Self-Assessment: One of Ways Attaining Students' Target Language in Autonomous Learning

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Abstract. This paper introduces the steps in developing students' self-assessment in autonomous learning. Self-assessment is used as reflection students' knowledge and understanding and also to motivate students to learning independently. Self-assessment will help students to attain their target language by learning autonomously. There are five ways in developing students' self assessment. They are (1) Conduct an honest review of the learning process; (2) Set the goals regarding to the learning process for a period; (3) Breaks the goals into the smaller competence for every learning time; (4) Refer back to the self-assessment to ensure that the goals are in line to improving the language skills; and (5) Conduct another self-assessment in next period to get an idea of how your goals are progressing and whether they have been an effective way to improve the language skills.

Keywords: self-assessment, autonomous learning, goals, language skills.

Introduction

The common educational issue in Indonesia, students are targeted to be autonomous learners. Students should be able to learn independently, to self-manage study and learning, and realistically to appraise the strengths and the weakness. They should open mind with the science and technology also the cross cultural. It means that students should have the ability to study autonomously.

Autonomous learning helps students enrich their knowledge and improve students' language skills; listening, speaking, writing, and reading. There is some reason why students should be able to study autonomously. First, there are limited practices in class. Because of that, students' language skills are still low. By autonomous learning, they can improve English language skills efficiently and effectively.

Second, there are limited times for English teaching learning process. It effect the lower rate of students' language skills,

students spend very little time improving language skills at school and about the same amount of time improving language skills at home. Students sometimes depend on teacher's instruction. If the teacher asks them to do exercise at home, they will study at home. However, if the teacher do not asks them to do exercise at home, they will not study at home.

The last, tasks for autonomous learning are easy to find in the bookstore. The tasks are usually published to help students learning independently. The tasks are issued by both the government and commercial publishers. Thus, there are a lot of choices of reference for learning sources. At the same time, these require to choose the appropriate tasks according to the students' target competence.

Improving target competence by autonomous learning tasks, students should be honest with their ability. Students should have self-assessment to know their strength and weakness. Self-assessment is one of the motives that drive self-evaluation, along with self-

verification and self-enhancement. In conclusion, Self-assessment is a key issue in autonomous learning as it enables learners to set goals and to monitor and also evaluate their own learning.

On the other hand, students' self assessments are still low. Sometimes they exclude to assess their knowledge and understanding. It hinders students to master the language skills. Students' awareness of being critical is low. Thus their language skills are still low. In conclusion, the lower self-assessment impacts on the lower language skills mastering.

Besides, without self-assessment, students will make mistakes time to time. Improving self-assessment, students have great motivation to investigate whether they are making mistake or not. It will give higher learning quality for students. Self-assessment encourage to reflecting their knowledge and skills.

Assessing their selves, students will have long term memory about what they learn. When they realize of making mistakes, they will assessing these and they will remember the right answer for long time. Self-assessment avoids students from embarrasses moment when their mistakes are critics by another people.

Due to the phenomenon above, it is necessary to improve students' self-assessment in autonomous learning. Beside, self-assessment can be used as reflection students' knowledge and understanding and also motivate students to learning independently. In addition, students still exclude self-assessment. Therefore, describing the steps of doing self-assessment in autonomous learning is necessary.

Theoretical review

Autonomous Learning is an approach to learning which requires learners to exercise a high level of control over their learning outside the classroom including learning management, cognitive processes and learning content (Benson, 2001:50). Little (in Conttia, 2007: 3) stresses that autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners; that is, it is not another teaching method. Benson (in Conttia, 2007: 3) argues that autonomy can be fostered, but not taught. Broady and Kenning (1996: 9) express a similar idea that learner autonomy cannot be taught in the traditional sense, but can only be promoted.

Dickinson (1995: 167) characterizes autonomous learners as those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own goals, and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests; they are able to use learning strategies, and to monitor their own learning. According to Ridley, Schutz, Glanz, & Weinstein (in Conttia, 2007: 3) the metacognitive learning strategies that autonomous learners can make use of include taking conscious control of learning, planning and monitoring learning strategies and progress, correcting errors, reflecting on the effectiveness of learning strategies, and making changes to learning behaviors and strategies accordingly. The control an autonomous learner exerts over his learning demonstrates his capacity to take control of his own learning (Benson, 2001: 55).

