

EVALOE-DSS PARA PROMOVER A REFLEXÃO E MUDANÇAS NO ENSINO DA LÍNGUA ORAL EM CONTEXTO ESCOLAR

EVALOE-DSS TO PROMOTE THE REFLEXION AND THE CHANGES ON THE TEACHING OF ORAL LANGUAGE IN A SCHOOL CONTEXT¹

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Resumo:

A escola é o contexto natural de desenvolvimento no qual as estratégias comunicativas utilizadas pelo professor quando interage com os seus alunos são essenciais para o desenvolvimento da competência linguística e comunicativa. O objetivo da pesquisa foi construir, implementar e validar uma primeira versão de uma ferramenta para autoavaliação e tomada de decisões sobre o ensino da linguagem oral na escola. A ferramenta foi adaptada da Escala de Avaliação do Ensino da Língua Oral em Contexto Escolar (EVALOE) (Gràcia et al. 2015), baseada no uso da Metodologia Conversacional. A presente pesquisa é baseada em um estudo de caso múltiplo com quatro professores (1 da escola regular, 2 da escola rural e 1 da escola especial). Durante seis meses, os professores avaliaram suas práticas de ensino utilizando a ferramenta, tomaram decisões visando melhorar suas práticas e introduziram mudanças em suas aulas. Os pesquisadores observaram cinco aulas de cada professor, avaliaram as práticas observadas utilizando a mesma ferramenta e promoveram cinco reuniões com cada professor visando discutir e refletir conjuntamente sobre as práticas observadas e o uso da ferramenta. Os resultados mostraram que, a ferramenta EVALOE – Decision Support System (EVALOE – SSD) foi uma ferramenta que facilitou a autoavaliação, a tomada de decisões e a implementação de mudanças em sala de aula, visando a promoção do desenvolvimento comunicativo e linguístico dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: autoavaliação, competência comunicativa e linguística, Sistema de Suporte para Tomada de Decisão, escolas.

Abstract:

The school is a natural context of development in which the communicative strategies used by the teacher when interacting with the students are essential for the development of communicative and linguistic competence. The objective of the research is to construct, implement and validate a first version of a self-assessment and decision-making tool on the teaching of oral language at school. It is an adaptation of the Oral Language Assessment in School context Scale (EVALOE) (Gràcia et al. 2015) based on the use of the Conversational Methodology. This is a multiple case study focusing on four teachers (1 of ordinary school, 2 of rural school and 1 of special education school). For six months, the teachers had self-assessed

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their teaching practices with the tool, made decisions to improve it, and introduced changes in their classes. The researchers observed five class sessions of each teacher, assessed them with the same tool and each teacher-researcher pair conversed and reflected on the classes in five meetings throughout the semester. The results show that, the EVALOE - Decision Support System (EVALOE-SSD) has been a useful tool that facilitates self-assessment, decision-making and the introduction of changes in the classes in order to promote the development of communicative and linguistic competence in the students. The analysis identifies elements that can be improved that will be considered during the review of the tool.

Keywords: self-assessment; communicative and linguistic competence; Decision Support System (DSS); school; make decisions

1. Introduction

Even if computers have been integrated into fields related to educational management in many countries since the 1970s, the integration of a Decision Support Systems (DSS) is still recent (Kaley & Chen, 2002) and during the last 35 years, those systems have become a key element in information and decision-making processes (Kivijarvi, 1997). A DSS is an interactive and dialogic system based on computers which helps and supports management and decision-making, especially by making semi-structured or semi-intelligent decisions (Silver, 1991). The emphasis lies in the functionality of decisions and the widening of the decision-making capacities of those who take them. The present research analyses the implementation of a first version of a DSS in the teaching and learning of the oral language by four teachers.

1.1. The Assessment of Teaching of Oral Language in the School context Scale (EVALOE)

The Assessment of Oral Language in the School Context (*Escala de Valoración de la Lengua Oral en contexto Escolar*, EVALOE) (Gràcia et al., 2015) was created in base of the great importance of linguistic interactions in the school context and the need of the awareness of teachers of the pragmatics of language. It was designed with the objective to provide to professionals of language development (speech therapists, counsellors...) with a tool so they could assess the skills and strategies used by teachers in order to promote the development of oral competence in the classroom.

EVALOE is a tool that allows professionals to explore the interaction between the teacher and the students and between them in the classroom and has been developed from a socio-pragmatic and eco-functional perspective of language acquisition. It consists of two parts. The first one is an observation scale of a total of 30 items grouped in three dimensions (Context and Management of communication, Instructional Design and Communicative and Strategic Functions). The second part includes a set of questions to develop a semi-structured interview for teachers, with the purpose of evaluating their teaching practice, taking into account aspects which are included more thoroughly in the first part. EVALOE has been adapted to be used in the context of Special Education schools (Gràcia, Benítez, Vega &

Domeniconi, 2015) and has also been translated into Portuguese (Vega, Gràcia, Domeniconi, & Benítez, 2017). The methodological proposal at the core of the creation of EVALOE is the Conversational Methodology (CM) which sees classrooms as communicative spaces where teaching and reflection on oral language, as well as a tool to help students learn content related to all subjects (Gràcia et al., 2015, 2017).

