

Promoting assessment for learning by using self-assessment in an ESP course

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Abstract

Assessment can be used not just to measure learning but also to promote learning. Mostly, teachers might be familiar with assessment of learning and assessment as learning but in this century, AfL or assessment for learning would significantly help students to gain more knowledge and enhance them to be active learners. Since self-assessment is a method allowing students to see things to be improved. So, this study aims to promote AfL and enhance students to be active learners by using this method. This study investigated what students reflected on their performance concerning four main aspects; plans, strengths, weaknesses, and what they have learned. Fifty-two tertiary students in Business English II course were firstly taught language use, and how to give an oral business presentation. Secondly, they were asked to prepare their presentation for three weeks with their partner before giving a 10-minute presentation in class. All their presentations were recorded, and watched by them later. Then, they had to assess their performance individually on the self-assessment form. Moreover, an in-depth interview was employed for asking some additional points. The qualitative analysis was used to find the results and it highlighted the use of self-assessment for promoting AfL as well as enhancing students to be active learners.

1. Background

Assessment is the act of collecting information and making judgments on a language learner's knowledge of a language and ability to use it. (Chapelle and Brindley, 2002). In language programs, assessment is used for a variety of purposes. The main ones are to give learners feedback on their progress and to motivate them to study, to certify a person's ability or determine their suitability for selection, and to demonstrate achievement to external parties such as parents, school boards or government funding authorities (Broadfoot, 1987). So, it is very important to ensure that your assessment method meets the purpose of your assessing.

The Business English II course for year two students in the Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University IT Campus aims to teach students to be able to use English in various business contexts. One of those was to be able to give a business presentation effectively. In previous years, all students were assessed traditionally on their ability of an oral business presentation alone. Students were asked to be in front of class and to give a presentation orally. Then, they were finally scored and given some comments by a teacher.

Later on, a teacher found that this kind of assessment was not meaningful enough to promote students' learning and enhance them to be active learners. She was not sure whether her students would realize on her comments and knew what they were weak or good at to find the way to improve or not. She assumed that if students realized her comments and knew their strengths and weaknesses, her students might have some guidelines to improve themselves then.

A recent year, she added her purposes of assessing an oral business presentation to be giving students' feedback on their progress and encouraging them to keep studying instead of assessing their speaking and presentation abilities alone. Her idea was also inspired by the information about assessment for learning available on The New Zealand Ministry of Education's website (www.assessment.tki.org.nz). They presented that assessment for learning is

best described as a process by which assessment information is used by teachers to adjust their teaching strategies, and by students to adjust their learning strategies. Assessment for learning provides students with information and guidance so they can plan and manage the next steps in their learning. By this type of assessment, it uses information to lead students to see what they have learned to what needs to be learned next.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – an organization carrying the mission to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world recently paid attention to assessment for learning (AfL), a case of formative assessment. This information was provided on the paper in the sixth parallel session of OECD/CERI International Conference, Learning in the 21st Century: Research, Innovation and Policy held during 15-16 May, 2008 at Paris, France. They mentioned that the principle of formative assessment methods has been important to raising overall levels of student achievement. Qualitative and quantitative research on formative assessment has shown that it is perhaps one of the most important interventions for promoting high-performance ever studied. The statement from this conference suggested researchers and educators should study more on formative assessment since it would help students to show their performance higher.

Self-assessment is “the process by which the student gathers information about and reflects on his or her own learning ... [it] is the student’s own assessment of personal progress in knowledge, skills, processes, or attitudes. Self-assessment leads a student to a greater awareness and understanding of himself or herself as a learner.” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p.3). From the aforementioned, the purposes of this study were promoting assessment for learning by using self-assessment in an ESP course named Business English II class. The study investigated what students reflected on their performance concerning four aspects; plans, strengths, weaknesses, and what they have learned. The results of this study would allow students to raise awareness of English language learning and understand themselves more. And it would also highlight the use of self-assessment for promoting assessment for learning as well as enhancing students to be active learners.

