed by Lennon (1990), in contrast to other language elements, fluency is not precisely about linguistic knowledge but more about performance. In other words, fluency in language learning may be seen as the physical representation of the mental process that occurs when speech planning and production are taking place. Consequently, this definition is also to be taken into account when defining the measures for which fluency can be gauged.

Riggenbach (1991) argues that fluency should be measured by taking into account as temporal variables (pauses, hesitations, speech rate, to name a few) as non-temporal variables (accent, vocabulary, grammar, confidence). In this regards, Lennon (2000) and Jong and Hulstijn (2009) claim that the role of pauses in fluency is an important factor to contemplate as it suggests that fluent speech is that which presents fewer pauses and more speediness. Nevertheless, Chambers (1997), Oliveira (2002), Packhomov (2012), and Schilperoord (2002) argue that pauses are natural evidence of speech processing in the speaker's mind. In the case of language learners, it is likely that students pause because multiple connections are being made in order to include previously studied items into their message.

This present study expected that fluency would be reflected in the participants' ability to use more and varied vocabulary to express their ideas regarding a given topic. Pauses and other factors above mentioned were not necessarily related to this vision of fluency, and consequently, three variables were contemplated based on García-Amaya (2009) and Rossiter (2009): students' total speaking time (TST), the number of words attempted during their speech (TWA) (excluding diffluent words like fillers, false starts and repetitions), and students' inclusive speech rate (ISR) (which was calculated by dividing the TWA into the TST and multiplied by 60 —bearing in mind that students failed to speak for a similar amount of time in both samples.)

Chapter Three: Research Design

Reflective teaching is nowadays a more dominant exercise in language classrooms and Action research permits teachers to formalize this reflective practice by setting the route to solve educational inquiries. In this path, various elements, including the researcher, context, and participants' roles in the study are contemplated in order to define the tools for data collection and the procedures to follow.

Type of study

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) characterize action research as "motivated by a quest to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it from the effects of the changes made" (p. 298). Therefore, teachers undertaking action research often depart from defining an inquiry to plan a course of action for improvement. Once an action has been carried out, there is a process of observation and evaluation that relies on the teacher's capacity to reflect on the results obtained to interpret the reality. Generally, valid and reliable outcomes from this process are referred by other researchers in order to deepen their comprehension regarding to similar phenomena (Burns, 2010).

The present study is an exploratory mixed method action research study (Creswell, 2007). On one hand, it aims not at studying individuals in isolation but considers them as active and always-changing elements of a whole. On the other hand, quantitative data in this study supports qualitative findings, providing a more complete scenario to understand the research problem under study. Bearing in mind that this project intends to determine the influence of vocabulary self-assessment practices (qualitatively) on students' oral fluency (quantitatively), a mixed method action research study appears to be a suitable approach in order to explore how this relationship evolves and how the possible outcomes obtained from it may convey further changes in the educational setting of this study.

Researcher's role

Teachers conducting action research are not only observers or explorers of the situation but become active participants in the investigation (Burns, 2010). In this study, the researcher's role as participant-observer conveyed different functions: guiding and monitoring students' process as they were trained to become effective self-assessors; instructing learners in using different vocabulary learning strategies by providing various techniques during the initial session and the piloting stage; and being an "insider" (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 15) who reported on the participant's insights regarding the phenomena under study by presenting them from a different perspective.

Context

This research project took place in a Colombian private institution which provides training on various occupational fields at a technical level. Particularly, the *Proficiency in English* program is divided into four levels according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) namely: basic, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced. Unfortunately, the program objectives mainly addressed grammatical development and thus there was no clear institutional strategy for dealing with other skills. Since evaluation procedures involving formative assessment were missing, the course book, *New American inside out* (2009), served the purposes of syllabus and evaluation criteria guide. Hence, learners were assessed according to the book standards or based on the teacher's viewpoint.

Participants

Twenty-four pre-intermediate young adult learners agreed to participate in this intervention. Most of the students had previously had contact with the language through their jobs, schools or through formal training in other institutions; however, for other students enrolling the program represented the first encounter with the target language.

Participants' learning styles were predominantly visual and kinesthetic; they enjoyed activities in which realia were used, but they especially liked interaction activities.

A particular feature among students was their friendliness which aided to establish a close rapport with each other. They also shared similar backgrounds which reinforced their willingness to participate and cooperate with peers. Most of the students enrolled the class because they were eager to obtain better jobs in the future or simply because they were interested in achieving improved performance in the target language.

In terms of their linguistic needs, students writing skills were coherent with their level; however, most needed reinforcement in listening and speaking skills. In addition, finding appropriate vocabulary to express their thoughts orally, joining their ideas and translating common expressions from their first language to English were among their limitations. Participants' affective needs included reducing anxiety when speaking and gaining confidence about their progress since they often underestimated their abilities in the target language.

Data collection instruments

In order to collect data, this study drew on learning logs filled in by students, students' artifacts in the form of recordings, and a final survey used to collect learners' insights regarding the assessment process.

Learning logs

Learning logs can be both, assessment and research tools (Friesner & Hart, 2005). Their use provides opportunities to gain understanding about students' experiences as they enhance reflection (Alvarez, 2013). Learning logs can be structured according to the purpose of the research and data obtained from them should be interpreted based on the learning situation in which they are written. Friesner and Hart (2005) argue for the section of learning logs as data collection instruments due to their advantages, including:

- Data are collected directly from participants. There are no filters in the way and, thus, the information obtained from logs provides validity to the study.

- Data collected from learning logs originate from students' experience, learning and reflection.

- Logs consider the inclusion of goals for students to monitor their learning process. For this reason, learning logs are usually written weekly.

- Learning logs have immersed action plans raised from students' reflection about the achievement of objectives.

In this study, a log was designed to be filled out by students every week (Appendix A). This instrument contained questions regarding student's experiences during the lesson, strategies used and learning goals set.

Students' artifacts: Recordings

As a pedagogical tool, audio recordings can help learners in improving their speaking abilities (Ariza, 2013; Lince, 2012) because students are able to identify those aspects in their speech that are hindering effective communication or those which simply need reinforcement. Cohen et al. (2007) argue that audio recording is a powerful tool for collecting data since it may reduce the influence of previous interpretations made on the material analyzed by providing the researcher with clearer and more authentic perceptions of the information obtained. In this study, two audio recordings were accomplished by learners in order to provide themselves and the researcher with an overall view of their fluency development before and after the implementation.

Survey

Surveys are aimed at gathering qualitative data directly from the subjects studied. Marshall and Rossman (1999) highlight numerous advantages of surveys including "their

accuracy, generalizability, and convenience" (p. 130). Surveys are easy to administer and allow the researcher to drawn on generalizations from the participants' insights. In this study, it was expected participants would be able to supply qualitative data about their feelings in relation to the self-assessment implementations through a survey designed by the researcher. Specifically, the purpose of this survey (Appendix B) was to capture learners' perceptions about the role that self-assessment had had in their vocabulary, fluency and language development.

Data Collection Procedures

The procedures carried out in order collect data (Table 1) took place over an eleven-week period divided into three stages: pre, while, and post-implementation.

Table 1. Data collection procedures.

Implementation Stage	Weeks Allotted	Procedures
Pre-	Four	Training on VLS First Recording
While-	Six	Learning logs implementation
Post-	One	Second recording Survey

Pre-implementation

At this stage, which lasted four weeks, students signed letters of consent (Appendix C) agreeing to participate in the study. They also had input in vocabulary learning strategies and recorded their first speaking task, which was transcribed and filed.

While-implementation

This stage took place over six weeks and there were two sessions each week. Sessions were organized as follows: firstly, participants were exposed to relevant vocabulary and suggested to make use of vocabulary learning strategies; secondly, students were engaged in production activities involving the vocabulary studied; and thirdly, participants filled in their learning logs in order to assess their general performance during the week.

Post-implementation

Students recorded a final speaking task on the same topic as in the first recording. A checklist for learners to self-assess their performance was provided to students (however, it was not contemplated in order to gather data since it was filled in under different circumstances by each student). For both speaking tasks, learners were advised to prepare by taking notes of key words to avoid reading while recording.

At this stage, students' overall insights were also collected by means of the survey. Since not all participants were able to present both speaking tasks, only those surveys of learners who had gone through the whole process were taken into account.

Design and validation

In this study, social validity (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) took the form of peer-examination where other researchers provided a disinterested look at the research design in order to discover any procedural inconsistency and piloted some of the instruments to be used (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Additionally, an experienced researcher evaluated the instruments and suggested modifications to avoid faulty items that could mislead participants.

Ethical considerations

As suggested by Whitehead and McNiff (2006), ethical considerations were undertaken in order to validate the information presented in this study. From the beginning of the intervention, students were informed of the rationale behind the study, the possible constrains for them as participants, and the benefits that this research project could convey. Thus, only data from students who agreed to participate by signing a letter of consent were contemplated. Participants' anonymity was maintained at all stages of the project.

