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# The Impact of Self Assesment and Feedback on Students Learning

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# THE IMPACT OF SELF-ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS LEARNING

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

BY

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This project by Federica Castro is accepted in its present form.


Date ___Sept. 1, 2002___

Project Advisor_____

Project Reader_____

To my parents, *Federico and Tiola*

and

To *Natalí* and *Miguel,* my beloved children

and

To my husband, *Ramón*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABSTRACT

This Independent Professional Project is an exploratory action-research, the main purpose of which was to verify the impact of self-assessment and feedback on students learning; that is, to substantiate how useful these tools are for students and if their use really influences students learning and academic progress. Variuos instruments were designed and applied throughtout the research process to a group of Dominican students taking the Level I English course at PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA MADRE Y MAESTRA in Santiago, Dominican Republic. Theoretical implications are also presented here as well as limitations found while conducting the research. Finally, I offer some useful suggestions to be considered in future research.

**ERIC descriptors**

Alternative assessment
Self-assessment
Student autonomy
Student feedback
Student interest
Student motivation

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

"To teach is to touch a life forever" (unknown source).

Do I really care about what I do? This is a question that all teachers should ask themselves. I believe that, as teachers, we not only have the duty and the responsibility to teach, to transmit new knowledge, but also to shape persons, to help our students to grow. I think that this work is part of a teacher's vocation, and it should be the goal of effective teaching.

Particularly in my case, the above has been a reason for constant reflection, analysis and questioning along the following lines: Who are my students? What areas do they need to improve? In what areas do they need my help? How do I know whether they are learning? how can they help themselves in the process? All these interrogations have led me to search for ways and mechanism in order to find the answers I am looking for.

In this constant search through self-reflection about my classes and my way of teaching, conversations with colleagues, book consultations, the masters degree that I am following, I encountered for the first time the concept of students self-assessment. At the beginning, this was a vague concept for me, but as I began to read about it and to consult the work of other

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colleagues on this topic, I realized that it responded perfectly to what I nedded. I considered that this was the best mechanism I could provide my students with so that they could formally focus their attention, begin to analyze their strengths and weaknesses and the areas that they need to improve, and become aware of their class performance. As a result, they could become more responsible for their own learning.

From a teacher's point of view, I think this is a way of humanizing teaching and of being concerned for students as whole persons with feelings and needs. In addition to letting teachers know what students need, what they have or have not understood, what helps them or not to learn more in our classes, students self-assessment is a useful tool for teachers to find out whether or not their way of teaching is effective, what is working and what is not working in their classes.

My experience as a teacher of English as a foreign language has enabled me to identify some weaknesses in my students, at the level of how aware they are of their participation in their own learning process and of the fact that part of their success in the course is up to them, not the teacher. This lack of awareness keeps them from taking responsibility for what they do. They only care about the grade they must get in order to pass the course. If they pass, it is their achievement; but, if they fail it is the teacher's fault. This situation has made me feel frustrated for years. The students I work with accept everything the teacher says; the teacher has to tell them how to do everything. They never have questions. They act as if everything is fine and in the end they fail the exam. When asked to give an opinion on any topic they are afraid and insecure of what to say or cannot do it. The development of critical thinking is another important reason why I would like to foster in my students the practice of self-

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assessment. I want them to be able to express their feelings and thoughts about certain topics, but I especially want them to be able to reflect on and talk about their own abilities, and how they learn.

To be fair, I must also say that to a certain extent I feel that I have been partly responsible for this situation. I had always wanted to give my students everything, thinking that if I left them alone they were not going to be able to do things right. I gave them neither the opportunity nor the space in the classroom for them to demonstrate their abilities.

I think that in a way I have not respected their autonomy by putting everything within their reach without much effort on their part. I also think that I have been more concerned with completing a certain amount of content for the exams than with becoming aware of what my students were doing to learn better.

## Context Description

This research was conducted at the *Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM)*, a university founded in 1962 by the Conference of the Dominican Episcopate, by which it is governed. A large number of students attending this university have a basic knowledge of the English language. English classes are mandatory in the Dominican Republic from fifth grade on. For this reason, most of the students in English classes at this university are false beginners.

Students who wish to attend PUCMM are given an optional written placement examination. Many students who know English do not take this exam and enroll in the English courses in order to ensure getting a higher grade point average at the end of the semester. This situation is taxing on the teacher who ends up having a multi-level classes. In many instances there are advanced English learners and beginners in the same class.