2. Literature Review

The review of literature provides theoretical foundations of this study. There are learning intentions, assessment for learning and self-assessment. Learning intentions were included in this study by providing the introduction of learning intention itself and the key factors of it related to students’ learning. Assessment for learning (AfL) was presented for giving the key concept of this study. And self-assessment was revealed for presenting an insight assessment approach and how to use it into practice. Each of these three aspects was considered for stating research framework and searching for a research instrument.

2.1 Learning intentions

A learning intention provides what students should know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson or series of lessons (Learning Unlimited, 2004). The Assessment for Learning Curriculum Corporation, Australia presented the learning intention on their website (www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au) that when students know the learning intention of a lesson; they are helped to focus on the purpose of the activity rather than simply completing the activity. They know where to focus their efforts, intend to stay ‘on task’ and do not tend to be confused or distracted. It says that they focus on the learning such as the skills, knowledge and understanding. This figure 1 was also presented by them on the website to show key factors

related to learning intention. There are teaching and learning activities, feedback, teacher questioning, the assessment task/activity, student self-assessment, and success criteria. Those key factors in figure 1 imply that assessment task/activity is one of factors influencing learning intention of students as the researcher assumed. So, this study should also propose to find out the implication of assessment to learning intention.

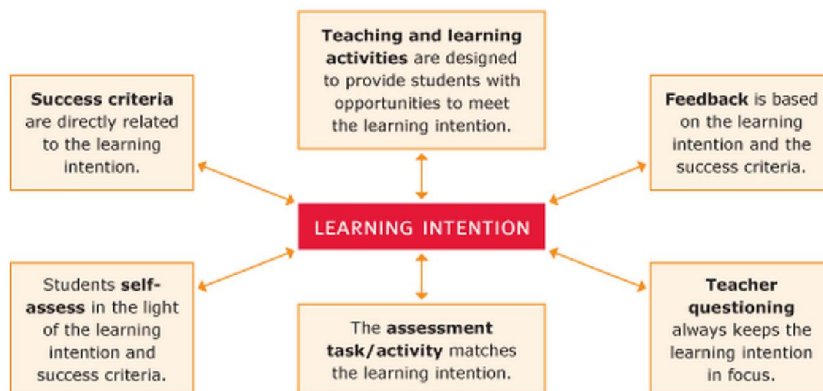


Figure 1 Background of learning intention by the Assessment for Learning Curriculum Corporation, Australia

2.2 Assessment for learning

Formative assessment describes all those processes by which teachers and learners use information about students' achievement to improve their achievements. So it's about using information to adapt your teaching, to adapt the work of your pupils to put the learning back on track ... to make sure the learning is proceeding in the right direction and to support that learning. So it's what happens when you don't just lecture students and rattle through the material and then ask them if they understood. (Dylan Wiliam, 2006). It is defined that assessment carried out during the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning (Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Rust, 2005).

Assessment for learning is one of the formative assessment approaches. It allows students to learn about achievement expectations from the beginning of learning by studying models of strong and weak points (Rick Stiggins, 2005). Paul Black, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall, and Dylan Wiliam (2004) described assessment for learning that it is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. Regarding to the review of assessment for learning from different experts, it would describe that assessment for learning can help students to develop their learning as well as giving information to teachers for developing their teaching.

2.2 Self-assessment

One type of assessment that has been shown to raise students' achievement significantly is student self-assessment (Black & William, 1998; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002; Rolheiser & Ross, 2001; White & Frederiksen, 1998). The concept of self-assessment goes by a variety of names such as self-evaluation, self-rating, self-testing, and self-appraisal (Yoko Saito, 2003). However, self-assessment has been shown to cause both increased student achievement and

improved student behaviour. Involvement in the classroom assessment processes can increase student engagement and motivation (Ross, 2006). Andrade and Du (2007) also clearly defined the definition of self-assessment that it is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work, and revise accordingly.