The research design of this study permitted the researcher to structure a path for learning about the effects of self-assessment in students' vocabulary development. Learnings logs, a survey and students' artifacts were contemplated in order to gather significant data to evince how students in the particular context of this study dealt with self-assessment.

Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

In this study, language learning is grounded in vocabulary development and sees self-assessment as a strategy to provide participants with meaningful and long-lasting vocabulary learning. However, for vocabulary self-assessment to produce the expected results, a clear picture of the pedagogical procedures framing the study was required.

Vision of Language

This study sees language as comprising a double purpose. On one hand, language is a medium for learners to convey meaning about their reflective practices. On the other hand, language facilitates communication among learners. As students improve their oral skills, they might extend their abilities to exchange authentic information with others through oral interaction. Various linguists (Nation, 2005; Schmitt, 2001; Wilkins, 1972) have emphasized the importance of vocabulary knowledge for successful communication. They argue that, while grammar structures are important to communicate, even in the absence of grammatical knowledge communication could still be accomplished if enough vocabulary exists. Thus, in this study language is also seen as having its bases in vocabulary development. For this reason, learners are expected to enrich their vocabulary in order to improve their communication with others.

Vision of Learning

Andragogy, which studies adult learning and the procedures they follow in order to facilitate such learning (Merriam, 2001), focuses on the relationship that exists between adult learning and self-directed learning. This association indicates that adult learners are characterized by an internal motivation towards learning, solving problems, relating their learning to their experiences and needs, and having a developed control over their process. Thus, in this study learning is also seen as a set of procedures that allows participants to gain lifelong skills applied to different areas of their lives inside and outside classrooms.

Vision of Curriculum

Harrison, Blakemore, and Buck (2001) define curriculum as a "sequence of formal instruction" (p. 1); it is usually carefully planned to reflect the beliefs and principles of a given educational context and transferred to students by means of the teacher. In the setting of this study, the curriculum objectives were intended to provide learners with proper grammatical knowledge in order to develop other skills. However, from a deeper view, the program was constructed to respond to the CEFR requirements (Council of Europe, 2001); thus, the content was adjusted to such requirements and presented through a communicative syllabus by the instructor.

The methodology of the program, based on institutional policies, was named *Inductive-active method* and provided students with progressive guidance until they were able to perform on their own. In terms of evaluation, the program was undertaking the construction of solid evaluation criteria. Hence, the responsibility for this task had been transferred to the tutor who set the criteria in alignment with the syllabus of the course and the learners' needs.

Instructional Design

The cycles pertaining this study included thirty hours of pedagogical intervention. However, the instruction was designed to cope with the three stages described in the instructional design which were: pre, while, and post-implementation (Table 2).

Table 2. Instructional design.

Implementation Stage	Time allotted	Activities	Research design procedure
Pre-	Four weeks	Input on vocabulary learning strategies (inferring from the context, using a vocabulary notebook, and using the dictionary.)	VLS training First recording.
While-	Six weeks	Meaning-focused input/output. Language-focused learning. Fluency development.	Learning logs implementation.
Post-	One week	Reporting overall insights.	Second recording. Survey

Pre-implementation

The pre-implementation stage took four weeks and was intended to engage learners in using three vocabulary learning strategies: inferring from the context, using vocabulary notebooks, and using dictionaries. In addition, students were required to prepare a speaking task and record their oral production; the gathered data were evaluated based on specific criteria (Appendix D) and used as the departing point regarding students' spoken abilities.

With reference to the vocabulary notebook, its design allowed learners to apply various popular vocabulary strategies: the word meaning or a corresponding key word in Spanish, a related word in English which could have been a synonym or an antonym, information about prefixes or suffixes, family roots or collocations. The format also

contained two additional spaces for creating a sentence and drawing a picture related to any of the items already mentioned (Appendix F).

While-implementation

 Every lesson at this stage included three parts: warm up, practice and wrap up. In the warm up students' schemata was activated by presenting them with a picture, video, short reading or question that allowed them to predict the context of the lesson. During the practice, Nation's four strands on providing opportunities for learning vocabulary (2008) were included through four activities. Namely, meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development were taken into account when planning the lessons (Appendix E).

For instance, at the practice stage, a typical lesson included activities that allowed the learners to learn new vocabulary and relate it with their previous knowledge while stimulating their receptive skills; information gap activities or information transfer activities based on a piece of listening or reading provided meaning-focused input. Similarly, problem solving activities, role plays, re-telling stories, reporting and talking about anecdotes were useful for providing meaning-focused output where learners made use of the vocabulary learned. Deliberated learning is the key aspect in language-focused learning, given that students are instructed on vocabulary knowledge and the attention is focused on elements such as meaning and form (Nation, 2008); strategy training also took place during this stage by means of using the dictionary, providing explicit feedback or filling up in the vocabulary notebook.

Other activities focused on fluency development, where learners had the opportunity to develop proficiency at using the vocabulary already learned. These activities addressed communication based on familiar topics; they also included some pressure that required learners to perform faster than usual. In spoken fluency, the 4/3/2

technique (Nation, 2008) is one of the best-known activities for developing fluency, however; other activities were also adapted. Criteria for evaluating several of these activities were set by students based on the teachers' guidance.

At the wrap- up stage students reflected about their performance during the lesson, their possible problems, and their learning goals. This activity was completed by means of self-assessment and the tool used to register it was a learning log. Taking into account Brown's (2004) and Taras' insights (2010), the self-assessment carried out by students at this stage was that which reflected on their performance during the class and their efforts at learning new vocabulary, on how they used strategies for making vocabulary learning an independent task, and on setting new goals that allowed them to develop their vocabulary.

Post-implementation

Students were engaged in a spoken task similar to that proposed in the pre-implementation stage. The topic of the task and the length of time spent for this activity were similar to the topic and length of the initial recording. A survey intended to capture learners' insights about the self-assessment process was also administered.

Materials

The course book *New American inside out* (2009) and additional material from *Summit 2* (2006), *New cutting edge* (2005), and Internet, including puzzles, readings, and videos, were used in order to support the implementation of this study.

This pedagogical intervention presented various challenges to the participants of this study, starting with a more evident focus on their role as young adult learners. Before the implementation, no formal lessons had been taught in their course requiring students to reflect on their actions at every stage of the lesson and even out of the classroom setting, which was interestingly evinced in the collected data.

Chapter Five: Results and Data Analysis

Participants in this study were able to increase awareness of their own vocabulary learning habits by means of the reflective exercise that involved self-assessment. These findings were initially represented by a series of codes that later evolved into three categories; selective coding integrated categories into a core category that represented the actual phenomenon under study from a theoretical perspective (Strauss & Corbin, 2007).

Data Analysis Method

Strauss and Corbin (2007) define grounded theory as the process of maintaining a continuous dialogue with data in order to build theory that fits the reality that it represents. This data analysis method has been typically applied to qualitative and mixed studies such as the present, in which data are approached deductively, generating a continuous comparison that permits the researcher to set bases for the resulting findings. In using grounded theory methodology, various steps are followed with the purpose of reducing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data; these stages, also known as open, axial, and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), permitted gradual interpretation of those behaviors involved in the process of vocabulary self-assessment carried out by the participants of this study.

Procedures of Data Collection

In this study, three data collection tools were used: students' artifacts (in the form of recordings), learning logs, and a survey. Specifically, the first recording was used to determine students' initial fluency levels. The results in this speaking task and that applied after the implementation were contrasted to see if participant's fluency had improved. Speaking tasks were administered under the same conditions in order to validate their applicability; thus, students had to prepare, record, and listen to their own recording and then fill in a checklist. However, this checklist was not contemplated in the data analysis

since not all participants were able to complete it. All recordings were kept in a single folder and labeled as first or second recording next to the letter S, which stands for student, and a corresponding number.

Learning logs were administered three times during the implementation. The initial plan was to gather a learning log for every week that the implementation took place starting from week two; however, two learning logs was sent by email to be completed at home and facilitate their transcription but not all participants submitted them. This fact made the collection of the instrument more difficult and so, irregular compared to the logs collected in class. To guarantee the validity of the study these samples were left out. The logs collected in class, were transcribed and organized question by question in a single Microsoft Word document using labels for participants (S1-S24) to align with the ethical considerations.

The survey was administered in the last week of the implementation and later transcribed using Microsoft Word. Responses were classified according to each question to facilitate data management. Finally, the researcher created a chart to register all activities related to the data collection process to keep track of collected data (Appendix G).

Data Management

Students' speaking tasks were transcribed by means of the software *Transcriber* (2008) (as used in Kormos & Dénes, 2004) (Appendix H) and later copied into a Microsoft Word document. With the aid of a chart (Appendix I), the researcher examined the transcriptions taking into account variables such as total speaking time, total of words attempted and speech rate inclusive in order to measure students' fluency levels with regards to the use of more and varied vocabulary.

