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## Students' Perspectives on the 4/3/2 Technique and Self-Assessment to Improve English Speaking Fluency

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### Abstract

*Understanding students' perspectives and differentiating classroom practices based on student needs are considered effective educators' primary purposes in improving the foreign language learning process. How teachers conduct and teach their classes significantly affects how students cope with their learning. For this reason, this phenomenological study aimed to identify the perspectives among 12 Ecuadorian ninth graders on the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment used to improve their English-speaking fluency during a five-week class. The data were collected through interviews and visual narratives and analyzed using grounded theory. The results of the study show that the 4/3/2 technique presented three categories (I learned because I repeated; I increased my speaking speed and decreased word repetitions; I got nervous when I had to speak faster). Self-assessment presented two categories (I learned from my mistakes; We were aware of our progress, which motivated us). Thus, this study has shown the importance of identifying students' perspectives on the two learning strategies used in class. By doing this, teachers can select the appropriate technique for that specific learning context based on the students' perceptions and foreign language theories. Further research is still necessary for the Ecuadorian context to explore how students' perspective on the teachers' learning methodologies affect them, especially their emotions.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding students' perspectives and differentiating classroom practices based on student needs are considered effective educators' primary purposes in improving foreign language learning (Fisette, 2010). How teachers conduct and teach their classes significantly affects how students cope with their learning (Thijssen et al., 2022; Trigwell et al., 1999). Therefore, teachers should be aware of identifying their students' perspectives regarding the methodologies used in class to provide satisfactory results. By doing so, teachers can improve and (re)adapt the learning context in favor of the learners (Cook-Sather, 2003). However, it is essential to highlight that students need to be qualified to evaluate teaching methodology. Therefore, teachers must filter this information and do what is better for their students based on the second language teaching literature and theories.

Multiple scholars have concluded that learning is continuous (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019), and learning is acquired through practice and experiences (Alarcão, 2002). This constant process depends on teachers searching for methodologies to improve students' learning by implementing new classroom strategies. However, one of the main challenges for educators is finding suitable techniques to help students progress in their learning and feel comfortable in class. Sometimes, what works well for one student may not work for others; consequently, the techniques can influence, for instance, students' emotions (Méndez-López & Bautista-Tun, 2017).

Researching students' perspectives is essential because their attitudes toward the environment and interpretations based on their conceptions can influence their learning and behavior in class (Gardner & Lalonde, 1985; Sjöblom & Svens, 2019). A wealth of research has examined student perspectives in the different contexts of education (Beausaert et al., 2013; Elen & Lowyck, 1999; Reece, 2013; Spencer & Schmelkin, 2002). However, while the previous studies focus on a more generalized idea of the education process, we wanted to delve into a group of twelve Ecuadorian students' perceptions regarding using the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment to improve their speaking fluency.

For this reason, this current study aims to identify the students' perspectives on two learning strategies (the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment) used in a unit to improve their speaking fluency, exclusively to give insight into the perceptions between (dis)satisfaction and learning. The research question that guided this study was: What are students' perspectives about the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment to improve English speaking fluency based on their experience? This current study differs from previous studies in two aspects: First, this study extends previous research, which only examined the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment in English-speaking contexts, not those in the global south; second, this research applies visual narratives as a data collection instrument, which is still not commonly used in this type of research. Semiotic resources may help participants portray their feelings, emotions, and beliefs (Kalaja et al., 2008).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we first examine foreign language speaking fluency. Then, the two strategies (4/3/2 technique and self-assessment) are presented and defined, followed by a brief discussion of the students' perspectives on learning English as a foreign language.

### 2.1 Foreign Language Speaking Fluency

Second language researchers have long maintained that speaking is one of the most important skills (Juhana, 2012; Santos et al., 2020). For example, according to Ur (1991) and Santos et al. (2020), learners measure their success when they can keep a fluent dialog in the target language. Nazara (2011) and Desmaliza and Septiani (2017) uncovered that students believe that speaking is the most significant skill and the one that needs to be developed first. This happens because students misunderstand language acquisition and learning (Krashen, 2013). According to the comprehensive hypothesis, to acquire a language, be it a first or second/foreign language, we need input, so the first skill to be developed is listening (Krashen, 2013). Consequently, it can be considered the most important.

Speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols, in various contexts” (Chaney & Burk, 1998, p. 13). Tuğrul (2012, p. 1), on the other hand, described speaking as “being capable of speech, expressing or exchanging thoughts through using language.” Thus, a speaker must try to be as concise and explicit as possible when having a conversation. However, an excellent speaking fluency level in the target language takes time and practice, and sometimes, it is influenced by emotions (Santos et al., 2020), lack of motivation (Kowalski et al., 2022; Reece & Walker, 1997), and excessive use of the mother tongue (Carrió-Pastor & Vallés, 2015; Kansakar, 1998).

Improving this skill involves several factors, including cognitive, discursive, and pragmatic (Arcara & Bambini, 2016; Burns, 1998; Widdowson, 1998). Speaking in its dialogical form is interactive, which involves knowing how to take turns (McDonough & Mackey, 2000). It happens in real-time, usually with no space for planning, resulting in unplanned and spontaneous responses (Foster et al., 2000). Nevertheless, emotional factors such as fear and shyness hinder learners from improving this fluency (Santos & Barcelos, 2018; Santos et al., 2020). Brown (2001) classified spoken language into two types: (a) monologue, when the speaker is giving a lecture and is not interrupted, and (b) dialogue, when there is an exchange of information among people, and they use the take-turning process.

Fluency is a feature that comes from speaking. It is related to speech rate, number of filled and unfilled pauses, number of errors, number of repetitions, and formulaic language use (Bohn, 2015; Gut, 2009). Hedge (2000, p. 54) said that “the term fluency relates to the production, and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain, inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation.”

## **2.2 The 4/3/2 Technique**

Maurice (1983) created the 4/3/2 technique to help students improve their foreign language speaking fluency. This technique asks students to say three times the same speech without interruptions at different lengths. The first time in four minutes, the second in three minutes, and the third in two minutes. Therefore, the time can be adapted for each learning context according to English proficiency. Since its establishment, this technique has helped many students to improve their EFL speaking skills.

According to Zhou (2006), students who used the 4/3/2 technique regularly produced 20% more concrete utterances than those who did not. de Jong and Perfetti (2011) and Boers (2014) extended this work and observed that repeating the same information on different occasions makes vocabulary easily recoverable for future use. Consequently, to help learners improve their English-speaking fluency, they are encouraged not to worry about making mistakes. Some studies (Asri & Muhtar, 2013; Molina & Briesmaster, 2017; Yufrizal, 2018) applied this technique to improve students speaking fluency and help students with their speaking learning problems.

For example, Molina and Briesmaster (2017) worked for ten weeks with Chilean students. In the end, they concluded that their students improved their speaking fluency. In the same vein of positive results, Yufrizal (2018), who worked with Indonesian students, confirmed the improvement in students' fluency. Santos and Ramírez-Ávila (2022) also demonstrated that this technique helped 12 students in improving their speaking fluency. All of them have found important learning features in the second language field.

## **2.3 Self-Assessment**

Assessment is a vital element of the teaching and learning process (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Wu et al., 2021). It can improve the teachers' practices and students' learning (Moqbel, 2018) and provide teachers and students with feedback. Several practitioners have instituted multiple types of assessment, including self-assessment, which Andrade and Du (2007) define as a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly.

Working with self-assessment in class provides students with responsibility and makes them active learners (Boud, 1995; Yang et al., 2022) since they have to reflect on their learning process and improve when necessary. Some studies have explored speaking self-assessment and fluency (Moqbel, 2018; Phan & Phuong, 2017). For example, Alibakhshi and Sarani (2014) worked with 60 Iranian students of English as a foreign language (EFL) in a language institute. They used self-assessment to improve their speaking fluency and accuracy. They found positive results and realized that students became more critical in their learning by the end of the study. So, using the self-assessment benefits the student in acquiring a foreign language.