In order for learning to be truly useful, students need to be fully engaged in the learning process. Holec (in Conttia, 2007: 3) points out that the learner will make use of his ability to [self-direct his learning] only if he so *wishe*s …. In conclusion, learning autonomously is not automatic for everyone. He also states that to take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspect of this learning. They are: (1) determining the

objectives; (2) defining the contents and progressions; (3) selecting methods and techniques to be used; (4) monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc); and (5) evaluating what has been acquired.

Assessment is one of the critical elements of the learning and teaching experience. Assessment is regarded as a process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information in order to make decisions on student performance. In class, assessment can be conducted to diagnose student problems, to judge their academic performance, to provide feedback to students and to plan instruction (Airasian in Yun-Hyang Lee, 2005: 2). Self-assessment is used by learners to evaluate and monitor their own level of knowledge, performance and understanding and to get information about their learning.

Therefore, self-assessment is what the students see from their own perspectives (Oscarson in Srimavin, W. and Darasawang, P. 2003: 1). Enabling students to self-monitor their learning practice is regarded as a way to help students develop knowledge through conscious control over that knowledge or to develop the awareness of knowledge and thought.

Cram (via Nunan, 2004: 149) states that the basic purpose of self-assessment is to provide the opportunity or students to develop an understanding of their proficiency level, knowledge or personal readiness for a task in relation to their goals.

Although self-assessment is regarded as unreliable in formal education many educators advocate self-assessment as a tool to involve students in their learning. Oscarson (in Srimavin, W. and Darasawang, P. 2003: 1) thinks that self-assessment can promote learning because it gives learners training in evaluation which is important for autonomous

learning. Learners need to be able to make reliable and valid judgments. Being asked questions on what and how they have learnt fosters evaluative attitudes in the learners and improves goal-orientation because the learners are aware of variability of language learning objectives and they are in control of their own learning situation.

In addition to assessment, self-assessment is becoming popular. Self-assessment is quickly becoming a common method of learning evaluation in learning process. Self-assessment helps to remind the strength and the weakness of the learners. Self-assessment is a great way to help set the learning competence and make sure that they are achieved. If students want to improve language skills, a self-assessment may be just the shot in the arm they need.

A self-assessment can help students to: (1) Identify successes and opportunities for improvement; (2) Jump-start a change initiative or energize current initiatives; (3) Energize the workforce; (4) Focus the organization on common goals; (5) Assess the organization's performance against the competition; (6) Align the resources with strategic objectives; and (7) Deliver world-class results.

Self-assessment in autonomous learning is necessary because it enable the learners to reflect on their progress. This reflection enables the learners to take more control of their learning and to be responsible. Besides knowing their knowledge, students can use it to plan the next material will be learned.

Method

This study is aimed to describing the steps of conducting self assessment. Besides, it describes the kinds of self assessment. It is useful for students to recall their learning process to check whether they attain their target competence. Learning method, material,

and target can be proposed according to the reflection.

Discussion

1. Conduct an honest review of the learning process**.**

Students' proficiency level will be compared with a previous determined level and incorporated either into a summative report of gains made during a course or into a cumulative record of learner achievement. In doing self-assessment, students are not accurate judging their own ability (Nunan, 2004: 149). It causes the misunderstanding of students' knowledge and ability.

Avoiding this phenomenon, students need media to assessing their learning process whether they attain the goals or not. On the other hands, students should conduct an honest review of the learning process. Without honesty, students will not know their proficiency level.

2. Set the goals regarding to the learning process for a period.

Setting the goals are use to know about students' lacks (present knowledge), necessities (required knowledge), and wants (subjective needs) in learning process. Besides, it helps students to decide which strategies will be used. If the goals have set and the strategies have decided, students will be attaining the target competence easily. Bellow is the example of set the goals.

