Monitoring learner progress

Monitoring learner progress is an integral part of any learner-centred curriculum, with important implications for course design and implementation. This book suggests practical ways in which teachers can give feedback to their learners and encourage them to take responsibility for monitoring their own progress. The research summarised in this book shows how practising ESL teachers of adults have developed tools for monitoring the progress of their learners, often in the process of action research in their own classrooms. Five areas of monitoring are considered, ranging from portfolios to self-assessment. The book consists of a brief overview of current theory followed by strategies and practical suggestions from practising teachers. It will be useful to ESL teachers as well as trainers running professional development courses.

The Professional Development Collection consists of short, practical books on teaching topics drawn from recent research projects. Its aim is to help teachers keep up to date with specific areas of classroom practice by drawing together research, theory and practice. Other books in the series include: Developing critical literacy, Teaching disparate learner groups and Using technology in the classroom.

Kristine Brown
Series editor: Anne Burns
Monitoring learner progress

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National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research
Introduction to the series

This book is part of a series that draws on recent research projects conducted in the Australian adult ESL context. The aim of the series is to explore some of the research findings from these projects and some of the general literature in the area in order to suggest implications for classroom practice. Thus, the series attempts to draw together research, theory and practice in a way that is accessible to practising teachers.

The focus in this book is on the monitoring of learner progress. Monitoring progress is an integral part of the learner-centred curriculum for both the teacher and the students, and has important implications for course design and implementation. The aim of this book is to suggest ways that teachers can provide feedback to their learners as well as encourage them to take responsibility for monitoring their own progress. The majority of examples in this book are drawn from recent research, including action research conducted by teachers who were attempting to discover, and trial in their own classrooms, tools for monitoring learner progress.

The main body of the book summarises the principal findings of the research, in point form, then offers practical suggestions for activities that will help teachers to examine the issues for themselves in their own classrooms. The findings and the suggestions are supported, and in some cases expanded upon, by quotations from the research papers themselves. For ease of reading, the supporting quotations appear on the left-hand pages, opposite the findings or suggestions to which they are addressed. However, right and left-hand pages are equally important elements in the discussion and both contribute towards a fuller understanding of monitoring learner progress and its implications for adult learners.

At the back of the book there is a list of references from which quotations have been taken, and another list containing further relevant texts. Together these two lists provide a broad overview of the current research in the area of monitoring learner progress.
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Monitoring learner progress refers to finding out and recording how learners are progressing in their learning as they proceed from entry to exit point of a language learning course. This type of monitoring is also called formative assessment. It focuses on changes to learners’ language over time, especially (but not only) in response to what is being taught. This book discusses classroom issues related to formative assessment and offers suggestions for activities and materials that can be used to help teachers and learners know ‘how they are going’. Monitoring progress is not, of course, an end in itself. It is used as an aid to course and lesson planning, to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher activities, strategies and materials and to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses.

This book does not discuss placement and referral assessment procedures or end-of-course achievement assessment (ie summative assessment) such as that required for the purpose of certification. It does not discuss what administrators or other external bodies want to and need to know – although in most cases formative assessment does feed into summative assessment. Rather, it discusses what teachers and learners want and need to know in order to continue to progress in their learning.

Why is monitoring learner progress an issue?

There is a need in the current educational context to be able to demonstrate evidence of learner progress. However, given the demands on teachers’ time and the shortness of some courses, monitoring learner progress is an aspect of assessment that can be difficult to manage well. While most teachers monitor learner progress informally, they may not always record their impressions in any formal way, or undertake more formal tasks. While informal monitoring is essential, there needs to be some attention also to more formal and focused monitoring.

The current emphasis on outcomes-based assessment approaches can mean that day to day monitoring is overlooked. It can also be unclear how this day-to-day monitoring relates to formal competency assessment statements.