After the survey application, there was a need for a tool that facilitated data analysis for both the learning logs and the final survey in order to gather initial concepts grounded in the two instruments. Therefore, data was scrutinized with the aid of the software *ATLAS.ti* (2009) that permitted improved organization for the researcher as well as retrieval of the data as the coding process was taking place (Appendix J). This approach facilitated the process of continuous comparison advocated in the research method selected.

In a parallel file, another sample of the learning log documents and the transcriptions of the final speaking task were saved (Appendix K) for both analyzing and having a wider perspective on the type of vocabulary learned by the participants and its actual use during the first and last speaking tasks; this procedure aimed at obtaining further evidence of any improvement in vocabulary acquisition after the self-assessment process.

Data reduction

This process responded to the principles of grounded theory. Thus, open coding was applied to the data. The purpose of this initial step was to identify repetitive ideas expressed by participants in both instruments in order to discover patterns and subcategories. In doing this, the learning logs and the survey were read and analyzed by using a *project* in ATLAS. ti (2009); using the coding tool in this software, students opinions were highlighted and labeled with a key concept based on the type of behavior they represented. In this process several pieces of data were compared to find regularities that allowed the researcher to label them as an existing or as a new code. This, in order to obtain concepts that could represent a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 2007); in other words, concepts found in the data were the abstract representation of given behavioral patterns that reflect the focus of the research. Appendix L presents samples of the codes gathered by means of open coding.
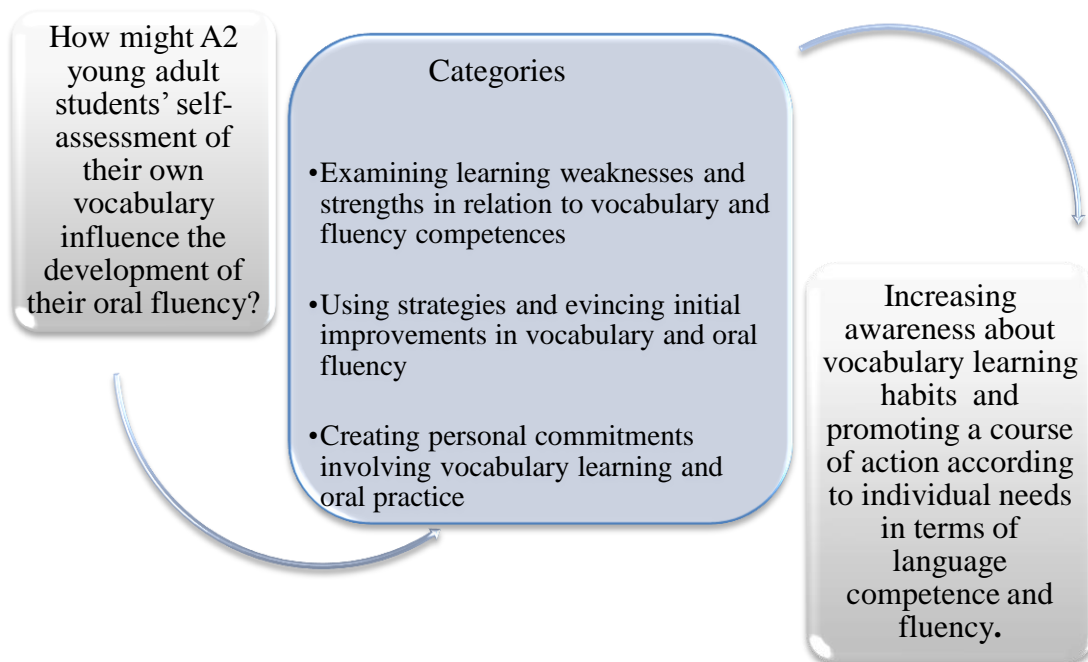
Axial coding consisted of connecting codes already found to be grouped into specific subcategories. According to Strauss and Corbin (2007), during this process (which generally happens simultaneously with open coding) the researcher generates connections among codes by identifying contextual or causality relationships. These types of associations were accomplished with the aid of ATLAS. ti (2009) families tool (Appendix M) where repetitive codes were linked to create subcategories. The next step was to group and label these resultant behaviors into categories, of which three emerged from the axial coding process.

Selective coding integrated categories into a core category that represented the actual phenomenon under study from a theoretical perspective (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). At this stage, concepts, patterns, and categories were analyzed through continuous comparison to find the convergence point where most of the findings met; deeper relationship analysis was consummate by examining each pair of contrasted pieces of data to uncover the conditions under which the phenomena subject of study occurred and thus, provided a clear and detailed theoretical explanation to the research question initially raised. Figure 2 highlights the process described above.

Core category

When engaged in self-assessment, learners develop their linguistic abilities by optimizing their metacognitive skills (Cardenas, 2010; Picón, 2012). For the participants of this study, this was a novel experience that for the first time moved the target of the lesson from an emphasis on language to the participants' role as learners, the responsibilities entailed and the incomes gained afterwards (Areiza, 2013). Throughout the six weeks of implementation, it was found that learners were able to increase awareness of their own vocabulary learning habits by means of the reflective exercise that involved evaluating themselves through a learning log.

Figure 2. Data reduction process.

How might A2 young adult students' self-assessment of their own vocabulary influence the development of their oral fluency?

Categories

•Examining learning weaknesses and strengths in relation to vocabulary and fluency competences

•Using strategies and evincing initial improvements in vocabulary and oral fluency

•Creating personal commitments involving vocabulary learning and oral practice

Increasing awareness about vocabulary learning habits and promoting a course of action according to individual needs in terms of language competence and fluency**.**

At first, participants examined their strengths and weaknesses observing the latter as barriers that hindered their desired improvement. Moreover, even when assessment focus was on vocabulary, students also monitored other elements of their language competence identifying areas that needed extra attention on their part; for instance, their listening and reading abilities, the need for extra class participation, the usefulness of available learning tools, and even, their punctuality and assistance to class. More closely related to vocabulary learning, students addressed specific learning weaknesses but at the same time, they were able to set learning goals in order to overcome these issues.

Students' initial personal commitments targeted broad aims that were gradually refined throughout the assessment progression. Goal-setting properties (Schunk, 1990) including *difficulty* were evinced in students' aims while *proximity* varied from learner to learner; *specificity* criterion was absent in most of students' goals. Overall, personal commitments were found as one of the most important features of the self-assessment process carried out by learners. Even when they were not closely examined with regards to their direct effect on students' vocabulary and fluency development, the data suggested

that the exercise of creating commitments benefited students' self-efficacy levels. Additionally, goal-setting served as the bridge connecting students' self-monitoring and procedures; having established the objectives to be reached, learners drew on a course of action to reach their goals.

Students' self-assessment also encouraged them to set strategies in order to overcome their individual needs; hence, learners were able to establish relationships between their needs and their own resources to attack specific areas. Since vocabulary and oral fluency were the focus of the lessons, students' strategies addressed mainly these two elements; however, other areas including class performance and independent work were mentioned by participants. Interestingly, strategies involving listening were the most common approaches proposed by learners being songs and videos the most referred tools.

In this study, self-assessment was conducted by learners in a systematic way; thus, reflection triggered learners to examine their strengths and weaknesses and consequently, a series of learning goals and strategies were proposed in order to reduce the effects of their difficulties. It was found that this process was highly beneficial for students and such a benefit was evinced in the analysis of students' spoken tasks which revealed that learners were able to use more and varied lexicon when talking about a specific topic after the implementation of self-assessment than before this had occurred.

Examining learning weaknesses and strengths in relation to vocabulary and fluency competences

During the process of self-assessment carried out by the participants of this study, a set of opinions on their part disclosed reflection about their own language weaknesses and strengths; by doing so, learners started to raise awareness of the need to reinforce various elements of their language learning process. Moreover, various students went beyond merely acknowledging their weaknesses but they reflected on the causes behind them.

Janulevičienė and Kavaliauskienė (2007) argue that both actions become a positive trait in students' way to repair their difficulties since, in doing so, they reflect on their outcomes and then, raise awareness and responsibility.

By means of self-assessment, participants were able to talk about their strengths and weaknesses during the process. These weaknesses were not only related to their level of proficiency but also to various elements of the learning process including their personal involvement with the class, the independent practice taking place out of the classroom and even features of the lessons they struggled with. These facts encouraged learners to raise awareness about their difficulties as shown in Excerpts 1 and 2:

Excerpt 1.

"Siento que los ejercicios realizados me han dejado ver que me falta adquirir más práctica para una mejor fluidez." ([*sic*] S6. Final survey)

Excerpt 2.

"El no poder organizar mis ideas correctamente. Esto no me permite crear mis oraciones a la hora de hablar." ([*sic*] S8: Learning log 1)

When asked about the aspects that caused them the most difficulty during the lesson, learners were able to analyze their performance and pointed out various types of difficulties. Mainly, students identified language problems as the area that required more attention on their part. At this point, it was also found that even when most of the learners claimed at the beginning of the study to have lexical difficulties, self-assessment enabled them to perceive other problems including sentence structure and pronunciation factors.

