Using Appreciative Inquiry for EFL Speech Self-evaluation

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The purpose of this study is to introduce the concept of Appreciative Inquiry into EFL presentation evaluation and compare it to common EFL presentation evaluation methods. Appreciative Inquiry is a positive, strength-based approach to organizational change that has evolved from the business world but is now applied in many disciplines. In this study, students wrote and performed two presentations and did self-evaluations of their performances. The instructors guided the self-evaluations once using an analytic approach common in EFL and once using an Appreciative Inquiry approach. After their self-evaluations were completed students took a short questionnaire and the students' responses to the two methods were compared. The comparison between student responses showed very little difference except on the two questions related to confidence that showed a significant positive effect in favor or the Appreciative Inquiry approach. The implications of these results are discussed.

Keywords: Appreciative Inquiry, EFL, Self-evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The authors of this paper were interested in whether certain practices, specifically types of self-assessment tools, would change or influence how the students felt about a given task. Albert Bandura started to investigate the effects of beliefs on performance in the 1970s. This research evolved into his well-known ideas of self-efficacy and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Since then many studies have been conducted on how learner beliefs and self-efficacy can affect performance (Agustiani, Cahyad, & Musa, 2016; Chen & Zimmerman, 2007; Genç, Kuluşaklı, & Aydın, 2016; Rahimi & Abedini, 2009; Zimmerman, Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2017). These ideas have gained popular attention in education with asset or strength-based approaches to teaching (Lopez & Louis, 2009) and in business with similar ideas like the Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2008) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

The aim of this paper is to explore the possible effect of two different self-assessment tools—a common analytic rubric and an alternative model known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI)—on students' attitudes toward preparing and giving

presentations in English. The authors conducted a small pilot study over two semesters in two Japanese university English classes to investigate the influence that both evaluation methods would have on the students' perceptions of giving a presentation in English. The authors are most interested in the use of the alternative form of assessment and whether the nature of AI, which focuses on the learner's strengths and the best possible outcomes, would positively affect learners' attitudes toward giving presentations in English.

The role of self-assessment in the language classroom

Self-assessment has been seen as a valid, reliable, and effective tool that enhances student learning, motivation, and self-efficacy. In his report of a self-assessment project in a university setting in a language center in Colombia, Rodriguez Ochoa (2007) reported that students expressed positive attitudes toward self-assessment activities, stating that they were important to gaining a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges and "constraints encountered." Diane de Saint Leger's (2009) study highlighted the pedagogical benefits of self-assessment at cognitive and affective levels by investigating the effect of self-assessment on students' self-perceptions as L2 speakers. The participants were third-year French students at a large Australian university, and the study was conducted over the course of a twelve-week semester. Students completed multiple self-assessment tasks, and the researcher monitored changes in goal setting and self-perceptions. The results in terms of student perceptions of self-assessment showed that the tasks motivated students to study harder, raised awareness of their own learning, increased their ability to focus more on problem areas, led to improvements in pronunciation, and helped to build confidence. Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, and Bauer (2010) examined studies on self-assessment of knowledge in educational and vocational settings to determine their construct validity, and found strong correlations with motivation and satisfaction. Ross' (2006) meta-analysis of self-assessment tools revealed that positive assessment led to an improvement in performance and behavior.

When self-assessment and other forms of assessment are considered, it is important to also note that feedback can influence learning both positively and negatively. William (2011) found that student responses to feedback can adversely or positively affect their motivation. Bernaus and Gardner (2008), in Catalonia, Spain, examined the influence of teacher motivation strategies on learner perceptions and English achievement. They discovered that as long as student motivation was positive, their attitude toward the learning situation was positive as well. Additionally, teacher strategies influenced students' motivation and achievement when the students perceived the strategies to be effective. This suggests that student perceptions of the classroom environment as well as classroom practices could impact students' motivation and achievement. So, it can be argued that the way in which feedback and assessment is framed might impact student motivation and self-efficacy. In one study, in which participants played the roles of managerial staff in a computer-simulated manufacturing organization, two groups were given feedback on their progress. One group was given feedback in terms of where they fell short of their goals, and another was given feedback in terms of how

far they had advanced toward their goal. For example, one group was told that they were 20 percent short of their goal, and another group was told that they had advanced 80 percent toward their goal. The group whose feedback was deficit focused experienced a drop in performance levels as well as a decrease in self-efficacy. Conversely, the group that received feedback that focused on the gains or advancement toward the goal performed better and reported high levels of self-efficacy (Jourden, 1993). For the purposes of this paper, self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's capability (Bandura, 2012). Based on the results of this study, it can be argued that how teachers choose to frame their feedback and the mode of assessment tools might impact the way in which students perceive their capability, which could cause them to avoid or seek out tasks for which they received negative or positive performance feedback.