Ways of addressing the issues of monitoring learner progress in the classroom have been explored in a number of recent research projects. This book attempts to summarise the recommendations from this research and to suggest ways for teachers to continue the enquiry. The five main issues that have been identified from these projects are listed on the contents page.
… a large number of teachers went to some lengths to insist on the informal and primarily observational nature of their ongoing assessment practices, which they saw as very much inseparable from teaching.
(Brindley 1989:22)

Teachers constantly evaluate … yet they often do not see the value of this activity for future planning and much decision-making about content, methods, activities and student progress is lost as courses proceed. It is understandable, then, that at the end of a ten-week or fifteen-week course period, it may be very difficult for teachers to be very precise about student achievement or curricula content: it is simply not possible to recall such impressionistic data.
(Lewis 1989:63)

[Taking] time in class to observe students interacting … gave rise to more student/student activity that took the teacher ‘off centre stage’. This resulted in fewer teacher-directed activities in some classrooms and changed teacher attitudes to the ability of students to work cooperatively and productively, using each other as resource people.
(Lewis 1989:70)

Responses frequently referred to time constraints as a factor which inhibited any kind of formal (written) assessment.
(Brindley 1989:24)

**Recording informal observations**

Should informal assessment be part of the overall program?

How is this achieved?

**Findings**

> Teachers do a substantial amount of informal monitoring of learner progress in the course of their normal teaching.

> It is important to convert some informally observed data into formal records, so that the information is not lost.

> Making time to regularly document progress can have positive spin-offs in a number of directions. For example, strengths and weaknesses in students’ oral or written language production can be diagnosed, and tasks developed to address specific language learning features.

> Teachers need to develop simple, time-effective and achievable systems for recording informal impressions.
There is nothing magical about [the student observation sheet reproduced opposite] – it is merely a basic grid. It was the process teachers went through to make these observations that made the impact on their understanding of students as a class and as individuals. (Lewis 1989:70)

Teachers were asked to focus on two or three students per week and note their activities under the appropriate headings. Most teachers reported that this was difficult at first, both in the quality of the comments and in remembering to observe and note particular student behaviour. However, as they realised how much they learnt about students by this strategy, they found that it sharpened their perceptions and expectations and it became ‘second-nature’ to note observations. (Lewis 1989:70)

Develop a simple format like the one below (from Lewis 1989:71) to record daily observations of student performance.

**Student observation sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>CLASS:</th>
<th>NAME:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Oracy skills</td>
<td>Literacy skills</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Do not try to record the progress of all students at the same time. Split the class into groups for the purposes of recording. Record observations of one group every few days.

Establish common formats to record learner progress at your centre.

Follow the suggestions below which relate in the main to effective use of time when monitoring progress. They are based on discussions with teachers who were involved in a wide-scale assessment project (from Arnold and Lomas 1991:17).

- Consider around 10-20% of class time as reserved for assessment activities including hard copy of results which can be analysed and discussed by both teacher and learner.
- Target your assessment. Eliminate assessment that doesn’t serve a useful purpose, doesn’t get used or doesn’t justify the cost in teacher time, class time and so on.
- Keep assessment at a practical level by involving learners wherever possible in devising assessment tools and collating results.

Suggestions for the classroom

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- Keep assessment at a practical level by involving learners wherever possible in devising assessment tools and collating results.
Diagnostic assessment can take many forms and may involve:

- teacher observation against a checklist
- learning tasks focusing on specific language features, skills or strategies
- scaffolded assessment tasks focusing on whole texts
- analysis of student performances in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Wherever possible, learners can be involved in the process in order to develop techniques for critical reflection and peer self-assessment. These techniques help learners build an understanding of the role of assessment in learning both inside and outside the classroom.

(Feez 1998:55–6)

Suggestions for the classroom

> Use the results of assessment in subsequent lessons, group activities, discussions, planning sessions with learners etc to maximise their impact.
> Record ongoing assessment results involving course objectives as an aid to end-of-course assessment.
> Develop ways of getting the marking and recording done in class time using the class as a resource.
> Trial a variety of assessment tools, discuss challenges in finding the right tool for the right purpose with colleagues ... build up a repertoire of tools/techniques.
> Read Brindley 1989, especially Chapter 4.
It is when students and teachers are collaboratively involved in assessment that the greatest benefit is achieved.
(Valencia 1990:338)

… there is a strong case to be made for allowing students to cooperate with teachers in assessing their own performance … A variety of assessment modes is possible. Students can assess themselves; they can discuss their behaviour with the teacher in order to arrive at a mutually agreed assessment following a formal test, or they can initiate a retrospective assessment in consultation with the teacher.
(Carroll 1995:104)

What is the purpose of a portfolio?

How can it help teachers assess student progress?

