

Handout

Self/Peer-Assessment: Stress-Free Consciousness-Raising and Reflection Dr. Andrew Finch

1. The situation

Self- and peer-assessment in traditional language-learning settings is desirable and feasible for pedagogic, practical, and humanistic reasons, though as Rea comments, curricula in test-driven settings often reflect a view of evaluation which is ill-informed and concerned mainly with exclusion (“gate-keeping”) and administration (“number-crunching”):

Although we would agree that language is a complex behaviour and that we would generally accept a definition of overall language proficiency as the ability to function in a natural language situation, we still insist on, or let others impose on us, testing measures which assess language as an abstract array of discrete items, to be manipulated only in a mechanistic way. Such tests yield artificial, sterile and irrelevant types of items which have no relationship to the use of language in real life situations. (Rea 1978:51, cited in Weir 1998:3)

If students are to learn in a way that motivates and is meaningful to them, the learning environment needs to include consciousness-raising (language learning awareness), reflection (self-assessment), and development of learning strategies, as part of “actual” language study. Assessment in this context exists to give information to the learner and the teacher in terms of learning strengths and weaknesses, so that future goals can be set and learning plans devised. Testing which concentrates on the “target-like appearance of forms” (Larsen-Freeman 1997:155) ignores the fact that “we have no mechanism for deciding which of the phenomena described or reported to be carried out by the learner are in fact those that lead to language acquisition” (Seliger 1984:37), as well as the fact that the learner’s internal grammar is not a steady commodity and often deteriorates prior to internalising new content. Even if we could identify and measure all of the factors in second language acquisition, “we would still be unable to predict the outcome of their combination” (Larsen-Freeman 1997:157).

The question therefore arises of how to incorporate self-assessment into traditional language learning situations (e.g. state secondary schools). Governments often advocate alternative methods of assessment, claiming to be making “efforts to assess students authentically and holistically” (Korean Ministry of Education Website 2001), but ‘when push comes to shove’, the need for a non-complex ‘objective’ method of discriminating between students tends to over-ride such statements, and teachers find themselves back in the test-driven classroom, preparing students to be measured on language ‘usage’ rather than ‘use’ (Widdowson 1978). This is the situation facing the majority of language teachers in national schooling and in private language institutions in Asia. Given that methods of assessment in use serve mainly administrative rationales, how is the individual teacher to proceed? Can change really be implemented from the bottom up?

2. An approach

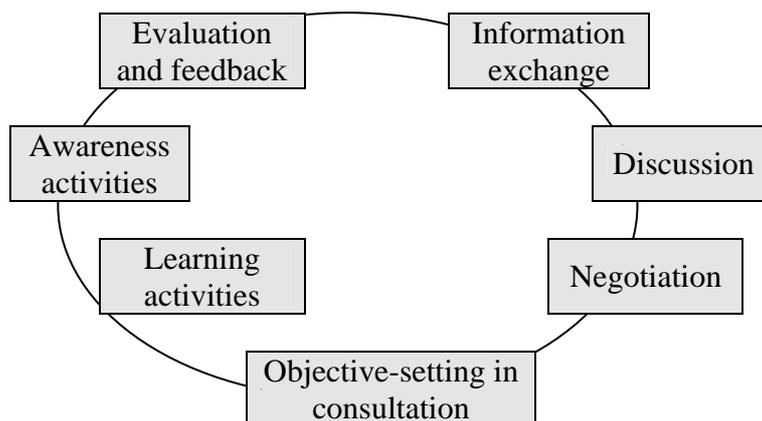
Perhaps there is a ‘Middle Way’ for the class teacher, rather than the bleak prospect of ‘put up or shut up’. The gradual introduction of holistic practices such as self-assessment into a traditional learning environment need not be confrontational or subversive, since consciousness-raising, reflection, and development of learning strategies can be shown to enhance traditional study methods and goals *within* the framework of institutionalised definitions of achievement. This presentation suggests that any learning environment can become reflective and can promote positive

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attitude change, and that this change of emphasis will make the classroom experience more enjoyable and fruitful for teachers and learners.

Taking Brindley's (1984:77) learner-centred system (fig. 1) as a model of reflective investigation of objective/subjective needs, which can be entered at any point, and which can continue during (and after) the course, we gain some insight into processes involved, though it might seem at first sight that learner-initiated needs analysis, "Objective-setting in consultation", and "Negotiation" (fig. 1) are not practical in institutionalised settings where students attend not by choice and have no say in the curriculum.

