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Fostering Students' Capacity to Reflect Through Formative Assessment Strategies

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### **Abstract**

This action-research aimed at fostering students' capacity to reflect on their learning process through Formative Assessment Strategies (FAS). It was conducted in a public school in Rionegro-Antioquia with 33-eighth graders during approximately one year. Action strategies included two stages. The first one involved familiarization of students with FAS such as self and peer assessment, rubrics and feedback by means of guiding questions, discussions and formats. The second stage put into practice FAS seeking to promote students' reflection on their own learning process. Data gathering instruments included teacher's journal, focus group, and students' artefacts. Findings revealed that students' capacity to reflect allowed them to take actions to benefit their learning process and support students' reflection towards task development and assessment. Some implications for this project included: (a) intentionally conducting activities to familiarize students with the FAS and (b) time investment at the beginning of the process while students get familiarized with the strategies.

*Key words:* Formative assessment strategies, reflection, learning process, EFL.

**Degree requirement**

This action research project is submitted as a requirement to obtain a Bachelor's degree in foreign language education (English- French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia.

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### **Preface**

This action research was conducted with students of 8-2 grade in San José de las Cuchillas School during the scholar year in 2019. It was developed in two stages: proposal and implementation. The former consisted of observations and alternated teaching sessions with my cooperating teacher; information about the teaching practices was registered on my journals. It ended up with the proposal of exploring students' capacity to reflect by means of formative assessment strategies and the action plan to conduct such proposal. The latter involved the implementation of the action plan, the data gathering process and the analysis and interpretation of such data to come up with interpretations and findings.

I decided to explore students' capacity to reflect taking into account my interests and class observations. Firstly, I have been concerned about the way assessment practices are conducted in schools where, after my experiences, there is a clear room for summative evaluation and grades but fewer opportunities to foster reflection and autonomy after sharing the power of evaluation with students. Secondly, during the observations, I could see students interested in understanding how the English class connected with their English learning experience so that they could ask questions about certain activities and lesson goals.

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### Context

The *Institución Educativa San José de las Cuchillas* is a public school located in la Vereda Cuchillas de San José in Rionegro, a municipality in the eastern region of Antioquia. It offers education services to students from preschool to high school levels. The institution schedule comprises three terms during the year; the first and second terms last 12 weeks whereas the third one lasts 16 weeks. The school works in full-day school modality.

There are four teachers of English in the institution; two in elementary school and two in middle and high school. The teachers join every year to design the English program called *malla curricular* which they write based on basic standards of competence and the *Basic Learning Rights*. For each student diagnosed with special needs, teachers should accommodations learning objectives, teaching and assessment strategies. Every term evaluation is divided into four items: conceptual-quizzes (20%), follow-up (40%), behavior/attitude (20%) and final exam (20%). To support the English class, the institution has some materials which are commonly stored in the library. Among others there are textbooks, dictionaries, lotteries, vocabulary games and maps. It is also possible to use tablets and the computer room for the English class (Informal talk with the teacher, February 22, 2019).

This research was conducted with 33 eighth graders aged between 13 and 15 years old. They had 2-hour English class twice a week. Six students had been diagnosed with learning difficulties. Generally speaking, students expressed they did not like English language; however, they studied it because of institutional requirements. Nonetheless, they participated in class actively; they explained their favorite way to learn was through music and teamwork (Observation, March 1, 2019). My cooperating teacher was also the head of the English



department. She obtained her undergraduate degree at University of Antioquia. Her teaching experience had been in urban private school and rural public schools.

To sum up, this research was conducted with 33 eighth graders, in a rural context school. The school counted with different resources in order to support the English class such as T.V or speakers. It also holds a particular evaluation system which includes the items of conceptual, follow-up, attitude, and final exam per each term. Such conditions favor the possibilities to work on formative assessment strategies promoting reflection in students what is presented in the next section.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In English class, assessment practices can be carried out using different types of activities according to participants and purposes (Arias, 2005; Shohamy, 2001). In 8-2 grade class, assessment activities are proposed mainly by the teacher while students had little opportunity to make decisions on it. Moreover, some of the assessment practices currently developed in this class did not have effective effects on students' learning process, and intentional activities to foster students' reflection were not implemented.