## 2.4 Students' Perspectives on Learning

Knowledge is constructed through active learning experiences (Anthony, 1996; Lombardi et al., 2021). Therefore, the instructor's techniques play an essential role in students' learning (Konopka et al., 2015). Furthermore, teachers' techniques in class can positively or negatively affect students' learning (Beausaert et al., 2013). Along these lines, "exploring students' perspectives on the learning environment could offer insight and feedback about what is really going on in the environment" (Könings, 2007, p. 82).

In the last two decades, understanding students' perception of the techniques used in class has been a growing concern (Brown, 2009; Finefter-Rosenbluh et al., 2021), mainly for two reasons. First, understanding what is happening in class regarding the learning process is not predictable (Pointon & Kershner, 2000). Teachers need to ask and research what happens in this context bearing in mind that classrooms are diverse, that teaching should be student-centered, and that students' learning needs should be covered. All this requires a personalized approach based on students' learning behaviors. Second, understanding what happens benefits the learner and is valuable for teachers and other stakeholders. Cook-Sather (2003, p. 23) mentioned that "listening to students and sharing their perspectives could help teachers and designers to rethink learning processes and the design of learning environments" and will improve "the effectiveness of the learning" (Könings, 2007, p. 11).

Although a careful literature review would reveal several studies on the topic of students' perspectives on the learning process, for this study, we focused on representative research to help us gain an overview of the main approaches in different contexts, particularly in the EFL area. Table 1 presents a summary of these studies.

**Table 1.** Studies landscape on students' foreign language learning perspectives.

| Author(s)                             | Year | Participants              | Perspectives on           | Data collection               | Context         |
|---------------------------------------|------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Spencer & Schmelkin                   | 2002 | University students       | University students       | Questionnaire                 | USA             |
| Vodopija-Krstanović & Brala-Vukanović | 2012 | University students       | University students       | Questionnaire                 | Croatia         |
| Bloemert et al.                       | 2017 | Secondary school students | Secondary school students | Questionnaire                 | The Netherlands |
| Ramírez-Lizcano & Cabrera-Tovar       | 2020 | Secondary school students | Secondary school students | Questionnaire and focus group | Colombia        |

Table 1 shows that most studies implemented questionnaires to collect data and a few interviews. They were conducted in some parts of the world, but no studies have been conducted in South America, specifically in Ecuador. Regarding the two techniques, we did not find studies in Ecuador about students' perspectives using the two strategies: 4/3/2 and self-assessment. For this reason, the significance of this study is justified due to the lack of literature in the Ecuadorian context and the benefits of understanding students' perspectives regarding the techniques used in class to select the appropriate one according to the context.

### **3. METHODS**

This phenomenological study applied a qualitative method to illustrate and identify the students' perspectives on the two strategies used in a unit to improve their speaking fluency. [Creswell \(2007\)](#) suggested that this type of study aligned with qualitative methods is best indicated when the research seeks to comprehend participants' perspectives on their natural background based on their experiences.

#### **3.1 Unit**

This unit aimed to teach twelve students with A2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference, how to express their opinions about movies or TV series through movie reviews. The lesson plan for each class was done in light of the principles of communicative language teaching because its primary goal was to improve speaking fluency. It followed the backward design template proposed by [Wiggins and McTighe \(2005\)](#). All the topics were focused on real-time situations, and the students were the principal agent of the learning. This unit lasted five weeks, a total of 30 hours of class.

Students learned in each class the aspects that compose the movie review genre. This content was taught through games, role plays, group activities, and discussions in class. On the first day of the unit, the teacher explained to students the whole process, such as the goal, the activities that would be done during the 30 classes, and, most important, explained through videos and practices about the 4/3/2 and self-assessment. Each student performed in each class both strategies during the 30 days. Sometimes they did it alone, in pairs, or in groups. The teacher gave feedback to everyone. In order to increase the reliability of the self-assessment, students used a speaking rubric, and, in the end, the learners shared their responses with the whole class.

Students were required to record one video at the beginning and one at the end of the pedagogical innovation, which was used as a pre and post-test, to check if both techniques helped improve their speaking fluency. The results, which were found through statistical tests, demonstrated that the participants had a significant difference between the pre-and post-test, which means that they improved their speaking fluency.