This university requires that students of all areas, except law students, complete the English program offered. There are four levels: 1) Introductory English I, 2) Introductory English II, 3) Intermediate English I, and 4) Intermediate English II. Each level has an established program.

The main objective of these courses focuses on the development of reading skills which should enable students to understand English texts in their related field of study. These programs are currently undergoing revision with the goal of intagrating the four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

This research focuses on one group of Introductory English I students. The Introductory English I program has a total of five credits; its duration is one regular semester, consisting of

fourteen weeks, or one summer term with a duration of eight weeks. The class meets five days a week for a period of fifty minutes each day. Students may be absent from seven classes during the term; if they exceed this number of absences they have to repeat the course. Class sizes are between twenty-five to forty-five students of both genders. Almost all students are Dominican citizens, but on occasions there are four or five Haitian students. Students are between seventeen and nineteen years of age. Their highest academic level is high school, and in most cases their knowledge of other languages is limited to their native tongue.

Students are evaluated based on written examinations as follows: four (4) partial exams with a value of fifteen percent (15%) each, equivalent to sixty percent (60%) of the final grade, and a final exam covering the contents of the entire course, with a value of thirty percent (30%). These exams consist of multiple choice and short-answer items. The remaining ten percent (10%) of the grade is given for class attendance, participation, and discipline, each of which is worth 3.3%, and the grade is assigned by each professor according to his/her own criteria.

**Framing the problem**

Traditionally, the educational system in The Dominican Republic at all levels, leads students to a high level of dependence on the teacher throughout the learning process. The teaching methodology predominant in the schools and universities is mainly teacher-centered, and rarely involves students in their own learning process. From my point of view, alternative methodologies should be presented which allow students to have a clear vision of their roles during the learning process. They should be guided to participate actively in determining what they need to learn and how they learn best. And they should have a clear understanding of the criteria on which they will be evaluated, preferably in a way that include self-assessment as part of the evaluation system. Teachers should structure regular feedback sessions where students and teachers have the opportunity to express their concerns and needs in a relaxed environment.

At PUCMM, 90% of evaluations consist of tests. These tests are mostly designed to measure students' memorization capacity rather than to show what students have learned. As a result, teachers spend most of their time preparing students for the required tests. This situation has raised a series of questions that I have tried to answer in this project: What methods of evaluation are most frequently used in the teaching of English as a foreign language, in my context? Are these evaluation methods adequate? To what extent do these methods make students less responsible for their own learning? How motivating are traditional evaluation methods for my students?

At the same time, the goal of this project is to explore possible alternatives to the current evaluation system in the English Department at Madre y Maestra Pontificial Catholic

University. My research examines the effectiveness of an assessment methodology in my own EFL classes which I hope will serve as a starting point for teachers in contexts similar to mine. I believe that the results of this research have proved the viability of a self-assessment model in our university EFL classes and I believe it should be considered for implementation at PUCMM.

## Purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is:

- To design, implement, and analyze self-assessment tools that could be used by the English Department at PUCMM.

- To examine my own beliefs about the effectiveness of self-assessment as an alternative to the standard evaluation program at PUCMM.

## Importance and Justification of this research

Throughout this project, I wish to emphasize my belief that when students are involved in their own learning process, they are more motivated to learn; and as a result, their interest, performance, and learning will be greater. In addition, by participating actively in their own learning process students learn how to reflect on their actions making them more critical human beings. By learning to assess their own learning, students become more independent, autonomous, and successful learners. For this reason, I expect this action research to be a practical and methodological contribution to the field of alternative evaluation.

# CHAPTER 2

## THEORETICAL FRAME

Instruction and evaluation are two interdependent components in any instructional

program. In my opinion, evaluation is not an end in itself, but a means of information for

teachers about their students' progress and the effectiveness of their teaching practices, in

order to make appropriate decisions.

Evaluation should contribute to improve instruction and student achievement. "The primary

aim of assessment is to foster learning of worthwhile academic content for all students"

(Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, and Gardner 1991 in O'Malley, Valdez Pierce,1996).

For a long time, traditional evaluation has consisted solely on exams, particularly multiple

choice tests. Exams are usually a way of finding out what students do not know rather than

what they have learned. With this type of testing instrument, students do not play an active

role in the learning process; instead, they are the object of such a process. This way of

evaluation does not involve students as an active and fundamental part of the teaching-

learning process; rather, it discourages them from participating since exams generate anxiety

and fear most of the time. If an evaluation program is only based on exams, teachers will

inevitably teach to the test to prepare students for getting good grades. In the process, they

often involve their students in rote learning. As a consequence, their teaching becomes

inefficient and discouraging. To avoid this situation teachers should include students as active participants in assessing their own work, as well as their strengths and weaknesses as learners.

