

Self-reflection survey: Road to autonomy

Ayako Hisatsune

Kanazawa Institute of Technology

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Some students believe that grades are given by teachers, not earned by students, so helping them understand the actions necessary to succeed in class is essential. The author of this study conducted a survey to offer students the opportunity to objectively look at their own efforts, to foster student self-confidence, raise motivation to study, and enhance autonomous learning abilities. At the beginning of each term, the students in this study were given a questionnaire to keep track of their progress throughout the course. At the end of the term they completed a survey to show them the extent of their efforts and to present them with additional language learning strategies they can use to become better and more autonomous language learners. This article shows the two tools, a questionnaire and a survey, introduced to the students as well as the survey results.

成績は、自分で勝ち取るものではなく、教師によって与えられるもの、と考えている学生が時にはいる。したがって教育者は、学生が何をすればよい成績を取れるかを、はっきりと示すことが大事である。筆者は、学生に自分自身の努力の度合いを客観的に見つめさせ、学生の自信、学習意欲を高め、自学自習ができる人間に育てるためのアンケートを行った。学生は、学期の初めから、学期中の自分の達成度を測ることのできる用紙をもとに自分の成績を把握する。学期末には、自己反省アンケートに答え、自学自習の努力の加減を知ると同時に、さらに上達する為の、新しい学習方法も学ぶ。本稿では、授業中に使用された達成度を測る用紙と、自己反省アンケート、そしてそれらの結果を紹介し、学生をどのように指導すれば、自学自習の出来る者になれるかを考察する。

Reflecting on one's effort and performance before moving on to a higher proficiency level is a crucial part of language learning. Educators constantly try to provide students with opportunities to perform well in class. They also offer students assistance to monitor grades throughout a course. Yet some students still look surprised when they fail to receive the desired grades at the end of a course. Thanasoulas (2000) states that one of the principal goals of education is to alter learners beliefs about themselves by showing that putative failures or shortcomings can be ascribed to a lack of effective strategies rather than to a lack of potential.

To help students evaluate their learning, identify problems, and provide solutions, a Self-Reflection Survey that allowed students to objectively look at their efforts in and outside class was administered to the

378 participants in this study. The Survey was designed to enable the higher level students to receive assurance that they have done what was required of them, and help the lower level students become aware of the areas on which they need to focus. This self-reflection gave some students self-confidence and satisfaction, and caused others to see a painful reality. This latter group would then direct their anger or frustration toward their teachers, believing that it was the teachers who failed them deliberately.

However, the author of this study tried to show students that the grades are not simply given: it is the students who must make effort to perform well and meet the objectives of a course, and thus earn the grades. By involving students in a process of reflecting on their study habits, they become aware of the extent of their efforts and acquire additional language learning strategies necessary to become better language learners.

The survey helps students gain knowledge of their own performance and fosters students' self-determination to succeed, enabling them to be actively involved in a language classroom. The author devised three steps for students to follow in order to foster autonomy. 1. "Individual learners accept responsibility for his or her own learning" (Little & Dam 1998)" 2. Students learn that it is their effort and performance in and outside the classroom that "award" them the desired outcome. 3. Students evaluate their own learning strategies and readjust their learning styles.

Little and Dam (1998) say that "reflectivity and self-awareness produce better learning". Before sending students to the next language course or next language learning opportunities, one of the teachers' jobs would be to provide

students with tools to reflect on themselves and illustrate actions necessary to succeed in the language learning. Little (1991), cited in McCarthy (1998), defines autonomy as "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action." Having searched for ways to lead students toward autonomous learning, the author asked the following questions: Can a Self-Reflection Survey help students see how and why they acquire their grades? Can it facilitate students with additional language learning strategies necessary to become better language learners?

Progress record sheet

In order to facilitate the appropriate environment for students to reflect on their performance, educators must provide students with assistance to monitor their performance throughout a course. It is also essential to clearly show performance objectives at the beginning of a semester.

A Progress Record Sheet (Hisatsune & Baird, 2004), an A4 size sheet of paper on which students simply filled in the appropriate boxes (see the following figure), was used as the first step in the self-reflection. It had the following purposes: 1. To help students see the tasks and activities they are expected to perform in class. 2. To assist students in keeping track of their own progress so that they know what forms their grades. 3. To show students how to calculate their own grades.