The fact that evaluative activities were proposed most of the times by the teacher hindered students' opportunities to reflect upon their own learning process and deprived the teacher of enhancing activities after students' suggestions or choices. For example; during the observations, one of the evaluative activities had to do with designing a cartoon to be socialized in class; although students had the chance to select the topic, none intended activity was developed to identify their perceptions or reflections towards the activity (Observations, February 19 and 22, 2019) in order to enrich the grading process or following activities

design. In this case, the teacher selected both the type of activities and the way such activities were conducted (Observation, Feb 22, 2019); as a consequence, students' chances to reflect on their own learning process through assessment practice were neglected.

In addition to this lack of students' participation in their assessment process, repetitive evaluation practices aiming at enhancing students' learning outcomes failed at accomplishing their main goal. This is the case of quizzes which were conducted four classes in a row seeking for students' learning based on memory (Observations, Feb 15, 19, 22, 26; 2019). Nonetheless, the outcomes revealed the opposite; many students showed lack of understanding on the topic (Informal talk with the teacher, March 29, 2019). This situation led to consider the importance of implementing a variety of activities including those recognizing students' individual learning differences. As a consequence, reflection on assessment activities could become an opportunity to identify more appropriate ways for learning and assessing in this context.

Furthermore, both, the teacher and students displayed their interest in reflecting about teaching and learning processes conducted in the classroom. In this sense, the teacher implemented some strategies such as the agenda to inform students of the lesson goals. Other times she asked several questions referring assessment as an ongoing process such as "what do you think of this activity? Was it easy or difficult? Why?" Students had the opportunity to share their opinions. However, such moments tended to be brief and lacked intention from beforehand planning. As a result, the information provided by students got lost and did not have an impact on coming lessons.

As a conclusion, top-down and repetitive evaluation practices seemed not to be enough for the development of effective assessment practices involving reflection. In this context, the implementation of some formative assessment strategies such as feedback, rubrics, self and peer-assessment can contribute to foster students' capacity to reflect on their own learning process. Some theoretical features of these strategies are discussed in the next section.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Currently, Formative Assessment (FA) plays an important role in the language learning field. Some FA strategies such as feedback, rubrics as well as self and peer assessment have been found to also benefit reflection while improving both teaching and learning (Broadbent, Panadero & Boud, 2017; Lau, 2015; Picón, 2012). This section presents some definitions and traits of FA as well as its relationship with reflection in the education field as the cognitive and affective activities that allow broadening the intellectual understanding of students (Lau, 2015).

### **Formative Assessment**

FA purpose refers mainly to measuring achievement along the process while aiding students to enhance their skills (Picón, 2012). It also informs teachers about the way students are learning and progressing so that appropriate decisions regarding students' learning process can be made on time (Del Campo, Bonilla, & Ahumada, 2010). FA is characterized by its format, which advocates for constructed responses in authentic context; and feedback which can be global or specific including suggestions to improve (Shute & Kim, 2013). Constructed-responses involve students' language productions in writing, speaking, or in other ways (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

FA faces some challenges such as students' lack of experience working with this type of learning and assessment, possible difficulties when initially implemented because of its differences with other assessment systems, and students' and teachers' perceptions of excessive workload (López-Pastor & Sicilia-Camacho, 2015). As follows, this section defines and characterizes the FA strategies to be implemented throughout this project, namely; feedback, rubrics as well as self and peer-assessment.

**Feedback.** Feedback concerns relevant information given to students to influence their subsequent behavior. Following questions can guide feedback for both teacher and students: Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress? (Hattie & Timberley, 2007). In order for feedback to lead students in a self-regulated learning process involving reflection, it is crucial that they fully understand it; otherwise feedback will lose effectiveness connecting with students' learning process (López-Pastor & Sicilia-Camacho, 2015). This is why clarifying goals fosters students' capacity to evaluate and reduce the gap between their level and the level they are expected to obtain.

However, students are likely to misunderstand the aims of tasks as well as the meaning of the teacher's comments. As a result, students' maturity to make evaluative judgments on their own learning should be acquired step by step (López-Pastor & Sicilia-Camacho, 2015).

**Rubrics.** A rubric can be understood as a document clearly describing goals and goal achievement scales of a task. As a matter of fact, rubrics should include a coherent set of criteria for students' work containing descriptions of levels of performance. Besides, rubrics

provide details of the standards by which students' evaluation can be judged for quality and the extent to which learning outcomes have been met (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013).

However, students' lack of a solid understanding of notions of quality represented by the rubric can be a challenge, due to the limited descriptive information and the lack of students' understanding of the concepts and terminology from the rubric (Dawson, 2015). In contrast, co-creating rubrics with students can be an opportunity to understand and better internalize the assessment criteria as well as standards from the rubrics (Fraile, Panadero, & Pardo, 2017). As a result, students can use rubrics to self-assess their work by the same standards, before submitting the piece of work for grading (Broadbent & Panadero, 2017).