Excerpt 3.

"Lo que me causo mayor dificultad fue encontrar palabras que no conocía y que no sabía cómo pronunciar."([*sic*] S11. Learning Log 3)

In Excerpt 3, it is believed that even when the learner had a set of available words to be used, ignoring their pronunciation may have hindered the student from producing such words. Recalling Nation (1998), word knowledge implies recognition of different elements of the lexicon including meaning, usage, and pronunciation. Moreover, in their process of going from their current developmental stage to adulthood, young adult learners are still developing emotional stability and they are concerned about their images in front of others (Brown, 2007); thus, when slips in pronunciation occur, this type of learners tend to feel threatened by the situation. However, learners not only reflected about specific language problems but they also reflected about difficulties affecting the way in which they managed their own learning process (Cardenas, 2010). They were assessing the whole process and being conscious that in the path for learning a second language several elements, not simply language skills, need to be addressed in order to succeed. For instance, Excerpt 4 below illustrates how S2 acknowledged that independent practice and participation required intervention.

Excerpt 4.

"(…) hacer las tareas, vencer el miedo de hablar en público."([*sic*] S2. Learning log 2)

Excerpt 4 not only supports what was claimed before regarding the participants' anxiety to make mistakes in public, but it is also closely related to the process of self-assessment argued for by Brown (2004), in which learners evaluate their performance as a whole rather than focusing on a single competence. Thus, students are able to reflect on elements other than the language accepting that the responsibility for the results also depends on factors external to the classroom setting such as individual practice at home, discipline, willingness to cooperate with others, and personality (Sánchez, 2012). In Excerpt 5, for example, S10 refers to the form in which self-assessment facilitated

reflection about the student's weaknesses and consequently, facilitated self-consciousness, more likely, about the student's role as learner.

Excerpt 5.

"La autorreflexión me ayuda sobre mis déficits y me ayuda a concientizar sobre mí." ([*sic*] S10. Final survey)

Thus, by means of reflection, self-assessment provided students the opportunity to evaluate themselves as learners taking into account their weaknesses and strengths in such a role. Additionally, recognizing strengths and weaknesses was useful to bridge student-teacher communication because learners uncovered their language needs, emotions, and feelings regarding the process. This benefited the learning-teaching process since direct feedback about the learning process was received from students. For instance, when reflecting on their current performance, most of the participants in this study claimed that self-assessment had been influential for their vocabulary learning, fluency development and learning in general. Moreover, a few students also acknowledged that even when the experience had been positive, they had not perceived meaningful changes in their learning, mostly because of a lack of commitment on their part. Both positions are illustrated in Excerpts 6 and 7 below:

Excerpt 6.

"En mi caso es uno más consciente de su verdadero desempeño y porque si o no lo hace." ([*sic*] S10.Final survey).

Excerpt 7.

"No le puse empeño a lo que me proponía, por eso no hubo intervención en mi aprendizaje." ([*sic*] S11.Final survey)

According to Carter and Nunan (2001), when self-assessment is first administered, learners tend to overestimate or underestimate their actual level of performance. Similarly,

in Excerpt 7, self-assessment was apparently seen as ineffective because no major changes were observed. Langan et al. (2008) attribute this fact to a natural effect of not having well developed reflection skills that usually lead to subjectivity. In S7's case, self-assessment permitted the instructor to recognize a specific problem affecting the student's process and to consider various scenarios in order to support this learner's difficulty.

Creating personal commitments involving vocabulary learning and oral practice

Metacognitive assessment involves deep reflection regarding one's general performance in order to evince strengths and weakness, but it also includes the creation of learning goals addressed to improve specific points (Brown, 2004). In this study, learners were encouraged to create learning goals based on the difficulties they had found in class. Specifically, students were required to think about their objectives for the following class assuming that this requirement was easy to fulfill. A selection of the learners' first attempts to create goals is illustrated in Excerpts 8 and 9.

Excerpt 8.

"Poner todo de mi parte para hacer cada vez más que el Inglés se vuelva

algo cotidiano." ([*sic*] S1.Learning log 1)

Excerpt 9.

"Aprender más palabras, estudiar lo aprendido y superarme un poco más."

([*sic*] S20. Learning log 1)

The goals presented above were rather general and they failed to address a specific element in students' performances, neither a span of time when they would be met nor a method by which they might be achieved. However, recalling Schunk (1991), learners usually approach a task with these types of goals in mind; as they advance in the process they start self-regulating it by observing judging and reacting to positive or negative

results. Goal-setting constitutes a rigorous process that needs to be systematically

approached and training learners to set appropriate goals comprises further work and time

investment (Castrillon et al., 2013). Therefore, in the subsequent self-assessment exercise

it was suggested to the students that they revise their learning logs and ponder the goals

they had already set. They were invited to set new goals based on achievement or failure

of the previous objectives. Consequently, learners came up with different "commitments"

(as they called them) as seen in Excerpts 10 and 11.

Excerpt 10.

"Read the book and bring new sentences for the next class and ask the teacher de

meaning." ([*sic*] S4: Learning log 2)

Excerpt 11.

"Mis objetivos son repasar mis apuntes en cada clase." ([*sic*] S5: Learning log 2)

By the third self-assessment practice, the participants' learning goals had improved

in quality. Some students even thought of the means for achieving their objectives and

also referenced some classroom activities that could support the attainment of their goals.

Self-assessment drove them to reflect on the process of goal-setting and even in the

absence of formal training, they were able to improve this practice by setting different

strategies that suited their learning styles and preferences. An example of this

improvement is seen in Excerpt 12 in which S15 presents self-recording, a tool that had

been used in the pre-implementation stage, as an alternative to improve the speaking skill.

Also, in Excerpt 13, S10 includes the expected time to achieve a goal related to vocabulary

learning and retrieval.

Excerpt 12.

"Planeo grabar más mi speaking para ver cómo mejorarlo." ([*sic*] S15. Learning

log 3)

Excerpt 13.

"Mi objetivo es tener más disponibilidad y retener las palabras y temas para usarlas en mis próximas clases." ([*sic*] S10: Learning log 3)

Students' sensitivity to set better-quality objectives suggested that, as they became gradually involved in their process by means of self-assessment, they also developed their capacity to self- regulate it (Areiza, 2013; Torres, 2009). This, in turn, permitted them to attend to specific areas of learning that could be modified with the tools they had within their reach. In Excerpts 14 and 15, S7 and S3 relate their goal-setting experience with a having stronger relationship with their learning process than prior to the implementation. S7's sample indicates that most of the goals registered in the learning goal were actually achieved and attributes that accomplishment to the fact of writing these goals; that is, the fact of establishing commitments with the self. Similarly, S3's commitment to practice independently was product of the personal reflection carried out by means of self-assessment.

Excerpt 14.

"Al escribir compromisos me sentí en la obligación de cumplirlos y trate de cumplirlos casi todos." ([*sic*] S7. Final survey)

Excerpt 15.

"En mi caso he tenido más compromiso de investigar lo que quiero aprender."

([*sic*] S3. Final survey)

Learners' opinions suggested that writing learning goals was useful for them as they felt the need to achieve those goals. Thus, goal-setting in self-assessment not only fosters students' self-regulation but also increases students' level of commitment with their process (Picón, 2012). Moreover, this commitment becomes an authentic and strong vow given that it is established with the self and not with third parties (such as the instructor or

peers). Therefore, creating personal learning commitments is likely to enhance

achievement attributable to students' self-efficacy increase as illustrated in Excerpt 16 in

which S6 affirms that formally writing learning goals encouraged this student to achieve

such goals.

Excerpt 16.

"Pienso que el solo hecho de escribir mis propósitos ha ocasionado en mí una

gran motivación para realizarlos."([*sic*] S6.Final survey)

Learners' ability to self-regulate their learning provided support for their

involvement in the learning process; this fact moved the ownership of the language

learning from the teacher to the participants because they felt able to respond for their

actions. Moreover, students learned how to accommodate their learning styles in order to

attain their proposed learning goals looking forward to language improvement.

Using strategies and evincing initial improvements in vocabulary and oral

fluency

Using strategies for achieving learning goals is another type of behavior resultant

from the self-assessment conducted by the participants of this study. Oxford (2003) argues

that strategies only become meaningful for students when they are product of their own

attempts to approach a situation. However, strategies can also be taught to improve

different areas of learning. In this study, three vocabulary learning strategies were taught

during the pre-implementation stage, but it was observed that very few students

contemplated them during the while-implementation stage. Instead, some students reported

(Excerpts 17 and 18) having used other strategies as means to achieve their objectives.

Excerpt 17.

"Busque otros medios como programas en inglés, escuchando los diálogos." ([*sic*]

S11. Final survey)

Excerpt 18.

