

Self assessment involves learners in determining their own achievement or lack of it in the light of goals set either by themselves or others. Ideally these goals should be set by the learners themselves, since only they can specify their own requirements, rate of learning, etc., yet initially learners may equate these goals with those of their teachers because they do not know how to set attainable goals of their own. ... Only once they have grasped the evaluative criteria as a result of learner training will learners be able to set realistic goals for themselves. (Lewkowicz & Moon, 1985: 49).

Self assessment is important since it helps learners perceive their own needs and to understand the demands of the course as well as any assessments that they are required to complete. It fosters learner independence which is particularly important for successful language learning.

Involving peers in the assessment and feedback process also has other distinct advantages. Learners bring with them different levels of abilities and experience and so they should be able to help each other as they work together. In doing so, they will become more aware of the criteria used to judge them and ultimately better able to judge their own progress. They will also be sharing the responsibility for feedback with the teacher, which, if well managed, will reduce the marking workload. However, it is important to recognize that for peer and self assessment to be successful, their teacher must invest time initially on learner training and on explaining assessment criteria.

2.4 Considerations in designing formative assessment tasks

You will need to consider the following when designing formative assessment tasks:

- identify the specific learning targets and objectives you want to assess;
- set specific aims, i.e. decide what the aims of the assessment are;
- consider the type of assessment task appropriate to your aims;
- design / modify a task to meet your assessment aims;
- identify criteria by which learner performance will be judged; and
- develop a feedback mechanism to use for the assessment.

Let us return to Task B in section 2.1, repeated here for ease of reference, and relate it to the points above:

Reflect

Turn the following task into an assessment task by completing the steps below.

Task B

You are going to have a barbecue on Sunday. Tell your partner how to get to your house for the event.

Step 1: Identify the specific targets and objectives to which it relates.

Step 2: Decide on the specific aims of the assessment.

Step 3: Modify the task as necessary.

Step 4: Set out the criteria by which learner performance will be judged.

Step 5: Decide how you will provide feedback to learners on their performance.

Specific learning targets:

To exchange an informal oral message

- to converse and exchange points of view about feelings, interests, preferences, ideas, experiences and plans (ISb in KS3); and
- to provide or find out, select, organize and present information on familiar and less familiar topics (KSa in KS3).

Aim of the task:

To assess the learner's ability to provide a sequence of directions

Task modification:

Provide the learners with more detail so that they know the focus of the assessment.

For example:

You start by saying:

I'm having a barbecue on Sunday and I hope you'll come.

To get to my house you ...

Criteria:

You can select and adapt criteria from the various observation and feedback instruments that are included in this package. For example, if we take the feedback sheet on pages 33-34, you will notice it is too complex for assessing the above task. You will need to adapt it selecting those items which are most relevant for your needs.

Of the 6 subcategories identified in the generic feedback sheet on pages 33-34, you may decide to focus on only 4: Content, Communicative strategies, Pronunciation and fluency, and Grammar and structure. You may further decide to focus on a single criterion in each category as indicated below:

- *Content*
Accuracy with which directions are provided

- *Communicative strategies*
Ability to check speaker's comprehension
- *Pronunciation and fluency*
Use of appropriate intonation and stress patterns
- *Grammar and structure*
Accurate use of imperatives

Notice that the criteria for pronunciation and fluency as well as grammar and structure are taken from the original feedback sheet, while the others have been developed specifically to reflect the demands of the task.

Feedback to learners:

There are many ways in which feedback could be provided to learners, for example, through the feedback sheet presented below. The feedback should reflect the criteria for judging learner performance.

NAME: _____	CLASS: _____	DATE: _____
TASK: Giving directions		
<i>Content</i>		
Accuracy with which directions are provided (needs improvement / satisfactory / well done)		
<i>Communicative strategies</i>		
Ability to check speaker's comprehension (needs improvement / satisfactory / well done)		
<i>Pronunciation and fluency</i>		
Use of appropriate intonation and stress patterns (needs improvement / satisfactory / well done)		
<i>Grammar and structure</i>		
Accurate use of imperatives (needs improvement / satisfactory / well done)		

To encourage learners to self assess their performance and to see how well their self assessment agrees with the teacher's assessment, learners could be asked to complete the following sheet.

NAME: _____	CLASS: _____	DATE: _____
TASK: Giving directions		
<u>Content:</u> I can give directions that are understandable	Yes / To some extent / No	
<u>Communicative strategies:</u> I have strategies to check that the person I am talking to understands me	Yes / To some extent / No	
<u>Pronunciation and fluency:</u> I can use my voice to communicate meaning and interest	Yes / To some extent / No	
<u>Grammar and structure:</u> I can give directions grammatically (e.g. Take the second on the left)	Yes / To some extent / No	

2.5 Providing feedback to learners on formative assessment tasks

We have already indicated that providing feedback to learners is central to successful formative assessment. Ensuring feedback is comprehensible to learners is of fundamental importance as this will not only help in their learning, but will also contribute to their ability to self and peer assess. At the same time, it is necessary to design feedback mechanisms that are not too time-consuming to complete.

The form of feedback provided to learners will vary according to the objectives of the task being assessed and the purpose of the assessment. It is important to remember that feedback does not always have to come at the end of a task or activity. Teachers should provide ongoing feedback so that their learners perform to the best of their ability. While a class is working in groups, for example, the teacher may go around the class, note strengths, weaknesses and points the groups should pay particular attention to, provide oral feedback at an opportune moment, and then let the groups continue with their discussions.

Reflect

Here is a list of mechanisms which you can use to provide feedback. Which forms of feedback do you use? When? How frequently?

Observation sheets
 Feedback sheets
 Conferencing
 Journaling