

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Self-Assessment as A Tool for Promoting Learner Autonomy in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Self-Assessment as a Tool for Promoting Learner Autonomy in EFL Classrooms: A Review of Current Perspectives Abstract Learner autonomy has become one of the major objectives of contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. As language teaching increasingly adopts learner-centered approaches, students are expected to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Among various pedagogical strategies, self-assessment has attracted considerable attention due to its potential to promote reflection, self-regulation, and independent learning. This article reviews current theoretical and empirical perspectives on the role of self-assessment in fostering learner autonomy in EFL classrooms. Drawing on previous studies, the paper examines the relationship between self-assessment, reflection, learner responsibility, and autonomous learning behaviors. The literature suggests that self-assessment enables learners to evaluate their own performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and establish learning goals. Furthermore, portfolio-based self-assessment practices encourage continuous reflection and support the development of self-regulated learning skills. The review highlights the pedagogical value of self-assessment as a learner-centered approach that contributes to students' academic growth and lifelong learning. The paper concludes that integrating self-assessment into EFL instruction can significantly enhance learner autonomy and encourage students to become active participants in their own learning process.

KEYWORDS

Self-assessment, learner autonomy, EFL, reflection, self-regulation, portfolio assessment, independent learning.

INTRODUCTION

The development of learner autonomy has become a central concern in modern language education. In recent decades, educational paradigms have shifted from teacher-centered approaches toward learner-centered models that emphasize student participation and responsibility. Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, learner autonomy is particularly important because language learning often requires continuous engagement beyond classroom instruction. As a result, researchers and educators have

increasingly focused on identifying effective methods for encouraging students to become more independent and self-directed learners. Learner autonomy is commonly defined as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. According to Little (2011), autonomous learners are capable of setting goals, selecting learning strategies, monitoring progress, and evaluating learning outcomes. Such learners actively participate in the learning process and demonstrate greater awareness of their educational needs. Consequently,

autonomy is widely regarded as an essential component of successful language learning. Among the various strategies proposed for fostering learner autonomy, self-assessment has emerged as one of the most effective. Self-assessment refers to the process through which learners evaluate their own performance and learning progress using predetermined criteria. Unlike traditional assessment methods that rely primarily on teacher judgments, self-assessment encourages learners to become active participants in evaluating their achievements and identifying areas for improvement (Gholami, 2016). The growing interest in self-assessment is closely related to its potential to promote reflection and self-regulation. Through self-assessment, learners gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses and become more capable of making informed decisions about future learning. This process supports the development of independent learning behaviors and encourages students to assume greater responsibility for their educational outcomes (Thanh, 2019). The purpose of this article is to review current perspectives on self-assessment as a tool for promoting learner autonomy in EFL classrooms. By examining relevant literature, the paper discusses the theoretical foundations of learner autonomy, explores the relationship between self-assessment and independent learning, and highlights pedagogical implications for language educators.

Learner Autonomy in EFL Education

Learner autonomy has become one of the most influential concepts in language education. The concept emerged from the recognition that learners achieve greater success when they actively participate in managing their learning processes. Rather than depending entirely on teachers, autonomous learners take responsibility for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning activities (Little, 2011). Researchers have consistently associated learner autonomy with positive educational outcomes. Autonomous learners tend to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, self-confidence, and academic achievement. Furthermore, they are more likely to engage in independent learning activities outside the classroom, which is particularly important in EFL settings where opportunities for language exposure may be limited (Thanh, 2019). However, learner autonomy should not be viewed as an innate ability possessed by only a few students. Instead, it is a skill that can be developed through appropriate educational practices and supportive learning environments. Teachers play a crucial role in creating

opportunities for students to reflect on their learning, make decisions, and assume responsibility for educational outcomes (Willis, 2011). Assessment practices have been identified as one of the most important factors influencing learner autonomy. Traditional assessment often positions students as passive recipients of feedback, whereas learner-centered assessment approaches encourage active participation in the evaluation process. Consequently, self-assessment has gained increasing attention as a means of supporting autonomy development.

Self-Assessment and Learner Autonomy

Self-assessment is widely recognized as a powerful tool for promoting learner autonomy. By evaluating their own work, students become more aware of learning objectives and gain a clearer understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. According to Gholami (2016), self-assessment encourages learners to take ownership of their learning and become more responsible for their academic progress. One of the primary benefits of self-assessment is increased self-awareness. Through regular evaluation of their performance, learners gain insights into areas requiring improvement and develop a more realistic understanding of their abilities. This awareness enables students to make informed decisions regarding learning strategies and future goals. Self-assessment also contributes to learner motivation. When students actively participate in the assessment process, they often develop a stronger sense of ownership and commitment toward learning. Recognizing personal progress and achievement can increase confidence and encourage continued engagement in educational activities (Hati et al., 2021). In addition, self-assessment supports independent learning by encouraging students to monitor their progress and establish learning goals. These behaviors reflect important characteristics of autonomous learners, who are capable of directing their own educational development. Research suggests that students who engage in self-assessment demonstrate greater responsibility and self-regulation than those who rely exclusively on teacher feedback (Ashraf & Mahdinezhad, 2015).