"Actualmente me inscribí en un curso virtual de Ingles." ([sic] S23. Learning log

3)

The strategies set by learners mainly focused on their independent practice; this

feature indicates that learners were capable of setting action plans for those instances

where little or no formal guidance was received. This, in turn, demonstrates how self-

assessment may encourage learners to consider certain actions that are not necessarily

regulated by the instructor but on their own, which reflects the life-long learning effects

that strategy-setting conveys for students who are constantly self-assessing their process as

in the case of the S6 in Excerpt 19.

Excerpt 19.

"Cuando estoy en el bus o voy a casa, trato de hacer oraciones en mi mente que

me hagan recordar vocabulario y su significado."([*sic*] S6. Final survey)

Based on students' reflections regarding strategy-setting, two important features

were established; on one hand, learners reported that experimenting on their own by

"asynchronously" listening to their own recorded products benefited them because they

were able to discover problematic areas in their speaking that were not easily perceived in

synchronous conversation (Ariza,2003). One example of this claim in favor of self-

recording was provided by S12 in Excerpt 20.

Excerpt 20.

"Al escucharme me daba cuenta de mis errores y así los podía corregir."([*sic*]

S12. Final survey)

On the other hand, it was found that of all possible strategies selected by learners,

using listening resources was recurrently pinpointed by the participants as one of the most

common strategies to exercise the target language (Excerpt 21). This finding guided the

class design for subsequent lessons in which more listening resources were included. Cardenas (2010) argues that having a clear picture of which students' learning strategies are favors the ultimate goal of learning which is fostering students' autonomy. This is because by exposing their opinions regarding the tasks that help them the most, students are implicitly starting to assume responsibility for their own learning processes.

Excerpt 21.

"Leer en Ingles, ver películas en Ingles, escuchar los listenings enviados por la profe." ([*sic*] S2. Learning Log 2)

Oxford (2003) claims that when setting strategies, students' learning styles need to considered. This particular group of learners developed awareness of their own learning styles in order to select the strategies that were successful for them. Nonetheless, it cannot be discarded that students unconsciously selected strategies that in the past had functioned for them. Moreover, it is clear that fostering students' awareness about the way they learn best is favorable when selecting an appropriate course of action. In this study the benefits of encouraging learners through self-assessment to select appropriate strategies for learning vocabulary were measured and analyzed using data obtained from the students' speaking tasks transcriptions.

Both speaking tasks were transcribed and analyzed in terms of three temporal variables of fluency related to vocabulary use. First of all, total speaking time (TST) was seen as a major indicator of fluency development taking into account that one of the main reasons to consider their own discourse as diffluent was that learners usually felt unable to talk about less familiar topics for an ample amount of time. In the first *speaking task* students talked in average for eighty-five seconds (not including pauses lower to 0.3 seconds, false starts, repetitions, and filled pauses). In contrast, in the second speaking

task TST increased in average by sixty seconds being this change more significantly noticed in some students' tasks than in others. See Figure 3.

The second temporal variable for measuring fluency was the total of words attempted in each task (TWA). The relevance of this measure had to do with the vocabulary-for-fluency focus of the study. Subsequently, the amount of words used by learners in both *speaking tasks* was analyzed. In the first task, students produced about seventy-five words each minute (not including repetitions, false starts or filled pauses) compared to an average of one hundred and forty words spoken in the second task (Figure 4). Analysis of the relationship between TST and TWA was also accomplished by measuring the speech rate inclusive per minute (SRIPM).

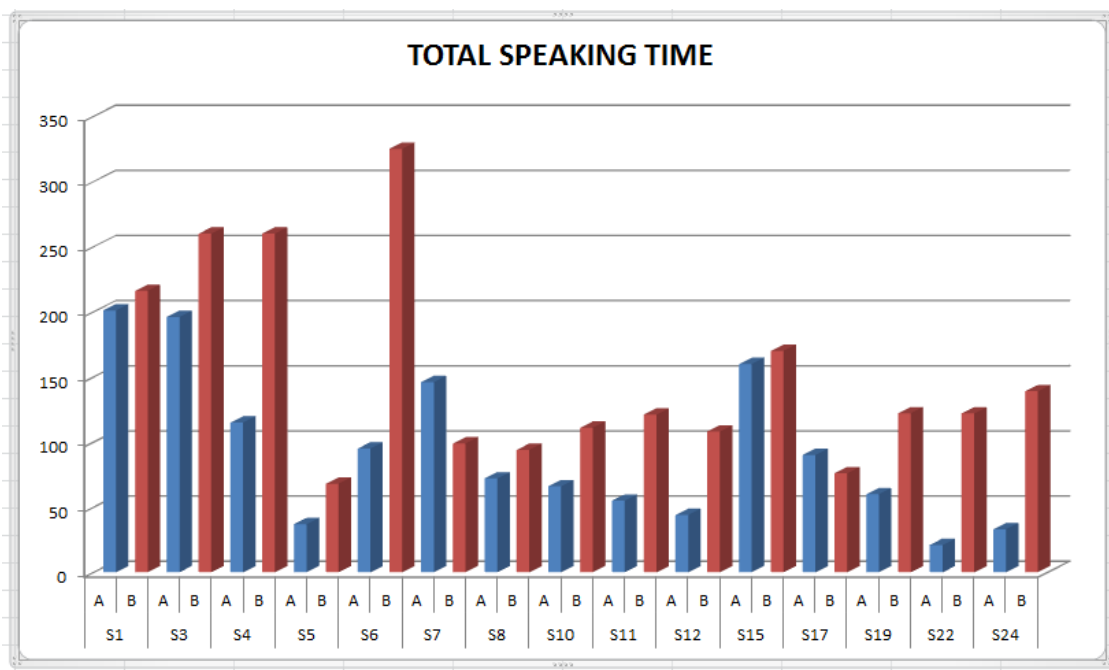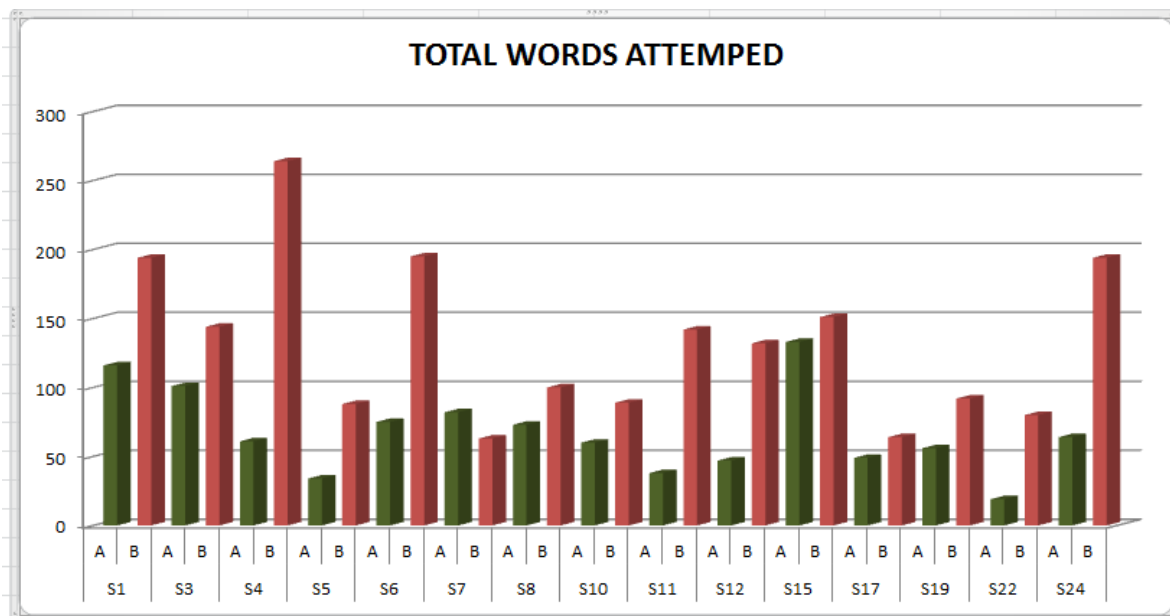Figure 3. Total speaking time per minute measured in seconds.

Figure 4. Total words attempted per minute.

SRIPM is one of the most common temporal variables referred in the literature

dealing with fluency development (Chamber, 1997; García-Amaya, 2009; Tavakoli &

Skehan, 2005). Even when its name varies from study to study SRIPM is basically

considered as the number of syllables uttered by the speaker every second. In this study

this measure was obtained by dividing the number of TWA into the TST (multiplied by

sixty taking into account that not all students spoke for the same amount of time) and the

results suggested that most of the students' SRIPM increased in comparison to their first

task (Figure 5). In addition to the analysis of the temporal variables for fluency examined

in the first and second speaking task, the content of these artifacts was also contemplated

for suggesting initial improvements in students' fluency development.