The impact that feedback and assessment have on student motivation, achievement, and perceptions could be explained by the concept of the L2 Motivational Self System as defined by Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009). In their explanation of the L2 Motivational Self System, they explain that being proficient in a foreign language is part of the ideal or ought-to self, and a desire to narrow the gap between the image of the current self and that of the ideal self is a predictor for being highly motivated to learn the target language. If this is true, in the same way that feedback focusing on the gains improved the performance of the participants in Jourden's (1993) study, feedback that focuses on the advancement toward the goal of achieving proficiency could encourage highly motivated students to work harder and continue to narrow the gap between their current self and ideal self.

The analytic rubric

This paper seeks to compare an unconventional evaluation method, Appreciative Inquiry, with traditional evaluation methods. However, defining and finding what exactly is a "traditional" method for speech evaluation or what is the most common form of speech evaluation proved to be difficult. We surveyed our colleagues, reviewed commercially published materials, and consulted popular online teacher groups. Two patterns emerged: the first was assigning a mark for the performance overall (holistic evaluation) and the second was assigning points to various aspects of a speech and grading each area separately and adding them together for an overall score (analytic evaluation). In addition, both grading methods usually added general comments of praise and one or two suggestions on weak points that needed to be improved. With these results in hand we searched the academic literature to see if there were models that matched what we found in the teaching community. We adapted Dr. Brown's "*Analytic Rubric for Scoring Student Oral Presentations*" to represent a "traditional" evaluation method. (Brown, 2017 and 2018)

Alternative assessment: Appreciative inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) originated from the field of Organizational Development and was created by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastra as an alternative to the problem-solving paradigm of action research in the 1980s. In their paper, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) argued that the tendency for action research to focus on action stifled the potential for change. They posited that

revisiting the power and influence of theory on social change was a way to make action research more effective.

According to Cooperrider and Srivastra, theory influences beliefs, values, social norms, and cultural expectations. Additionally, they wrote that when scientists observe and explain a situation, it shapes how the situation develops. Whether researchers are conscious of it or not, theory largely influences the situation it describes. This is directly related to language, and how the language individuals use shapes the culture of the organization.

Cooperrider and Srivastra used the example of performance evaluations to show how one's approach to a situation shapes the nature of that situation. They explain that when a manager evaluates the employee, they see the employee as responsible for his or her level of performance. However, when viewed from the socio-rationalist perspective, which views the behavior as being influenced by the person and the environment, performance is more a matter of the employee and how he or she interacts with and relates to the organizational situation. When a performance evaluation is seen from this perspective, then the level of performance is no longer the employee's responsibility alone, but rather the organization's responsibility; therefore, the evaluator becomes the one being evaluated as well, and the employee and the manager become part of the whole rather than separate from each other.

AI is based on five basic principles:
- The constructivist principle; reality is co-created through language and beliefs.
- The simultaneity principle; inquiry and change are simultaneous.
- The poetic principle; people can choose what to study.
- The positivity principle; positive questions generate lasting effects.
- The anticipatory principle; humans move toward our visions of the future.

(Mohr & Watkins, 2002)

The anticipatory principle is especially important when considering the important difference between action research and AI. Cooperrider and Srivastra argue that although action researchers aim to prevent negative outcomes by concentrating on problems and solutions, by focusing on what they do not want, their efforts have the opposite of the desired effect. Therefore, AI focuses on the positive aspects, encouraging people to build on what works rather than trying to find and fix problems. Through AI, the organization can leverage its strengths to develop a better version of itself.

The inquiry of AI is centered around a topic that is explored through a series of interviews that are conducted in a "4-D" cycle: discovery, dream, design and destiny. The topic focuses on the qualities and conditions that result in instances where the organization is at its best, which is called the "positive core." Each phase of the cycle is designed to uncover the "positive core" of the organization. In the first phase, discovery, the stakeholders of the organization construct a narrative of their best moments in the past in order to identify their strengths. After identifying

strengths, the inquiry moves to the second phase: dream. In the dream phase, participants imagine their ideal self. In the third phase, design, members of the organization leverage the strengths identified in the discovery phase and aim toward the ideal vision created in the dream phase. Strategies and initiatives are implemented to begin reforming the organization. In the final phase, destiny, the language and culture of the group is altered to create a more appreciative organization transforming the system from the inside out into one that is forward thinking and driven by a common vision.