The helpful definition of Andrade and Du (2007) suggests some guidelines for designing a research instrument of this study. The self-assessment form should be created to lead students to reflect on their quality of work and learning. It would focus on identifying strengths and weaknesses in their work, and ways to revise it more effectively.

3. Objectives

This research used students' self-assessment to investigate students' performance from their oral business presentations in nine parts; (1) plans, (2) what they like, (3) what they were able to do well, (4) what they did not like, (5) their problems and reasons, (6) what they have learned about themselves, (7) their strengths, (8) their weaknesses, (9) their preferences and needs. The results of this investigation would be the implications of self-assessment for promoting assessment for learning and enhancing active learners.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Participants

The participants of this study were fifty-two tertiary students in the Business English II course in the second semester of the 2012 academic year at the Faculty of Management Science, Silpakorn University. All students were second year marketing majors. The purposes and instructions of doing self-assessment were clearly explained to them in class.

4.2 Instruments

The instruments of this research were an individual video recording from the oral business presentation, a self-assessment form and an in-depth interview.

4.2.1 An individual video recording

The use of a video recording is beneficial for self-assessment of oral presentation skills, as it enables students to observe themselves from the view point of the audience and a video recording can also be used for improving the full range of their verbal and, in particular, nonverbal communication skills (Yamkate and Intratat, 2012). In this research, students were asked to watch their individual video recording from their oral business presentation and do self-assessment at the same time.

4.2.2 A self-assessment form

The self-assessment form (Appendix A) was adapted from the student self-assessment and reflections designed by Teresa Grossi (2012), the Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center, Indiana University. Teresa Grossi (2012) also suggested that this self-assessment form can be used as a transition assessment too for students who spend all or the majority of their time in general education classes as well as all other students. The purpose of transition assessment is to collect data focusing on the individual student's aspects as following;

- Strengths – skills and attributes students are good at and help them describe their character (physical/ mental characteristics).
- Interests – things that draw attention, curiosity and help engage students.
- Preferences – evaluate or judge in the sense of liking or disliking an object, experience, situation or setting.
- Needs – accommodations or support needed

The results of self-assessment by students would be beneficial for them in terms of being involved in the assessment process actively, being encouraged to have self-determination and self-advocacy skills, being enhanced to have responsibility for their own learning, being promoted to have critical thinking skills, being allowed to monitor and reflect on their progress and being helped to see how their involvement in the class/project/activity connects to future goals. In this research, the purpose of using self-assessment was to promote learning so self-assessment forms consist of four main sets of the instructions in open-ended form like the original one, but it was translated into Thai to comfort students by using their first language.

4.2.3 An in-depth interview

An in-depth interview was also used for collecting more information based on what students mentioned on their self-assessment form.

4.3 Data Collection

The data collection consisted of three main steps below.

Step 1: Assigning the project, introducing self-assessment, and recording video presentation

At the end of the course in February, 2013, students were asked to have a speaking test. They were assigned to work with their partner by preparing an entertainment or sightseeing plan for welcoming foreign visitors who are participating the international conference organized by their company. They had to give a 10-minute presentation to their manager and their colleagues demonstrated by their teacher and their classmates. In this step, students were also explained the purpose of making a video recording and self-assessment and all of them were willing to participate in this research as well. Their presentations were recorded and copied onto CDs group by group.

Step 2: Asking students to do a self-assessment form

Students were given an individual video recording and a self-assessment and reflection form. They were asked to watch their video and fill in a self-assessment and reflection form individually. Three days later, their self-assessment and reflection form was collected by a researcher.

Step 3: Interviewing some students for gathering more information

Some more information concerning what students mentioned on their self-assessment and reflection form was collected again to find more information by using an in-depth interview.