Figure 5. Speech rate inclusive per minute.
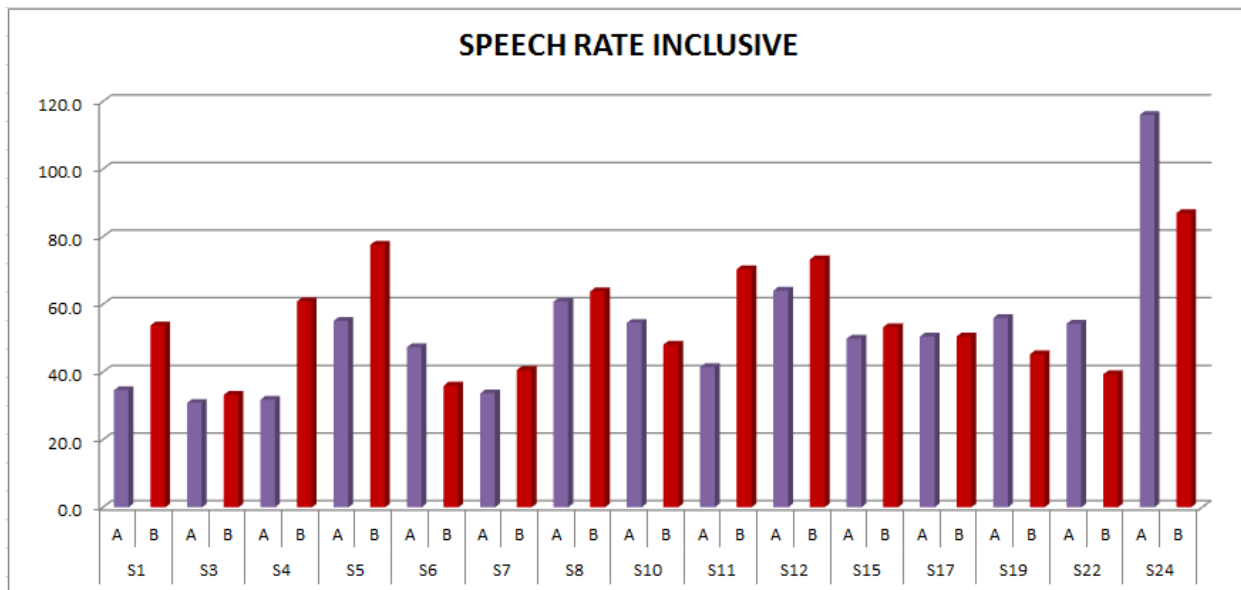
It was found that a few participants attempted to use the vocabulary learned

throughout the implementation as part of their speech in the second speaking task. They

drew on this vocabulary to convey their ideas about the topic of the speaking task. This

task required learners to talk about a social problem observed in their immediate context

and, therefore, certain words, including *drinking and driving* or *noisy neighbors* appeared

in their task (Excerpt 22). Similarly, in Excerpt 23 it is observed how the speaker self-

corrects in order to include the word *behavio*r, which was also part of the vocabulary

studied during the implementation, instead of the word *comportanment* (as in

comportamiento which is the meaning of *behavior* in Spanish).

Excerpt 22.

S1: *Hi, my name is xxxx xxxxx and (…) my subject is drink problem in Bogota (…) this*

problem in Bogota is very, very important because, because ahh (…) have much people

(…) people drinking and driving in the street […] [*sic*] Second speaking task

Excerpt 23.

S6: *[…] one comportament… (…) one behavior in (…) our society is neighbor noisy (…)
neighbor noisy (…) and sometimes neighbors no… compren (…) don't have
comprehension about (…) the music […]* [*sic*] Second speaking task.

After the results in each speaking task were contrasted and analyzed, it was found
that most of the participants improved their ability to use more and varied lexicon when
talking about a given topic. They were also capable of speaking for a longer time and they
used a larger number of words to express their opinions when talking about a topic related
to their context. Data suggested that self-assessment supported students' learning
processes as they were able to start self-regulating their learning actions which served as
the basis for learners to be able to speak more freely in contrast to the first speaking
sample.

The data analysis process in this study permitted the researcher to understand that
self-assessment for learning should not be a process to be taken for granted. In fact, it is a
systematic procedure in which several elements, including students reflective skills and
training, are involved and which require constant guidance on part of the researcher to
produce significant changes.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The self-assessment conducted by learners in this study encouraged them to monitor and self-regulate their learning processes which conveyed implications for pedagogy and future research interventions. On one hand, self-assessment can contribute to students' autonomy, and thus, to language development. On the other hand, future studies may benefit from learning about this study's reserch opportunities and limitations.

Conclusions

In this study a group of young adult learners were engaged in the process of self-assessing their own vocabulary learning by optimizing their metacognitive skills in order to foster their fluency development. This procedure was of particular interest in the context where it was developed given that the focus of the lessons was mainly on the students' role as active learners and not simply on language competence development. Moreover, it was found that students went through a process in which various stages were gradually completed providing this study with a wider perspective about how learners' fluency can be influenced by their own vocabulary learning actions.

In the first place, students' reflective practice supported them in acknowledging their own difficulties and strengths regarding their language learning process. Evidence was provided that students were able to recognize that more than the teacher's intervention is required for effective results in learning a second language (Sanchez, 2012). Then, learning problems related to independent practice and participation in class were registered in students' logs. Areiza (2013) reported similar findings and claimed that when acknowledging their weaknesses through formative assessment, students' tendency is more related to organizational than to pragmatic knowledge. This is because organizational issues are easier to address since they mostly imply a learner's change of attitude.

Moreover, students were able to identifiy specific problematic elements in their learning routines as well as language factors that limited them from producing a more fluent discourse. In this path, learners cited particular weaknesses with pronunciation and cohesion that were hindering them from producing an acceptable speech. With regards to pronunciction, it is argued that two important factors influencing oral fluency are learners' emotional stability —seen in this study as the speaker's fear to make mistakes in public —together with emphasis on word knowledge. In relation to the former, Ariza (2003) recommends guiding learners in treating their mistakes as natural steps in their process which may reinforce the construction of a supportive classroom environment. Therefore, in vocabulary teaching a stronger emphasis in pronunciation is recommended.

A few students also reported no having experienced major changes in their fluency development by the end of the implementation. However, such practice was also a prime an indicator of a slight change in students' awareness, while they reflected on their current performance level and initiated a meaningful self-assessment cycle. Carter and Nunan (2001) and Langan et al. (2008) argue that learners usually overestimate or underestimate their performance levels at the initial stages of the self-assessment cycle due to their reflection skills are not completely developed leading to subjectivity. These authors' views, along with the fact that the participants were engaged in the study for a short time, their age, and even personality factors, led the researcher to believe that—indeed—, the degree of development in students' reflective abilities may have influenced their opinions about the process they went through. Accordingly, further longitudinal self-assessment studies may report more homogenous results by emphasizing on reflective skills.

 This study also analysed students' ability to react against their weaknesses. It was observed that learners initial courses of action lead them to set learning goals targeted to their general performance which was identified as a typical feature in inexperienced

students (Schunk, 2003) . It seems that even when learners were not able to achieve their

initial aims, they gained meaningful insights from the experience that permitted them to

improve goal-setting by observing, judging and reacting to results. There is no doubt

about how much polished students' self-assessment could have been if they had received

training in creating learning goals. However, even under these conditions, students'

sensitivity to develop better-quality objectives suggested that, as they became gradually

involved in their process by means of self-assessment, they also developed their capacity

to self-regulate it (Areiza, 2013; Torres, 2009).

Particularly, it was found that most of the students highlighted the pertinence of

goal-setting for their learning processes because it drove them to accomplish such aims. It

seems that goal-setting in self-assessment not only fosters self-regulation in students;

another important benefit is that by setting goals, students increase their level of

commitment with their process. Picón (2012) reported similar results and argued that "the

assessment process enhanced most students' commitment towards the development of the

activities completed in class" (p. 53). Thus , this study may be seen as supporting the

indirect relationship that self-assessment has on students' motivational levels, which are of

prime importance for any educational context

Additionally, learners used different strategies that supported the achievement of

the learning goals set during the implementation; in doing so, students were able to

accommodate their learning styles in order to pursue their objectives. Interestingly, even

when the participants were instructed in using specific strategies for vocabulary learning

(vocabulary notebooks, dictionary use and infering from the context), very few reported

having used them, and it is believed that this happened because these strategies were not

products of their own attempts for learning vocabulary, and therefore not really meaningful

for students. Evidence also suggested the benefits of self-assessment for setting action

plans for informal learning contexts such as their home or work settings. This is an optimistic view in terms of students' lifelong learning suggesting that self-assessment may help students to concentrate on areas of their learning, even when little guidance is provided. In this way, learners might be more oriented to start their path to autonomy.

Students also made reference to specific resources for learning and applying new vocabulary including the use of listening material. They also highlighted the usefulness of self-recording in exercising their speaking abilities because this strategy permitted them to become more aware of their flaws in spontaneous discourse, as well as monitor their progress. Self-recording was also acknowledged by participants in Ariza's study (2003) because it allowed students to "take as much time as they wanted to record the exercises" (p. 29). Monitoring on part of the instructor was also done in order to contrast students' initial performance to their performance by the end of the implementation. Three variables were contemplated according to students' initial necessities being SRIMP the measure that evinced the most positive results in learners' oral fluency.