#### **3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

This section elaborates on the instruments implemented to carry out this research. The first part includes information related to the interview. The second part reports information about the visual narrative.

##### *3.2.1 Interview*

According to [Galletta \(2013\)](#), semi-structured interviews are a series of open-ended questions that allow the researcher to enrich the data. This study used this type of data collection because semi-structured interviews are appropriate for identifying students' perceptions and experiences.

The semi-structured interview used in this study was planned according to this research's goals and research question. Each session of 10-15 minutes was conducted with each participant. They were video recorded using the Zoom platform under the

parents' authorization. This interview was conducted in Spanish because of the participants' low level of English. Later it was transcribed and analyzed. Analyzing the interview was based on [Holliday \(2005\)](#) and grounded theory ([Glaser, 1998, 2005](#)). First, the interviews were read to get a general idea of the participants' answers. Later, the researchers sought the students' perspectives regarding the two strategies, and these perspectives were grouped according to their similarities. Intending to create reliability in the analysis, a Ph.D. student did the same process of coding the data. Afterward, the researcher and the Ph.D. student shared the results found.

### 3.2.2 Visual narrative

The visual narrative is an instrument of data collection that includes drawings, photographs, or collages. This instrument has been used in the applied linguistics field due to its advantages in adding a personal dimension to the data ([Kalaja et al., 2008](#); [Menezes, 2008](#)). According to [Kalaja et al. \(2008\)](#), this tool allows the participants to express themselves using different modes. For example, [Santos et al. \(2020\)](#) used a visual narrative to check students' emotions while speaking English in an Ecuadorian context. They concluded that this instrument helped students portray their emotions during class.

For this study, the participants were required to draw themselves using the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment. Each visual narrative comes with a short description written by the participants. The analyses were carried out according to [Pitkänen-Huhta and Pietikäinen's \(2016\)](#) perspectives. First, the visual narratives were analyzed to describe their visual products; everything was analyzed as a complete whole. Then, some attention was put to the key elements, and connections were brought from the interviews to complement the analysis. Afterward, it was possible to identify similarities and divergences across the data sets. Finally, the authors tried to connect the verbal and nonverbal elements.

## 3.3 Setting and Participants

The participants were 12 ninth graders (junior secondary) chosen through convenience sampling since it is where the first researcher used to work. The eight girls and four boys belong to a private school in Ecuador. Their ages range from 12 to 13 years old. They have an A2 level of English, according to the CEFR. All participants had their first contact with English in primary school and started learning in this context. They all considered it essential to have good speaking fluency and pursue diverse opinions about the importance of learning English, such as a love for the language and life opportunities. However, they admitted some difficulties in learning English, mainly related to speaking skills. Table 2 presents a summary of the participants' social-demographic information. Each participant chose a pseudonym according to the ethical procedures to keep their anonymity.

This study was carried out under the procedures of ethical considerations ([Munhall, 1988](#); [Tolich & Iphofen, 2019](#)). Permission was asked of the school's principal; consent letters were sent to the parents, and they all signed a consent letter. As the classes were conducted in the afternoon, out of class time, the authors made sure to have only voluntary participation ([Hogan, 2008](#)). Finally, the participants' privacy and anonymity were protected through pseudonyms.

The participants' profile of this study is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Participants' profile.

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Perceived importance of English | Difficulties in English | The importance of having good speaking skills |
|-----------|--------|-----|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| VT        | F      | 13  | Life opportunities              | Pronunciation           | Very important                                |
| DM        | F      | 13  | To help in future jobs          | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| AR        | F      | 12  | Love for the language           | Pronunciation           | Very Important                                |
| Fl        | F      | 13  | Travel and meet new people      | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| MO        | F      | 13  | Job and opportunities in life   | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| PA        | F      | 13  | Love for the language           | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| GL        | F      | 12  | Love for the language           | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| AL        | F      | 13  | Love for the language           | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| KE        | M      | 12  | Importance of the language      | Pronunciation           | Important                                     |
| NA        | M      | 13  | Opportunities in life           | Speaking                | Very important                                |
| SM        | M      | 12  | Travel and meet new people      | Pronunciation           | Important                                     |
| AW        | M      | 13  | Opportunities in life           | Speaking                | Very important                                |

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore students' perspectives regarding the two strategies used to improve their speaking fluency. The outcomes demonstrated that the participants perceived the 4/3/2 technique and self-assessment as favorable to their learning. The results found in the data collection instruments (interview and visual narrative) were grouped into thematic categories.