**Self and peer assessment.** On the one hand, self-assessment can contribute to produce self-directed and productive lifelong learners. At this point, its promotion requires including reasonable learning goals and assisting students' progress towards meeting them, what will also contribute to reinforce metacognitive skills such as reflection and revision (Shute, 2009). Besides, students can compare their learning level with the one to be reached, and carry out actions to meet goals (López-Pastor & Sicilia-Camacho, 2015).

On the other hand, peer-assessment implicates students' collaboration with one another to solve, explain or understand a problem or task bringing cognitive, social or motivational benefits (Shute, 2009). Moreover, students who have just learned something can explain it to their classmates in a more accessible way. In the same way, feedback from peers provides additional information contributing to reassess knowledge and beliefs (López-Pastor & Sicilia-Camacho, 2015).

### **Reflection in Language Courses**

Over decades, discussions regarding the role of reflection have been carried out in the education field. In Sullivan and Rosin's words (2008, as cited in Lau, 2015), "the term reflection denotes the cognitive and affective activities that deepen individuals' intellectual understanding and/or provide them with new insights" (p. 1); consequently, reflective process should not be taken for granted but intentionally taught. Del Campo, Bonilla and Ahumada (2010) reinforce this idea stating that "through reflection, the evaluation becomes a tool for improving or perfecting and a medium for achieving significant learning" (p. 147). These authors also explain that reflection starts an internal dialogue known as regulation which encourages students to be aware of their learning. In this sense, Lau (2013, as cited in Lau 2015) refers to the importance of arising reflection through giving samples to critique or exemplars from which to learn.

As a way to assess reflection in language courses, Lau (2015) proposes a holistic framework which seeks to reconcile different reflection views, including reflection as a product and reflection as a process. This framework's backbone is the interconnection between reflection and action. Some of its descriptors include as follows: a) the distinction between the reflective discourse and reflective practice where accurate use of language and visual resources to shape the genre of reflection are expected; b) criticality of reflection and action plan where learners show their metacognitive awareness through an action plan that mediates critical understanding of the status quo and changes in learner's behaviors. The quality of this action plan can be seen by means of its relevance to learners' strengths and weaknesses and its practicality taking into account contextual limits. Therefore, learners

should be provided with opportunities to carry out the action plan, operationalize reflective practice and show their change in behavior.

### **Research Question**

How can formative assessment practices foster 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' capacity to reflect on their own learning process in an EFL class at a rural school in Rionegro?

### **General Objective:**

To explore students' capacity to reflect on their learning process through formative assessment strategies

### **Specific Objectives**

- 1) To examine how some formative assessment strategies promoting students' capacity to reflect
- 2) To analyze how formative assessment can impact students' capacity to reflect on their learning process.
- 3) To evaluate the relationship between the implementation of formative assessment strategies and students' capacity to reflect on their learning process in EFL

### **Action Plan**

For the implementation of this action research, I planned eight weeks of research activities. Each week had two different activities that developed one formative assessment strategy, namely, self-assessment, peer-assessment, rubrics and feedback. The activities followed a cycle that included a first stage with the purpose of familiarizing students' with each one of the practices mentioned and a second stage where I planned to put into practice what students learned in the first stage.

To gather the information from these research activities, I planned to implement three different instruments: (a) Teacher's Journal after teaching each lesson to register the class development and students' reactions regarding the implementation of formative assessment strategies. (b) Focus group, one in the middle of the process (week 5) to identify students' perceptions of formative assessment strategies after the familiarization stage; and another one by the end of the process (week 8) to analyze students' insights about implementing formative assessment strategies to promote reflection in their learning process. (c) Students' artifacts, that is, formats that students fulfill or design as well as pieces of activities that can be useful to answer the research question.

### **Development of Actions**

The actions were conducted during the second semester of 2019. The strategies were combined with the lesson plan taking from fifteen to 30 min of class time. As proposed in the action plan, the first activity for each strategy involved a familiarization stage. In the case of self and peer assessment, it involved clarifying the definition and purposes of those strategies (Appendix A); in turn, rubrics and feedback included the implementation of formats presented in both English and Spanish (Appendix B), such formats where negotiated and discussed with



students before being fulfilled for students to clarify the intention of the activity and the way students could use the information from the formats to benefit their learning process.

