Assess It Yourself

Doug Tomlinson

This activity is designed to involve students in assessing themselves, their classroom participation, and other aspects of their learning. Traditionally, teachers have jealously guarded their prerogative to assess student performance. This right can be shared if teachers are willing to trust their students to responsibly assess themselves. This assessment activity takes only a few minutes at the end of an instructional unit, course, project, semester, or academic year.

PROCEDURE

1. Prepare a handout containing the criteria for self-assessment (ideally with input from the students).

2. Share the criteria with each class at the beginning of instructional units, the course, the project, the semester, or the academic year.

3. Have the students assess themselves at the end of the period based on the criteria.

4. Incorporate these self-assessments in the overall teacher evaluation.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Have adult learners commit to self-assessment based on a learning contract (see Renner, 1993).

2. For beginners, make the guidelines available and discuss them in their L1(s).

3. Apply the self-assessment to such areas as class participation, project completion, perceived progress, and skill acquisition.
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


SELF-ASSESSMENT

Learner Access to Assessment

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Any</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>Become aware of own development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perform an integrated teacher–learner assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Produce a record of progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be assessed during classroom tasks</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Time</th>
<th>40 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Time</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Listening, reading, speaking, or writing task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment should not be separate from teaching but rather a natural step within the teaching and learning process. In fact, assessment can give teachers one more opportunity to recycle input on content and have learners put that content into practice. The difference between this kind of assessment and any other practice task is that the learners have already worked with the content and will be asked to assess their performance after carrying out the task; teachers will do the same. The advantages of this type of assessment are that it is ongoing, is built into classroom tasks, provides a record of progress for learners and teachers, and allows learners to be aware of their development.

PROCEDURE

Listening or Reading Assessment

1. Follow the usual steps for prelistening and prereading exercises.
   - Use visual aids to help the learners forecast what the content of the task will be.
   - Guide the learners to create a hypothesis about the content by using headings, subheadings, and illustrations.
   - Elicit from the students what they predict they will have to find out about the material.
• List the questions the students will have to answer on the blackboard. At this stage, ask questions that concern a general understanding of the content.

• Make sure the learners understand the prelistening or prereading questions.

2. Expose the learners to the material.

3. Give the learners time to answer the questions individually.

4. Check the answers with the whole group; motivate peer correction and justification of responses.

5. Elicit from the students some detailed information presented in the task. Have the students do a second listening or reading to look for these details.

6. Repeat Steps 3 and 4.

**SPEAKING OR WRITING ASSESSMENT**

1. Follow the usual steps for prespeaking and prewriting exercises.

2. Use audiovisual aids to help the learners get ideas for carrying out the task.

3. Guide the learners to elicit topics for discussion or writing. List these topics on the blackboard.

4. Elicit from the learners the kinds of structures and vocabulary they will need to carry out the task.

5. Review any language items necessary.

6. Give clear instructions on what the students are to do and how they are to do it.

**In a speaking assessment**

• give the learners time to think about what they are going to say

• place them either in pairs or small groups

• be available to help the learners with any vocabulary or structures they need during the task

• have the learners discuss their performance with their peers

**In a writing assessment**

• have the learners do the writing assignment

• have the learners exchange papers and check the use of structures and
vocabulary as well as the understanding of content (instruct them to
give only constructive or positive feedback)

• help them if necessary

FEEDBACK AND SCORING

Pass out the assessment sheet (see Appendix). Explain how to fill it out. For example, if the assessment is based on a listening task involving two people talking about the advantages and disadvantages of living in New York and Los Angeles, the students might fill in the Content space in the assessment sheet with *Comparing cities* and the Skill space with *Listening*.

Discuss with the students how they should assess themselves, how much of the activity they think they should have understood, and what they believe should be considered an excellent, very good, good, and fair performance. For example, for the listening task in Step 1, the following rubric might work: Consider your performance excellent if you were able to list all the advantages and disadvantages mentioned. Consider your performance very good if you were able to list more than half of the advantages and disadvantages. Consider your performance good if you were able to list half of them.

Give the students several minutes to grade themselves and write about their development.

Collect the assessment sheets. After class, go over the learners’ self-assessments. Write down your opinion of their performance and ways they can improve (e.g., what they need to review or practice more).

Return the assessment sheets to the learners in the next class. Be available to the students during and after class to discuss their assessments.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Integrate the use of two or more skills in the same task and assessment (e.g., listening and speaking, reading and speaking, listening and writing).

2. A suggested schedule for doing this assessment is after every 10 hours of class.

3. Some students may resist assessing themselves, believing that assessment is only valid if it comes from the teacher. Explain that you will assess their performance but that it is essential for them to know how they themselves feel about their progress.
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


APPENDIX: Assessment Sheet

NOTE: Fit multiple copies of the assessment on one piece of paper to hand out to the students.

Student’s name ___________________________ Group ______________

Teacher’s name ___________________________ Date ______________

Skill ______________________________________________________________________

Content ____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Student’s assessment ________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Teacher’s comments _________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-Evaluated Video

Tim Murphey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Any</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>Use video recordings to assess conversational progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Time</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Time</td>
<td>10–15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Video camera(s) or video recording device(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video recordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timer (optional)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this activity, students regularly view their own conversations on video to assess themselves in the short and long term. Each week, students practice certain conversational strategies with the intention of using them in a weekly video recorded conversation. The use of technology means that the teacher can provide students with a video recording of themselves to watch at home, and evaluate immediately. The teacher keeps a master video recording of all conversations or downloads videos recorded on students’ mobile devices that can be used to assess the students’ progress later in the course.