Figure 1: Elements of a learner-centred system (Brindley 1984:77)



Students typically perform their own (unassisted) needs analyses and have perceptions of their learning abilities. Even the statement "I am not good at English" implies a level of awareness, evaluation, feedback, negotiation, and objective-setting on the part of the speaker, whether this is well-informed or based on prejudice and popular learning-myths, and whether it is used to enhance future learning or to justify its discontinuation (e.g.: "I cannot learn, so I will stop trying"). Thus to see the learner-centred approach as out-of-place in the test-driven classroom is to confuse traditional teaching pedagogy with the system it serves, for as Underhill observes:

... doing the same things with a different awareness seems to make a bigger difference than doing different things with the same awareness. (Underhill 1989:260)

Reid (1999) points to the responsibility of teachers to "provide the scaffolding for more effective and efficient learning" (Reid 1999:305; cf. Guild 1994) by raising student awareness of affect, and then listening to the students as they express their needs, beliefs and perceptions. Underhill sees this act of "really listening to the student and to the content of what he or she says" (1989:256) as having a dramatic effect on the learning atmosphere, since "our students don't necessarily need reassurance, what they need is to be heard" (1989:256). Such a student-centred approach presupposes a learning climate of trust and clarity, which Legutke & Thomas (1991:64) see as an indispensable goal, governing teachers' choices and preceding the learning process, though depending on that process for its practical realisation. Awareness of the need for this trusting learning climate is generally seen as more facilitating than innovative tasks, techniques, or principles, since "a learning environment conducive to growth includes an atmosphere of trust" (Legutke & Thomas 1991:43). O'Neill stresses the importance of doing "ordinary things" well (O'Neill 1991: 300-301), and Sano *et al.* (1984) claim that creative production is possible only in a "non-threatening environment" which encourages meaningful learning and the creative use of English. They see learning as dependent on:

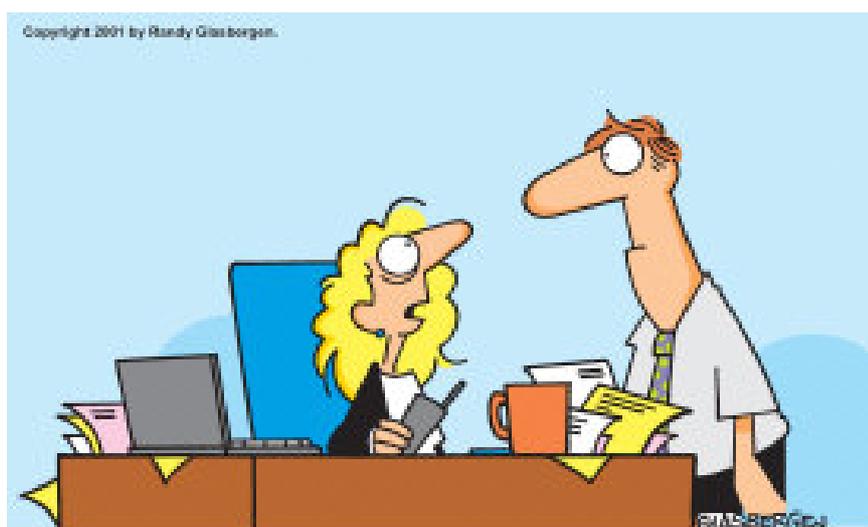
... warm-hearted interaction between teachers and learners, as well as among learners themselves. This friendly interaction is, in our opinion, the most essential factor in successful language learning. (Sano *et al* 1984:171)

3. Practical applications

A non-threatening, warm-hearted, learner-centred classroom is therefore an indispensable requirement for the fostering of the sort of positive attitude change that will motivate students to become responsible, self-directed and effective learners. When we investigate the learning environment in Asia further, however, we find that language teachers are often faced with government-sanctioned behaviouristic texts of excessive content (cf. Lee 1991:18; Li 1998:686), which treat language-learning as a branch of arithmetic (i.e. as a collection of formulae to be learned and applied), which subscribe to teacher-centred presentation of formal concepts (Breen 1987), and which set their sights on national examinations and therefore have no time for concepts such as promotion of autonomy, positive affect, learner training, cultural sensitivity/suitability and critical thinking. In such a context, teachers cannot be blamed for wondering how to promote a more meaningful view of education.