1.2. Decision Support Systems (DSS)

The use of DSSs in the education field is still at an early stage, and recent research has highlighted the advantages and potential of its use, for the planning of teaching processes and content learning (Kalay & Chen, 2002) and decisions related to structural and organisational changes in the school (Sadahiro & Sadahiro, 2012). Nevertheless, some studies already point out that it is possible to use it in order to help the decision-making process in the field of special education (Gregg, 2009) or in the context of virtual learning (Xu & Wang, 2006).

This study brings to light the usefulness of DSSs in the educational field and, more precisely, the intention of empowering teachers and helping them in their decision-making regarding their educational practice, their communication management as well as the adaptation to the environment, with the purpose of contributing to the development of the linguistic competence of students. In this context, the research purpose is, firstly, to assess the efficacy of a first version of a DSS, based on EVALOE, in helping four teachers self-assess her teaching practice and decision-making with the purpose of introducing changes, contributing to the progress of the communicative and linguistic competence of their students. Our second purpose is to detect elements for improve this first version of the instrument, in order to develop a more effective one.

2. Methods

This is a multiple case study with some components of action-research, due to the fully participative role of the teachers (Latorre, 2003; Riba, 2009). The strategy used can be placed within an approach of mixed methods in that the study gathers and analyses qualitative and quantitative data (Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

2.1. Participants

Four teachers and their students participated in the pilot study. The Case 1 is composed by a teacher and 26 students from the third course of the second cycle of kindergarten education at a state school, whose mother tongue is Arabic, except for one which is Spanish. The Case 2 is composed by a teacher and 8 students from the first (3 students) and second course (5) of the second cycle of kindergarten education at a state rural school. The Case 3 is composed by a teacher and 9 students from the first (4 students) and the second course (5 students) of the third cycle of primary school education, at the same rural school of Case 2. Finally, the Case 4 is composed by a teacher and 9 students from an adapted secondary level in a special education school. The families of all the schools

are Medium-Low Socio Economic Status. The vehicular language used at all schools is Catalan.

Four researchers participated observing and assessing the classes and discussing with the teachers during the meetings.

2.2. Instruments

The tool used is the first version, in digital format, of Assessment of Oral Language in the School context Scale – Decision Support System (EVALOE-SSD). It allows the teacher to self-assess her or his teaching practice in relation with the students communicative and language development. The first part of the tool consists of 30 items that can be evaluated according to a scale which three levels (0-1-2) (0 means that the action does not appear during class; 1 means that the action appears, but not in the expected form or frequency; and 2 would show what was expected). The 30 items are grouped in 5 dimensions: Instructional Design (6 items); Conversation Management by the Teacher (6 items); Conversation Management by the Students (3 items); Communicative Functions and Strategies of the Teacher (8 items); Communicative Functions of Students (7 items). For each item, there is the possibility of adding a written comment or reflection. In the second part of the tool, the teacher is encouraged to make 3 decisions of improvement, that is, to select three of the 30 items of the first part that have been evaluated as 0 or 1. In Table 1, it is showed one example of an item of each dimension.

The version used in special education schools has the same 30 items of the original tool and 10 more items. Five items are included in Communicative Functions and Strategies of the Teacher dimension and five items are included into the Conversation Management by the Students dimension.

2.3. Procedure

Once the families and the teachers signed the informed consent, each researcher carried out one observation of one of the teacher's class session with her students and assessed it with the EVALOE-DSS tool. Later, each researcher sent the recording of the class session to the teacher so she could also self-assess it with the same tool. The researcher created a comparative table with the scores of the teacher and the researcher to each item. They met in order to compare the scores and so the teacher could share her doubts regarding the tool, the changes she could start to introduce in her classes according to the content of the items and her perception about the tool. After that session, they would meet and compare the scores, following the same procedure that they had used during their first meeting. After 17 (Case 1), 6 (Case 2), 6 (Case 3) and 12 (Case 4) self-assessments by the teachers and 5 observations and assessments by the researchers, they met one last time to evaluate the use of the tool and the participation of the teachers, as well as the progress that the teachers had detected in the students. All the meetings were audio-recorded, and the class sessions observed by the researcher were video-recorded.

3. Preliminary Results

The Figure 1 shows the evolution of the scores obtained with EVALOE-DSS, both the self-evaluations of the teachers and the assessments of the researchers.

