



Empower learners as assessors: co-constructing accessible, feasible and useful self-assessment grids

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- Background of the project
- Brief introduction of the project
- Adapting assessment criteria to local contexts
- Students' and tutors' perceptions

- Started in 2014 and published in 2018
- Improve the coherence, transparency and efficiency of English language assessment, curricular and education in China (Jin, Wu, Alderson, & Song, 2017) and developing learning autonomy
- Strikingly similar to CEFR

CSE levels

English ability development stages	Level
Advanced stage	Level 9
	Level 8
	Level 7
Intermediate stage	Level 6
	Level 5
	Level 4
Elementary stage	Level 3
	Level 2
	Level 1

*How a context-free, though by **no means of context-indifferent**, framework like the CEFR can, should, and even must be translated into **context-relevant forms** in diverse educational environments in order to be **implemented** (Byrnes, 2007, p. 643)*



CSE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I can write letters to apply for overseas exchange programmes.● I can write down my thoughts and/or views after seeing a film/play or visiting an exhibition.● I can write a book report after reading.● I can collect materials from different sources to improve my writing.● I can revise the structure and content of my writing based on teacher or peer feedback.● I can write short argumentative essays following academic conventions.● I can write letters/email and notes related to my study or work.
CSE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I can write my views on topics I am familiar with or interested in.● I can write a summary of what I have read.● I can write a brief report on a certain social practice.● I can write my resume.● I can write brief news reports for media such as university newspapers.● I can write an outline before I start writing.● I can use a topic sentence to emphasise the main idea of a paragraph.● I can check my writing and correct errors in word use and connection.
CSE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I can write short stories based on prompts given by my teacher.● I can write compositions on familiar topics.● I can write letters or email to tell my friends about my current situation.



CSE 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I can write letters to apply for overseas exchange programmes.● I can write down my thoughts after seeing a film/play or visiting an exhibition.● I can write a book.● I can collect information for writing.● I can use feedback or peer feedback.● I can...● I can...
CSE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I can...● I can...● I can use...● I can check...
CSE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I can write short stories by my teacher.● I can write compositions on familiar topics.● I can write letters or email to tell my friends about my current situation.● I can...

• How could self-assessment descriptors be applied in local instructional contexts?

• How could they be designed to align with teaching and learning?

Brief introduction of the whole project (2017-2018)

Stage 1: creating criteria

- Created pre-modified assessment criteria based on **ELP descriptors**
- Participants' perceptions of the ELP descriptors after training
- Modified descriptors

Stage 2: using the criteria

- Used the modified ELP descriptors for self- and teacher-assessment

Stage 3: evaluating criteria

- Comparing self- and teacher assessment results
- Participants' perceptions of the ELP descriptors
- Applications for CSE

Participants



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- Two tutors
- 146 university students in China
- EAP reading-writing integrated module

Class ID	Number	Gender	Subject	Final writing scores (average)
1	35 (taught by Tutor 1)	Male: 16 Female: 19	Network media	69.69 (SD=7.66)
2	35 (taught by Tutor 1)	Male: 13 Female: 22	Network media	67.79 (SD=7.17)
3	29 (taught by Tutor 2)	Male: 8 Female: 21	Public Management	71.31 (SD=7.79)
4	47 (taught by Tutor 2)	Male: 3 Female: 44	Chinese Language and Literature	75.98 (SD=6.22)

Limitations of self-assessment driven by the criteria written by teachers solely

- Different understanding of the same criteria between learners and tutors (Orsmond et al, 1996, 1997, 2000)
- “learning cannot be sustainable in any sense if it requires continuing information from teachers on students’ work (Boud & Soler, 2016, p. 403)”

Advantages of self-assessment co-constructed by learners and teachers

- Co-construction facilitates learners’ understanding of why, what and how to assess their learning
- Empower and develop assessors’ capabilities
- Ownership & motivation

Different roles at different stages



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- Students constructing marking criteria alone can also lead to the criteria based on **what students are happy with** and **their existing yet limited** knowledge of the current tasks (Orsmond et al., 2000)
- Assessment has most effect when **students and teachers become responsible partners** with students progressively taking responsibility for the assessment process and developing and demonstrating their abilities to make sound judgment of their work. (Boud and Association, 2010)
- Reality constraints: time/knowledge

Creating accessible, feasible and useful self-assessment grids



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1. Researchers and tutors created draft assessment grids based on ELP descriptors, aligning with teaching, learning and learners

2. What were students' and tutors' perceptions of the accessibility of the **original** ELP descriptors?

3. Based on participants' perceptions, what **modifications** were necessary to enhance the accessibility of ELP descriptors?

4. What were students' and tutors' perceptions of the feasibility and usefulness of the **modified** ELP descriptors for EFL writing?