To conclude, the self-assessment conducted by learners in this study encouraged them to monitor and self-regulate their learning processes; in doing so, learners revised their past actions in order to reflect on their current performances, as well as on the activities that they found useful. Monitoring became a key element for this study as it was helpful in disclosing the influence of the students' vocabulary self-assessment on their oral fluency. Thus, in analyzing students' insights in contrast with their speaking tasks, it was found that the influence of the self-assessment implementation was benefitial for learners. Participants perceived this practice to be favorable for their vocabulary, fluency, and learning process in general; the speaking task proved that students raised , if only moderately, their levels of oral fluency in contrast to the initial results.

Pedagogical Implications

Self-assessment has traditionally been related to the development of autonomy (Race, 2001) because this strategy provides students with sufficient tools to reflect about and take charge of their own learning process as proposed by Holec (1981). This study illustrated how a group of young adult learners started their path towards autonomy by using self-assessment to examine their learning weaknesses and strengths, set learning commitments and draw on learning strategies. Moreover, it was found that self-assessment needs to be scaffolded constantly in order to master its use and obtain effective and long lasting results. This, therefore implies that in engaging students in the use of self-assessment, constant guidance should be provided to participants as they master the use of this strategy. Given that self-assessment involves a high degree of metacognition, learners should be accompanied and supported since not all students are equally disposed to respond to the reflective demands that are involved in the process.

Moreover, it was observed that the process of vocabulary self-assessment added to the evaluation component in the participants' learning setting. Learners' assessment became a more inclusive experience in which learners were able to participate and not soley rely on the teachers' judgment. Hence, it is presumed that including self-assessment as an active component of language learning courses could foster the development of vocabulary and oral competences taking into account that both fields have been quite unexplored in terms of this specific type of formative assessment.

Limitations

In this study, self-assessment presented as an opportunity for students to reflect upon their vocabulary learning process in order to promote their oral fluency development. Even when the results were positive, different factors appeared as limitations for its implementation from which the most relevant concerns were students' time disposition and

resources availability. On one hand, it was found that even when learners were eager to participate in the study, external time issues influenced their individual performance. The population that participated in this study belongs to a social group in which work and family responsibilities are usually —and logically— more important than their personal growth. For this reason, learners had difficulties completing the task proposed as extra work or homework, including speaking tasks completed through the Internet or even their learning logs for personal reflection. Another limitation for the study was the limited availability of resources needed to carry out the speaking tasks in class including Internet access and recording tools. Students therefore had to invest a large amount of time in completing their speaking tasks at home given that several learners were not completely computer literate and, thus, the use of technology without direct guidance became a threat.

Further research

Participants in this study claimed that the use of self-recording tools was highly beneficial for their self-assessment process as these tools enabled them to monitor their learning process, specifically their oral performance. Most of the students provided positive insights regarding the use of *Voki* (2014) for presenting their speaking tasks given that this tool allowed them to record, listen, judge and repair their oral production. Consequently, it is advised to study the effects of self-recording tools in the development of pronunciation and cohesion in young adult learners who are willing to self-monitor their own oral performance. This could be achieved with the aid of mobile devices which are popular among these type of students, accessible and easy to manage. Further studies may also examine the relationship between self-efficacy and self-recording by means of Web 2.0 tools, taking into account that these tools may provide recorded evidence of the gradual process followed by language students in achieving specific learning goals.

Another consideration that wouldl be worth studying would be the effects of self-assessment practices in which a special emphasis is given to goal-setting. This study found how learners modified and re-stated their learning objectives throughout the process of self-assessment. Moreover, it would have been very interesting to observe how their outcomes might have been influenced by proper goal-setting that allowed them to assess whether their proposed aims were fully achieved or not. Thus, if this study were to be replicated in a other context, a strong focus on setting objectives would be highly advisable.

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Appendix A

Students' Learning Log

Apreciado estudiante,

En el siguiente log, usted podrá reflexionar acerca de su desempeño en el aprendizaje de nuevo vocabulario. Recuerde que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas; la información obtenida será usada solo con propósitos investigativos.

1. ¿Qué nuevas palabras aprendí en las actividades de ésta semana? (Escríbalas, por favor)	2. ¿Qué nuevas palabras he aprendido recientemente fuera de la clase? (Escríbalas, por favor)
3. ¿Utilicé alguna de las nuevas palabras aprendidas en las actividades de *speaking* de ésta semana?¿Cómo?	
4. En la última actividad de *speaking* de la clase de hoy, ¿Cuál fue el aspecto que me causo mayor dificultad a la hora de hablar?	
5. ¿Qué estrategias planeo usar para superar mis debilidades/dificultades en vocabulario?	
6. ¿Cuáles son mis objetivos para la próxima clase?	

Appendix B

Survey

Apreciado estudiante:

Responda el siguiente cuestionario pensando en el proceso por el que ha ido desde que se implementaron

los ejercicios de autoevaluación sobre el aprendizaje de vocabulario. Recuerde que no hay preguntas

correctas o incorrectas. La información obtenida será usada solo con propósitos investigativos.

1. ¿Considera usted que los ejercicios de autoevaluación que realizo en clase le contribuyeron en algo a su proceso de aprendizaje?
    Si ___ No___ Explique
_____
_____
_____

2. ¿Cree usted que los ejercicios de autoevaluación realizados en clase han influenciado en algo el desarrollo de su vocabulario en inglés?
    Si ___ No ___ Explique
_____
_____
_____

3. ¿Cree usted que los ejercicios de autoevaluación realizados en clase han influenciado en algo el desarrollo de su fluidez oral en inglés?
    Si ___ No ___ Explique
_____
_____
_____

4. ¿Hay algún aspecto (s) del proceso de autoevaluación que le haya gustado?
    Si ____ No____ Explique
_____
_____
_____

Fin del cuestionario.

Gracias por su participación

Appendix C

Consent Form

AUTORIZACION

Respetado estudiante:

Usted está siendo invitado a participar en el proyecto de Investigación *Young Adult Learners' Vocabulary Self-Assessment: How does it Influence their Oral Fluency?* El objetivo del estudio es determinar la posible influencia que las prácticas de autoevaluación sobre el aprendizaje de vocabulario pueden tener en el desarrollo de la fluidez oral de los participantes.

Durante el proceso, que tomara once sesiones de clase, usted podrá ser audio grabado; sin embargo, esta información será usada solamente con fines educativos y de investigación. Igualmente, se espera implementar algunos cuestionarios que podrán ser completados en corto tiempo al final de las clases. Sus nombres, al igual que cualquier información obtenida, serán mantenidos en el anonimato.

Usted podrá dejar de ser parte del estudio cuando así lo desee por lo cual, no habrá ningún tipo de sanción disciplinaria o académica. Así mismo, es importante reafirmar que al ser participante en la investigación, su estatus como estudiante, sus derechos y obligaciones con el curso y la institución, sus notas y en general todo aspecto relacionado con la clase, jamás se verán afectados por ningún motivo. Una vez el estudio haya sido satisfactoriamente terminado, el investigador compartirá públicamente los resultados encontrados, siendo usted uno de los invitados a dicha socialización.

Al firmar este documento usted habrá aceptado ser partícipe de este estudio y dará fe de haber sido informado de las implicaciones que esto conlleva. Habiendo hecho las preguntas necesarias y recibiendo una respuesta satisfactoria, usted está de acuerdo en participar voluntariamente de esta investigación.

_____   _____

Nombre   Firma

_____   _____

Fecha y hora   Correo electrónico

Appendix D

Criteria to Analyze Speaking Tasks

PPM	Pauses per minute= TNP/TST*60
TWD	Total words diffluent
DWPM	Diffluent words per minute= TWD/TST*60
TST	TST: total speaking time in seconds
SRIPM	Speech rate Inclusive= TWA/TST*60
MLR	Mean length of runs= Total length of pauses/TNP

Appendix E

Lesson Plan Sample

Main Aim(s)
By the end of the lesson, students will be able to talk about one stereotype found in their country using strong arguments, appropriate vocabulary and being fluent.

