

## **Promoting Learners' Autonomy in Indonesian EFL Speaking Classes: A Framework for Effective Self-Assessment**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The role of self-assessment has grabbed much attention in recent years owing to the growing emphasis on independent learning to promote learners' autonomy which becomes the trend of present-day EFL teaching. Learners' autonomy is an inevitability and has proved to positive effect on EFL learning outcomes. In the Indonesian EFL context, self-assessment used in speaking class seems attention-grabbing to be noticed, while in fact, the majority of Indonesian EFL teachers appear troublesome to provide a method to assess students' speaking skills. This present study thus aimed to provide a theoretical framework for the effective self-assessment for the Indonesian EFL speaking classes by presenting alternatives of instruments that can be utilized for promoting learners' autonomy. A descriptive qualitative approach was used in this study using library research through conducting a comprehensive search of the relevant theories and empirical findings related to the self-assessment instrument in EFL speaking class. The result of the analysis shows that several instrument models can be utilized for EFL speaking classes, namely self-assessment checklists and learning logs.*

**Keywords:** *self-assessment, learners autonomy, EFL, speaking classes*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The notion of learner autonomy has gained its significant place in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. It is because learners' autonomy has been proven to be one of the significant factors driving success in EFL learning both in classroom settings (Hsieh and Hsieh, 2019; Liu, 2016; Rahman, 2018) and in online settings (Bedoya, 2014; Yosintha and Yunianti, 2021). Besides, the role of self-assessment has also grabbed much attention in recent years owing to the growing emphasis on independent learning to promote learners' autonomy which has become the trend of present-day EFL teaching (Taufiqulloh et al., 2018). Unquestionably, having learners' autonomy is believed to have a great contribution to well-established EFL learning (Hsieh and Hsieh, 2019; Koirala, 2020); Orawiwatnakul and Wichadee, 2017). Several studies have confirmed the need to stress learner autonomy in EFL learning such as Liu (2016), Orawiwatnakul and Wichadee (2017), and Koirala (2020) who have studied the implementation of autonomous learning through various treatments in different learning contexts. Findings showed that learners who have high autonomy obtained better achievement than those who learned traditionally. Accordingly, the need to cultivate learners'

autonomy is an inevitability in EFL learning and has proved to have a noteworthy impact on EFL learning outcomes.

There are several ways of cultivating learner autonomy, one of which is through self-assessment (Gholami, 2016). Self-assessment is one of the different kinds of assessment that a learner may carry out to know their performance (Masruria and Anam, 2021). Self-assessment is proven to positively impact students such as by improving learning outcomes (Panadero et al., 2017), encouraging the learners' awareness to improve the quality of their work (Khabbazbashi, 2017), fostering learners' ability to become increasingly self-regulated learners (Andrade, 2019), and offering independent learning to promote learners' autonomy (Taufiqulloh et al., 2018). Additionally, according to Masruria and Anam (2021), self-assessment teaches learners the value of assistance and commitment required to achieve the learning objectives, search for effective learning methods, as well as how to utilize them effectively. It is also designed to give students the opportunities to feel a sense of control over their learning activities and maintain positive attitudes towards learning, which then can improve their learning motivation.

The idea of self-assessment has a close relation to the idea of learner autonomy since the definition of learner autonomy states that learners are able to reflect and evaluate what they have learned (Hati et al., 2021). Hati et al. (2021) also suggest that in terms of language learning, self-assessment helps EFL learners monitor their success in achieving their learning goals and, in these circumstances their language skills. Besides, self-assessment allows learners to be able to identify their learning progress so that it can motivate them to develop their performance using their best strategies to achieve the goals that they have set (Masruria and Anam, 2021). It means that by implementing self-assessment, learners are allowed to reflect on whether the learning strategies they have used have been effective or not. They will be informed if they need to revise or keep on applying the strategies based on the result of their judgment. Moreover, in step with foreign language learning, learner autonomy serves a big role since learners may possibly take time to master the foreign language well. Thus, it requires a high level of autonomy in learning in order to get maximum learning outcomes in more effective ways.

One strand of research has demonstrated results concerning how self-assessment is used in EFL teaching. An empirical study conducted by Hati et al. (2021) investigated how self-assessment can enhance learners' autonomy by instructing them to run self-assessments after they have finished learning each theme. The result showed that EFL learners' autonomy level under their study improved. Another relevant study by Mazloomi and Khabiri (2018) demonstrated results that after conducting the experiment of instructing self-assessment, the

writing ability of Iranian students improved significantly. Similarly, a study by Hafidz (2018) also declared results that there is effectiveness of using self-assessment in relation to the accuracy of the EFL learners' writing essays. Discussing another language skill, Mardiyah et al. (2018) conducted a study showing that learners' autonomy has been empirically found to improve reading ability among university students in Jakarta. Those foregoing studies have linked self-assessment and learning autonomy with enhanced proficiency in several language skills.