Reflection, Self-Regulation and Independent Learning

Reflection is considered a fundamental element of learner autonomy. Reflective learners critically analyze their learning experiences and use this knowledge to improve future performance. Self-assessment provides a structured framework for reflection by encouraging learners to evaluate

achievements, challenges, and learning strategies. According to Thanh (2019), reflective practice enables students to become more conscious of their learning processes and develop greater control over educational decisions. Through reflection, learners can identify effective strategies and modify ineffective approaches, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. Closely related to reflection is self-regulation. Self-regulated learners are capable of setting goals, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes independently. Willis (2011) argues that assessment practices encouraging learner participation play an important role in developing self-regulation skills. By engaging in self-assessment, students learn to manage their learning more effectively and become less dependent on external guidance. Furthermore, self-assessment promotes independent learning by encouraging students to assume responsibility for their educational development. Independent learners actively seek opportunities for improvement, engage in additional learning activities, and demonstrate greater persistence in achieving learning objectives. These characteristics contribute significantly to learner autonomy and lifelong learning.

Portfolio-Based Self-Assessment in EFL Contexts

Portfolio assessment has become an increasingly popular approach to implementing self-assessment in EFL classrooms. A portfolio is a collection of student work that demonstrates learning progress, achievements, and reflections over time. Portfolio-based assessment provides learners with opportunities to document their development and evaluate their performance continuously. According to Huda et al. (2020), portfolio assessment encourages learners to reflect on their learning experiences and become more aware of their progress. By reviewing previous work, students can identify improvements, recognize challenges, and establish goals for future learning. Portfolio-based self-assessment also supports learner autonomy by encouraging responsibility and self-monitoring. Students become active participants in documenting their learning journey and evaluating educational outcomes. Hati et al. (2021) suggest that portfolio assessment promotes ownership of learning and strengthens students' ability to regulate their own learning processes. The use of portfolios aligns closely with learner-centered educational approaches because it emphasizes reflection, participation, and continuous improvement. Consequently, portfolio-based self-assessment represents a valuable strategy for fostering autonomous learning in EFL contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The literature reviewed in this article provides several important implications for EFL teaching practice. First, teachers should incorporate self-assessment activities into regular classroom instruction. Reflective journals, self-assessment checklists, learning logs, and portfolio tasks can provide meaningful opportunities for learners to evaluate their progress and develop greater responsibility. Second, educators should provide clear assessment criteria to ensure that students can engage effectively in self-assessment. Transparent criteria enable learners to evaluate their work more accurately and develop confidence in their judgments (Shelton-Strong, 2018). Third, self-assessment should be implemented as a continuous process rather than an isolated activity. Regular reflection and evaluation help learners develop habits associated with autonomous learning, including goal-setting, self-monitoring, and self-regulation. Finally, teachers should encourage a supportive classroom environment where self-assessment is viewed as a tool for learning rather than merely a mechanism for grading. Such an environment can promote positive attitudes toward learning and increase student engagement.

CONCLUSION

Learner autonomy has become one of the most significant objectives of contemporary EFL education due to its contribution to lifelong learning, learner responsibility, and academic success. As language learning increasingly requires students to engage with learning opportunities beyond the classroom, the ability to manage and evaluate one's own learning has become an essential skill. Consequently, educators continue to explore effective strategies that can support the development of autonomous learning behaviors among language learners. The literature reviewed in this article indicates that self-assessment is a valuable pedagogical tool for promoting learner autonomy. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that self-assessment enhances learners' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, encourages reflection, and supports the development of self-regulation skills. By actively participating in the assessment process, learners become more responsible for their educational progress and develop a greater sense of ownership over learning outcomes. These characteristics are widely recognized as key components of autonomous learning. Furthermore, self-assessment contributes to the development of independent learning behaviors by

encouraging learners to monitor their progress, establish personal learning goals, and identify effective strategies for improvement. Through continuous reflection and evaluation, students become more capable of making informed decisions regarding their learning and less dependent on teacher guidance. This shift from teacher-directed learning to learner-directed learning is essential for fostering autonomy in EFL contexts. The review also highlights the importance of portfolio-based self-assessment as an effective means of supporting autonomous learning. Portfolios provide learners with opportunities to document achievements, reflect on learning experiences, and evaluate progress over time. As a result, portfolio assessment not only serves as an assessment tool but also functions as a learning strategy that promotes responsibility, reflection, and self-monitoring. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that EFL teachers should integrate self-assessment activities into regular classroom practice. Reflective journals, learning portfolios, self-assessment checklists, and goal-setting activities can provide meaningful opportunities for learners to become active participants in the learning process. When implemented effectively, these practices can help create learner-centered classrooms that support the development of autonomy and lifelong learning skills. In conclusion, self-assessment should be regarded as an integral component of modern language education. By fostering reflection, responsibility, self-regulation, and independent learning, self-assessment contributes significantly to the development of learner autonomy. Therefore, its systematic integration into EFL instruction can help prepare learners to become confident, reflective, and autonomous individuals capable of managing their own learning throughout their academic and professional lives.

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