Given the non-threatening learner-centred environment, however, required texts can at least be supplemented (if not replaced) by materials which are directed to the learner, promote language-learning awareness and learner-training, and encourage students to reflect on and to assess their own (and each other's) achievement. From here it is a logical step for self- and peer-evaluation to become a natural part of the learning process, whatever the context. The remainder of this presentation offers some materials that might be useful in this process. These materials were developed by and have been used by the author in a tertiary setting (Freshman University students) since 1997.

- Online self/peer-assessment sheets:
<http://www.finchpark.com/courses/sheets.htm>
- Online videos of alternative assessment: <http://www.finchpark.com/videos>
- PowerPoint Presentations: <http://www.finchpark.com/ppp/>
- Hot potatoes home: <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/>
- Sample hot potatoes activities: <http://www.finchpark.com/courses/hotpot/>
- Sample Moodle courses: www.finchpark.com/moodle
- Contact: aef@knu.ac.kr



“Ev erha veo neof thosed ayswh ennot hinggo esr ight?”

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- ✓ **Pairs** ✓ **Exchange books** with your partner.
- ✓ **Ask** your partner these questions.
- ✓ **Record** the answers in your partner's book.
- ✓ **Make a final total** at the bottom of the page.
- ✓ **Enter** the final total into the *Class Journal*, pages 9, 10.



4 = Yes, absolutely. (100%) 3 = Yes, mostly. (75%) 2 = Not really. (25%) 1 = No, not at all. (0%)

<i>Skills</i>		4	3	2	1
Listening skills: TV, Radio, lectures, conversations	1. Can I understand when the teacher speaks in English?				
	2. Can I understand when my classmates speak in English?				
	3. Can I understand TOEIC tapes?				
	4. Can I understand movies in English?				
	5. Can I understand the news in English?				
Speaking skills: conversations, interviews, travel, seminars, lectures, employment, public speaking	6. Can my classmates understand my spoken English?				
	7. Can I give directions in English?				
	8. Can I express my likes and dislikes in English?				
	9. Can I talk about my daily routines?				
	10. Can I express my opinions?				
	11. Can I politely interrupt?				
	12. Can I bring others into a conversation?				
	13. Can I encourage others to continue speaking?				
	14. Can I check that I understand?				
	15. Can I check that others understand me?				
Presentation skills: describing, discussing, reporting	16. Can I explain how to do something?				
	17. Can I describe things?				
	18. Can I negotiate?				
Writing skills	19. Can I write my resumé?				
	20. Can I write business letters?				
	21. Can I write reports?				
Other skills	22. Can I shop online in English?				
	23. Can I use an English Internet browser?				
	24. Can I understand a computer manual in English?				
	25. Can I understand a textbook in English?				

Sub-totals:

--	--	--	--

Add all the subtotals to make the **final total:**

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- ✓ **Groups of 4 people**
- ✓ **Talk about** your expectations for this course.
- ✓ **Make** a Learning Contract for your group.

In our English class, and in our self-study times ...

1. *We should*
2. *We should*
3. *We should*
4. *We should*
5. *The teacher should*
6. *The teacher should*
7. *We should not*
8. *We should not*
9. *We should not*
10. *The teacher should not*

Signatures,

Signatures,

Teacher's signature

Date



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Appendix F: TMM, Information Section

“Interview”

Do you remember the homework (p.25)?
Talk to someone in the class (or another class).
Ask about “Goals”:

What are your long-term goals?

Notes

- Why did you choose these?
- Which goal is most important to you?
- Are you working on these goals now?

What are your short-term goals?

Notes

- Why did you choose these?
- Which goal is most important to you?
- Are you working on these goals now?

What language skills do you need?

Notes

- How can you get these skills?
- Are you working on these skills now?

What problems do you have?

Notes

- Do you need help with them?
- How can you solve them?

Do you plan your day?

Notes

- Do you forget homework?
- Do you get up late in the morning?
- Do you stay up late at night?

Do you plan your week?

Notes

- Do you forget appointments?
- Do you arrive late at classes?

Do you plan your month?

Notes

- Do you study at the last minute?
- Do you balance study time and free time?

Do you plan your semester?

Notes

- Do you know about your assignments?
- Do you know about your examinations?