In the Indonesian EFL context, self-assessment used in EFL speaking classes seems attention-grabbing to be further investigated (Alek et al., 2020); yet, the majority of Indonesian EFL teachers seem to have difficulties providing a method to assess students' speaking skills in order that they typically used traditional way. This might be led by the fact that testing speaking in any foreign language is one of the more difficult tasks committed by teachers attributable to class size, time for testing, and environment-friendly assessment (Ahmed, 2016; Alek et al., 2020). Additionally, speaking is a complex and challenging skill (Khabbzbashi, 2017) and is thus found to be one of the most feared context-based anxieties globally (Alek et al., 2020). Speaking requires a learner to compose the aspects of grammar, fluency, comprehension, as well as accuracy. Hence, it is not surprising that most EFL learners find it hard to speak English since they are afraid of making mistakes and mispronouncing words, as studied by Alek et al. (2020). Besides, the fear of speaking might also come from anxiety and a lack of communication and preparation. In step with that, self-assessment is thus about to be assumed to have positive outcomes in decreasing EFL learners' fear and anxiety in speaking.

Despite the fact that self-assessment has been proven to be an alternative solution to the foregoing situation, it was found that the majority of EFL teachers did not implement self-assessment in their teaching (Devianti et al., 2014). They reported that EFL teachers encountered inconvenience in implementing self-assessment in EFL speaking skills because most of the learners did not understand the use of self-assessment. Teachers under their study also confessed that they did not have sufficient knowledge and proper guidance about the self-assessment instrument. This situation has led them to feel unwell to implement the self-assessment in their EFL class. The role of teachers, nonetheless, is significant in determining the successful implementation of self-assessment, as emphasized by Liu (2016), Orawiwatnakul and Wichadee (2017), Koirala (2020), and Yosintha and Yuniarti (2021). This strand of research suggested that EFL teachers should consider their learners' readiness to learn autonomously and provide sufficient scaffolding. Teachers should act as facilitators to organize their classroom management, act as the counselors of their learners, as well as become the

resources during the implementation of self-assessment.

There have been numerous studies concerning learners' autonomy worldwide since then. Even so, learners' autonomy becomes a focus from year to year since it is a central concern among educational practitioners and scholars (Huda et al., 2020). The foregoing research on the use of self-assessment majorly indicated that it is effective in promoting learners' autonomy. As an initial study, this present study is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for the effective self-assessment for the Indonesian EFL speaking classes by presenting alternatives of instruments that can be utilized for promoting learners' autonomy. This study also provides an in-depth understanding by conducting a comprehensive search of the relevant theories and empirical findings related to the self-assessment instrument in EFL speaking classes. Exploring the instruments for self-assessment in EFL speaking class is essential as it may provide directions for EFL teachers and learners to promote learners' autonomy which in the future will produce better learning outcomes.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In EFL teaching, self-assessment is an alternative and effective way to explore learners' English language abilities (Alek et al., 2020). Self-assessment has been used extensively in English language testing within the four expertise in English namely reading, listening, speaking, and writing. According to Goral and Bailey (2019), during the process of self-assessment, teachers should provide guidance, comments, or support for their learners to produce better-quality learning outcomes. As a result, when learners know their potential, they are able to work for better preparation for the next performance and maximally achieve their learning goals. It means that when the learners do self-assessment, they will be aroused to make such as their learning plans, monitor their work, and evaluate what they do directly. Self-assessment is a type of assessment that requires learners to assess themselves both in the classroom and outside classroom settings. However, it is worth noting that teachers' roles in conducting self-assessments are crucial. In order to motivate learners to conduct self-assessments, teachers should involve learners in assessment-focused discussions as well as provide suitable exercises. Saito and Inoi (2017) suggested that several opportunities should be given to practice various aspects of the assessment process. They further explained that teachers are also in charge of clearly defining learning objectives and specific examples of student work in agreement with their learners.