Findings

> Portfolios are systematic collections of evidence of learners’ progress. They may vary depending on the student group but ideally they contain a variety of types of indicators of learning including (Valencia 1990:339):
  - samples of the learner’s work selected by the teacher or the learner
  - the teacher’s observational notes
  - the learner’s own periodic self-evaluations
  - progress notes contributed by the learner and teacher collaboratively.

> Portfolios are valuable tools for formalising on-going assessment, because they:
  - demonstrate to learners that assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning process
  - focus on both the process and the product of learning
  - involve both teachers and learners in monitoring progress
  - demonstrate development of skills in a way that is useful to both teachers and learners.

> Portfolios are not an end in themselves. They should be used to help you determine what you can and should do to help students progress beyond their current achievement level towards their learning goals.
Before embarking on keeping portfolios for assessment think about how they are to be organised and be selective about what will be included in them.

Examine the following procedures for monitoring learner progress. Identify those that would be appropriate to include in learner portfolios in your classroom:

- observations of student performance on tasks
- observations of classroom interactions and students’ attitudes
- anecdotal records
- skills checklists to record mastery
- diagnostic assessment instruments
- student self-assessment instruments such as surveys
- on-going or post-course discussions or interviews
- before and after teaching questionnaires and surveys
- audio and/or video recordings of simulated or authentic performances
- written feedback from learner to learner (peer assessment)
- examples of written work
- regular letters to the teacher
- diaries and journals recording day-to-day events and reflection on learning
- assessment checklists used before and after lessons, activities and tasks.

When monitoring progress, how are decisions made about what to assess?

**Findings**

> In many current ESL programs in Australia, learner progress is ‘criterion-referenced’ rather than ‘norm-referenced’. That is, learner progress is measured in relation to certain criteria of language achievement rather than in relation to the achievement of other learners.

> Criterion-referenced methods allow learners to see clearly what they can do and what they cannot do in relation to stated criteria.

> The starting point for establishing criteria for monitoring progress is to determine what it is the learners should be able to do at the end of the course. Often this will already be determined by explicit course objectives or statements of competencies.

> The ways in which teachers can formulate criteria for ongoing monitoring will depend very much on the learner group and the situation. The criteria may be broad (relating to a whole macroskill), or specific (relating to a particular context of language use). They may relate to language only or may also relate to non-language aspects such as confidence.

> Where competencies are set for the course, the process of measuring progress against criteria is easier.
WHAT RESEARCHERS say

Structured observation using checklists has the advantage of providing a written record of students’ progress in a standardised form. This will be invaluable in recording outcomes at end-of-course in terms of competencies achieved. (Cornish 1992:13)

As a class checklist of features is developed, assessment of written work against the checklist is integral and ongoing at all phases of the teaching-learning cycle. Absent or wrongly-used language features are identified through peer discussion … With such preparation, formal assessment in class under test conditions should not present any difficulty. Where performance criteria are not met, feedback is explicit and a second chance given. (McGregor 1994:12)

… there has been too little attention paid to trying to accurately describe the range of linguistic skills which students at low level of oral proficiency may possess. For example … at low levels the student’s passive vocabulary may be just as relevant as an indication of proficiency as the display of active vocabulary … (Wakeland 1989:51)

Suggestions for the classroom

> Convert chosen criteria to checklist format for use when observing learners’ language use.
> Include ‘testing’ activities as well as teaching activities as part of your teaching cycle.
> Establish criteria in such a way that small steps in progress can be seen. This is especially important for beginner groups. It is unhelpful to use criteria that are so broad that no one in the group is able to achieve them.
> Use or adapt published sets of criteria to your own purposes and situation.
> If explicit assessment criteria are already set out (eg the performance criteria of competency-based courses), use these as the basis to formulate criteria for ongoing classroom use. Generally smaller steps in achievement that are more closely linked to teaching materials and activities will be involved.
> If possible and appropriate, consult native speakers who are not teachers in determining criteria.
> If possible and appropriate, involve the whole class in assessing progress.
> Find examples of assessment developed by classroom teachers (eg Brindley 1989).
> Consult assessment kits that provide a detailed procedure for diagnosing learners’ strengths and weaknesses in reading and writing (eg Hood and Solomon 1988).
I used multiple forms of assessment in an effort to heighten student involvement in the process and to promote autonomous learning. As time passed, and student confidence grew, I narrowed the assessment method from one where maximum peer support was available, ie whole-class assessment, through peer assessment, self-assessment and finally to one where no support was available (ie formal teacher assessment). Concurrently, I extended the focus of activities until I had included all the (prescribed) performance criteria … (Stewart 1995:11)

