learners at the end of the observation or whether you synthesize your observations at a convenient point in the lesson. Just as the conference record may be more or less open-ended, the observation sheet may be open-ended or based on a checklist which you tick off during the observation time. The use of observation sheets will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.5.1.

1.9.3 Journaling

Learners can be required to keep records of their own progress in the form of a journal. If you use this procedure, however, it is important that you respond to what each learner writes. Journaling is meant to be a form of "written conversation" between you and your learners. In addition to acting as a record of what learners have learned, it can provide you with qualitative feedback on the processes of learning, what learners enjoyed / found engaging, etc. It can also be an extremely useful tool for self assessment (see section 2.6.2).

1.10 The role of the learner in the assessment paradigm

In addition to teachers, learners, too, have an active role to play in assessments that are designed for learning. Both self and peer assessment can facilitate learning.

1.10.1 Self assessment

Traditionally, it has been accepted that learners have little say in the assessment process; that teachers or external assessment bodies design, develop, implement and grade assessments and that the learners' role is simply to complete the assessment tasks as set. In other words, learners' involvement in the assessment process has been very limited. This view of assessment is changing and as learners are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, they are also beginning to play a more active part in their own assessment.

> **Reflect**
>
> *What do you see as the benefits of involving learners in the assessment process?*

One way of involving learners is to encourage them to self-assess their performance on assessment tasks. Such self evaluation has learners think about how well they did on a task and match their performance against the assessment criteria used to judge them. This process helps them understand the learning objectives they are trying to meet as well as the grading criteria being used to assess them. It makes the whole assessment process more transparent and at the same time encourages learners to become more self-critical.

Learners need to be trained to self-assess their own performance. When first introduced to self assessment it is likely that their own assessment will not match that of the teachers, but both parties will move closer together given time and practice.

The formality and complexity of self assessment can vary considerably. Learners can be asked to respond to a simple question. Alternatively, they may be encouraged to use a complex self assessment grid which describes each of the possible levels in detail and assesses more than one skill. Such grids are not infrequently used to help learners assess their own learning and will be discussed more fully in Unit Two.

1.10.2 Peer feedback

Teachers should not be the only ones responsible for providing feedback on learners' learning. As we have suggested above, if we want learners to understand how they are assessed, they need to become much more involved in the assessment process. Learners need to develop the confidence and ability to monitor their own progress and to co-operate with classmates so that they can help each other. Peers may have a different perspective or angle from the teacher when looking at each other's work and they should be provided the opportunity to share their views. It must, however, be remembered that peers will need to be trained in giving feedback (see also the need for learner training discussed in section 1.10.1). Learners may at first be reluctant to criticise their friends' work and they may not want other learners to see their own output.

If the purpose of peer feedback is to help learners understand assessment criteria, then the assessment criteria used for providing peer feedback should reflect the same criteria as those used by the teacher. During an oral presentation learners can, for example, be asked to fill in a questionnaire based on the assessment criteria to be used by the teacher. They can alternatively be asked to focus on a specific aspect of the presentation so that some learners provide feedback on the content, others on language while others on communicative strategies such as maintaining eye contact and using body language. It should, however, be borne in mind that if feedback sheets are to be effective, they should not be overly complex and difficult to complete by peers.

1.11 Evaluating tasks designed for assessment

Reflect

How do you know whether a task you have developed for assessment purposes worked well or not? What factors do you need to consider?

In section 1.7 on *'How assessment tasks are developed',* we indicated that there is a 7th step to designing any assessment task. It is, in fact, that of evaluating the task after it has been administered, completed and the learners have been given feedback on it. You will, of course, have information on how well learners performed on the task, but that is only part of the story. You will also have your own observations of how learners worked through the task, what questions they asked you and whether they seemed to be completing the task smoothly or not (see section 1.9.2).