4.4 Data Analysis

All responses were transcribed and saved in Microsoft Excel files. The data was first divided into four main columns; (1) a brief description of their project and their oral business presentation which students have completed, (2) what students like about their project, their oral business presentation and what they were able to do well, (3) what students did not like about their project, their oral business presentation and some problems they had including reasons, and (4) what students have learned about themselves such as strengths, interests, preferences, and needs. Secondly, each response was read and encoded in the formats. Then, the encoded data was categorized into the salient themes. So, this method probably established the frequency of the theme occurrence in percentage.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are divided into four main sections based on the self-assessment and reflection form. The theme occurrences with their percentages are presented in tables to give a clearer picture of this study as following.

5.1 Section 1: Give a brief description of a business presentation you have completed.

The first section reports the list of what students did for their business presentation in Table 1. The findings are presented from the most frequent response to the least with number of respondents out of fifty two in each item and its percentage.

Table 1 List of what students did for their business presentation

What I did for my business presentation	Number of respondents out of 52	%
1. I searched for the information for my report on the Internet	46	88.46
2. I practiced speaking English many times.	36	69.23
3. I wrote my script in English.	23	44.23
4. I had a meeting with my partner.	21	40.38
5. I studied a program tour available on the websites.	14	26.92
6. I had a survey trip with my partner to look for the possibility of our project.	12	23.08
7. I practiced using my body language for my presentation.	9	17.31
8. I rehearsed my presentation with my partner.	8	15.38
9. I tried to remember every single word from my script.	8	15.38
10. I thought about the cost of my project.	7	13.46
11. I wrote my script in Thai first then translated into English.	7	13.46
12. I studied patterns of language used in a business presentation from native speakers on the Internet.	4	7.69

From Table 1, there are 12 things that students did for their business presentation. And, there are three highest percentages that most of them did which are searching the information on

the Internet (88.46%), practicing speaking English many times (69.23%) and writing their script in English (44.23%). Regarding to those most frequent responses, students were interviewed for finding more information.

The findings found that the Internet helps them to find the information easily and not only the content they looked for but also vocabulary and grammar used in their presentation. Practicing speaking was done about 2-3 times before giving a presentation. Writing a script in English was done based on language patterns they learned in classroom and some useful ones were adapted from the Internet.

The results of this study in this section imply that the Internet is an important recourse for students. Some good resources in the Internet concerning English language use in a presentation should be reviewed and recommended for them by teachers. Students also showed that they slightly tried hard on their task. As well, they prepared their script in English for their presentation so it means that writing skill was also used in this presentation. It would say that this activity could lead students to practice more than one English language skill.

5.2 Section 2: What did you like about your business presentation? What were you able to do well?

The second section reports the list of what students like about their business presentation in Table 2 and what they did well in Table 3. The findings are presented from the most frequent response to the least with number of respondents out of fifty two in each item and its percentage.

Table 2 List of what students like about their business presentation

What I like about my business presentation	Number of respondents out of 52	%
1. This activity allowed me to practice English more than one skill.	28	53.85
2. I had a chance to learn how to increase my confidence in English presentation.	22	42.31
3. I practiced pronouncing English many times.	18	34.62
4. I had a chance to speak in front of people.	14	26.92

From Table 2, it shows that most students (53.85%) like this activity because they could practice more than one English skill. Another thing is they (42.31%) had a chance to learn how to increase their confidence in English presentation. These two points they mentioned were also interviewed later for gathering more information and it found that students could practice writing, listening and reading from this activity. Students firstly did not know how to be confident in their presentation but after attending this class, they learned more about that. And, they could be in front of class for their business presentation finally so they like it.

From these results, it can be seen that this activity could be used for integrating English language skills as well. Increasing confidence should be taught to students. Teaching students how to give a presentation is not about teaching vocabulary, or language use alone so presentation skills should be considered as a method to teach confidence.