Table 1. Setting Goals

Month	Topic	Goals
June - July	Descriptive	• comprehend the descriptive text. • retell the descriptive text.
August-September	Narrative	• comprehend the narrative

		text. • retell the narrative text.

3. Breaks the goals into the smaller competence for every learning time.

It use as syllabus for guiding the learning process. Besides, it helps students to decide which target competence will be reached first. On the other time, students anticipate their weaknesses by spend more time in learning. Bellow is the example of breaking the goals into the smaller competence.

Table 2. Breaking goals into competencies

Month	Goal	Competences
June	comprehend the descriptive text	• Identify the main idea. • Identify the factual information. • Identify word/phrase meaning. • Identify the referent.
July	Retell the descriptive text	• Identify the factual information. • Identify the detailed meaning. • Identify the inferred meaning. • Paraphrase the text.

4. Refer back to the self-assessment to ensure that the goals are in line with improving the language skills.

Recheck the learning progress is important thing in attaining the target competence. It avoids the left behind of the target competence. The comparison of the first self-assessment and the second one give the description about their learning process. Besides, rechecking is a measurement for students to add another skill competence or continue to the next competence.

a. Conduct another self-assessment in next period.

It is used to get an idea of how the goals are progressing and whether they have been an effective way to improve the language skills. Variations of self assessment improve students' language skills. On the other hand, using varieties of self-assessment avoid bored feeling for students in assessing their learning. Thus, students assess their progress honestly. Students can assess their leaning quality by self-assessment. There are many models of self- assessment. However, the popular models are using self-assessment checklist and individual journals.

b. Self-assessment checklists

Before start to learn, decide the target competence. Then, students learn in autonomously. After learning time, students reflect their learning quality. The checklist is intended to aid the independent learning skills and goals. There are no right and wrong answers. If students honestly, the answers will provide an accurate of their strength and weakness. It can be set which one is the priority in leaning and plan of the future learning. Below is an example of the reflection.

Table 3. Reflection

Question	Yes	No
1. I am aware of my motivation for learning and can reflect on this.		
2. I can motive my self to learn.		
3. I can motive my self to learn autonomously.		
4. I have increased my knowledge by learning autonomously.		
5. I can reach the target competence by learning autonomously.		
6. I can solve my language learning problems by consulting grammar book, dictionaries, and internet access.		
7. I can explain what I have done in simple terms orally or in written text.		
8. I can carry out the material better?		
9. I will relearn the material, if I fail to reach the target competence.		
10. I only relearn the tasks which I fail to do.		

c. Individual Journals

Journals are another way to assess students' learning process. Students may write about their learning goals, reflections on their learning or their learning development. Journals are used to reflect on the learning process and whether they attain the target competence or not. In self-assessment, journals can be used to helps learner systematically collect data on their learning.

Reflection is regarded as a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and assume responsibility for those choices. Reflection and self-assessment are associated in that self-assessment is a useful tool to help students reflect on their practice and understand that learning is a process, not just an event that happens and finishes. Journals are suggested as the best means to observe and collect evidence to help in the reflection process. Therefore, journal writing was used in self-assessment.

Journals are the easiest tool to use for self-assessment. Besides used to data collecting, journals are also used to improve students' writing ability. Before start to learn, decide the target

competence. Then, students learn in autonomously. After learning time, students reflect their learning quality by writing journals. The journals are collected in one period. They will be used in the reflection.

The weakness of using journals as data in self assessment is that there are no reactions to the journals with the teacher. Sometimes, learner may have treated the journals as an exercise and not as an opportunity to assess their own learning. In conclusion, doing assessment in journals is need feedback from teacher to guide their autonomous learning.

Conclusions

Students' self assessments are still low. The lower self-assessment impacts on the lower language skills mastering. There are five ways in improving students' self assessment. They are (1) Conduct an honest review of the learning process; (2) Set the goals regarding to the learning process for a period; (3) Breaks the goals into the smaller competence for every learning time; (4) Refer back to the self-assessment to ensure that the goals are in line to improving the language skills; and (5) Conduct another self-assessment in next period to get an idea of how your goals are progressing and whether they have been an effective way to improve the language skills.

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