Another strand of research put attention on the relationship between self-assessment and self-regulation (e.g. Andrade (2019); Panadero et al. (2017); Khabbazbashi (2017)). Khabbazbashi (2017) stated that self-assessment may influence the learners' individual

understanding because it emphasizes their high-order thinking, self-reflective, and self-regulation, and they can manage themselves to achieve their goals. Similarly, Andrade (2019) and Panadero et al. (2017) pointed out that self-assessment is an essential part of the self-regulation elements since it gives learners the ability to become increasingly self-regulated. It means that self-regulated learners will get higher chances to know their progress in learning through self-assessment and thus will seek the best methods to obtain the maximum learning outcomes.

The conceptualization of learners' autonomy is broad and it has various definitions. Despite its complexity, various theoretical definitions of learner autonomy raise significant characteristics: learners are responsible for their learning and they control their own learning process, accomplish their own decisions regarding the learning process, regulate their learning goals, reflect on their learning process, identify their learning resources, track their progress, and develop their learning methods (Ushioda, 2011). Discussing learners' autonomy cannot be separated from the discussion about active learning. According to Sanitchai and Thomas (2018), learners who are always active will tend to have good learning achievements. They will also develop their independence in learning and have a good ability to learn. Thus, learners who have high autonomy learning have a high desire to realize their learning plans and enjoy the freedom to decide their own goals to be achieved.

## **METHOD**

This study aimed to provide a theoretical framework for effective self-assessment for the Indonesian EFL speaking classes by presenting alternatives of instruments that can be utilized for promoting learners' autonomy. This study also provides an in-depth understanding by conducting a comprehensive search of the relevant theories and empirical findings related to the self-assessment instrument in EFL speaking classes. Building upon the mentioned objectives, this study employed a descriptive qualitative approach as the design of the study. According to Atmowardoyo (2018), a descriptive study refers to a study that explores an existing phenomenon and systematically descriptively presents the results as accurately as possible. Regarding the objectives of this study, a descriptive study is considered the most appropriate design of the study since it aims to explore the theories and studies from previous research to obtain the framework of self-assessment instruments for EFL speaking classes.

Library research was conducted to collect the data for this study. Sintayani & Adnyayanti (2022) state that library research is a study that uses literature in the form of books, notes, and reports on research results from previous research. The data were taken from previous research that was related to the topic of this study, namely self-assessment in EFL speaking class. There

are several steps are taken to collect this data, such as searching for and collecting data from journals or articles, recording the results found in the data, and finally concluding the findings. After the data were collected, an analysis was conducted to further discuss the issue and conclude the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study presents a theoretical framework as the results of a comprehensive search of previous studies related to the self-assessment instrument in EFL speaking class, namely the self-assessment checklist and learning logs.

### Self-Assessment Checklist

The self-assessment checklist is a type of test that comprises a list of questions or statements that learners need to answer. The use of a self-assessment checklist has been found to be effective in improving EFL learners' speaking skills (Başak 2019) and helping them to be self-directed learners (Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2014). To illustrate, a survey requiring learners to evaluate their performance of their language skills with a specific rating scale may be one such self-assessment checklist (Başak 2019). A checklist developed by Jankowska and Zielińska (2015) is one of the self-assessment instruments that can be utilized in the EFL speaking class. In creating the self-assessment checklist, Jankowska and Zielińska (2015) were inspired by several sources, namely the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the guidelines for the practical English oral exam at the Teacher Training College in Poznań, as well as the authors' teaching experience and observations. The descriptors used in the European language portfolio, specifying the language level of learners, formed a basis for a detailed approach to the criteria incorporated in the preparation of the list. The checklist for the self-assessment instrument is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The first example of self-assessment checklist**

	In my speech I managed to....	5	4	3	2	1	Comments/examples
1	Clearly present complex ideas						
2	Adequately describe experience						
3	Follow logical order of events						
4	Emphasize important arguments						
5	Give appropriate examples						
6	Draw conclusions						
7	Speak fluently						
8	Use appropriate intonation						
9	Pronounce "th" correctly						
10	Pronounce final voiced consonants correctly						
11	Pronounce vowels correctly						
12	Use correct stress in words						
13	Use advanced vocabulary						
14	Vary sentence structures						

15	Form grammatically correct sentences
16	Use correct verb forms
17	Use correct articles

Table 1 shows the self-assessment checklist developed by Jankowska and Zielińska (2015) that contains several aspects to assess. The learners are required to give a checklist on every statement which ranges from 5-1 based on their own judgment of their performance. Jankowska and Zielińska (2015) pointed out that during the self-assessment process of speaking, teachers are in charge of listening to and observing the process carefully and providing specific feedback to learners when necessary which includes some important points. First, learners must be informed about what errors and mistakes they make. Second, they must be motivated to speak, assess their speaking, and correct their mistakes after receiving feedback from the teachers. Moreover, teachers also should appreciate learners when they can correct their mistakes, develop themselves, use a new vocabulary item or an amusing role-play, produce correct sentences, make an interesting contribution to a discussion, and become eager to speak and assess speaking. Another example of a self-assessment checklist was developed by (Başak, 2019) which is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. The first example of self-assessment checklist**

	Yes	No
I can....		