Students were given the Progress Record Sheet at the beginning of a semester so that they could keep a personal record of their class participation points, quiz scores, and test scores throughout the course. Hisatsune & Baird (2004)

stated that by providing the Progress Record Sheet, students could clearly understand how and why they achieved their respective grades. It also helped prevent students becoming frustrated at failing to achieve a desired grade without knowing the reasons. Thanasoulas (2000) also suggests that elucidating expectations of a course at the beginning of the term and reporting on the outcomes of a course at the end of the term be carried out so that learners can put things into perspective and manage their learning more effectively.

Self-reflection survey

After closely following their own performance throughout the course with the Progress Record Sheet, students then filled out a Self-Reflection Survey at the end of the semester. A revised version of the Evaluation Sheet (Plastina, 2000) and Survey of Classroom Interaction (Sasaki, 1995) was used as a Self-Reflection Survey from the fall of 2002.

The survey consisted of 23 questions related to the students' background, and their awareness and usage of learning strategies. It was printed on both sides of an A4 sheet of paper. The first nine questions asked student background questions, and the rest of the survey was subdivided into three categories: tests (mid-term and final), quizzes, and attitude (class participation) scores. Each subcategory began with one fill-in-the-blank question that asked students to write the actual scores out of the maximum points for the category. Students were asked to simply transfer the actual scores in each category from their Progress Record Sheet to the Survey. This was then followed by multiple-choice questions related to activities and tasks that involved the evaluation of their performance in a

particular course. Thus, the survey itself showed students how they achieved their grades. The last question in the survey was an open-ended question that asked students to write comments regarding themselves or other aspects of a class such as teacher performance, attitude or class content.

Some questions in the survey asked if students put the learning strategies introduced in class into practice or not, and others provided information so that students could consider alternative strategies to add to or replace on their own in future study. (Table 2). Sharkey (1994/1995) used self-evaluation forms during a course to encourage students to reflect on their language learning skills (LLS). In the present research the survey served the purpose of encouraging the students to reflect on their own performance as well as the teacher's performance.

While the Self-Reflection Survey in this study was used at the end of each semester after giving back the final exam, it can be used twice a semester, such as after the mid-term and the final exams. It can also be a useful aid for student-teacher counseling concerning students overall performance by looking at each category together where time permits.

English V self-evaluation questionnaire

マークシートを使い、次の質問に答えてください。

Student Background経歴

1. Age年齢 a.18 b.19 c.20 d.21 e.22以上
2. Sex性別 a.男性 b.女性
3. Major専攻 a.工学部E b.環境・建築学部V
c.情報フロンティア学部H d.その他

4. Academic year 学年 a.一回生 b.二回生
c.三回生 d.四回生
5. How long did you study English in high school?
高校で英語をどのくらい勉強しましたか。
a. 1年間 b. 2年間 c. 3年間
6. How important is it for you to be fluent in English?
英語が流暢になるのは、あなたにとってどのくらい重要ですか?
a. とても重要 b. 重要 c. あまり重要ではない
7. Why do you study English?
どうして英語を勉強したいのですか。
a. 言語、文化に興味があるから
b. 英語を話す友達がいるから
c. 卒業する為の必修科目だから
d. 将来の就職の為に必要だから
e. 旅行の為に必要だから
8. Do you have your own study habits?
自分の英語の勉強方が
a. ある b. ない
9. Have you ever been to an English speaking country?
英語圏の国へ行ったことがありますか。
a. はい b. いいえ

Your grade consists of three parts: Daily quizzes, Tests, and Attitude. In order to understand how you have achieved your grade, please answer the following questions.

あなたの成績は3つのパートから成り立っています。あなたがどのように今学期の成績をとったかについて次のaからeを使い、10番から21番までの質問に答えてください。

- a. Always いつも行(おこな)った

- b. Generally たいいてい行った
c. Sometimes 時々行った
d. Generally not たいいてい行わなかった
e. Never まったく行わなかった

I achieved /80 on my Tests.

