

Using Student Self-Assessment in World Language Classrooms

Asking your students to judge their own work or ability can be a valuable classroom activity and can help students to better understand their own language learning. Student self-assessment (SSA) refers to “students judging the quality of their work, based on evidence and explicit criteria for the purpose of doing better work in the future” (Rolheiser & Ross, 2000, p. 3). SSA has been shown to be beneficial to students and a useful assessment tool.

What are the benefits of student self-assessment?

Research shows several benefits of SSA. Kitsantas, Reisner, and Doster (2004) and Butler and Lee (2010) noted that SSA enhances students’ goal orientation and motivation, thus improving learning. Similarly, McDonald and Boud (2003) found that teaching students how to self-assess helps learners respond to learning activities at their own developmentally-appropriate pace. Studies have also shown that SSA increases the confidence of learners, and contributes to a positive environment for learning (Saint Leger, 2009). Thus, SSA facilitates student-driven learning by helping learners think about their own learning processes.

How can self-assessment be implemented?

While SSA has clear benefits for language learners, research has shown that effective and consistent self assessment depends on several factors. In order for SSA to be effective, research (Paris & Ayres, 1994; Stiggins, 1997; Wiggins, 1998) has shown that students need:

- **clear goals** for learning;
- the opportunity to create **a standard** for quality work;
- **feedback** to correct their work before they turn it in; and
- **reflective activities** in which students are prompted to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their work, to make plans for improvement, or to integrate the assignment with previous learning.

When implementing SSA in a language classroom, instructors should also plan on integrating it with other assessment tools and instructional activities. Frequent use of SSA, complete with training of instructors and students, will also result in more reliable assessment results (Chen, 2008). Effective student self-assessment should complement other classroom practices.

What are some challenges to implementing SSA?

Applying SSA in class is not always easy. Teaching students to self-evaluate may involve changes in traditional teacher and student roles. According to Ross, Rolheiser, and Hogaboam-Gray (1998), teachers may find sharing control of evaluative decision-making difficult. Also, it takes time and planning for both teachers and students to accommodate instructor/learner roles and relate SSA to learning. Thus, SSA may be most effective and practical when used not in place of teacher evaluations, but rather to activate student self-awareness and ownership of learning, as well as to gain feedback about the effectiveness of teaching.

Useful resources for SSA

- *Center for Development and Learning* (http://www.cdl.org/resource-library/articles/self_eval.php) provides guidelines for how to teach students self-evaluation and how to create materials for self-evaluation for some example performances in class. It also answers for some potential questions that instructors may have about SSA.
- *Teacher Vision* (<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/assessment/resource/5815.html>) introduces various alternative assessments and a rubrics library for teachers. It includes printable forms for SSA. Particularly appropriate for teachers in K-12 schools.
- *Critical Thinking Community* (<http://www.criticalthinking.org/resources/HE/structures-for-student-self-assessment.cfm>) provides structures for self-assessment not only for specific skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) but also for global skills.
- *National Capital Language Resource Center* (NCLRC) (<http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/assessing/peereval.htm>) provides a description of self-assessment as well as peer assessment. Also, a detailed explanation on how to use SSA successfully can be found on this website.

References

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