Collaborative assessment procedures should be explored by teachers, particularly as this is really the bottom-line of successful communication, that is, a range of individuals is always going to be assessing any one individual’s language proficiency, and more critically so outside the language classroom … in workplace classes and even within regions, employers, clerical staff, other teachers and learners are all ‘available’ to make judgments (and they do) on learners’ language proficiency. (Manidis and Prescott 1994:58)

> Adapt some of the examples below for use in your own teaching situation.

The following table shows the steps followed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Spoken | past tense | • discussion about weekend activity  
• teacher writes students’ sentences  
• model presented | informal |
| 2 | Written and Spoken | past tense sequence | • students write about weekend activities  
• model presented of 2+ sentences  
• Samples kept for future reference | informal - Teaching Assessment  
whole class OHT of each student’s work analysed against performance criteria |
| 3 | Written and Spoken | past tense sequence  
temporal markers, cohesion of text | • students write about weekend activities  
• model presented including temporal markers, past tense  
• requires cohesive text over two paragraphs  
• discussion about what constitutes a ‘pass’ | informal - Peer Assessment Group Work  
each group given pieces of student writing to assess and examine against performance criteria  
pass or fail - Why?  
students use assessment sheet |
| 4 | Written and Spoken | past tense temporal markers sequencing  
conjunctive links  
text cohesion | • students write about weekend or another period in their lives.  
• model presented  
• topic widened | informal - Peer Assessment Group Work  
each pair of students analyse two pieces of work against performance criteria and present to class with OHT  
pass or fail - |
| 5 | Written/Spoken | all performance criteria  
model available eg. My Wedding, Schooling, Childhood, Journey to Australia, First week in Australia, Previous English classes, Festivals | • students write about any chosen past event  
• model available  
• Self assessment / interview students examine their work against the performance criteria and report individually to the teacher about their work  
pass or fail - Why?  
feedback given |
| 6 | Written | all performance criteria  
recount from Step 2 with written recount from Step 5 | • students compare written recount from Step 2 with written recount from Step 5  
• Self assessment - students examine work in relation to performance criteria | |
| 7 | Written | all performance criteria  
no model available | • students write a recount of excursion  
• Formal assessment Summative  
pass or fail  
conducted by teacher | |

(Stewart 1995:11); reproduced with the permission of NSW AMES. continued p23 >>
The assessment scale developed in this course is an example of a semi-formal device for ongoing learner assessment which could be adapted to a variety of courses. We have shown that this type of criterion-referenced assessment can help both teachers and learners to formulate and assess ongoing learning objectives. (Mah 1989:48)

In a well-attended classroom, especially at the beginning of term it is not always possible to pick those needing more attention in the area of oral communication. Results (from the survey) have helped to highlight some of those students’ needs for me. (Moodie 1991:19)

**WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY**

> Mah (1989) developed the following criteria, in consultation with learners and counsellors, for assessing telephone skills for an Office Skills course.

**Please indicate your rating by putting a circle on the scale, e.g.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> Moodie (1991) set up conversation opportunities for adult classes at her centre with students at the local high school. She developed a rating-scale to gauge the progress of the adult learners and this was completed by the learners themselves, their teachers and by their high school student partners. The aims of this survey were to compare teacher assessment, native speaker assessment and student self-assessment; provide data to assist ongoing course design; and to give feedback to learners on their progress so as to better target their learning efforts. The survey included assessment of:

– effect on listener
– getting the message
– asking questions
– continuing the conversation
– resuming speaking

– clarity
– onfidence
– answering questions
– interrupting
– stopping the conversation

(Mah 1989:46)
The close link between teaching and ongoing assessment had the noticeable result of maintaining high student interest levels. My students particularly enjoyed the peer assessment opportunities and overruled my attempts to maintain anonymity. With ruthless enthusiasm they exposed each other’s linguistic strengths and weaknesses (mostly the weaknesses) and did not seem to mind being ‘victims’.