During the second stage, activities to put into practice the formative assessment strategies were proposed. For self-assessment, students were asked reflective questions guiding them to propose actions that contributed to the class development and their learning process (Appendix C). For peer-assessment students shared some task products, namely, a role play and an interview recording; then, they provided comments to each other in order to check task completion (Appendix D). In turn, for rubrics, students designed one that was useful to evaluate a particular task (interview recording) in which they included criteria for task development, submission and assessment (Appendix E). In the case of feedback, students were given comments along the task development so that they could enhance their performance in the class (Appendix B).

Although it was not considered from the action plan, the routine of asking reflective questions to students' before finishing a lesson or class became a powerful strategy to foster reflection in students towards the action they could do to improve their English learning or their performance in English class. In this case, last ten minutes of the class were devoted for asking students questions about their learning process regarding their behavior, content for the class, class participation or material implementation. It is important to explain that summative evaluating actions were conducted along the formative assessment process because of some institutional requirements.

### **Findings and Interpretations**

In order to come up with findings for this action research, data was gathered by means of the research instruments; and later, it was systematized, categorized and analyzed using the software *Atlas.ti version 7.5.4* as well as taking into account the critical comments of the research advisor in order to claim and interpret the findings (Vo & Mai-Nguyen, 2009).

The findings of this project which aimed at exploring students' capacity to reflect on their learning process through formative assessment strategies can be distinguished in (a) the way students' capacity to reflect allowed them to take actions to benefit their learning process and (b) how the implementation of formative assessment strategies supported students' reflection towards task development and assessment.

#### **Students' Capacity to Reflect Allowed them to Take Actions to Benefit their Learning Process.**

Data collected in this research revealed that students' capacity to reflect allowed them to take actions benefiting their learning process what can be evidenced when using reflective questions to promote reflection towards actions and taking an active role in to propose actions that benefited the learning process. In the following lines, I provide further details about these considerations.

**Using reflective questions to promote reflection towards actions.** Data revealed that asking reflective questions to students led them to connect reflection and action by describing criteria for possible changes they should carry out in order to improve the English class. For example, in order to assess the class, students were asked the reflective question: how can I

help to make the most of the class? Stressing on their role as students<sup>1</sup>, they proposed actions such as having the classroom clean, bringing all worksheets and pieces of homework to class and to have an appropriate attitude with discipline, participation and attention; as well as, speaking less to each other during explanation and using cell phones only when they were allowed to (Teacher's Journal, August 9, 2019).

The previous criteria showed students' own drive to propose actions in order to improve the class, in both senses their behavior in class and commitment with their learning process, which could occur after explicitly asking them a reflective question. This is connected with theory since students proposed a list of possible actions similar to an action plan what can evidence their metacognitive awareness, because students could understand the status quo and identify the change they wanted to make by means of the changes in their behaviors (Lau, 2015). Students also identified such questions as useful at the moment of noticing what they had done right or wrong regarding both behavior and language improvement when they were asked if the reflective questions were useful form them they said "yes, we can understand different points of view; [also] to improve anything we have done wrong in class. We correct ourselves" (Focus group 2, November 1, 2019).

This is particularly appealing when taking into account Del Campo, Bonilla and Ahumada (2010) who state that, "through reflection, the evaluation becomes a tool for improving or perfecting and a medium for achieving significant learning" (p.160).

**Taking an active role to propose actions that benefited the learning process in class.** Data also evidenced that formative assessment practices encouraged students to take an

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<sup>1</sup>¿Cómo puedo contribuir para mejorar la clase de inglés? (Desde su rol como estudiantes)

active role in their learning process. Such role could be represented in students' ideas to create an appropriate ambience for the class. In this case, data showed that during self-assessment activities students made proposals to contribute to the class development by means of individual actions such as promoting listening and keeping the classroom clean (Teachers' Journal, August 9, 2019).

During self-assessment activities, discussion with students' participation took a core position so that listening to each other became an important aspect when fostering reflection through formative assessment strategies.

“I have noticed that developing an appropriate ambience to listen to each other by means of discussions and dialogues is a main condition to implement formative assessment practices leading to foster reflection. This listening activity was intended to give students voice after their words in English as a manner to give combine both practice of English and reflection after peer assessment” (Teacher's Journal, September 27, 2019).

By the end of this study, students manifested that their way of learning had changed since they had become aware of their process, that is, what they needed to improve and what they had reached regarding both their attitude towards class and their language learning.