Since its inception, AI has been adopted by the medical field, national and municipal governments, and international NPOs such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International. Educational researchers began using AI as a tool for research when Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan, and Van Buskirk (1999) used AI in a study of the qualities of a Catholic high school in Philadelphia that was particularly effective at meeting the needs of minority students. Since then, other educational researchers have used AI for school reform, professional development, leadership, and assessment and evaluations (Bevington, Fuggle & Fonyagy, 2015; Calabrese, 2006; Couch, 2017; Dickerson & Helm-Stevens, 2011; He, 2013; Horan, 2017; Jones-Eversley, Harnek Hall & Vejar, 2018; Kumar & Chacko, 2010; Kung, Giles & Hagan, 2013; Porakari & Edwards, 2018; Quaintance, Arnold, & Thompson, 2010; Scandura, 2017; Shuayb, 2014).

The perspective that AI yields is similar to framing feedback in terms of an individual's advancement toward the goal, rather than in terms of where that individual has fallen short of the goal as demonstrated in Jourden's study. We wanted to explore whether or not shifting the perspective from one of problem-solving to one of discovery would positively influence students' perceptions of giving presentations in English. Assessment has been shown to positively influence learner motivation, self-efficacy, and language acquisition. The authors wanted to know how using different types of self-assessment tools influenced how students felt about preparing and giving presentations in English. The research question that guided the investigation was:

Does the mode of evaluation influence students' attitudes toward giving presentations in English?

METHOD
Participants

This study was conducted over the course of two 14-week semesters at a Language Center at a private university in west Japan. The participants were the teacher-researchers' students in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at the Language Center. The students were from two different IEP classes. One class had students with advanced levels of English proficiency and the other had students with low-intermediate levels of English proficiency. Participants from the advanced class consisted of twelve females whose L1 is Japanese and one female participant whose L1 is Mandarin Chinese and an average age of 19 years old. Five of them have either lived or studied abroad or attended an international school for more than

a year. The other class consisted of 25 students, 13 females and 12 males, all of whom are Japanese. Consent forms were explained and collected from all students.

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of the following nine statements:

1. Giving presentations in English is fun and easy.
2. It's fun and easy to prepare for English presentations.
3. It's great to share my opinions in an English presentation.
4. I enjoy giving presentations in English.
5. I enjoy preparing English presentations.
6. It is important to practice before giving a presentation in English.
7. I am confident about giving a presentation in English.
8. I feel at ease and confident when I give a presentation in English.
9. I know how to focus on my strengths to make giving a presentation in English easy and fun.

The tenth item of the questionnaire asked the participants how much time they would spend preparing for a presentation they had to give in two weeks. As the tenth item does not concern the students' attitude toward giving presentations, the responses will not be included in this paper. The students indicated their agreement or disagreement on a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 means *Strongly Agree* and 4 meant *Strongly Disagree*. In addition to choosing a number, participants were prompted to explain their answers in one or two sentences. These responses provided the qualitative data collected for this study.

Procedures

Each class completed a ten-item questionnaire about their attitudes toward giving presentations in English at the beginning of the fall semester of 2017. Each class then completed an oral presentation and self-evaluation project that took place at the beginning of the fall semester of 2017 and spring semester of 2018. In the fall semester, students prepared and performed oral presentations and then evaluated their performance using an analytic rubric. After completing the self-evaluation, students repeated the same ten-item questionnaire they completed at the beginning of the semester. At the beginning of the spring semester of 2018, students took the questionnaire again, and in the first three weeks of the spring semester, the students completed a similar oral presentation project; however, instead of using an analytic rubric to self-assess their performance, students went through the four phases of AI. At the end of the fall semester, students completed the ten-item questionnaire thereby completing the study.

The results of the questionnaires that the students took at the end of the 2017 fall semester were compared to the results of the questionnaires that the students took at the end of the 2018 spring semester. A *t*-test was performed to ascertain whether there were any statistically significant differences between the two assessment tools. In order to determine the effect size of the difference between using the AI self-assessment tool and the analytic self-assessment a Cohen's *d* result was calculated for each question.