(Stewart 1995:14)

**WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY**

> The following example shows how criteria-based assessment categories were used by K Brown (1995) to assess written language in a pre-tertiary course in which quantitative assessment of progress was required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing assessment feedback sheet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASPECT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall appropriateness of text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance to task set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal/informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas/information included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text organisation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion between sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar and vocabulary at sentence level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tenses, articles, subject/verb agreement etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary range and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surface features</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full sentences used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL /20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are non-language outcomes and why should progress be assessed in these areas?

Findings

> It is important to monitor non-language outcomes as well as language outcomes of learners.

> Teachers use the term ‘non-language outcomes’ to refer to outcomes related to (Jackson 1993:2)

  - social, psychological and emotional support in the new living and learning environment
  - confidence
  - motivation
  - cultural understanding
  - knowledge of the Australian community context
  - learning about learning
  - clarification of goals
  - access and entry into employment, further study and community life.

> Rather than making assumptions about non-language aspects of learning, we should carry out careful diagnostic assessment.

> Just as we acknowledge small steps in language progress, it is important to acknowledge the small steps learners make towards progress in non-language outcomes. Giving immediate feedback and demonstrating evidence of progress to learners are critical parts of this process.
Read the extract opposite from a curriculum framework for initial-elementary proficiency new arrivals (Nunan and Burton 1989c. Use the questions as a starting point to construct a ‘confidence’ checklist suitable for your class.

Read the two Jackson texts listed in the reference section at the end of this book for practical suggestions about how to incorporate non-language outcomes into your teaching and ongoing assessment. Trial some of these suggestions with your class.

Suggestions for the classroom

> Do the quieter ones now offer anything? How often?
> How are they all feeling? How can we tell?
> How are they all feeling? How can we tell?
> How are they all feeling? How can we tell?
> Is he still doing everything by himself?
> Did she actually speak to someone this week finally?
> How many utterances has he made this lesson, today, this week etc?
> How rapidly is she responding to questions/comments?
> How often did he take part in the pair work this week?
> Has she done one exercise on her own without fretting?
> How many times has he given an answer unaided?
> How many times did she come to class this week?
> How often does he take a risk or try something out now?
(Nunan and Burton 1989c:40)
Why involve learners in monitoring their progress?

How can self-assessment be encouraged?

Findings

> Self-assessment can encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning, enable them to diagnose their weak areas and get an overall view of their ability, encourage them to be more motivated and goal-oriented, help them to develop criteria which they can use to monitor their own performance and, thus, go on learning in a self-directed fashion when formal instruction has ceased. (Brindley 1989, citing Von Elek and Dickinson)

> Criticism of self-assessment on the grounds of dubious validity and reliability is not so relevant if self-assessment is not being used as an external formal assessment, but as an informal in-course adjunct to other assessment practices.

> Self-assessment needs to be introduced gradually.

> Learners need to be taught how to self-assess.

> Self-assessment can be a troubling concept for some learners who may see assessment as totally the responsibility of the teacher.

> Self-assessment may conflict with learners’ cultural notions.

> Learners need to see the rationale and relevance of self-assessment practices if they are to use them effectively.

> The most useful self-assessment tasks seem to be those where learners are asked to rate the difficulty of specific, concrete situations or tasks.
Suggestions for the classroom

- Make self assessment a ‘routine and explicit, visible but totally ordinary part of classroom practice.’ (Jackson 1994:117)
- If necessary, use translations for self-assessment forms that you use regularly.
- Explain to students the use as well as the format of self-assessment tools.
- Teach the language needed to engage in self-assessment.
- Read the sections on self-assessment procedures and activities in Willing (1989a and 1989b) listed in the references at the back of this book

Practical examples

- Adapt some of the examples below for use in your own teaching situation.
- The following activity (from Nunan and Burton 1989b) is designed for learners in courses with a study skills focus.
  - After taking notes from a short talk, video or written text, ask learners to move round the class, discuss their notes with other learners and make any necessary corrections. This way, they can build up their own notes without being told their notes are wrong. The teacher can observe the interaction and use this for follow-up work on communication strategies.
  - Alternatively, learners could be asked to form small groups to discuss their notes. One student could be appointed group tutor and be given a copy of sample notes. The others must ask questions to clarify information and correct their notes.