Entrevistadora: ¿Creen que eso [actividades de evaluación formativa] ha afectado su manera de aprender o de participar en clase de inglés?

Estudiantes: Es más bueno porque podemos caer en cuenta [de] qué tenemos mal y qué tenemos bien.

Entrevistadora: ¿Cómo afecta eso en su manera de aprender?

Estudiantes: También podemos ver como qué hemos mejorado.

Entrevistadora: ¿En que hemos mejorado?

Estudiantes: En la pronunciación, en el listening, ya usted llama la atención y sabemos debemos escuchar en ese momento. (Focus group 2, November 1, 2019)<sup>2</sup>

By the same token, Picón (2012) found in his study that students gained ownership of their learning process by means of assessment negotiation what could be confirmed in this study as students' commitment and responsibility towards the learning activities and their participation in decision making.

In consequence, the active participation of students in assessment practices, by proposing actions and making decisions, favored their learning process and made them aware of their learning experience. For instance, after asking students for their reaction about proposing the rubric criteria for a task development and assessment, they expressed “[Nos sentimos] bien porque pudimos dar nuestras ideas y todos pudimos estar de acuerdo con las decisiones, por ejemplo, escogimos un tiempo que fuera adecuado para todos”<sup>3</sup> (Focus group, November 1, 2019).

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<sup>2</sup>Interviewer: Do you think that formative assessment activities have affected your way of learning English or participating?

Students: It's better because we can realize what we have right or wrong

Interviewer: How does it affect your way of learning?

Students: We can also see how much we have improved.

Interviewer: How have you improved?

Students: In the pronunciation, in the listening. Now, you [the teacher] call our attention and we know that we should listen to you

<sup>3</sup> [We felt] good because we could give our ideas and we could be in agreement with the decisions, for example, we chose the a duration that could be adequate for everybody]

### **Formative Assessment Practices Supported Students' Reflection towards Task Development and Assessment**

Besides encouraging students' to take an active role in their learning process, formative assessment practices also supported students' reflection towards development and assessment of the task. In this line, using formats with guiding questions or items contributed to clarify and evaluate the task, while implementing feedback generated reflective comments regarding the task; in turn, involving cognitive aspects and students' criteria in self-assessment led to change action in class.

**Using formats contributed to clarify and assess the task while reflective comments.** In this regard, negotiating the rubric format played a relevant role since students actively participated listing criteria for the assessment of the task what contributed to internalize the task features (Teacher's Journal, September 6, 2019) what they could use later to assess the task and to improve their language skills:

“Como usted nos dio *the rubric* de evaluación, uno puede mejorar lo que tiene mal, por ejemplo la pronunciación [...] sacar como, qué era lo que tenía malo y pensar en cómo lo podía mejorar [...] cómo ponerle algo más a las frases, hacer un diálogo más fluido, más real y espontáneo”.<sup>4</sup> (Focus group, November 1, 2019)

The rubrics during this project were negotiated with students and concluded in the creation or modification of a format to be implemented in the task assessment; what brought benefits for students, namely, they could internalize the task features and, after submission, they could use those criteria to self- assess their performance taking into consideration teacher

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<sup>4</sup>As you gave us the rubric for assessment, one can identify what was good or bad, for example, the pronunciation [...] identify what was wrong and consider how to improve it, how to make more complex sentences or a more spontaneous dialogue.

and classmates' comments (Appendix 2). The following were some questions students ask in order to clarify the task during a rubric negotiation:

- Profe, ¿[the role play] tiene que ser obligatorio de la película?
- O sea que ¿tiene que ser una escena igual pero en diferentes palabras?
- Pero, ¿si lo [the task] hacemos como dice ahí [rubric] vamos a acabar en 40 min.<sup>5</sup>

(Teacher's Journal, August 16, 2019)

This experience is in alignment with Fraile, Panadero and Pardo (2017), whose study revealed that “the opportunity to reflect out loud [...] gives more exposure to the use of their internalized criteria and standards [and that] co-creating rubrics could benefit self-regulation and performance” (p.74). Picón (2012) also refers to assessment negotiation and explains that it can foster metacognitive processes.

Data also revealed that for task clarification and assessment, providing examples and using Spanish (L1) in the discussions and reflective activities played an important role (Teacher's Journal, August 23, 2019). To start with, the rubric and feedback formats were presented in both English and Spanish, but students' participation and reflection were presented mainly in Spanish, they could identify purposes and features of the task, as well as possible difficulties they could face to complete it and how they could overcome the situation; making explicit this information favored students' process and final result of the task. Concerning to this, Paker and Karaagç (2015) confirmed the tight relationship between the target language and the mother tongue in feedback and assessment.

