

Abstract

Title: Self-assessment of Writing in Learning English as a Foreign Language
A Study at the Upper Secondary School Level

Language: English (with a Swedish summary)

Keywords: Self-assessment, assessment, language education, EFL, writing, lifelong learning, feedback

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The main aim of this study is to explore the role of self-assessment in EFL learning in developing lifelong language learning skills and in furthering the development of more comprehensive and thereby fairer assessment practices. The study explores how upper secondary school students perceived their own general and specific writing abilities in relation to syllabus goals and whether these perceptions are affected by self-assessment practices. It also explores students' and teachers' experiences of integrating self-assessment into everyday classroom practice. The study is based on the theory that metacognitive skills such as self-regulation and self-monitoring are important for the development of autonomous learning skills.

Two teachers and four groups of Swedish upper secondary students participated in the study during one school year. Using grades, students self-assessed the results of two written assignments, namely a classroom writing assignment and a written test task. The classroom writing assignment was also analyzed linguistically by the researcher. The two teachers and eight student focus groups were interviewed about their experiences at the end of the study.

The results of the study showed that at the *group* level students were well able to assess their general writing results in relation to the criterion (the teachers' grades). At the *individual* level the results were more variable, partly depending on the type of writing activity assessed and on the amount of practice students had had of self-assessment. Students' assessments of their writing ability in general showed a stronger relationship with teachers' grades than did students' assessments of their results in a particular classroom writing assignment. Students' assessments tended to become more realistic with practice.

The results also showed that the *specific* writing skills that students at upper secondary school focused on in their writing are spelling and grammar, rather than other skills such as sentence structure, vocabulary, paragraphing and punctuation skills. Students were self-critical with regard to these skills and tended to underestimate their performance in relation to the researchers' assessment of the same.

Students and teachers were positive to the incorporation of self-assessment activities in the EFL writing classroom and saw it as a transferable skill that underpins lifelong learning in other subject areas. The method used in a classroom assignment, where the writing process approach was coupled to self-assessment questions and non-corrective feedback from the teacher, was found to be a practical way of helping students become more aware of their language skills and language levels. Both teachers and students considered student self-assessments as contributing valuable additional information to ordinary tutoring and testing.

The implications for EFL writing are that syllabus goals that encourage student responsibility and autonomy are viable and realistic, but students need to practice self-assessment, preferably from an early age, to become adept at employing the approach effectively on a regular basis.