What Researchers Say

Self-assessment does not need to begin with written worksheets and formal assessment sessions … Every aspect of learning is capable of gradual and progressive transfer of responsibility to the learner. Every aspect of learning therefore invites the mobilisation of self-assessment practices. (Jackson 1994:117)

The self-assessment form is itself a text with specific stages and linguistic features, which can be taught by the modelling, joint construction and independent construction approach. (Khoe and Llewelyn 1992:15)

Do not avoid this important aspect of learning because of the difficulties of explanation. Make it a priority for low-level learners: that way [they] will automatically incorporate self-evaluation as part of their repertoire of learning strategies. (Willing 1989a:77)

We helped learners develop a metalanguage for discussing assessment. Brainstorming sessions on learners’ particular problems were held on a number of occasions, and here we helped to transform the learners’ utterances into language appropriate to a self-assessment form. (Khoe and Llewelyn 1992:13)

Continued p35 >>
Learners may perceive [self-assessment] as an assessment of the teaching process and be unwilling to take part in criticism of their teacher. They may also feel that admitting their own success is unacceptable 'boasting'.

(Lewis 1990:203)

Learners will assess their own performance if they can see that it contributes to their progress ... and they can understand its usefulness in planning the next step in their learning.

(Aiken and Pearce 1991:24)

Those [self-assessment] tools which assessed the difficulty of a task or situation, whether real-life or imagined, were more readily completed by the learners than those which asked learners to analyse their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers ... should exploit this fact by having learners write their own self-assessment tools assessing their real-life encounters outside the classroom. This could lead to individualisation of learning goals and greater motivation.

(Lewis 1990:203)

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Practical examples

continued from p33

> The learning diary illustrated below was devised for young fast learners. It demonstrates one way to encourage learners to reflect on their own learning in a structured way. Other means, of a less structured nature, include learner journals and regular on-going letters to the teacher.

A learning diary

The following will help you record how and what you're learning in class and outside.

1. Copy the form, and fill one in after each lesson, or at the end of each week.
2. Only fill in those sections that interest you.

| Today I practised: |
| Today I learned: |
| Today I used English when: |
| Today I spoke English to: |
| One thing I said well today: |
| My difficulty is: |
| I want to know about: |
| Tomorrow I will: |

(Nunan and Burton 1989b:33)

... with all tasks and activities you should give your learners the chance to make the connections between communicative need and language, and to discuss the purpose of what they are doing. This way, they will have a sense of purpose and achievement.

(Nunan and Burton 1989b:36)

continued p36 >>
Practical examples  

continued from p35

> De Leon (1992) – as part of an action research project with a low oracy, low literacy class – developed materials and activities to lead learners to an understanding of the concept of self-assessment, of the tasks to be done and of the self-assessment texts themselves. The following text samples illustrate her approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Only with Help</th>
<th>Some Problems</th>
<th>Easily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Company information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand details of the company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand the instructions about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• filling in the form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand the words on the form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can write the information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Health details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand the words on the form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can write the information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. General information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand the words on the form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can write the information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Educational history</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand words on the form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can write the information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Employment history and references</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can understand the words on the form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• can write the information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I need more practice with: __________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

(de Leon 1992:7); reproduced with the permission of NSW AMES.

… it is possible to carry out formal classroom self-assessment tasks with initial Band A learners. Designing appropriate instruments takes time and careful planning but it is time well spent.
(de Leon 1992:9)

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Practical examples  

continued from p36

> Khoe and Llewelyn (1992) describe an action research project with a vocation-focus intermediate group of learners to find out the kind of teacher input necessary to help learners use their knowledge of the structure and language of a text. The following examples of self-assessment materials demonstrate their approach.

Can fill in an application for employment

- I can drive a car.
- I can’t drive a car.
- I can write my address without help.
- I can write my address with some help.
- I can copy my address.

Once the learners had finished a task (eg filling in an application for employment) they were given a self-assessment form referring to the task. This form was analysed as a class activity and we showed the students that the stages in the self-assessment form related to the stages in the text.
(Khoe and Llewelyn 1992:12)
Bibliography

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Murray, D E 1994. ‘Using portfolios to assess writing.’ Prospect, 9,2:56–69

Further reading
Chang, A 1991. ‘Learner self-assessment as a tool for developing job-seeking skills.’ Interchange, 17:20–21