After the analysis of the 4/3/2 technique, three themes were uncovered: (a) I learned because I repeated, (b) I was able to increase speaking speed and decrease word repetitions, and (c) I got nervous when I had to speak faster. On the other hand, two themes were uncovered in self-assessment: (a) I was learning from my mistakes, and (b) we saw our learning, which motivates us.

### 4.1 Students' Perception of the 4/3/2 Technique

Students reported in the interview that using the 4/3/2 technique helped them improve their learning differently. They said repeating the same speech at different times helped them to practice and raised their confidence about what to say. Two students stated that they increased their speaking speed and one said she decreased her word repetitions. However, one student presented a different perspective on using this technique. She revealed that when she had to speak faster, she became more nervous. Next, we present the three categories found in the data collection.

#### 4.1.1 'I learned because I repeated'

In the interview, the participants reported the significance of repetitions for learning. They pointed out many advantages to students of using the 4/3/2 technique. For example, PA said:

- (1) "When it was my turn to do 4/3/2 and repeat my speech, I learned more because I memorized some words each time I repeated". (PA)

Delivering the same speech at different times helped her get to know the words and do it better next time (Zhou, 2006).

Another aspect was the importance of repetition to improve speed. Students started to be comfortable with what they would say, which helped them increase their speaking speed. AL declared:

- (2) "I am practicing more so that when I have to speak in English again, I can do it faster because I have already practiced it". (AL)

This thought can also be confirmed in her visual narrative (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** AL's visual narrative.

AL portrayed herself on a typical day of class, with her computer in front of her and some notes she likes to take during classes. In her description, she said:

- (3) "I drew myself after the moment I said the three times of practice correctly. I remembered that I made some pronunciation and grammar mistakes the first time, but I could say it correctly and faster the second and third times. This made me feel thrilled". (AL, visual narrative)

Besides showing that she was happy with her results, this also demonstrates that she was critical about her learning. PA and AL discussed the importance of students practicing and repeating to deliver a good speech. The same opinion was found by Yufrizal (2018) when he used the same technique with his students.

#### 4.1.2 'I was able to increase speaking speed and decrease word repetitions'

All the participants agreed that the 4/3/2 technique is excellent for students who want to improve their speaking fluency. KE said:

- (4) I would rate the 4/3/2 as a 10 out of 10 because it helped me immensely. I increased my speaking speed and decreased word repetitions; for that reason, I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve their speaking fluency. (KE, Interview)

KE and the other participants mentioned that they progressed in some aspects of fluency, like speed and word repetitions. PA, for instance, informed that this technique could decrease the number of repetitions of words: "I have learned not to repeat the same words when I am speaking and to speak fluently" (Interview). AR, on the other hand, stated that she decreased the number of pauses during her speech and that "repeating many times makes you speak faster without many pauses" (Interview)." Both aspects mentioned by the two students—decreasing the number of pauses and repetitions—are related to the definition of fluency given by Gut (2009) and Bøhn (2015).

VT endorsed the idea that she decreased the number of repetitions and the number of pauses. She drew herself while practicing the technique (see Figure 2).