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<sup>5</sup>-Teacher, ¿Does it have to be from the movie?

-So, does it have to be the same scene but with different words?

-But, if we follow do it [the task] like it says [rubric], will we finish in 40 minutes?

Students' names: \_\_\_\_\_ Feedback format

①. What activities are we doing? What criteria are we following? ¿Qué actividad estamos realizando? ¿Con qué criterios?  
 un role play, Utilización del "going to" y el "will"

②. How do we plan doing it? Responsibilities, time and materials ¿Cómo planeamos hacerla? (Responsabilidades, tiempo y materiales)  
 Por medio de diálogos, con un tiempo alrededor de 3 minutos, pizarrón de papel, utilización del tablero como parte de la escenografía, (falta más descripción, cuento)

3. Difficulties or challenges with this activity. Dificultades o retos de esta actividad  
 el tiempo porque...

4. Questions (Vocabulary, grammar, content) Preguntas (Vocabulario, contenido, gramática)

**Figure 1 Students' artifacts, September 27, 2019**

Such strategies to achieve task clarity, namely, using formats and Spanish, helped to deal with the inconvenient of lack of familiarity students had with some assessment strategies. During the negotiation of rubrics format, for example, students participated by asking questions and giving comments in Spanish and, at the moment of implementing the rubric for peer-assessment purposes, students could identify task features and provide feedback to their classmates also in Spanish. In this way, collaboration among students could contribute to explain the task bringing cognitive, social or motivational benefits for students (Shute, 2009).

**Combining reflective comments with cognitive aspects in self and peer-assessment as well as feedback led to changes action in class.** Besides clarity for the task, formative assessment strategies promoted the combination of reflective comments and cognitive aspects that led students to make changes in action. In this sense, students' identified self-assessment as the way to realize their failures and come up with some actions to improve their own process including practicing, searching for information or asking the teacher. The following is



students' answer after asking them if they think self-assessment could help to improve their ways for learning:

Sí, para reflexionar sobre nuestro comportamiento en clase y saber si sí estamos prestando atención y mejorar para la próxima.[...] Por ejemplo yo me evaluó como que ¡ay!, no entiendo esto pero me voy a poner la meta de investigar y pues a aprender a mejorar lo que no he entendido, a preguntarle a la profesora y así. He mejorado algo porque antes ni participaba. (Focus Group, September 13, 2019)<sup>6</sup>

In turn, feedback was described by students as the opportunity to make corrections of the target language, since they could know what was necessary to change and to consider possible actions to achieve such change, as students expressed where they were asked for the importance of feedback “[...] uno aprende más, porque aprende de los errores [...]Se corrige y se estudia para no volverlo a hacer” (Focus group, November 1, 2019).<sup>7</sup>

Besides, written feedback provided by the teacher included questions, most of the times in Spanish, aiming at realizing the usefulness of the activities to learn certain topics. The feedback format for a particular task also included questions aiming at identifying possible challenges students had to solve so that they could consider strategies to solve the situation.

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<sup>6</sup>- Yes, for reflecting on our behavior in class and realize if we are paying attention so that we can enhance for the next time [...] For example, I assess myself like: Oh! I don't understand this but I'll set my goal in looking for info so that I can learn to improve what I haven't understood, or asking the teacher or something like that. There must improve something because I didn't participate in class before even.

<sup>7</sup> “[...] You can learn more, because you learn from failure.[...] You correct it to not make the same mistake again”(Focus group, November 1, 2019).

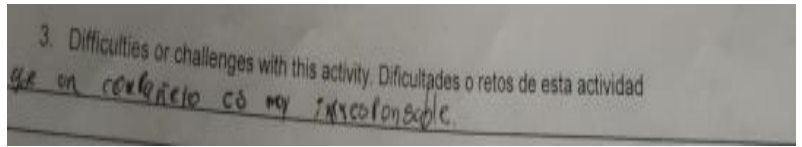
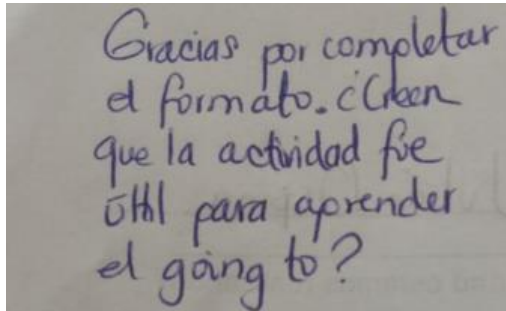