Alignment among assessment, teaching, learning and learners



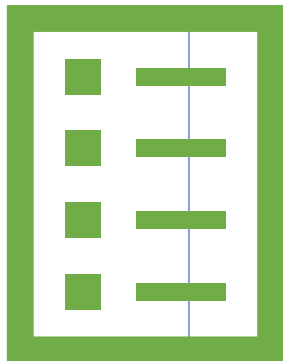
Instructional focuses

Genres: summary and Argumentation essays

English language proficiency: majority B1-B2

Low motivation

Learners' use of social media



Specific descriptors

ELP descriptors: essay and report

Descriptors at A2-C1 level: Motivation & objectives

Mixed orders of different levels of descriptors

emoticons to replace numbers

Creating pre-modified criteria: **numbers or emoticons**



achieved



nearly there



not there yet

more familiar and
friendlier than the
numbers

Serve the
purpose of FA:
Numbers in
summative
assessment

part of their learning
processes like their
momentary reflection
of daily life

Phase 1: introducing self-assessment

(25 minutes)

- Developing learners' knowledge of self-assessment
- Addressing their concerns over it
- Introducing the procedure of self-assessment

Phase 2: raising motivation

(5 minutes)

- Introducing the CEFR and ELP descriptors and its use and popularity
- Including its application for the forthcoming CSE (motivation)

Phase 3: demonstrating and trialling

(30 minutes)

- Teacher demonstration: their decision-making processes regarding sample and each descriptor
- Students carried out self-assessment with pre-modified descriptors

Accessibility of the pre-modified descriptors



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- Research methods: **nine-item student survey** about the accessibility and usefulness of pre-modified ELP descriptors
- Key findings: students' understanding of pre-modified descriptors

CLASSID	N	Mean*	Std. Deviation
1	33	2.30	.64
2	35	2.91	1.20
3	28	2.68	.67
4	47	2.62	.49
Total	143	2.63	.80

* On a scale 1-4: 1= extremely easy to understand; 4= extremely difficult to understand

Students' perceptions of the pre-modified descriptors



Table 4 Difficult items which were mentioned more than ten times

Difficult items	frequencies
Item 11	25
Item 23	25
Item 10	23
Item 21	19
Item 5	17
Item 18	13
Item 9	11
Item 4	10

Item 11: I can write with reasonable grammatical accuracy and can correct mistakes if they are identified by others.

Item 23: I can convey simple information of immediate relevance, getting across which point I feel is the most important.

Item 10: I can have good control of elementary vocabulary, but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts or handling unfamiliar topics and situations.

Item 21: I can produce continuous writing which is generally intelligible throughout.

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Item 21: I can produce **continuous** writing which is generally **intelligible** throughout.

- 69 among the 115: improved their own English language proficiency (e.g. increasing vocabulary sizes, improving grammar, practising listening and speaking, and memorising model sentence structures and essays)
- 37: replaced difficult and vague words with simple or common words
- Other advices
 - organising descriptors more coherently
 - reducing the number of descriptors
 - using bilingual descriptors
 - giving examples for each descriptor



- Research methods: teachers' reflective logs based on **classroom observation** and **prompts** similar to student questionnaire questions
- Key findings
 - Difficult words in descriptors affected students' comprehension
 - Similar items placed closely to each other increased difficulty
 - Lack of exposure to authentic English expressions in writing instruction
 - Students' low English proficiency levels



Bilingual versions

- Maintained the benefits of reading the ELP descriptors in English suggested by tutors and students
- More effective in solving the difficulties caused by the differences in English and Chinese language use than simply replacing difficult wording with “easy” vocabulary
- Priority on assessment rather than language learning

Modifications: **reducing cognitive load**

- Relocating similar items further apart
- Separating macro- and micro- aspects of the same genre across two sessions successively
- Assessment focuses across four sessions

Assessment focus	The number of descriptors
Constructing summaries	9
Language use in summaries	12
Constructing argumentative essays	7
Language use in argumentative essays	14

Self-assessment grid: Summary (macro)

- **Improved accessibility**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
accessibility of pre-modified descriptors	142	2.58	.598
accessibility of modified descriptors	143	2.15	.449

Four options: 1= extremely easy, 4 = extremely difficult

Modifications: a bilingual version of descriptors

- **Intermediate level of feasibility**

	N	Mean*	Std. Deviation
1	34	2.94	.81
2	35	3.03	.78
3	30	3.17	.70
4	44	2.64	.53
Total	143	2.92	.72

On a scale 1-4: 1= least feasible, 4= most feasible

- **97.9%**: confirmed the usefulness of the modified ELP descriptors for self-assessment and writing development.
- An intermediate to high level of usefulness: a mean of **2.61** (SD = 0.65) was obtained on a four-point scale (1=extremely useful and 4=not useful).

- **Set learning objectives**: attend to those underachieved items in their next assignments.
- **Increase learning motivation**: understand where they were and they should address them
- **Develop sustainable skills**: their ability to evaluate their own learning progress and developed their understanding of assessing themselves in future

Conclusions: empower learners as assessors



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Eliciting learners' voice in the whole process of self-assessment

- **Listen** to learners concerns over self-assessment
- **Align** assessment criteria with teaching, learning and learners
- **Support** learners to carry out self-assessment
- Co-construction: make the criteria a **shared domain** and resources for the community of practice with tutors
- Co-construction: increase their **ownership** of the criteria and the assessment itself
- Learners as **conscientious consumers** rather than passive recipients (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002)

*Assessment is used to provide a rationale and legitimacy for the **social structures** and **power relations** of modern day societies, and for **one's place** within these... It can influence not only how we see ourselves, but also our social relations with others and how we see them.*

Leathwood, 2005, 307-308

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself. – Galileo Galilei

More information about the project

QUICKLINKS ▾

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CEFR in China

HOME ABOUT THE PROJECT RESEARCH CONTEXT RESEARCH DESIGN RESEARCH OUTPUT RESEARCH OUTPUT DISSEMINATION CONTACT