Evaluation can not be separated from instruction, and this is why in order to improve the way evaluation is done it is necessary to change the way we teach (O'Malley, Valdez Pierce 1996).

For years, teachers and students' dissatisfaction regarding exams has led the former to search for other forms of evaluation that would not limit students and that would offer them the possibility to demonstrate what they know in various ways. "Over the past decade we have seen a rapid expansion of interest in alternatives to traditional forms of assessment in education" (Aschbacher 1991, Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters, 1992 in O'Malley, Valdez Pierce, 1996). The purpose of alternative assessment - which "consists of any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction, and is an alternative to traditional forms of testing, namely, multiple-choice tests" (O'Malley, Valdez Pierce, 1996:1)- is to make evaluation in general more extensive and fair for the students, to make it reflect the close relationship between the activities carried out in class by students and what they are asked to do when they are tested, to make it help teachers to find out what students can or cannot do and allow them to demonstrate their progress. This set of alternatives, including among others, performance assessment, portfolio assessment, and self-assessment, is what is currently called authentic assessment, "the multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities" (O'Malley, Valdez Pierce 1996: 4).

As I stated above, the manner of evaluation has a direct relation with the manner of teaching,

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and both are in turn influenced by teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and students.

In my opinion, the primary objective of teaching, rather than transmitting new knowledge to students, is to form critical persons, capable of reflecting, analyzing, and of expressing and substantiating opinions, i.e., autonomous, responsible, and independent individuals. This implies that teachers must adopt a different way of relating to students and start seeing them as thinking beings and not as simple language recipients. "Teachers must be concerned with what the students are doing with themselves rather than with the language" (Caleb Gattegno 1976: vii). I consider that one way of attaining this objective is to formally teach students to use self-assement. This way, students become aware of how, why, and for what they use this alternative. "Formalizing self-assessment should help focus the learner's attention on their strengths, weaknesses, and further needs" (Kathleen Bailey 1998: 227).

Although the use of self-assessment in the classroom is unknown in some school environments or has been ignored for a long time in others, there is a growing interest in learning more about this and applying it in the classroom.

Student self-assessment is an important element in authentic assessment, since it encourages students to become directly involved in the teaching-learning process, thus making it possible to integrate cognitive abilities, motivation and a positive attitude towards learning. This is precisely what I intend to obtain from my students by providing them with forms of evaluation other than tests. "Students self-assessment should be a regular part of instruction and it should accompany any kind of assessment used" (O'Malley, Valdez Pierce 1996: 5).

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## Importance of Self-Assessment

I think the reasons why student self-assessment is important, useful, and necessary is that self-assessment integrates students directly into the teaching-learning process and it fosters student autonomy and reflection on their performance. According to Bailey "The most useful aspect of self-assessment is probably the consciousness-raising factor" (1998: 228).

I believe that if teachers wish to develop independent, successful students, they must help them develop the necessary skills and knowledge to evaluate their own processes and results. Only when teachers provide opportunities for students to work on themselves, their skills, abilities, and performance is it likely that students will make any profound or significant change.

# CHAPTER 3

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a general overview of the methodological aspects of this research: type of study and description of the tools used throughout the process.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of self-assessment on students learning English as a foreign language and in promoting their independence and self-sufficiency at the Introductory 1 level at Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra.

As I mentioned in previous chapters, I believe that when students become involved and play an active role in their own learning process, they will be more motivated and will obtain better results.

It is also important to remember that education must have an integral dimension. Teachers not only teach content, but they also work to shape independent, responsible, and autonomous human beings, capable of evaluating their performance and progress and making their own educational decisions.

I believe that the foregoing should be an essential and priority goal of all teachers.

Another reason for this research was that it can serve as an alternative to be considered by colleagues and fellow students.

In my context, teachers have been trained to be knowledge transmitters. This is why in most

cases it is very difficult both for teachers and students to assimilate and adopt new

educational alternatives, particularly those requiring that more participation and power be

given to students in the learning process, such as the use of student self-assessment.

Given this situation, our educational system actually hinders the development of our students'

critical and reflective abilities.