Figure 2 Students' artefacts-  
Feedback, August 23, 2019

Students also looked for feedback in order to improve their performance in the different tasks. Sometimes they did not understand very well the instructions in English; so that they called the teacher – in Spanish- and asked her for help; as a consequence, students could clarify doubts and meet the purpose of the activity. They expressed “[por ejemplo], en la dramatización de la escena de *I Robot*, llamamos y pedimos ayuda, para resolver las dudas; [como resultado], nos salió bien, en el caso de nosotros, nos salió bien gracias a esa ayuda.

<sup>8</sup>(Focus group, Noviembre 1, 2019).

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<sup>8</sup> “[For example], in the role play of *I Robot*, we asked for help to clarify some doubts, [as a result], it was good thanks to that help <sup>8</sup>(Focus Group, November 1, 2019).

In brief, after conducting this action research seeking to explore students' capacity to reflect on their learning process through formative assessment strategies, data revealed that students' capacity to reflect led them to take actions benefiting their learning process while formative assessment strategies supported their reflection towards task development and assessment. Similarly, previous studies (Del Campo, Bonilla, & Ahumada, 2010; Picón, 2012) found that formative assessment strategies fostered in students their capacity to reflect towards their learning process by making decision and taking action.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The main purpose of this action research was to explore students' capacity to reflect on their learning process through formative assessment strategies, guided by the research question: how can formative assessment practices foster 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' capacity to reflect on their own learning process in an EFL class at a rural school in Rionegro? In this regard, data evidenced that intentionally enhancing students' capacity to reflect permitted that they took actions in benefit of their learning process concerning both their behaviors in class and the tasks development and assessment. As a matter of fact, reflective questions intentionally asked led to students' active role in their learning process favoring metacognitive processes and the ownership of their learning process. Similarly, the implementation of formats to develop formative assessment practices assisted the clarification and assessment of the task while fostering reflective comments from students; and the combination of reflective comments with cognitive aspects promoted changes in actions benefiting both the development and assessment of the task as well as students ownership of the learning process.

The development of this action research entailed some implications in this context. For instance, the lack of students' familiarly using formats and developing formative

assessmentpractices in general limited the development of the assessment activities; however, this situation could be soften by devoting some time in activities intentionally familiarizing students with such strategies, that is, asking for their perceptions, explaining/negotiating formats or establishing a class routine so that students could recognize the activities' purposes as well as the procedures to carry them out.

Another implication refers to the class time investment. At the beginning of the implementation of actions, formative assessment activities took much time from the lesson development. It could be a consequence of the lack of familiarity in the assessment activity or its purpose. Nonetheless, it was possible to overcome this situation through the development of class routines that students could recognize easily, for example, the evaluation of the class with reflective questions involving self or peer assessment as a closure for the lesson or the negotiation of a rubric before asking for a task submission. As a consequence, it was possible to experience the benefits of students' reflection in their process by means of the formative assessment practices.

After conducting this project, further research can be develop to understand the role of L1 when fostering reflection in the learning process in an EFL class, since during the process the presence of the L1 (Spanish) was evidenced all the time. Moreover, it would be relevant to explore the possible contributions of students' reflections towards their learning process in the improvement of a course design or evaluation in terms of its content, evaluation methodologies or teaching strategies.

The contributions of this action research are linked with the assessment practices that can be carried out in the EFL classroom. After this study, it is possible to conclude that formative assessment strategies can benefit not only the English learning process but also in

the learning process in general since formative assessment can help to identify learning styles, strategies and actions in students.

### **Reflection**

My process conducting this research project along with the professional practicum has been an enriching experience contributing to my improvement at both professional and personal level. Some of the learnings I have gained while becoming a researcher-teacher have been, namely, planning on time, using new technological tools useful to systematize and analyze information for research; and the importance of creating a learning community to share and discuss ideas, experiences and insights that contribute to foster the discussion in the field of language teaching and learning. Besides, I have faced some challenges mainly regarding the conduction of an action research project in a short period of time.

