

THE ROLE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FOSTERING AUTONOMY, REFLECTION, AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

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Abstract: In recent years, self-assessment has emerged as a transformative strategy in foreign language education, particularly in higher education. This article explores the theoretical and practical benefits of integrating self-assessment to enhance linguistic skills such as speaking and writing while fostering learner autonomy, critical thinking, and self-regulation. Through a qualitative synthesis of existing literature, the study examines three classroom approaches: rubric-guided evaluation, peer review integration, and reflective journaling. Findings indicate that self-assessment empowers students to critically evaluate their progress, align their learning strategies with goals, and engage in deeper reflective practices. Challenges, including student preparedness and cultural resistance, are also discussed. The article concludes with practical recommendations for educators to effectively implement self-assessment frameworks in tertiary language programs.

Keywords: Self-assessment, foreign language education, learner autonomy, reflective practices, higher education, linguistic competence.

Introduction

Foreign language education in higher education has increasingly shifted from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered approaches, emphasizing active student participation and metacognitive skills. Self-assessment, defined as learners' ability to evaluate their performance and progress (Oscarson, 1989), aligns with this paradigm by encouraging students to take ownership of their learning. In language acquisition, where skills like speaking and writing require iterative practice and feedback, self-assessment offers a pathway for learners to identify gaps, set goals, and refine strategies. This article investigates how self-assessment enhances linguistic competence and autonomy in tertiary language classrooms, drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies to support its efficacy.

The Concept of Self-Assessment. Self-assessment is rooted in formative assessment principles (Black & Wiliam, 1998), emphasizing reflection and self-regulation (Butler & Winne, 1995). In language learning, it enables students to analyze their proficiency, track progress, and adjust learning tactics. Oscarson (1989) argues that self-assessment cultivates linguistic awareness, allowing learners to connect classroom activities with real-world communication needs.

The Importance of Self-Assessment. Learner Independence is represented by setting personal goals, students transition from passive recipients to active participants (Boud, 1995).

Reflective Practices is characterized as self-assessment nurtures metacognition, enabling learners to evaluate strategy effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2002).

Motivation is embodied by recognizing progress through self-evaluation enhances intrinsic motivation and accountability (Andrade, 2010).

Methods

Three evidence-based approaches to integrating self-assessment in higher education language courses are analyzed:

Rubric-Guided Self-Evaluation: Structured rubrics clarify expectations for speaking/writing tasks. Students assess pre- and post-task performance against criteria like fluency and vocabulary (Andrade, 2005). Example: A writing rubric with descriptors for grammar, coherence, and argumentation.

Peer Review Integration: Peer feedback, guided by rubrics, prompts students to compare external insights with self-evaluations, fostering critical analysis (Topping, 1998). Example: Peer critiques of oral presentations followed by reflective adjustments.

Self-Assessment Journals: Journals encourage longitudinal reflection on challenges and strategy adaptation (McMillan & Hearn, 2008). Example: Weekly entries documenting vocabulary acquisition struggles and solutions.

Discussion

Self-assessment bridges the gap between instruction and autonomous learning. Rubrics demystify expectations, peer reviews build evaluative competence, and journals promote sustained self-reflection. Studies show improved writing accuracy and speaking confidence in students using these methods (Ross, 2006). However, challenges persist: novices may lack self-evaluative skills, and cultural norms in some contexts may resist student-led assessment (Harris & Brown, 2013). Educators must scaffold training, model self-assessment, and align tasks with linguistic objectives.

Conclusion

Self-assessment is a powerful tool for advancing foreign language proficiency and autonomy in higher education. By fostering reflective, independent learners, it prepares students for lifelong language use beyond academia. Future research should explore digital tools (e.g., e-portfolios) and cross-cultural applicability. Educators are urged to adopt incremental, scaffolded approaches to ensure student success.

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