**Characteristics of the study**

The study presented here is what is called an exploratory action research. It originated

from the need to find alternatives that would provide students with tools to help them become

actively involved in the process of learning English as a foreign language, making them more

independent and responsible for their actions inside and outside the classroom. It can also be

used as a constant form of feedback. It was developed on the basis of trial and error,

observing students' reactions and then modifying, changing, and adapting the materials used

and the process in general.

**Population Description and Sample**

This research was conducted at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra,

where all students, except those in the law school, are required to take four levels of English.

The first two levels are introductory and the last two are intermediate. Almost all students

are Dominicans, but in some cases there are five or six Haitians in our classrooms. Classes

are co-ed, and students are between 17 and 20 years of age.

For this work, I selected a group of Dominican students of both genders, aged 17 or 18.

There were 40 students in this class, at the Introductory level I. The students and I met

Monday through Friday for one hour, during fourteen weeks - the equivalent to one semester in this university.

The first decision I had to make to start this research was the type of instrument I was going to use to collect the data. Taking into consideration my objectives and the type of students involved I decided that the written questionnaire would be the most appropriate. It would allow the students to express themselves explicitly and objectively and it would also give them the opportunity to ponder and analyze their responses more seriously.

To design the questionnaires I considered the following aspects: context, type of students (who had never used a self-assessment tool before), their needs, and their own objectives regarding this investigation.

## Description of the Tools

### Partial Grades Record and Attendance Roll

Considering that one of my objectives was to help students develop an attitude of independence and responsibility for their actions inside and outside the classroom, I designed a sheet (see appendix #1) for students to keep a record of their grades in the partial exams and of their absences.

This sheet consisted of two sections, the first one for the days they did not go to class. The second section, for the grades they got in each exam.

The first thing I asked them was to write their names on the control sheet in order to avoid loss or misplacement. I explained to them my objective and how they would benefit from it.

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Throughout the semester I reminded and encouraged them to use the control sheet. On these occasions I asked them how useful it had been.

**Questionnaire #1: (Expectations and Accomplishments)**

This questionnaire (see appendix #2) has three reactives which students answered on the first day of class. This was the students' first contact with a self-assessment tool. After the students completed the questionnaires, I collected them, read the answers, took notes, and returned them the following day. At this time I clarified with students some answers or concerns. My intention was to get students to work with a self-reflective attitude from the first day of class and to get them to make a commitment to themselves. Hence, the nature of the reactives.

The first reactive, was intended to make them think, ponder and express in writing the reasons for being in that class. In the second, they had to answer what they expected to achieve and what they wished to accomplish. The third question required them to write the specific actions they were going to take to attain the goals expressed in the second reactive. Answering these questions led students to become aware that they too were responsible for what they were going to learn and do in class, and that it was not only the teacher who was responsible for their success or failure in the course.

**Questionnaire #2: (Beginning of Self-Assessment)**

This questionnaire (see appendix #3) has only two reactives. I considered that in order to initiate them in the use of self-assessment there should be few reactives at the beginning and that they should be somewhat general until the students became familiar with this tool. As in the previous questionnaire, the students answered it in the classroom and I followed the same process. This way I could use their answers as feedback and checked that students were

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using the tool correctly. Questionnaire #2 was given on the second and third days of class after an orientation period based on humanistic and group integration activities.

**Questionnaire #3: (Acceptance and Motivation of Activities)**

In this questionnaire (see appendix #4), I increased the number of reactives and the level of specificity. Here students had to evaluate themselves in a more direct, specific, and explicit way. Also in the last question I asked for feedback.
I gave students this questionnaire when I presented new material and wanted to find out how much the students had assimilated and what problems they were likely to have and when I wanted to know whether or not the students had liked the activity.

**Questionnaire #4: (Deepening self-analysis and reflection)**

This time, I added more reactives (see appendix #5), the level of reflection for each answer was deeper, and it implied more self-analysis and commitment. Students began to be conscious of what they were doing, what areas they needed to improve, and what they should do to accomplish their goals. It also gave me feedback on what the students needed me to do. Students had to give specific answers that required more reflection and awareness of their roles in class. They answered this questionnaire at the end of each lesson, approximately every third day.

**Questionnaire #5: (Control by Teacher)**

An important part of this project was the observation of students' reactions to answering the questionnaires. At a certain time, students seemed tired and discouraged; in other words, the tool was beginning to lose value for them. So I decided to find out and get their answers in writing (see appendix #6). With this questionnaire I asked for feedback on the other questionnaire and its effectiveness. I applied it two days after they have answered

questionnaire #4. According to their answers they were in fact getting tired and losing interest. This situation led me to questionnaire #6 (see appendix #7).