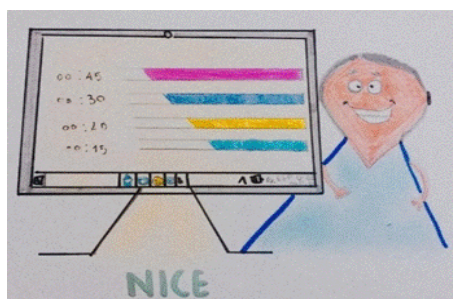


**Figure 2.** VT's visual narrative.

In Figure 2, VT's face demonstrates happiness. She wrote the word "nice." When asked what the word "nice" represents, she articulated that a feeling of improvement in learning prompted her to use this word. Her drawing description was:

- (5) "This is me when I realized I decreased the number of repetitions and the number of pauses while speaking English after a long-time practicing". (VT, Visual Narrative)

She added that this sensation of doing the right thing made her feel happy and confident about speaking English.

#### 4.1.3 'I got nervous when I had to speak faster'

One participant presented a different perspective regarding the use of this technique. She revealed that she became more nervous when she had to speak faster and consequently became anxious to speak. She said:

- (6) It helped me speak faster. However, on the other hand, it was more complicated because I got nervous when I had to speak faster. I was worse than Eminem, the singer. I tried to speak fast and

without making many pauses because my time was running out. Furthermore, making pauses is something that I always do when I speak in English. (MO, Interview)

MO compared herself to a rapper, which means she spoke faster than usual. She also added that she does not recommend this technique to low-level students:

- (7) “It is useful, but it would not be like a technique that I recommend with such a short time to start”. (MO, Interview)

She confirmed her thoughts in the visual narrative (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** MO's visual narrative.

MO made a sequence of drawings, each representing the time she used the technique. First, in the two-minute time, she portrayed herself as happy, and her smile demonstrates that. Second, her face changed to confusion, and she no longer had the same smile. Finally, with one minute to repeat, she appears with a frustrated and more nervous face. [Asri and Muhtar \(2013\)](#) said their students reported a similar perspective when using this technique. However, their students articulated that they felt bored, and the authors also reported that their students felt this way because this technique did not allow them to interact with anyone. To solve this problem, maybe they could have paired students and asked them to tell the same story three times, and in each part, the listener had to comment on what he/she heard. In the next part, we discuss the students' perspectives concerning self-assessment.

## 4.2 Students' Perception of Self-Assessment

The participants presented two perspectives regarding doing self-assessment. They demonstrated a high level of criticism of their learning, which shows the importance of this strategy for educational purposes, as maintained by [Boud \(1995\)](#) and [Andrade and Du \(2007\)](#). In the next section, we present the categories encountered in the interviews and supported by the visual narratives.

### 4.2.1 'I learned from my mistakes'

Making mistakes in language learning sometimes is seen as unfavorable by students. They believe their classmates will mock them. Consequently, this situation generates fear during speaking ([Candido-Ribeiro, 2013](#); [Santos & Barcelos, 2018](#); [Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021](#)). However, when teachers show students the importance of making learning mistakes, they may change their perspectives and see errors as

positive. This process of comprehending the mistakes as part of the learning process happened with AR, who said:

- (8) “I learned from my mistakes”. (AR, Interview)

Two participants stated the significance of self-assessment as a practice that may help students reflect on their mistakes and improve their skills. The first was GL, who said:

- (9) “I always repeated the word ‘AND’ when I was saying, and doing the self-assessment helped identify this situation. So, now, when I speak, I try to search for new words not to say the same ones”. (GL, Interview)

The second was DM, and she said:

- (10) The self-assessment helped me identify what I was and was not good at. I could not fool myself because I knew how I was doing”. (DM, Interview)

This idea was corroborated in the drawing made by PA. She represented herself with a self-assessment checklist by her side (see Figure 4). Each part of the checklist shows a topic she is sure she has learned. Her description was:

- (11) “This is me making the checklist of my learning during the self-assessment.” (PA, Visual Narrative)

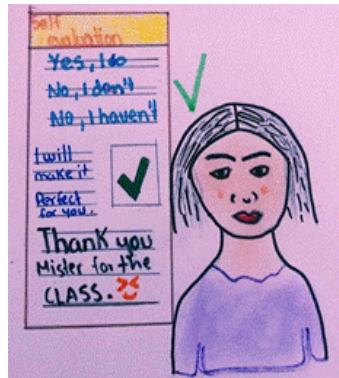


**Figure 4.** PA's visual narrative.

PA used verbal and non-verbal information to express her felicity in self-assessing. The ticks show that she went through the process correctly step-by-step. Muñoz and Alvarez (2007) emphasized that teachers should make self-assessment a habit to get practical results. Learners who use a pattern to self-assess are likely to have outstanding results.