<b>Other statement samples</b>	Native speakers generally understand me
	I feel that I am good at speaking
	There is not much grammar topic I avoid using
	I have a good vocabulary and I can use many vocabulary items
	I am able to adjust my speech to suit my audience
	I never make grammar mistakes
	I am rarely unable to finish a sentence

Table 2 shows the self-assessment checklist developed by (Başak 2019) that contains several components to assess. He explained that in order to make an objective measurement tool, the instruments should be created by the teachers. Besides, learners should be informed about the important components to be assessed. According to (Başak 2019) formulating statements starting with “I can” the desired skills of speaking can be assessed by learners. It is due to the fact the learners will more easily reflect on how well their performance is. An example of an instrument that includes the statement “I can” is the self-assessment presented in Table 2.

### Learning Logs

Another self-assessment instrument that can be utilized for EFL speaking classes is the learning log. Learning logs are used as a way to investigate learners’ display of autonomous learning activities. Logs were employed instead of journals because they were intended to give learners more flexibility in terms of length. While a journal usually contains longer passages, a log mostly includes only a short record of activity. Shih (2021) developed the example of learning logs models that have been proven to effectively improve learners’ speaking skills, as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. The example of learning logs model**

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Date/Time/ Length				
Describe your learning activity				
How did you feel?				
Would you recommend it? (why/why not?)				

Table 3 shows an example of the learning logs model developed by Shih (2021).



According to Shih (2021), assessing learners' performance using self-assessment during speaking activities is a difficult process. In order to make a well-established self-assessment process using the learning logs, EFL teachers are recommended to follow the following steps. First, teachers should establish a set of criteria so that both teachers and learners would be informed about the use of the self-assessment process. Second, it is recommended to instruct learners to reflect on their achievements and the inadequacies they perceive rather than asking them to grade themselves which can possibly make them nervous. Moreover, asking learners to grade themselves may also create objectivity and reliability-related problems. Third, self-assessment should take place immediately after the completion of a task, although audio and video recordings may prove helpful for students to remember their performance. Last but not least, it is important to complement self-assessment results with the teacher's information based on observations and test feedback in order to create a more reliable assessment tool.

Other possible solutions are also proposed by Shih (2021) to help teachers interested in using learning logs to enhance learner autonomy. First, the teacher's scaffolding, support, and explanation of the concept of learner autonomy and its importance should be consistently presented in class. Referring to Chan (2001) in Shih (2021), it is suggested that teachers need to be encouraged to work hard to enhance their learners' self-esteem and re-adjust the deep-rooted learning approaches that have long been discouraging any attempt to learn autonomously. Second, apart from the teacher's explanation of the concept of learner autonomy, bringing about changes in learners' beliefs requires activities that prompt their constant reflection and self-evaluation of learning. A successful example of Smith's (2003) realization of the strong versions of pedagogy in Shih (2021) for learner autonomy in a Japanese EFL class shows how the planning and evaluation cycle was integrated into a regular class. Third, giving learners the freedom to personalize their learning log, including which language they would like to use (their L1 or L2). Moreover, the teacher could encourage students to write more (both in terms of length and frequency) in the log.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to comprehensively search for previous studies related to the self-assessment instruments that can be utilized in EFL speaking classes. The results show that there are several alternatives to instrument models, namely self-assessment checklists and learning logs. To obtain an effective self-assessment process of speaking, teachers are recommended to listen to and observe the process carefully and provide specific feedback to learners when necessary which includes some important points. First, learners must be informed about what mistakes they made. Second, they must be encouraged to speak, assess their speaking, and

correct their mistakes after receiving feedback. Moreover, teachers also should appreciate learners when they can correct their mistakes, develop themselves, use a new vocabulary item or an amusing role-play, produce an accurate sentence, make an interesting contribution to a discussion, and become eager to speak and assess speaking. Teachers may correct learners' mistakes immediately or at the end of the speaking process. This study is an initial study that is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for an effective self-assessment instrument based on previous studies and theories. Thus, a follow-up study is recommended by conducting research to empirically prove how the foregoing alternatives of instruments are effectively used in EFL speaking classes.

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