**Questionnaire #6: (Conciousness raising about their learning)**

In this one the number of reactives is the same but the format varied, the reactives are more specific and direct. This can be observed in reactives #1 and # 4 where the students had to choose the answer from a set of alternatives this help them give a more precise, clear, and direct answer. Students had to answer with specific behavior and actions which allow them to have a clearer vision of themselves; consequently, they made a better use of it. This questionnaire was the one used until the end of the course. It was applied every four lessons; that is, every ninth or tenth day of class.

**How the Students and the Teacher used the Questionnaires**

First, the questionnaires were distributed to the students, they answered and revised them in the classroom during the last fifteen minutes of the class period, then they gave the questionnaires to me. I later read them and took notes, specially of the answers to the reactive: What specific things can the teacher do to help you? The next day, in class I returned the questionnaires to each student so they could keep track of their answers and their progress. Then the students and I discussed their answers, especially those that were too general. For example, if they wrote, "I understand everything", I asked them "And what is **everything** for you?" This way they had to think more carefully and give me concrete answers. I also asked them about specific  things that I had taught, such as grammar structures, vocabulary or reading skill, I asked specific questions like: "Write a sentence using such and such word" or "How would you complete this sentence?" or "Can you tell me when to use the connector **but**?" Generally when I asked these questions they asked about

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things they thought they understood. I asked them to write these new insights in the questionnaires as explicitly and specific as the answers they gave during the discussions. For example, "I understand when to use the connectors **and, but, so.**" "I understand the new words because I could do the vocabulary exercises correctly." Or "I don't understand when to use the present continuous." I told them this way I would be able to help them with the things that were not clear about yet. At the same time they would be conscious of what they knew or what they needed to practice more.

I also asked them about the specific things they were doing that showed that they had learned what they said. These were some of their answers: "Now I can do the exercises in the book by myself, I don't need to ask my partner or the teacher." "Because I know how to use the grammar structures correctly in the exercises and when the teacher asks me." "Because I understood the teacher's explanations and I did the exercises correctly." "Now I don't have problems doing the exercises." "Because now I know what implicit information is and how to find it in the exercises." This process was very interesting and useful for me, too, because I could improve my teaching, not only with this group but with the other groups I had. It helped me realize about some things that I was doing that were not helping the students. For instance, these were some of my students complaints: "I would like the teacher to speak slowly because I don't know much English and I almost never understand her." "I would like the teacher to sometimes allow us to speak Spanish in class because I feel ashamed of my pronunciation and sometimes I want to participate in class but I'm not sure." "The teacher should assign more homework so we can practice in our homes." "I need to improve my

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spelling so I ask the teacher to give us more dictations."

I also became aware of some simple things I did that were helping students. For example, at the end of any explanation I always ask my students if they understand, if they are sure they understand. I tell them if they don't understand I will explain again. Until this time I have not realized that these simple instructions were giving my students confidence to ask me to clarify what they were not sure of.

When I read their answers I took notes and when we were in the discussion process I told them that their requirements and suggestions were taken into account and that I would work on them. These discussions benefited both the students and myself and they also created a partnership, support, and teamwork environment in the class. At the end of each discussion session, the students and I took concrete actions for the future. For me, this generally implied to explain some things again, bring more and sometimes different activities to class. For them, according to their comments, it implied: "Pay more attention in class." "Take notes when the teacher explains something new." "Be on time to class and not miss classes unless very necessary." "Study more at home." "Ask the teacher when I don't understand." We felt we could count on each other. They knew I was interested in their learning and they began to show more interest in doing their work right.

For the purpose of this project it was very important for me to know about the strategies the students were using and how the use of the questionnaires was influencing their attitude towards the subject and their learning. According to the data provided in the previous paragraphs, students were responding in a positive way to this type of activity new to them.

**Rubric**

As I explained in previous chapters, part of the evaluation of the English classes at PUCMM, includes assigning a ten (10%) percent of the grade to attendance, participation, and discipline which is assigned according to each teacher's criteria.

In my search to find an objective way for assigning this 10% I thought that a rubric would be a good tool (see appendix #8). So the students and I started working on it.

In the following paragraphs I will explain the process of how my students developed their own assessment tool.

