

DEVELOPING STUDENTS’ SELF-ASSESSMENT SKILLS IN INDEPENDENT ENGLISH LEARNING

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Abstract: Independent English learning requires university students to take responsibility for their own learning. This includes completing learning tasks, monitoring progress, and evaluating learning outcomes. This paper examines the methodological role of self-assessment in developing students’ independent learning skills in English. The study is based on a theoretical and descriptive analysis of research on learner autonomy, self-regulated learning, formative assessment, and second-language self-assessment. The analysis shows that self-assessment is most useful when students compare evidence of their language performance with clear criteria and use the results to make decisions about further learning. CEFR Can-Do descriptors, checklists, learning diaries, portfolios, digital portfolios, self-recording, and feedback are considered as practical tools for developing self-assessment skills. The paper also discusses the use of self-assessment in speaking, writing, listening, reading, and vocabulary learning. Self-assessment should be developed gradually through explicit instruction, guided practice, and feedback.

Keywords: independent learning skills, self-assessment, learner autonomy, self-regulated learning, formative assessment, English language teaching, progress monitoring.

Аннотация. Самостоятельное изучение английского языка требует от студентов высшей школы ответственности за собственное обучение. Это включает не только выполнение заданий, но и мониторинг и оценивание собственного прогресса. В тезисе рассматривается роль самооценивания в развитии навыков самостоятельного обучения студентов английскому языку. Исследование основано на теоретико-описательном анализе научных работ по учебной автономии, саморегулируемому обучению, формирующему оцениванию и самооцениванию при изучении второго языка. Анализ показывает, что самооценивание является эффективным, когда студенты сопоставляют результаты своей деятельности с чёткими критериями и используют полученную информацию для улучшения обучения. Дескрипторы CEFR Can-Do, чек-листы, учебные дневники, портфолио, цифровые портфолио, самозапись и обратная связь рассматриваются как полезные средства развития данного навыка. Также рассматривается применение самооценивания при развитии навыков говорения, письма, аудирования, чтения и изучения лексики. Обосновывается необходимость направленной практики, позволяющей студентам постепенно развивать навыки самооценивания.

Ключевые слова: навыки самостоятельного обучения, самооценивание, учебная автономия, саморегулируемое обучение, формирующее оценивание, обучение английскому языку, мониторинг прогресса.

Introduction

Independent English learning in higher education involves students’ ability to organize and regulate their own learning beyond the classroom. It includes setting learning goals, selecting appropriate strategies and resources, managing learning time, monitoring progress, and evaluating learning outcomes. Therefore, monitoring and self-assessment are important components of independent learning. D. Little describes learner autonomy in terms of learners’ ability to take responsibility for planning, carrying out, monitoring, and evaluating their learning [1]. H. Reinders likewise presents independent language learning as a set of interconnected processes that include identifying needs, setting goals, planning, selecting resources and strategies, practising, monitoring, and evaluating [2]. These perspectives suggest that learner independence is determined not simply by whether learning takes place inside or outside the classroom, but by the degree of responsibility students take for decisions about their learning.

Y. G. Butler emphasizes that self-assessment is closely related to learner autonomy and self-regulated learning because it requires learners to reflect on their own performance and capabilities [3]. However, self-

assessment should not be reduced to giving oneself a score. Its methodological value lies in understanding the criteria, examining evidence of performance, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and using the results to determine the next learning step.

Self-regulated learning theory further explains this relationship: effective learning requires students to monitor their activity, compare their performance with a goal or criterion, and make adjustments when necessary. In this context, self-assessment functions as part of learning regulation rather than as a replacement for teacher assessment.

Self-assessment is meaningful only when students know what they are expected to evaluate. A general instruction such as “Assess your English” provides little information for improvement. A more useful sequence is: criterion → performance evidence → comparison → identification of strengths and weaknesses → learning decision. Self-assessment is therefore closely connected with formative assessment because students use assessment information to guide their subsequent learning [5].

Evidence from language assessment research also shows that self-assessment is not always accurate. M. Li and X. Zhang, in a meta-analysis of 67 studies involving 97 independent samples and more than 68,500 participants, reported a correlation of 0.466 between self-assessment and language performance [4]. They also found that the relationship can be influenced by the criteria used, the assessment instrument, learner characteristics, and the reliability of the procedure. This finding supports the need for explicit guidance and well-designed assessment procedures.

A clear and understandable criterion is a basic condition of effective self-assessment. Without clear criteria, students may rely on general impressions such as “my English has improved,” without knowing what specifically has improved or what still needs attention.