Do you want to plan your time better?

Notes

- How can you do this?

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LEARNING ENVIRONMENT NEEDS ANALYSIS

The Non-Threatening Classroom (NTC)

Everybody: Perform this activity in groups or pairs. **Interact!**

- The first time, check (☑) the boxes which reflect your **actual** teaching practice.
- The second time, check the boxes which reflect your **desired** teaching practice.

Δ = Yes, of course. Φ = Yes, in general. Σ = Maybe. ϑ = Not really. Ω = Not at all.

In a teaching practice, it is important to ...		Δ	Φ	Σ	ϑ	Ω
1.	develop a stress-free climate.					
2.	develop peer-support networks.					
3.	help students to relax.					
4.	promote students' self-esteem.					
5.	promote students' social responsibility.					
6.	offer unconditional trust to the students.					
7.	inspire confidence, motivation, and independent learning.					
8.	reflect on the assumptions that I take into the classroom.					
9.	examine the hidden agendas in the classroom.					
10.	focus on counselling skills and management of affect.					
11.	focus on communicative competence.					
12.	focus on what students can do - not what they can't.					
13.	think about teacher/student roles.					
14.	act as a language resource and counsellor.					
15.	promote interaction as learning content.					
16.	promote alternative assessment.					
17.	use learning materials which treat learners and their beliefs as valid and meaningful.					
18.	use learning materials which allow students to direct their own learning (autonomy, self-assessment).					
19.	promote a non-threatening learning environment.					
20.	reflect a view of language-learning as education.					
Totals:						

When you perform activities such as the NTC in your group, mark everybody's opinion on your sheet, using a different sign for each person: E.g. ☺ □ ✓ ○ ★.

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LEARNING ENVIRONMENT NEEDS ANALYSIS: Classroom Environment Questionnaire (CEQ) (Adapted from Fraser, 1986)

Classroom Environment Questionnaire (CEQ)

Teachers and students in groups: Perform this questionnaire twice.

- The first time, check (☑) the boxes which reflect what you **want** to happen.
- The second time, check (☑) the boxes which reflect what **actually** happens.

CEQ Preferred (1 st time)	CEQ Actual (2 nd time)
❖ = I would be happy if this never happened in class.	❖ = This never happens in class.
⚡ = I would be happy if this rarely happened in class.	⚡ = This rarely happens in class.
⊕ = I would be happy if this sometimes happened.	⊕ = This sometimes happens in class.
⚡ = I would be happy if this often happened in class.	⚡ = This often happens in class.
⊕ = I would be happy if this always happened in class.	⊕ = This always happens in class.

How often do (you want) these things (to) happen?		❖	⚡	⊕	⚡	⊕
1.	The teacher comes early to class.					
2.	Students come early to class.					
3.	Students talk in English before the teacher arrives.					
4.	The teacher decides on class layout (chairs & tables).					
5.	Students work together in groups.					
6.	The teacher decides which students sit together.					
7.	The teacher explains how to do tasks.					
8.	The teacher talks and the students listen.					
9.	Students choose which tasks to do.					
10.	Students work at their own speed.					
11.	Students are responsible for assessment.					
12.	The teacher explains grammar.					
13.	The teacher joins in class activities.					
14.	The teacher helps students who are having problems.					
15.	The teacher is friendly to the students.					
16.	The teacher talks with students individually.					
17.	The atmosphere of the room is friendly.					
18.	The room is a comfortable temperature.					
	Totals					

When you perform activities such as the CEQ in your group, mark everybody's opinion on your sheet, using a different sign for each person: E.g. ☺ □ ✓ ○ ★. FIGURE 15: Pre/post-course questionnaire

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TEACHING METHOD ANALYSIS

Checklist of teacher-classroom-language (frequency of phrases)

Phrases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
OK.																		
Great.																		
Good job.																		
Well done.																		
Listen to me.																		
Look at me.																		
Stop what you're doing.																		