First, I explained the purpose and the procedures to create the rubric giving them clear and precise instructons on what to do. I divided the class in five groups of eight. In each group each student individually had to write a list of the things I should evaluate concerning attendance, participation, and discipline. Later, with the other members in their groups they shared and discussed what the eight of them had written. They had to get to an agreement in order to have just one list per group. This part took them approximately four classes, each day we took the last fifteen minutes of each class. By the fourth class one student from each group gave me their lists. I collected the five lists, read them and made the necessary adjustments in order to have one final list. The next day in class I read it to the students, discussed and clarified some aspects until everybody agreed with the final product.

The rubric was divided in the three areas to be evaluated: attendance, discipline, and participation. In each area, the percentage assigned and the grade the students would get, according to the number of marks they had, was clearly specified (see appendix #8). In each section there was a list of statements with two lines on the left, one to be used by the teacher and the other by the student. Each column was clearly identified, the one to be used by the

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student had an "S", and the one to be used by theacher had a "T".

Each student received one rubric for their own self-assessment, the students completed the "S" column and got their own score. I then collected all their rubrics and did the same thing on the "T" column. The next day I had individual meetings with the students to discuss and comment on the grades they had. At this point the student and I talked about any difference we had in the final grade until we both agreed.

This rubric was completed two weeks before the final exam. By that time, the students knew their partial exams average plus their grades in the rubric. These two grades represented the seventy per cent of their final grade so the students already had an overall idea of what they needed to do before the final exam.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The main purpose of this project was to explore and examine the possible impact of self-assessment and feedback on student learning; that is, what effect provoked the use of these tools in the participants of this research. Different questionnaires and a rubric were designed and applied.

In this section, I will present the results obtained. These were attained through the observation of the students' reactions and actions in class, their answers in each instrument used, the discussions of the questionnaires, and the students' achievements at the end of the course.

As I mentioned in previous chapters, students who attend PUCMM, except law students, are required to take the English courses the university offers. This means that some students go to our English classes because they have to and not because they are interested in learning the language. This situation was not an exception in the group who particiapted in this research. Some of the participants, five of them, did not show any interest in the project instead they had a reluctant attitude and rarely answered the questionnaires. At the beginning I was worried about this situation so I decided to talk to them individually. I told them the reasons why I was doing it and how I thought they would benefit. I did this a couple of times

and the last time two of them clearly told me that they were not interested because they knew English. The other three told me they would participate but they never did so I decided to ignore them and continued with the rest of the group (35) who were really involved and interested. They always answered the questionnaires and participated actively in the discussions sessions.

According to the data collected and the results yielded from this action-research, the most important part of the project was these discussions sessions we had. During these times the students expressed themselves with honesty (nobody was pushing them to say what they were saying) and respect. They explained their answers and gave me their suggestions about the parts of the class they needed me to change to improve their learning. They also talked about what they thought their strengths were and about the concrete actions they would take to improve their weaknesses. They admitted the need they had to make some changes. They also mentioned the things that were working for them. Students shared their own individual learning experiences. I think that these moments were really important and significant. All of the students listened to each others' experiences and each others' suggestions. This, I think, benefited the whole group because they were learning from each other. Not only the students benefited from these discussions but I did, too, because all of their answers were feedback for me. At those times, I felt that what I was doing was worthwhile, it was benefiting them and, most important they were aware of these benefits.

Once the students understood that they were an important part of the learning process and not simple observers, they were more responsible for their work and performance in class. I could see this in some of their answers. For example: "I need to do my homework and ask the teacher when I don't understand." "I need to read more and look up the words I don't

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understand in the dictionary." Students were also more conscious of how they were working in class and what they needed to do: "I need to pay more attention in class and study more." I also found a high level of honesty and seriousness when the students reflected on themselves and they knew I was going to read their answers and they would be taken into account. An example of this was the process of writing the rubric.

It is important to notice that in my teaching context many students, when given these opportunities, try to justify their behavior in front of the teacher. This was something I was expecting to occur from the beginning of my project but it never did. I have to say that I was really surprised. As Dr. Gattegno says, "Don't take anything for granted, grant your students everything" (1976). I learned how true this is.

Through the observation of students' behavior in class, their oral and written answers, I noticed that once students know themselves better they feel and act more secure and autonomous and less dependent on the teacher. For example, one student wrote, "It helps me a lot to speak English with my friends out of class and to listen to music in English." The students also showed a change in their attitudes and interest towards the subject. The students were more interested in participating in class, and in doing their homework this agreed with what they said in the questionnaires and the discussions; consequently, their grades improved at the end of the course. It is not difficult to understand that when a person is motivated to do something the probabilities to obtain positive results are very high. In my case that was what I tried to do: to motivate them for this new experience, to make them understand its importance in their learning process as well as at their personal level.