In addition, the authors analyzed the qualitative data provided by the participants to determine the nature of the responses. Each response was scanned for certain keywords and phrases such as "fun," "easy," "difficult," and "time consuming", which were then coded. The total number of these common words and phrases were then tallied and depending on the percentage of positive, negative, and neutral words, the general attitude toward the aspect of giving a presentation in English represented by the statement was determined.

The qualitative data was then analyzed for themes related to students' responses to nine of the ten statements in the questionnaire they completed at the beginning of the fall semester 2017 before performing the first self-evaluation, at the end of fall semester 2017 after completing the analytic self-evaluation, and at the end of spring semester 2018 after completing the Appreciative Inquiry self-evaluation. The data from each class was analyzed separately as the discrepancy between the proficiency levels was quite great. The average TOEIC score among the advanced class was 700 and among the low-intermediate, the average was 450.

Each theme was divided into categories; attitude was separated into four categories according to the overall trend in the nature of the responses: 1) mostly positive, 2) mostly neutral, 3) mostly negative, and 4) mixed. Mostly positive responses were characterized by words like "fun" and "enjoy," and "improve." Neutral responses described conditions or reiterated the statement. These responses were characterized by words and phrases like "searching," "chance to use English," and "using slides makes the presentation interesting." Mostly negative responses were characterized by words and phrases like "can't," "nervous," and "not good at." Mixed responses contained equal amounts of positive, negative or neutral statements, such as, "fun but not easy." Insight was divided into two categories, "the effect of the task on learning," and "self-efficacy."

RESULTS
Quantitative data

According to the results of the *t*-test and Cohen's *d* for seven of the nine items, the analytic rubric and AI had the same effect and there was no significant difference between the two. Seven out of nine items resulted in small effect sizes of less than 0.1 and no statistical significance. The seven items had the following statements:

1. Giving presentations in English is fun and easy.
2. It's fun and easy to prepare for English presentations.
3. It's great to share my opinions in an English presentation.
4. I enjoy giving presentations.
5. I enjoy preparing for presentations.
6. It is important to practice before giving a presentation in English.
7. I know how to focus on my strengths to make giving a presentation in English easy and fun.

Two of the statements: "I am confident about giving a presentation in English," and "I feel at ease and confident when I give a presentation in English," showed a statistically significant difference between the analytic rubric and AI, and an effect size of 0.4.

Qualitative data

The overall qualitative data conflicts with the quantitative data. In the pre-treatment questionnaire the students had mixed or negative feelings about their confidence in giving English presentations as represented by items 7 (I am confident about giving a presentation in English.) and 8 (I feel at ease and confident when I give a presentation in English.) After the analytic self-evaluation most responses were positive about item 7 and negative about item 8. After the Appreciative Inquiry self-evaluation most responses were mixed about item 8 and negative about item 7. (See Appendix for more data).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that in the case of the 36 respondents, the analytic rubric and AI yielded similar results and were equally effective. Aside from the students' levels of confidence where the effect size was medium and the p value was significant, it can be argued that both methods would positively influence the students' attitudes toward giving a presentation in English. This could mean that self-assessment whether in the form of an analytic rubric or AI is perceived as worthwhile to the students and enhances their experience giving presentations in English. For instructors teaching presentations, it might be effective to include self-assessment to increase student's appreciation of the task and their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. To boost confidence and frame the feedback in a positive light, it might be useful to use AI instead of an analytic rubric due to its apparent positive impact on student self-efficacy and confidence in their English ability shown in the data from this study.

This study revealed interesting results in terms of self-evaluation tools and their effect on confidence and self-efficacy. Because Appreciative Inquiry is a new approach in the language classroom, it may be beneficial to explore its effectiveness in terms of student self-efficacy and confidence. A more in-depth mixed methods study where the respondents are interviewed may give more robust results. The limitations of the study including the small sample size and the lack of more extensive qualitative data make it difficult to apply the results to other educational environments. Studies with larger sample sizes and from different educational settings would help to increase our knowledge of the effectiveness of Appreciative Inquiry compared with other forms of assessment. This study focused on self-assessment, other studies focusing on teacher assessment might be useful as well.