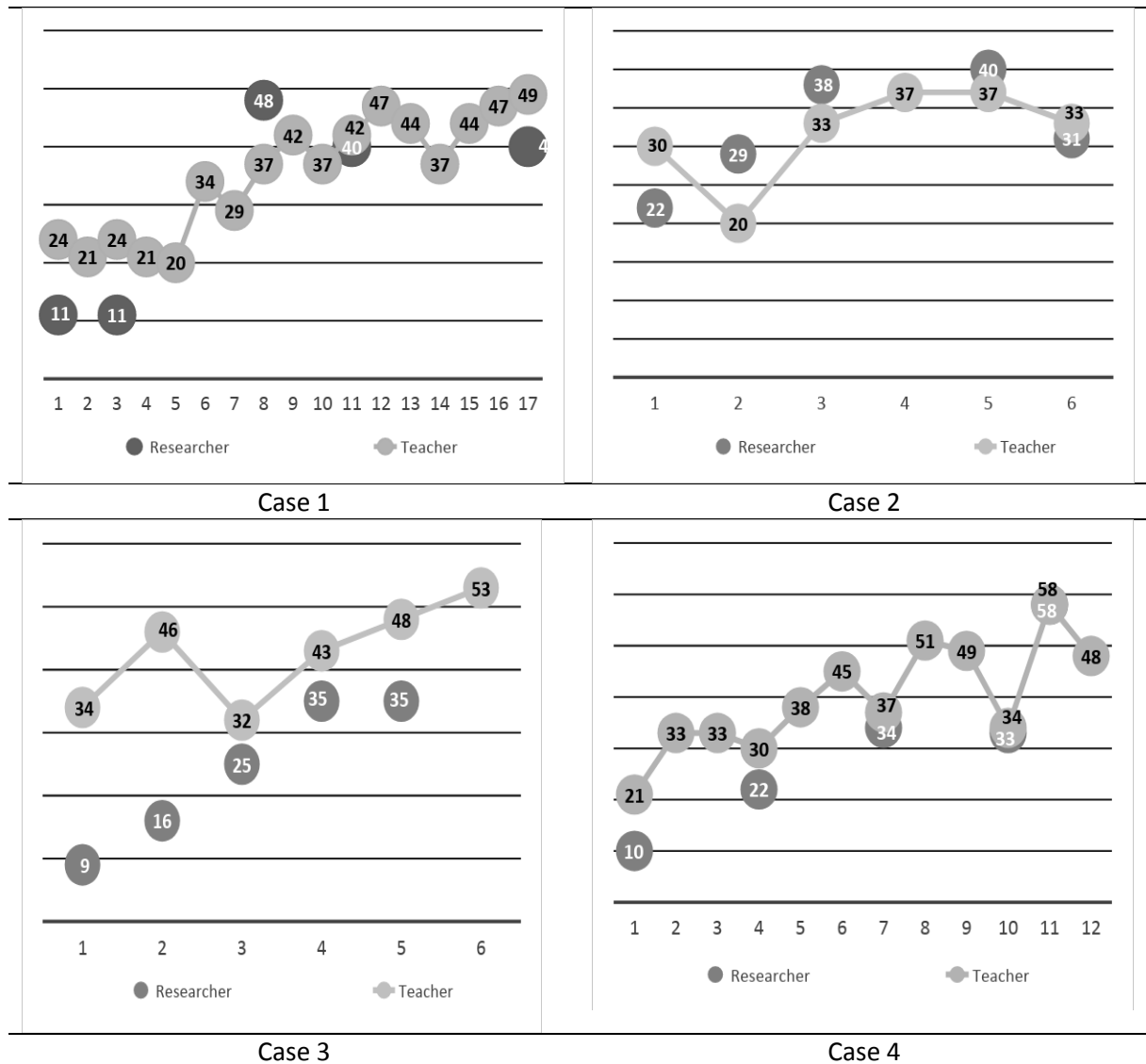


Figure 1. Evolution of scores with EVALOE-DSS of the each teacher (self-assessments) and each researcher, from November to May.

4. Preliminary Discussion

The analysis of the data has allowed us to know in greater depth the process experienced by four teachers in three different schools, who have actively participated in the gathering of data for this study, as well as their students. The first goal of the research was

to try out a first version of EVALOE-DSS, with the purpose of knowing its usefulness as a tool to help teachers self-assess their teaching practice linked to the oral language teaching, make decisions and introduce changes into their classes to improve it, and to contribute to foster language development of the students. A second goal was to detect some aspects to improve the tool in order to build a more useful version.

The results showed changes in practice of oral language teaching by some teachers, according to the Conversational Methodology elements. The observed changes occurred in different ways and intensity for each teacher. In spite of the individual differences the teacher became more familiarised with the tool and the conversational methodology. Thus, they would promote a more propitious context for the development of communicative and linguistic competence through the use of language in specific situations, in terms of help and accompaniment of the learning process (Gràcia et al., 2012).

Regarding the second objective of our study, DSSs are in general considered as resources to empower people, both in the field of everyday life and in the professional field (Kalay & Chen, 2002; Xu & Wang, 2006; Gregg, 2009). The results obtained from the use of the first version of EVALOE-DSS, provided by four teachers, would probably not have been possible without her meetings with the researchers. The challenge that we face, based on the results obtained in this multiple case study, is introducing modifications to the tool so that it incorporates the advisory role of the researcher, especially her assistance during the meetings. That means that it must be transformed into a semi-intelligent tool which provides adapted assistance to teachers according to their initial scores.

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