In the end, I perceived that the students were more receptive to analyze and to reflect on

themselves which influenced their critical thinking. I can also say that with the use of the self-assessment and feedback instruments designed for this action-research students were remarkably interested in getting actively involved in the class.

In general, and taking into account the results presented in this chapter, I could observe that when students make use of self-assessment and feedback instruments there is a positive effect in the students' performance, their achievements, and their personal growth.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this section of my project I will present a brief summary of my purposes in the action-research, and will explain to what extent the results matched those purposes. I will also present the theoretical implications, the limitations I found, and offer suggestions for future action-research of this type.

**Results**

According to the results and findings in this research, when students are involved as active parts of their learning process and when they know their teachers care about them, they show more interest for what they do and they are more committed to themselves, their classmates, and their teachers. This in turn influences in a positive way their learning process and their academic achievements.

On the whole, and over time, students were better able to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and the strategies they used in and out of the classroom, e.g., what things they were doing correctly, what they should pay more attention to, and what specific things they had to do. It is also important to notice how honest students are when in a formal, serious, and responsible way they are given the opportunity to express the teacher their wishes and needs, knowing that the teacher will pay attention to what they say and will act upon those

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wishes and needs. Finally, I could say that throughout the process of this research I could explore and test in practice my conceptions and beliefs about the effectiveness of self-assessment and reflection skills on student learning and motivation, and also my beliefs about teaching, learning, and students.

**Theoretical Implications**

After concluding this research it was obvious, that to improve the way we, teachers, evaluate our students it is necessary to revise the way we teach and our beliefs about the whole process of teaching and learning. We cannot teach based on traditional models, which are based on the belief that students go to our classes to receive information, and expect excellent academic results or miraculous transformations in our students. Instead, I believe that if we want to see profound changes in our students performance and attitudes, it is necessary that we revise our attitude and vision of what we think teaching is.

It is necessary that teachers analyze and reflect on what they do and how they do it. They need to ask themselves, "To what extent am I contributing to develop whole persons, human beings prepared not only in the subject matter, but also able to function in the common daily life situations?"

**Limitations**

Among the aspects I found that made this research difficult, I will mention the following:

1- **Group preparation:** since these students had never used these kind of tools before, at the beginning it was very hard for me to make them understand what they would use them for and how they would benefit from them. It took a lot of time, patience, and effort.

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2- **Students' fear:** at the beginning, when I explained the purposes and instructions on how they were going to use the questionnaires, and the process we would follow, the students were suspicious and afraid of my reaction to their answers. They thought, as they later on told me, that I could use that information against them. So I had to work on building students' trust by showing openness and acceptance of their answers and comments.

3- **Vague answers:** this was probably the most important limitation I had to overcome. The students' answers were often too vague and general. For example, they would write answers like: "I understand everything." This was neither the kind of answer nor the reflection I was looking for. These answers did not mean anything to me so I had to explain the type of answers I was looking for. For example I asked them: "What is **everything** for you?" Then they gave me specific answers so I told them: "This is exactly what I want you to write down in this questionnaire and in the next to come. I want you to write down and later tell me in the discussion sessions what specific and concrete material you understand or don't understand, what concrete and specific things you are doing or need to do in order to benefit from this class. I want specific answers that show me that you have devoted some time to think and reflect on the things I do, and your actions in this class." This talk usually took place during the discussion sessions. This situation led me to modify the questions in the instrument used.

4- **Frequency:** during the first weeks the questionnaires were given to the students at the end of each lesson that was approximately every three days. After a few weeks I

noticed that the students' interest in using the questionnaires decreased, they looked tired of doing it, it became a routine for them. They told me so and I could see it in the answers they were given. So I decided to apply the questionnaires every three lessons that would be approximately after nine days.

5- **Group size:** as I mentioned before, there were forty participants in the research which is a very big group. Had the group been smaller, I could have devoted more time to the discussion sessions and It would have been less work for me.

**Suggestions**

Next I will offer some suggestions for future action-researches of this type.

1- The criteria and purposes of the research must be very clear for both the researcher and the participants. The answers to questions like: "What do I want to get from this imvestigation?" "Where do I want to get with it?" and "How will I get there?" must and need to be very clear and carefully planned in advanced.

2- Once the researcher decides what instruments will be used in the research, the instructions have to be clearly explained to the participants so they understand what, in this case, the teacher expects.

3- The instructions, as well as, the items in the instrument must be specific and clear so the researcher makes sure that the required information will be obtained.