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APPENDIX A. Tables and Survey Data

Table 1. Data before the Self-evaluation (Advanced Class)
Students' Attitudes toward the Task

Categories	Item number
Mostly Positive	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Mostly Negative	5, 7
Mostly Neutral	9
Mixed (positive and neutral)	8

Table 2. Data before the Self-evaluation (Advanced Class)
Students' Insight into the effect of the task on learning

Item number	Typical insight
Item 1: Giving presentations is fun and easy.	"It depends on the topic."
Item 2: It's fun and easy to prepare English presentations.	"It's a necessary skill for the future."
Item 3: It's great to share my opinions	"It's an important skill."
Item 6: It is important to practice before giving a presentation in English.	"It improves the quality of the presentation." "It's good because I'm not good at English."
Item 8: I feel at ease and confident when I give a presentation in English.	"Preparation makes it fun and less scary."
Item 9: I know how to focus on my own strengths to make giving a presentation in English fun and easy.	"Practice is best."

Table 3. Data before the self-evaluation (Low-intermediate class):
Students' Attitude toward the Task

Category	Item number
Mostly Positive	3, 4, 5,
Mostly Negative	1, 2, 8, 9
Mostly Neutral	6
Mixed (negative and neutral)	7

Table 4. Data before the Self-evaluation (Low-Intermediate class):
Students' Insight into the Effect of the Task on learning

Item	Typical insight
Item 1: Giving presentations in English is fun and easy.	"English is necessary."
Item 3: It's great to share my opinions in an English presentation.	"It's important to share." "We need this skill in our future job."
Item 6: It's important to practice before giving a presentation in English.	"English is important."

**Table 5. Data after the Analytic Self-evaluation (Advanced Class):
Students' attitude toward the task**

Category	Item number
Mostly Positive	1, 2, 3, 5, 7
Mostly Negative	6, 8, 9
Mixed (neutral and positive)	4

**Table 6. Data after the Analytic Self-evaluation (Advanced Class):
Students' Insight into the Effect of the Task on Learning and Self-efficacy**

Questionnaire item	Typical insight
Item 1: It's fun and easy to prepare for English presentations.	"We can learn new things." "We can improve our skills."
Item 2: It's great to share my opinions in an English presentation.	"It's an important skill." "It's good for when we study abroad."
Item 4: I enjoy giving presentations in English.	"I could speak loudly." (self-efficacy)

**Table 7. Data after the Analytic Self-evaluation (Low-Intermediate Class):
Students' Attitudes toward the Task**

Category	Item number
Mostly Positive	4, 7
Mostly Negative	1, 3, 5, 8, 9
Mostly Neutral	6
Mixed (positive and neutral)	2

Table 8. Data after the Analytic Self-evaluation (Low-Intermediate Class): Students' Insight into the Effect of the Task on Learning

Item	Insight
Item 4: I enjoy giving presentations in English.	"It's important for my job in future."

Table 9. Data after the Appreciative Inquiry self-evaluation (Advanced Class): Students' attitudes toward the task.

Category	Item number
Mostly Positive	1, 2, 4, 6
Mostly Negative	3, 7, 9
Mixed (positive and negative)	5, 8

Table 10. Data after the Appreciative Inquiry Self-evaluation (Advanced class): Students' Insight into the Effect of the Task on Learning and Self-efficacy.

Item	Typical insight
Item 7: I feel at ease and confident when I give a presentation in English.	"I feel confident because I practiced a lot."
Item 7: I am confident about giving a presentation in English.	"If I practice, I feel confident."
Item 6: It is important to practice before giving a presentation in English.	"I can see my weaknesses and my strengths." (self-efficacy)
Item 9: I know how to focus on my strengths to make giving a presentation in English fun and easy.	"I know my strengths." (self-efficacy)

Table 11. Data after the Appreciative Inquiry Self-evaluation (Low-intermediate Class): Students' attitudes toward the task.

Category	Item number
Mostly Positive	3
Mostly Negative	5, 7, 9
Mixed (positive and negative)	1, 2, 4
Mixed (positive and neutral)	6, 8

Table 12. Data after the Appreciative Inquiry self-evaluation (Low-intermediate Class): Students' Insight into the Effect of the Task on Learning, and Self-efficacy.

Item	Typical insight
Item 1: It's great to share my opinions in an English presentation.	"In front of an audience is difficult; therefore, I should practice many times."
Item 9: I know how to focus on my strengths to make giving a presentation in English fun and easy.	"I care whether I can speak smoothly."
Item 2: Giving presentations in English is fun and easy.	"I think I am a good speaker." (self-efficacy)