Table 3 List of what students were able to do well about their business presentation

What I did it well about my business presentation	Number of respondents out of 52	%
1. I presented the interesting content.	22	42.31
2. I was confident to speak English in front of class.	21	40.38
3. I designed my slide appropriately.	10	19.23
4. I could speak English fluently.	7	13.46
5. I could use my body language properly.	7	13.46
6. My English intonation was good.	2	3.85
7. My English pronunciation was clear.	1	1.92

From Table 3, students (42.31%) assessed themselves that they could present the interesting content on their presentation. And, they (40.31) were also confident to speak English in front of class. It means students could see themselves that did well on presenting the interesting content but it might not be good enough by their pronunciation. Because the percentage of this point assessed by them was only 1.92% and it was the lowest one comparing with another.

5.2 Section 3: What did you not like about your business presentation? What problems did you have? Why?

The third section provides the list of what students did not like about their business presentation, problems and reasons concerning their business presentation Table 4. The findings are provided from the most frequent response to the least with number of respondents out of fifty two in each item and its percentage.

Table 4 List of what students did not like about their business presentation, their problems and reasons

What students did not like about their business presentation, their problems and reasons	Number of respondents out of 52	%
What I did not like about my business presentation		
1. I didn't like my English pronunciation.	23	44.23
2. I didn't like my body language.	13	25.00
3. I didn't like speaking English in front of my friends.	8	15.38
4. I didn't like some grammar and vocabulary I used.	7	13.46
Problems		
1. I was very nervous to speak English in front of people.	23	44.23
2. I was difficult to remember what I wanted to say.	17	32.69
3. My English pronunciation was not good.	16	30.77
4. I was not confident to use vocabulary and grammar I selected.	7	13.46
5. I could not use English intonation fluently.	4	7.69

What students did not like about their business presentation, their problems and reasons	Number of respondents out of 52	%
Reasons		
1. I didn't prepare myself much.	19	36.54
2. At that time, I had to do many assignments for another subject.	6	11.54
3. I didn't have any experiences about giving an English presentation.	3	5.77

From Table 4, most respondents (44.23%) stated that they did not like their English pronunciation. They mostly mentioned about their problems that they (44.23%) were nervous to speak English in front of people. And, the most reason of them was they did not prepare themselves much.

The results in this table are beneficial for a teacher to see students' problems and their reasons. And, that information can be guidelines for her to help students solve some problems they have and understand them how those problems occur.

5.2 Section 4: What did you learn about yourself? Strengths, interests, preferences, and needs

The fourth section provides the list of what students learned about themselves in Table 5, their strengths, interests, preferences, and needs in Table 6. The findings are presented from the most frequency response to the less with number of respondents out of fifty two in each item and its percentage.

Table 5 List of what students learned about themselves

What I learned	Number of respondents out of 52	%
1. I learned to prepare my presentation.	25	48.08
2. I learned business presentation skills.	21	40.38
3. I could raise awareness about English pronouncing.	14	26.92
4. I learned how to increase my confidence for my presentation.	10	19.23
5. I learned more about tourist attractions.	10	19.23
6. I learned more vocabulary and grammar used in business presentation.	9	17.31
7. I knew my weaknesses about giving a business presentation.	5	9.61

From Table 5, it allowed respondents to review what they learned from this activity and it shows that most of them (48.08%) learned to prepare their presentation. The second highest percentage (40.38%) was about business presentation skills at and the third one (26.92%) was raising awareness about English pronunciation.

Regarding the results in Table 5, it means most students learned about preparing their presentation, business presentation skills and raising awareness about English pronunciation. It would be evidence to show that this activity could be used for promoting those skills as well.

Table 6 List of students' strengths, interests, preferences, and needs

Students' strengths, interests, preferences, and needs	Number of respondents out of 52	%
Strengths		
1. The content in my presentation was interesting.	30	57.59
2. My confidence was increased.	25	48.08
3. My personality was good when being in front of the audience.	10	19.23
Interests		
1. How to be confident in a business presentation	25	48.08
2. Language used in term of business presentation	15	28.85
3. How to use body language	14	26.92
4. Vocabulary used in the context they presented	12	23.08
5. English pronunciation	10	19.23
Preferences concerning what I like		
1. I was more confident.	20	38.46
2. I worked with my partner very well.	19	36.54
3. I presented interesting content.	17	32.69
4. I used new vocabulary appropriately.	12	23.08
5. My awareness of pronouncing English was increased.	12	23.08
Preferences concerning what I dislike		
1. I didn't have a good English intonation.	34	65.38
2. I didn't like my English pronunciation.	18	34.62
3. I was not confident much to speak English.	5	9.61
Needs		
1. I want to practice more about business presentation skills.	23	44.23
2. I want to improve my personality for business presentation.	19	36.54
3. I want to apply my knowledge about management and marketing in my presentation.	17	32.69
4. I want to be more confident to speak English.	9	17.31