To start with, I have learned that planning on time helps to have not only purposeful and intended lessons regarding teaching but also to accomplish processes and tasks related to research in appropriate moments. In this sense, the collecting data process can be conducted and contrasted with participants as well as with the theory. Such learning provokes a great impact when interconnecting the different timelines of the school and the teaching program as well as students' learning rhythms. In doing so, appropriate decisions can be made in order to face unexpected situations or foresee future changes in the research and teaching processes maintaining their purposes and intentions.

Another learning I have had has to do with the management of information by means of a technological tool meant to facilitate the analysis and systematization of data in qualitative research. In my case, I have been introduced to the program Atlas ti which has

made me appreciate the information from different perspectives, considering levels of emergency and connections between the pieces of information. Although this is my first time using this kind of elements to process information from research, I have concluded that becoming a teacher-researcher also involves the skills to implement these kinds of tools which support the research work for the sake of time management and information treatment.

Furthermore, I have learned the importance of creating a learning community where teachers and students can share and discuss ideas, experiences and insights that contribute to foster the development of the language teaching and learning field. As a matter of fact, my cooperating teacher's as well as my advisors' support has been crucial at the moment of carrying out both my professional practicum as well as my action research. Their patience, confidence, support, advice and questions have guided and enlighten my process making me desire to conduct future research in my professional life. In the same way, I have realized the importance of contributing to professional development and academic discussion in this field by means of shared reflection and research.

This process has also been sprinkled by some challenges. One of them is the conduction of an action research in a very limited period of time. Since this research design demands the constant implementation of actions as well as the reflection on them; they can become adapted or changed according to the impact they have. It means that an exercise of profound reflection needs to be carried out throughout the whole process which demands a great amount of time. However, according to the university requirements, this project must have been conducted in less than four months, such constraints along with the school conditions, can make difficult to conduct a complete action research process. From this

experience, I have wondered about the inclusion of other research designs which can be conducted in the classroom and that could fit the time requirements in a smoother manner.

To sum up, both research and teaching experiences have been enriching for both my personal and professional development. Some of the main insights I have had after it include planning on time, using a technological tool useful to systematize and analyze data, and the relevance of participating in a learning community to nurture the discussion in the field of language teaching and learning. The main challenge I have faced during this project has been the time constraints regarding the action research traits and the program time to fulfill it.

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## Appendix A

### Self-assessment (Auto-evaluación)

Evaluative process.	Es un conjunto de acciones en las que se revisa, examina y determina cómo un proceso se lleva a cabo.
Self-directed learner	Se trata del estudiante que consigue la autonomía para dirigir su propio proceso.
Reasonable learning goals:	Son objetivos elaborados adecuadamente para orientar el aprendizaje.
Learners' progress:	El avance que tienen los estudiantes en su proceso de aprendizaje.
Learning:	El proceso en el que alguien adquiere nuevos conocimientos
Metacognitive skills	Las habilidades que ayudan a entender cómo uno aprende o elabora el pensamiento.
Reflection	El pensamiento que se produce luego de considerar algo cuidadosamente.
Revision	La acción de volver a mirar algo para corregirlo o mejorarlo.
Lifelong learners	Son las personas que gustan aprender a lo largo de toda su vida, no solo porque están en el colegio o la universidad.

## Appendix B

### Feedback format

#### Students' names:

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1. What activities are we doing? What criteria are we following? ¿Qué actividad estamos realizando? ¿Con qué criterios?

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2. How do we plan doing it? Responsibilities, time and materials ¿Cómo planeamos hacerla? (Responsabilidades, tiempo y materiales)

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3. Difficulties or challenges with this activity. Dificultades o retos de esta actividad

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4. Questions (Vocabulary, grammar, content) Preguntas (Vocabulario, contenido, gramática)

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## Appendix C

### Reflective questions for self-assessment

1. *¿Cómo puedo ayudar para que la clase de inglés se aproveche al máximo?*
2. *¿Qué ventajas o desventajas podría tener participar de un proyecto de investigación que explora la capacidad para reflexionar?*
3. *¿Para qué podría ser útil aprender a autoevaluarse?*

### Appendix D

#### Peer-assessment format

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

My name:	
My classmates' names:	
Moment of the movie	
Characters:	
Expressions using will / going to (How many)	
Duration:	
Opinion:	

### Appendix E

#### Rubric designed by students

Task: An interview to one or two singers or actors taking about their plans, in groups of 3 students.

Criteria/Max points	Points	Comments
Pronunciation (20)		
Durationbetween 1 min (20)		
Submission one day before next class via WhatsApp or email (20)		
Script (20)		
Use of future tenses with "will" "going to" (20)		