## ATTENDANCE AND PARTIALS GRADES CONTROL SHEET

**By: Federica Castro**

**Name:**_____

## ATTENDANCE

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DATES (NOT IN CLASS)** | | | | | | | |

## GRADES

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PARTIALS (15% EACH)** | | | | |

(Questionnaire #1)

<u>Self-Assessment</u>

By: Federica Castro

Please take a few minutes to complete this form:

1- The reasons why I am taking this class are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

2- What I want to get from this class is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

3- What I will do to get it is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

**(Questionnaire #2)**

**By: Federica Castro**

**Please take some time to answer the questions that follow:**

1- What do you think/feel you have learned today?

2- How do you feel after the activities we did in class today?

**(Questionnaire # 3)**

**Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

**By: Federica Castro**

**Please take a few minutes to complete this form. Thank you !!**

**Name:**_____

***From today's class:***

1- I understand_____

2- I don't understand_____

3- I liked doing (mention the activity)_____

4- I didn't like doing (mention the activity)_____

5- I want to tell the teacher that_____

**(Questionnaire # 4)**

**Please take some time to answer these questions as thoughtfully as possible.**

**Name:**_____

1-What do you think you learned in this lesson?

2- How do you know you learned it?

3- What part of the unit do you feel you still have doubts?

4- How can the teacher help you?

5- What specific things do you want the teacher to do?

6- What will you do?

Any additional comments?

**(Questionnaire # 5)**

**Please take e few minutes to complete the following statements**

Name:_____

1- I think answering the questionnaires_____

2- It's helping me because_____

3- It's not helping me because_____

4- I feel_____answering the questionnare because_____

_____

**(Questionnaire # 6)**

**Self-Assessment "End of the Unit Questionnaire"**

**Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.**
Your answers will help *you* and *the teacher* know which your strengths and weaknesses are in the material we have just finished.

**Name:**_____

1- The content (Grammar - Vocabulary - Reading Skills) in this unit is:

       perfectly clear      somewhat clear      not clear at all

2- What parts of the unit do you think you understand?_____

_____

3- What specific things can you do that shows you understand?_____

_____

4- What part of the unit is not clear yet?

       Grammar           Vocabulary         Reading Skills

5- From the one you chose in number 4, what specific material don't you understand?

_____

_____

6- What specific things can I do to help you?_____

_____

7- What will you do to help yourself?_____

_____

**(RUBRIC)**

Self-Evaluation to assign 10% to Attendance,Discilpline and Participation.
This is how you and I will assess your work in class.
Mark with an "x" on the line under the letter "S" for those statements in which you
would include yourself.

Name:_____

**Attendance 3%**     3 pts.(5-6 marks), 2 pts.(3-4 marks), 1 pt.(2-1 mark)

T       S

___     ___ The student comes to class on time.

___     ___ The student remains in the classroom the whole class period.

___     ___ The student tells the teacher in advanced when he/she is going to miss a
            class (except emergencies).

___     ___ The student rarely comes to class late.

___     ___ The student rarely misses a class.

___     ___ The student did not use the seven (7) absences.

**Discipline 3%**    3 pts.(7-9 marks), 2 pts.(6-4 marks), 1pt.(3-1 mark)

T       S

___     ___ The student is always attentive when the teacher checks the roll.

___     ___ The student does not interrupt the class, talking, coming late, leaving the
            classroom.

___     ___ The student shows respect and pays attention when the teacher or another
            student is talking.

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___ ___ The student takes the class seriously and is attentive to what is done in class.

___ ___ The student while in the English class is not working on other subjects.

___ ___ The student is usually attentive and quiet when the teacher is explaining new material or giving instructions.

___ ___ When working in groups, the student contributes with maintaining the order.

___ ___ The student raises his/her hand when he/she wants to participate.

___ ___ The student accepts the teacher's corrections respectfully.


Participation  4%    4 pts.(8-9 marks), 3 pts.(7-6 marks), 2 pts.(5-4 marks), 1 pt.(3-1 mark)

T      S

___ ___ The student shows interest and motivation for the class.

___ ___ The student contributes to the class process.

___ ___ The student usually brings the books to class.

___ ___ The student usually does the homework.

___ ___ The student participates in an organized way.

___ ___ When the teacher asks a question, the student is attentive and answers.

___ ___ When the student participates in class, he/she takes the initiative.

___ ___ The student helps when it is needed.

___ ___ The student asks when he/she does not understand.

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