Checklist of TTT vs. STT

Talking Time	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
Teacher										
Students										

Humanistic criteria for teacher-reflection

My English lessons today promoted:

education	_____	learning
meaning	_____	form
self-direction	_____	teacher autocracy
self-respect	_____	low self-esteem
interaction	_____	teacher-talk
self-assessment	_____	fear of assessment
cooperation	_____	competition
creativity	_____	plagiarism
motivation	_____	indifference
mediation	_____	instruction

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process _____ product

REGULAR STUDENT-CENTRED NEEDS ANALYSES:

General Needs:

Interview your partner, and check (✓) his/her answers in his/her book

Do you ever ... ?		Yes	Maybe	No
I need to think about WHEN I use English.	... come to lessons on time?			
	... speak in your L1 in class?			
	... ask for help from the teacher?			
	... ask for help from other students?			
	... study English at home?			
	... watch TV programs in English?			
	... watch movies in English?			
	... read magazines in English?			
	... read books in English?			
	... talk to native speakers in English?			
	... talk to friends in English?			
	... talk to the teacher in his/her office?			
... send an email to the teacher?				
Why do you need to learn English?		Yes	Maybe	No
I need to think about my English needs.	for studying your major?			
	for using the computer?			
	for travel?			
	for your future job?			
	for talking to foreigners?			
	for studying abroad?			
	for email pals?			
How do you feel about your language skills?		Great	Ok	Poor
I need to think about my level of English now.	My speaking skills in English are			
	My listening skills in English are			
	My reading skills in English are			
	My writing skills in English are			
	My communication skills in English are			
	My pronunciation skills in English are			
	My vocabulary skills in English are			
	My learning skills in English are			
	My confidence in learning English is ...			
	My participation in class is ...			
	My motivation in class is ...			
	My attitude to learning in class is			
My stress-management is ...				

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SELF-ASSESSMENTS (REGULAR AND CONTINUOUS)

Self-assessment: Confidence (Adapted from Finch, 2004, p. 42)

Self-Assessment: Confidence

Exchange books with your partner.

Interview your partner, and check (✓) his/her answers in his/her book.

My Confidence Profile:	Always Never				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. I have the ability to learn English.	5	4	3	2	1
2. If I do my best, I will achieve my learning goals.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I will improve if I continue to study.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I like to speak in English in class.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Trying to speak English is more important than accuracy.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I like to study with my group members in class.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My contribution is as important as anyone else's.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I participate in all the activities in class.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I participate even if I am embarrassed or nervous.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I ask the teacher for help when needed.	5	4	3	2	1
11. If I don't understand, I say so.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I do my best, whatever the situation.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I keep trying to learn, even if I am nervous.	5	4	3	2	1
14. It is OK to make mistakes when trying new language.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I worry about what other students think of my efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I worry about what the teacher thinks of my efforts.	1	3	3	4	5
17. I believe in myself.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I trust my feelings and emotions	5	4	3	2	1
19. I think about my learning ("How am I doing?").	5	4	3	2	1
20. I am a good language-learner.	5	4	3	2	1
Total					

- Add the numbers to make a total.
- Think about your self-image:
 - Do I respect myself?*
 - Do I believe in my abilities?*
 - Do I worry about what people think of me?*
 - Do I trust myself to achieve my goals?*

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A sample marking code

Code	Problem	Example
WF	wrong form	The movie was the <u>most good</u> ^{WF} she had ever seen.
WW	wrong word	The principle ^{WW} (principal) speaker is Dr. Hyun.
ST	Shift in tense	He woke up and <u>jumping</u> ST out of bed.
^	Something is missing.	You arrived here ^ the first of the month.
Sp	wrong spelling	The chair was not <u>confortable</u> . ^{Sp}
[]WO	wrong word order	When I arrived at the restaurant, she was ordering a meal [already]. ^{WO}
P	wrong punctuation	Be careful, ^P The train is coming.
V	wrong verb form	She <u>drunk</u> ^V the wine elegantly.
Word	not necessary	He came in and <u>he</u> sat down.
U	Join the ideas in one sentence	She sat down. She drank the coffee. It tasted good. U U
?... ?	What does this mean?	?They waking up brushed daily teeth?
<u>words</u>	This isn't quite right.	She chose the apple that seemed <u>wonderful</u> .
R[<u>words</u>]	This needs to be rearranged or reworded.	R[This reworded to be rearranged needs or.]
↵P	New paragraph	They had dinner and talked of old times. ↵P Next day the sun was shining on the river.
// or n/P	No new paragraph needed.	She chose the apple quickly. // (n/P) Then she put it in her bag.
	Change the order of two words.	She had brown dark hair.
...M ...M	Singular/plural mismatch.	Not even <u>one</u> ^M of them <u>have</u> ^M been to Africa.