

WEEK THREE: SELF ASSESSMENT

Learners are powerful allies in the assessment process. If adequately trained and guided, learners can add beneficial and relevant information about their language learning to support the observations and findings of teachers. In this week's Teacher's Corner, we will look at the role students play in assessment through assessment creation and self-reflection.

Some teachers might be reluctant to hand the power of assessment over to learners, but two core aspects of language learning strongly support such sharing of power: autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Brown, 2004). Learner autonomy plays a big role in language learning, as it is self-guided language use beyond the classroom that further reinforces language development and acquisition. At the same time, intrinsic motivation (the motivation that comes from within a person to succeed) plays a role in successful learning. Many learners have a "self-propelled desire to excel," and this desire to succeed is underscored (emphasized) when learners are involved in the learning and assessment process (Brown, 2004, p. 270). Additional research also suggests that learners are fairly accurate in predicting and assessing their own abilities (2004). Therefore, we should utilize what learners know about themselves and their own abilities as a tool for developing curriculum and informing lesson planning.

SELF-ASSESSMENT IDEAS

Checklists, rubrics, and questionnaires offer options for learners to assess both their learning processes and language performance. Self-reflection on the learning process, or metacognitive skills, gives learners a chance to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as they learn. For example, a simple list of questions about participation and attention, where students rate their abilities on a scale of 1 to 5, can help a teacher identify what students are doing and thinking while working through the learning process.

I listen when the teacher gives directions.	1	2	3	4	5
I ask questions when I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
I participate in groups.	1	2	3	4	5
I participate in class activities.	1	2	3	4	5

This kind of self-reflection asks the learner to stop and think about their performance in class, and targets a specific aspect of their learning. The teacher can use this feedback to identify any discrepancies between actual student performance and student self-perceptions. Once discrepancies or similarities are recognized, teachers can then take steps to reconcile the differences and reinforce the similarities. Here's an example based on the above self-reflection. A student rates his participation high, but the teacher notices that the student rarely talks in groups or class. As a result, the teacher can see that there is a discrepancy between what the student believes he does and what he actually does. Perhaps the student doesn't understand the expectations associated with participation or the teacher has not clearly explained these expectations. Either way, the teacher can use this information as a way to better understand the needs of the student and further support the student's success in the classroom. Perhaps the teacher can use the information to meet with the student to discuss participation expectations or spend time in class reviewing the expectations for all students. By completing regular self-reflections on process and metacognitive skills, learners feel invested in the process and also provide valuable feedback that supports teacher planning and involvement.

Another type of self-assessment gives learners a chance to assess their own language acquisition. Depending on the skill and task, a teacher can use lesson/unit objectives to create a checklist for learners to use as they review their own work, or the teacher and students can work together to develop a checklist. Here is an example of such a checklist, one created for an early draft of a paragraph writing assignment.

Paragraph Checklist

My paragraph has a topic sentence.	Yes	No
My topic sentence contains a topic.	Yes	No
My topic sentence contains a controlling idea.	Yes	No
My paragraph has a sentence that explains how my example relates to my topic.	Yes	No
My paragraph has one example of my topic and controlling idea.	Yes	No
My paragraph has a concluding sentence that restates my topic sentence.	Yes	No

Once students have assessed their own writing, they can be tasked with further activities related to their answers. For example, for every *no* answered on the checklist, the teacher asks the student to redo that part of the paragraph as a part of the revision process. This checklist can also be used again with slightly different wording for future revisions of the paragraph and can be adapted for a number of different skills and activities. For example, a speaking task might have learners record a message to set up a doctor's appointment. In the task, learners must:

- state their names
- say the reason they are calling
- ask for someone to return their call at the number given
- say thank you

After students record themselves, they can use a checklist while they listen to their own recording and see if they fulfilled the requirements of the assignment. After each student has checked his or her own recording, he or she can redo it in an effort to fix the things missed in the first recording. This type of self-assessment puts the task, learning, and revision in the hands of learners, furthering their sense of autonomy. Self-assessments of objective tasks are not limited to speaking, but can also be used for spelling, vocabulary, or grammar practice. In these types of self-assessments, learners are given the

correct answers or rules and are asked to fix their own mistakes rather than relying on the teacher to make the corrections. When learners are involved in the correction process, their memory and acquisition of the skill are better enhanced and teachers are freed up to focus on other tasks.

The overarching idea in self-assessment and reflection is to involve the learner in the assessment process as a way to increase motivation and learner autonomy. As teachers, facilitating language learning is only part of our job. We also want to develop self-motivated, autonomous learners who can succeed beyond our classrooms. In assessment, we can utilize the knowledge students have about their own processes to inform and foster motivation and autonomy.

References

Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.

American English Resources

- [Teacher's Corner: Collecting and Using Data](#)
- [American English Webinar: Teaching Today's Learners: Oral Error Correction and Writing Effective Assessments](#)
- [Assessment of Young Learners](#)
- [Assessment Literacy: Building a Base for Better Teaching and Learning](#)