PROCEDURE

1. If you are using video cassettes, connect two video cassette recorders to each video camera 10–15 minutes before class. Make sure the students each have a video recording device.

2. Allow the students to do a warm-up conversation with their partners before anyone is video recorded.

3. Select two students’ names at random. Have the students give their video recording device to the camera man as Camera 1. Have the two students sit or stand in front of Camera 1.

4. Repeat Step 3 for the remaining cameras and recorders.

5. Instruct the other students to find partners to practice conversing with while...
they are not being video recorded and to change partners every 5 minutes. In this way, they can have 6–7 partners in one class.

6. Start the cameras and recorders, and tell the students to begin. If available, set a timer for 5 minutes.

7. After 5 minutes, stop the cameras and recorders, and give the students who have just been filmed their video recordings to view at home.

8. Repeat Steps 4, 5, 7, and 8 until all the student pairs have been video recorded.

9. Have the students view their video recordings at home.

**FEEDBACK AND SCORING**

1. Typically in a class that meets three times a week for 45 minutes, the teacher instructs the class on certain material the first two classes, video records the students the third class, and then has the students take their video recordings home to evaluate at the end of the week. They then bring back the video recordings the beginning of the next week.

2. Give the students a focus for viewing their videos at home that encourages them to notice what they are actually doing. For example, ask them to write a short summary and answer the following questions:
   - What did you do well?
   - What strategies did you use?
   - What did your partners do or say that you could use?
   - What mistakes did you make, and what are the corrections?
   - What specific things do you want to do differently next week?

3. In the next class, have the students share their impressions in pairs with their partners, or in groups with their partners and others.
CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Note that the procedure will vary depending on the syllabus, the number of students, and other factors. With two video recorders, the third class meeting of each week will be similar to the one described above. It usually takes about 45 minutes to go through a class of 20 students.

2. At the end of the semester, the students typically have 10 segments of their conversations on one video recording device. Ask them to look at all the segments and write a self-assessment. Look at the first week’s master video recordings, and compare them with those of the last week to assess the changes in the students’ performance.

3. Suggest that the students view their videos with classmates, friends, or family, which seems to give the students a more objective, third-person perspective on themselves.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Rubrics are useful tools for grading student performance, but each rubric also encodes a specific value system. In classrooms with a focus on “democratic learning”—where student input is key—the selection of the values represented in the rubric is an important area for discussion and collaborative decision making. Student participation in rubric creation also helps them think more carefully about what characterizes successful performance, which can then guide learning. This assessment activity describes one such process by which students take the lead in developing a scoring rubric. This activity is based on the “4x4” activity described in Stevens and Levi (2005, pp. 63–64).

**PROCEDURE**

1. Describe the assessment to the students. The nature of the assessment should be made clear, including (a) the instructional goal(s) that the assessment targets, (b) the assessment task, and (c) the purpose of the assessment (e.g., check mastery, provide feedback, encourage good study habits). It may also be necessary to briefly describe what a rubric is to students (see Caveats and Options, below).

2. Divide students into groups of 3–4. Have the groups discuss four features that they believe best represent a quality performance on the assessment task. These features will eventually form the scoring categories for the rubric, such as **content**, **pronunciation**, and **task completion**. It will also be helpful to provide guidance regarding the level of detail to be used in generating the rubric. For example, the assessment might target generalized language...
skills (e.g., pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy) or task-specific skills (e.g., salutation for a business letter). Finally, more or fewer features might be used depending on the nature of the assessment and time available for discussion. Fewer features will speed grading, while more features will provide greater feedback.

3. Each group presents their four features to the class, writing their list on the board. The teacher may facilitate this process by asking questions and comparing results among groups but should avoid making judgments.

4. The class selects the four features that best describe good performance through a vote or by consensus.

5. Back in groups, students discuss what different levels of performance would look like for each of the four features. Four levels of performance labelled 1–4 (1 being low, 4 being high) are described for each feature. Each group fills out its own rubric grid for presentation to the class (Appendix A). Alternatively, three levels of performance may be used, which may make writing descriptions easier and save time.

6. For each feature, each group presents their descriptions. Discussion may follow, with the top four descriptions chosen by vote or consensus.

7. The features and descriptions then become the rubric used for the assessment.

Caveats and Options

1. This process requires a degree of sophistication on the part of the learners and is probably best used with students who have experience with the assessment task. Construction of rubrics in this manner also takes a fair amount of class time and so might be reserved for a more important assessment or a recurring assessment such as participation.

2. This activity will require students to understand what a rubric is. This knowledge might come from experience with rubrics in prior assessments, or from a brief teacher presentation describing them.

3. The teacher may reserve the authority to alter the final rubric as needed to ensure that it adequately addresses the target of the assessment. To maintain the collaborative nature of the process, however, it is advised that such alterations be kept to a minimum.

4. If there are doubts about the feasibility of having students produce a full rubric, then other less intensive approaches exist, such as asking students to write down the characteristics of good performance on slips of paper, which are then used by the teacher when constructing the rubric (see Stevens & Levi, 2005, pp. 58–65).
## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


## APPENDIX: Rubric Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features: What are the important parts of the assignment?</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levels: What does performance look like at different levels? (1 = low, 4 = high)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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