

## SELF-ASSESSMENT AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN EFL CLASSROOMS: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

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**Abstract:** This paper explores how self-assessment can be used as an effective tool to support learner autonomy in EFL classrooms. It is based on the idea that when students evaluate their own learning, they become more reflective and actively involved in their educational process (Hosseini & Nimehchisalem, 2021). Such an approach aligns with current shifts in education toward learner-centered models, where students are encouraged to monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Unlike traditional teacher-led assessment, self-assessment allows learners to judge their own performance using clear criteria and take responsibility for their academic development (Eswaey & Ihmoumah, 2024). As a result, students not only improve their language skills but also develop important abilities such as critical thinking, independence, and self-awareness.

**Key words:** self-assessment (SA), self-regulated learning (SRL), EFL, learner autonomy, metacognition, formative assessment, foreign language acquisition, intrinsic motivation, reflective learning

### Introduction

Traditional assessment methods often focus too much on memorization and do not always help students develop higher-level thinking skills such as analysis, creativity, and problem-solving (Al-Rashidi et al., 2022). Because of these limitations, more student-centered approaches have become popular in recent years.

One of these approaches is self-assessment, which encourages students to reflect on their own learning and better understand their progress in English. This process promotes critical thinking and helps learners become more independent (Jamrus & Razali, 2019). Over time, students develop metacognitive and self-regulation skills, which are essential for long-term academic success (Mansory, 2020; Yen et al., 2023). In practice, self-assessment can be implemented through activities such as reflective writing, peer discussions, and real-life language tasks (Phan, 2021). These methods encourage students to review their performance, set new goals, and adjust their learning strategies. As a result, learners gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and become more responsible for their own progress (Moqbel & Al-Kadi, 2023).

### Literature Review

Over time, self-assessment has become an important concept in educational theory. It is generally defined as a process in which learners evaluate their own work based on specific criteria. Earlier research highlighted those students who regularly assess themselves become less dependent on teachers and more capable of managing their own learning (Boud, 2000, as cited in Imani, 2022). Earl's (2003, 2013) framework further explains this idea by distinguishing between three types of assessment: Assessment of Learning, Assessment for Learning, and Assessment as Learning. Self-assessment belongs to the third category, where

learners actively monitor and guide their own development. In this sense, self-assessment is not just about evaluation—it is also a thinking process that helps learners understand what they know and what they still need to improve.

In EFL contexts, self-assessment has gained popularity as an alternative to traditional testing, which often focuses only on final results rather than the learning process (Mansory, 2020). Self-assessment, on the other hand, provides useful feedback that students can use to improve their future performance. Self-Assessment and Learner Autonomy. One of the main advantages of self-assessment is its ability to develop learner autonomy. Autonomous learners take responsibility for their own learning and make informed decisions about how to improve. Self-assessment supports this by turning students into active participants rather than passive recipients of grades (Phan, 2021).

Research strongly supports this connection. For example, Ebrahimi (2021) found that students who practiced self-assessment showed higher levels of autonomy and metacognitive awareness. Other studies also show improvements in motivation, creativity, and resilience among learners who regularly evaluate their own work. However, it is important to note that self-assessment does not automatically lead to these benefits. Students need clear instructions, training, and support to use assessment criteria correctly. Without guidance, their evaluations may not be accurate (Mansory, 2020; Yen et al., 2023).

### **Methodology**

This study uses self-assessment as the main assessment method within a learner-centered framework. Instead of relying only on teacher evaluation, students are encouraged to take an active role in assessing their own learning.

**Research Design.** The study follows a learner-centered approach where the teacher acts as a facilitator. EFL students participate in self-assessment activities across four key language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

**Formative Assessment Orientation.** Self-assessment is used as a formative tool, meaning that students continuously reflect on their progress rather than being evaluated only at the end. This helps learners identify their weaknesses and improve over time.

**Target Language Skills.** In Writing students evaluate their texts using rubrics to identify strengths and weaknesses. While Listening and Speaking tasks are given to learners, they reflect on their fluency and comprehension. By Reading students assess their understanding and adjust reading strategies.

**Data Collection Tools.** Several tools are used to support self-assessment they are reflective tools such as journals, diaries, and learning logs, rubrics and checklists to make students understand clear criteria for evaluation, interactive sessions organize discussions and feedback activities, digital tools to use online platforms and progress tracking, task-based activities to involve learners to use real-life language use tasks and others;

**Procedure.** At the beginning of each unit, students are introduced to assessment criteria. During the learning process, they complete reflective tasks and use checklists. At the end of the unit, they evaluate their performance and discuss results with the teacher and peers. This cycle makes self-assessment a continuous part of learning.

**Results.** Research shows that self-assessment has positive effects on multiple aspects of language learning.

**Writing Skills.** Students who assess their writing using rubrics become better at revising and improving their work. They develop a clearer understanding of what good writing looks like and take more responsibility for their progress.

**Speaking and listening.** Self-assessment helps learners improve their speaking skills by encouraging reflection on performance. It also supports listening development by promoting strategies such as monitoring understanding and identifying difficulties.

**Reading and Vocabulary.** Students who evaluate their reading comprehension become more active readers. They are better at identifying gaps in understanding and improving vocabulary.

**Metacognitive and Affective Outcomes.** Self-assessment increases students' awareness of their learning process. It also improves motivation, confidence, and reduces anxiety, making learners more willing to participate and take risks.

### Discussion

The findings suggest that self-assessment is more than just an assessment method - it changes the way students learn. When learners take responsibility for evaluating their own progress, they become more engaged and independent. This supports the idea of Assessment as Learning, where students actively participate in their own development. In addition, improvements in self-confidence and reduced anxiety help students stay motivated and continue learning effectively.

However, successful implementation depends on proper guidance. Teachers must provide clear criteria, support, and feedback to help students develop accurate self-assessment skills.

### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that self-assessment is a powerful tool in EFL education. When applied correctly, it improves not only language skills but also important abilities such as autonomy, critical thinking, and self-regulation. The results highlight the need to move beyond traditional teacher-centered assessment and adopt more learner-focused approaches. Self-assessment encourages students to take control of their learning and become more independent.

For teachers, the key is to provide clear instructions, structured practice, and continuous support. When these conditions are met, self-assessment can significantly enhance both academic achievement and long-term learning success.

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