Table 6 shows respondents' strengths, interests, preferences and needs from this business presentation.

First, most respondents (57.59%) stated about their strengths that the content in their presentation was interesting whereas the lowest percentage of their strength was 19.23% about their personality. This made students see how well they did on their presentation.

Second, it shows respondents' interest and the highest percentage (38.46%) in this part was how to be confident in a business presentation. On the other hand, the lowest percentage in this part was 19.23% about English pronunciation. This means students thought that being

confident would help them to give a better oral business presentation whereas English pronunciation could not help them perform much better.

Third, this table presents their preferences concerning what they like and what they dislike. The finding showed that the highest percentage about preferences concerning what they like was their higher confidence (38.46%) and the highest percentage about preferences concerning what they dislike was not having a good intonation (65.38%). The results in this part imply that these students assessed themselves that they had higher confidence but their intonation was not good enough. So, these students should be encouraged more about giving an oral presentation for maintaining and increasing some of them to have higher confidence. And, they also should improve their English intonation to be better. It would create effectiveness for their presentation.

Fourth, it presents needs of respondents to improve their English business presentation skills. The highest percentage (44.23%) was they want to practice more about business presentation skills whereas the lowest (17.31%) one was to be more confident to speak English. It means that students need to practice more about business presentation so a teacher should increase an opportunity for them to work on this kind of activity.

6. Implications

The findings of this study could lead us to some implications and recommendations for both teachers and students about teaching and learning as follows:

- This study allowed teacher to see students' learning strategies and it showed that some unexpected strategies also occurred and it reflected how well they applied their knowledge. As it was shown in the Table 1, the percentage of students who wrote a script in English was 44.23% whereas there were 13.46% who wrote it in Thai first then translated into English. This implies that most of them could firstly apply writing skill to this activity but for some students, they were not able to do it. So, writing should be considered more for this activity.
- The self-assessment and reflection form used in this study was not appropriate for these students. Some of them had difficulty to assess and reflect on themselves by answering the opened-ended question form. Rather, rating scale and check-list form might be better to lead them think about their learning point by point.
- This kind of assessment was used to promote self-esteem by allowing students to review both their strengths and weaknesses. It also lead students to be motivated to learn more successfully by considering their own strengths and weaknesses.
- This study could enhance active learners as well since most of them were able to understand themselves and state what they need to improve. They knew what they were weak at and they could define what they should improve in the future approximately.
- According to the results of this study showed that this kind of assessment can be used for promote learning. They were able to discover their strengths, weaknesses, preferences and needs. This information could become guidelines for them to manage their learning to be better later.

7. Conclusion

The purposes of this study were promoting assessment for learning by using self-assessment for students in Business English II class about giving an oral business presentation. The findings found that most students could use this method to review themselves and setting

some points to develop themselves about giving an oral business presentation in the future. This implies that self-assessment can probably promote assessment for learning. However, to be more successful in using self-assessment in this case, self-assessment form should be appropriate for students. Testing self-assessment tools should be considered before allowing students to use them to discover their own learning.

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Appendix A
Self-assessment and reflection form

Name _____ Class _____

<p>Give a brief description of the business presentation you have completed.</p>	<p>What did you like about this business presentation? What were you able to do well?</p>
<p>What did you not like about this business presentation? What problems did you have? Why?</p>	<p>What did you learn about yourself? Strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.</p>