臨時テストの合計80点中 点取得した

In order to achieve the result above,

その為に、

10. I took notes in the review class and did all the review recommended by the teacher.
テスト前の復習の授業でメモをとり、先生に言われた復習をした。

I achieved /80 on my attitude.

学習態度の合計80点中 点取得した。

In order to achieve the result above,

その為に、

11. I did homework.
宿題をした。
12. Checked vocabulary I didn't know.
分らない単語やイディオムを調べた
13. Prepared for the next class in order to participate actively.
予習をし、次の授業で積極的に授業に参加出来るようにした。
14. Tried to participate in class whenever possible.
授業中出来る限り発言した。(P points)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>15. Listened closely in class and silently answered questions whether I was called on or not.
授業中集中して聞き、あてられてもあてられなくても頭の中で先生の質問に答えた。</p> <p>16. Guessed when listening or reading the foreign language using contextual and structural clues.
英語を聞いたり読んだりするとき、分からなければ、文脈や分の構造から意味を推測した。</p> <p>17. I did the writing assignment and CD-ROM activities.
レポートやCD-ROMの問題を真剣に取り組んだ。
(Bonus points, CD-ROM points)</p> <p>I achieved /150 on my quizzes.
小テストの合計150点中 点取得した。</p> <p>In order to achieve the result above,
その為に、</p> <p>18. I took notes in class and reviewed the material taught in the previous class.
授業中メモをとり、前の授業で学んだことを復習した。</p> <p>19. I checked words and phrases I didn't know.
分からない単語やイディオムを調べた。</p> <p>20. I memorized the words and phrases I didn't know.
知らなかった単語やイディオムを覚えた。</p> <p>21. I listened to the CD for the textbook.
テキストに沿ったCDを聞いた。</p> <p>22. For daily quizzes, I studied for
小テストのために毎回勉強した時間は</p> | <p>b. One to two hours 1～2時間</p> <p>c. About one hour 1時間程度</p> <p>d. About 30 minutes 30分程度</p> <p>e. Did not study 特になかった</p> |
|---|---|

Other comments about your grade and class:
自分の成績や授業について他にコメントがあれば書いてください。

Survey results

The participants of this study were 378 Japanese students majoring in engineering at a university in north-western Japan. The data was collected from the spring of 2003 to the fall of 2005. The students were from 18 to 20 years old, and over 90% of the group were males. The questionnaire was distributed in the classrooms on the last day of the semester and the students completed the survey during a 60-minute English class. The groups had from 17 to 20 students; 82% had never been abroad; approximately 73% of the students claimed not to use any language learning strategies when studying English.

A survey (group-administered questionnaire) was chosen as the tool for gathering information. Brown (2001) suggests that the best way to determine opinions regarding any aspect of a language program is to ask students directly in an interview or through a questionnaire. The steps to create a questionnaire suggested by Brown (2001) were used.

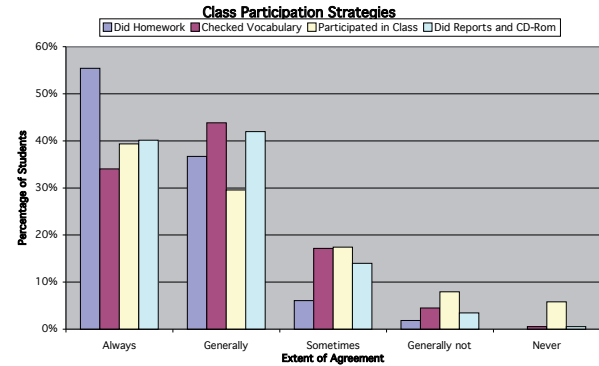
1. Brainstorming to decide question items to be given
2. Drafting a preliminary version

3. Getting feedback on the questionnaire
4. Incorporating the feedback into a final version of the questionnaire

A pilot study was conducted in the fall of 2002. Numerous changes were incorporated between the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2003 in an attempt to make the wording of the questions clearer and the responses accurately reflect the opinions of the participants (Nunan, 1992). Likert-scale questions were used, as this method is commonly used to investigate how respondents feel about a series of statements (Brown, 2001). Convenience sampling (Dornyei, 2003) procedures were adopted. The students were of similar age, gender, ethnicity, academic capability, educational background, social class, and socioeconomic status and were all taught by the author.