The CEFR Companion Volume provides descriptors for receptive, productive, interactive, and mediation activities, together with an expanded self-assessment grid [6]. Such descriptors make learning outcomes more observable. For example, instead of making a general judgement about speaking ability, a student can identify whether they can express an opinion, maintain a short conversation, or select appropriate vocabulary.

The process can therefore be organized as follows: general impression → explicit criterion → performance evidence → self-assessment → learning goal. Y. G. Butler notes that Can-Do statements and self-assessment descriptors can be used together with other forms of assessment in second-language learning [3]. A meta-analysis by Z. Yan, M. M. Chiu, and P. Y. Ko also indicates that the effect of self-assessment on academic performance depends partly on how explicitly it is organized [7]. Consequently, criterion-referenced self-assessment should be taught as a skill: students need opportunities to understand criteria, practise applying them, and compare their judgements with external assessment.

Can-Do checklists.

Can-Do checklists turn broad learning goals into specific statements that students can review regularly. They focus on what learners can actually do and help connect assessment with goal setting. The basic sequence is: selecting a goal → completing the task → reviewing evidence → self-assessment → identifying a priority area → setting the next goal.

Learning diaries.

A learning diary records the learning goal, completed activity, difficulties, strategies used, and progress. Its main value is that it allows students to identify recurring problems over time. For example, repeated difficulty in understanding naturally paced speech may indicate the need to change the level of learning materials, the strategy used, or the frequency of practice.

Portfolios

Portfolios allow students to collect and compare work completed at different points and to bring together self-assessment, teacher feedback, and peer feedback. M. S. Al-Hawamleh, A. F. Alazemi, and D. A. H. Al-Jamal used a digital portfolio for EFL speaking that included video recordings, self-assessment grids, teacher assessment, and reflection [8]. Although their study involved school students, its methodological principle remains relevant: self-assessment should be supported by concrete evidence of performance.

Self-recording.

Recording spoken performance gives students an opportunity to review features that may be difficult to notice during speaking, including hesitation, pronunciation, repetition, and limited vocabulary. A useful sequence is: recording → listening → comparison with criteria → identification of one priority area → comparison with external feedback → setting a new goal → re-performing. Benraghda, Mohd Radzuan, and Lardhi show that self-assessment can be incorporated into self-regulated learning in oral presentation tasks [9].

Teacher and peer feedback.

Self-assessment should complement, rather than replace, external feedback. A productive sequence is: self-assessment → teacher or peer feedback → comparison → revised judgement → learning decision. E. Concina's systematic review emphasizes the value of combining self-assessment with teacher and peer assessment in higher education [10]. The teacher provides criteria, demonstrates assessment practices, gives feedback, and gradually transfers responsibility to the student through guided practice.

Speaking and writing. In speaking, students can use self-recording and a small number of clear criteria, such as fluency, pronunciation, interaction, and lexical choice. Using a limited number of criteria at the beginning makes the process manageable. In writing, self-assessment can be placed between drafting and revision: draft → criterion-based review → identification of recurring errors → comparison with feedback → revision. Phuong, Phan, and Le found that analytic rubrics can make assessment criteria more explicit in peer and self-assessment of EFL writing [11]. The main purpose is not simply to count errors but to develop students' ability to revise their own work.

Listening, reading, and vocabulary. In listening, students can evaluate both the amount of information understood and the strategies used, such as prediction, listening for the main idea, selective listening, or replaying difficult sections. In reading, self-assessment can focus on text difficulty, achievement of the reading purpose, and the use of strategies such as skimming and scanning. In vocabulary learning, students should distinguish between recognizing a word, recalling it independently, and using it in communication. Delayed retrieval, contextual use, and spaced review can therefore be included in the monitoring process.

Across all language skills, the same basic cycle can be applied: 1) goal, 2) task, 3) evidence, 4) criterion, 5) self-assessment, 6) adjustment, and 7) next goal.

Conclusion

Self-assessment is an important regulatory component of independent English learning. It enables students to evaluate their current performance against clear goals and criteria and to use the results to guide further learning. Self-assessment is therefore more than assigning oneself a score; it requires explicit criteria, evidence of performance, interpretation, and a subsequent learning decision.

The literature reviewed in this paper indicates that self-assessment does not develop automatically. Its accuracy and educational value depend on the design of the assessment procedure, the clarity of criteria, the quality of the assessment tools, and students' preparedness [4]. CEFR descriptors, Can-Do checklists, learning diaries, portfolios, digital portfolios, self-recording, analytic rubrics, and teacher and peer feedback can provide practical support for its development. Students need guided practice so that responsibility for assessment can gradually shift from the teacher to the learner.

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