#### 4.2.2 *'We were aware of our progress, and that motivated us'*

Self-assessment motivated students to keep learning. SM said:

- (12) “The fact that I was able to see that I was improving my fluency motivated me to move on” (SM, Interview).

As happened to SM, the other students saw their improvement at each practice and became happy to visualize that they were actively learning. According to [Paris and Ayres \(1994\)](#), this self-assessing process helps students become more critical about their learning process because they understand their failures and see this as part of a whole process.

AW, in his interview, corroborated the same idea:

- (13) Because we see in what we were wrong, what we have to improve, and what we did well, which motivates us to improve it. (AW, Interview)

During the visual narrative, he portrayed his desire for improvement (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** AW's visual narrative.

AW's drawing shows him at different points in the self-assessment process. In each step, he judged himself and pushed himself to the best until he got the desirable results. This drawing demonstrated that this technique worked positively with students' emotions. Moreover, self-assessment motivated the participants to speak and helped them deal with their negative emotions during the English class. For example, NA stated he is a shy student because he is afraid of making mistakes. When this participant started to analyze his learning progress, saw that he was improving, and realized that his classmates made mistakes, he became more confident and comfortable interacting with his classmates. For example, when prompted to speak in the interview, NA responded:

- (14) "I am one of those who were sometimes ashamed to speak in public. So, it has helped me to talk with my classmates and express myself better." (NA, Interview)

NA felt that way because he was afraid of making mistakes in front of his classmates. This strategy helped him build up his self-esteem. One more time, it has been demonstrated that motivation plays an essential role in students' lives ([Gardner et al., 2004](#)). [Baber \(2020, p. 287\)](#) declared that "the learning environment also influences human motivation." Thus, the importance of searching techniques is that it supports students in developing this intrinsic motivation because when students are motivated to learn, they tend to feel comfortable and enjoy the learning process, which positively influences how they learn.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study shows the importance of identifying students' perspectives on the two learning strategies used in class. By doing this, teachers can select the appropriate technique for a specific learning context based on the students' perceptions and the foreign language theories. If students do not feel comfortable using the teachers' techniques, they might feel demotivated to learn. For this reason, it is crucial that learners' and teachers' learning and teaching styles be converged. All participants improved their speaking fluency. However, one student pointed out that she felt uncomfortable using the 4/3/2 technique because she felt pressured to speak faster. Even though she demonstrated positive results in her learning, her perspective on the 4/3/2 technique differed from the others. The teacher could only know this point of view by giving voice to his students in the learning process.

Students' perspectives on self-assessment showed the importance of this technique for them. They were aware of their learning mistakes, and when the participants realized they were improving, they became more motivated to learn. Identifying these students' points of view would make it possible to get this valuable information.

The findings of this study show EFL teachers that giving students a more active role in the (re)design process of a learning environment is crucial because it makes the classroom a powerful place to learn. Teachers can conduct interviews or different data collection methods to reach this goal. The results showed that the interview aligned with the visual narrative and complemented each other well to uncover the students' perspectives. The visual narrative helped give students a voice and help them understand what they could not say in words.

This study addresses EFL teachers who want to improve their student's speaking fluency in any language learning context. Two limitations were found during this research: (a) The lack of previous practice of the students in giving their perspectives about the strategies used in the classroom; some students could not construct solid opinions, and maybe some critical information was missed; and (b) the small number of participants in this research: A more significant number of students would provide a broader perspective of experiences. However, it may not be possible to have this richer information if the class was more prominent because the teacher could not give attention to all the students or make each share their points of view. So, to avoid bias in future research regarding the lack of practice, we recommend having a more significant number of classes to give students more time to practice. Finally, further research is still necessary for the Ecuadorian context to explore how students' perspectives on the teachers' learning methodologies affect them, especially their emotions.

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