Stage	Aim	Procedure/Teacher and student activity	Time
Warm up	To activate students schemata. To predict the content of the lesson	The word stereotype will be written in the board. Leaners will need to discuss its meaning and provide some examples in the case they know what it means. Once students have understood what the word stereotype means, the teacher will ask them to provide some examples regarding their city/country.	10"
Act. 1	To provide meaning-focused output by using previous knowledge.	The teacher will provide a list of adjectives and countries. Students need to use two adjectives from the list to describe each nationality (Annex 1). They will need to explain the reasons for their choice. In a whole class discussion students will present their points of view and will share their insights with others. The teacher may promote discussion when disagreement arises.	20"
Act. 2	To provide students with meaning-focused input.	Students will read the text: "The world wide to good manners" (Annex2) students will skim the reading and then they will read it again focusing their attention on key expressions or words. The teacher will ask students to look for single words in the dictionary. Once students have finished, the teacher will display some questions which will be used in a whole class discussion (Annex 3).	30"
Act. 3	To provide students with meaning-focused input. To emphasize on language-focused learning	Students will hear a listening called "Men cry" Students will focus in the new vocabulary as they listen. Students will be provided with the script of the listening (Annex 4) and they will be asked to use the inferring form the context strategy to approach to new words. The teacher will ask them to do a short vocabulary and reading comprehension quiz. Students will be asked to group themselves and talk about how this stereotype is seen in their immediate contexts according to their beliefs and thoughts.	30"
Act. 4	To emphasize on language-focused learning To foster fluency development.	Students will be asked to think about a strong stereotype that exits in their countries and prepare a four minute talk about their point of view. They will need to provide strong arguments to show that the stereotype is not accurate. When learners have prepared, students will practice the 4/3/2 technique with their partners. (give your speech to a partner for 4 minutes, repeat the same speech to another partner for 3 minutes and do the same exercise with another partner for 2 minutes)	30"
Wrap up	To enhance students' vocabulary self-assessment.	Right after the last speaking practice has concluded, students will fill in their learning logs. They will be encouraged to reflect about their whole language performance during the class and self-assess it by answering the questions in the learning log. (Annex 5).	20'

Appendix F

Template Suggested for Students' Vocabulary Notebooks

New word	Spanish Meaning or Key word	Related word in English	Other information
My sentence		Picture	

Appendix G

Chart for Registering Students' Activities during the Implementation

Student's nick name	1st recording	Self-assessment 1st recording	1st Learning log	2nd Learning log	3rd Learning log	2nd recording	Self-assessment 2nd recording	Survey
S1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S2	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
S3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S5	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
S6	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
S7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S8	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
S10	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
S12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S16	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
S17	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
S19	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S20	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
S22	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
S23	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
S24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix H

Figure 6. Sample of speaking task transcriptions.

Appendix I

Chart Used to Facilitate the Analysis of Students' Speaking Tasks

Measures of fluency	S1		S3		S4		S5	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
TOTAL SPEAKING TIME	201	216	196	260	115	260	37	68
TOTAL WORDS ATTEMPED	116	194	101	144	61	264	34	88
TOTAL NUMBER OF PAUSES	26	46	19	51	16	33	1	14
TOTAL WORDS DISFLUENT	7	26	28	48	6	10	8	5
MEAN LENGTH OF RUNS	2.5	1	1.7	0.6	1.6	2.5	14	3.2

Appendix J

Figure 7. ATLAS.ti screenshot sample.
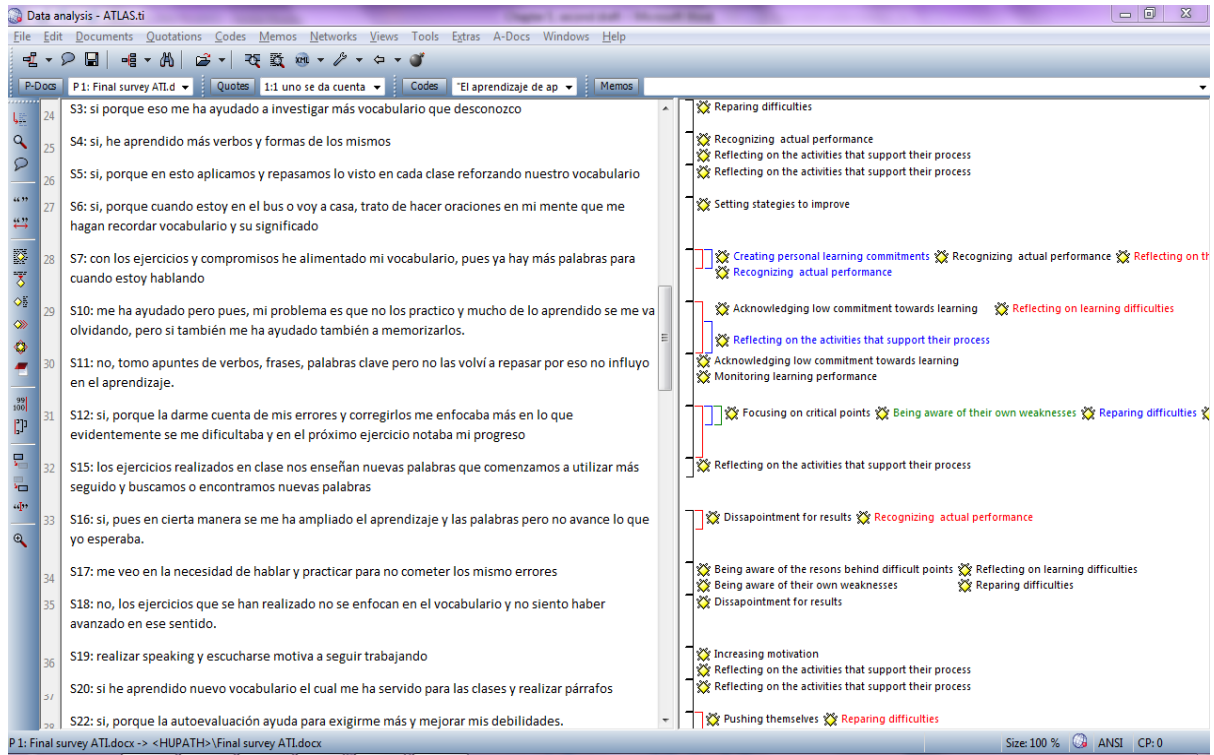
Appendix K

Samples of the Analysis of Students' Learning Logs and Speaking Tasks

STUDENTS' LEARNING LOG # 1		
March 12th, 2012	Class topic: stereotypes	
1. **What new words did I learn from this week lessons? Write them down, please?**		Comments
S1: Perhaps, broad mind S2: Widespread, afterwards, fed S3: Hard-working, advice S4: ain't, whole S5: wink, perhaps, soles, whilst, widespread, customes, allow, arranged, several, badly, abroad. S6: Foreign, bow, shark, behave S7: foreign, stranger S8: S10: several, abroad, polite, arrange, feel, shock, feed S11: behave, manners, wilst S12: abroad, behave, host S13: behave, polite S14: foreigners, mustn't wink, shocked, joke, custome S15: whilst, perhaps, deal S16: sociable, abroad, law work, must, behave, foreigners S17: behave, afterwards, should, seniority, greeting S18: allow up, arranged, behave S19: Perhaps, whiles, bow, showing S20: while, widespread, perhaps, abroad, must, allow up S21: polite, abroad, foreigners S22: whilst, behave, sleeves, rolling up, abroad S23: sing, thist, badly, abroad, get, while S24: this, abroad, widespread		Perhaps: 5 Behave: 8 Abroad: 9 Polite: 3 Foreigners: 5 Widespread: 4

Speaking task 2

S1 (3'36'')

Ehh well… (1.26'') first at all ehh… (1.49'') I wanted to… (0.45'') speak about the excuses (0.88'') because I think that is a… (1.02'') very big problem that have the society…. (1.15'') because… (2.67'') some lies… (0.67'') can be… (0.53'') very hard… and … (1.94'') can hurt the people that… that is ehh… (8.17'') with you…. (3.53'') that are with you… (3.77'') I think that ehh … (1.91'') you can say little lies but… because ehhh …. (2.19'') these… (0.97'') are not… (1.95'') than hurt… (2.53'') because is how say it… (1.70'') to your mom that… (1.79'') you if eat… (1.46'') in the lunch… (0.97'') but really you don't eat nothing… (1.17'') These lies are… (0.84'') good ehh… (2.97'') because don't hurt to ehh … (3.19'') someone... (2.81'')The lies can… (1.11'')ehh can … can… can … how… (17.39'') interfere in your job in your life, in all aspect … (4.60'') in your day… (2.59'') because… (0.73'') you can lie every day, every time and … (1.27'') is not good because… ehh… (2.41'') is how you … (1.31'') becoming a liar and … (3.52'') is not good for you… (1.41'') because… (0.69) after the life…. ehh the life ehhh… (7.34'') come back, come back ehh … (2.51'') to you ehh… (5.30'') The excuses in sometimes are good … but ehhh… (2.42'') personally I think that is better say the… (0.84'') true because… (1.31'') can be a truth very hard but is better know… (1.70'') the reason of the things that life ehh … (2.20'') with lies because … (1.95'') you aren't good ehhh …never… mmm…. (5.47'')No more.

TST: 216"   TWA: 194   TNP: 46   TWD: 26

Appendix L

Figure 8. Sample of codes obtained by means of open coding in ATLAS.ti.

Appendix M

Figure 9. Axial coding by means of ATLAS.ti family tool.