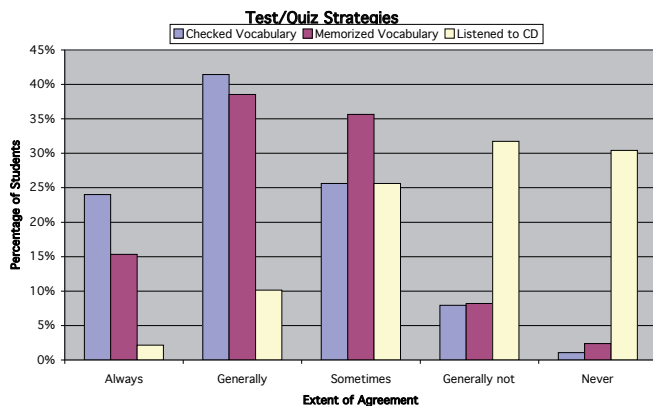
Answers were scored on a scale of “a” to “e,” where “a” corresponded to “Always” and “e” to “Never.”

Questions 11, 12, 14, and 17 were related to what is called the “Attitude Score” which includes class participation (question 14) and related assignments that enhance participation in class. Doing homework (question 11), checking vocabulary and idioms in the textbook in advance (question 12), doing reports and CD-Rom activities (question 17) were assigned in order to achieve the Attitude Score. Here, 349 (92%) of the students always or generally did homework, and 295 (78%) checked vocabulary in advance, 261 (69%) participated in class, and 311 (82%) did reports and CD-Rom activities. The questions in this category were the activities that were explicitly mentioned on the Progress Record Sheet.



Questions 19-21 dealt with activities that affected quiz and test scores. Here, 248 (65%) of the students always or generally included checking vocabulary (question 19) as a part of their study for quizzes or tests, 204 (54%) students always or generally memorized the vocabulary they checked (question 20), and 233 (62%) students never or generally did not listen to the CD (question 21).

Questions 10, 13, 15, 16, and 18 were concerned with strategies that were not explicitly included in the Progress Record Sheet, thus acting as alternative strategies that students could acquire for future study. Here, 214 (57%) students always or generally took notes in class and reviewed them before they took quizzes and tests (question 18), 223 (59%) students studied the material in advance and prepared for the next class (question 13), 239 (63%) students answered all of the questions asked by the instructor verbally or silently (question 16), 276 (73%) students guessed the meaning when listening or reading English using contextual and structural clues (question 15), and 252 (67%) students



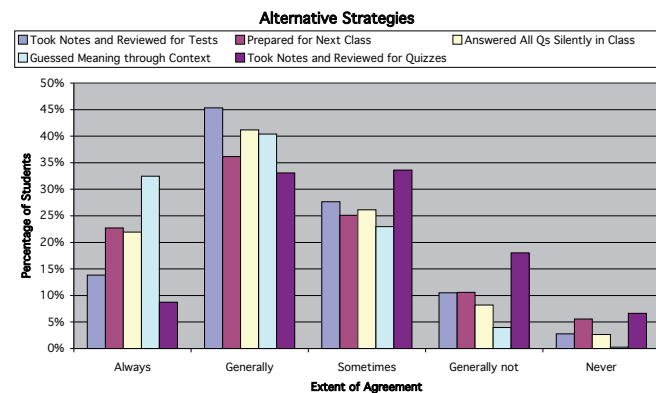
generally or sometimes took notes and used them to study for a quiz that was administered every class (question 10).

Question 22 asked about the study time spent on daily quizzes and there was an open-ended question for comments regarding students' grades and classes in general. Here, 257 (68%) students studied between 30 minutes to one hour before the daily quizzes.

Student comments

Of 378 participants in this study, 290 provided written comments (76%). Most of the comments could be categorized into the nine groups below. Forty students (13.7%) wrote a wide variety of comments that did not fit into any of these groups.

1. "Participating in class, listening to the CD, and studying hard paid off and I received a very good grade." (16.5 %, 48 students out of 290)



2. "I enjoyed class, but I didn't study enough every day for the quizzes and I did not put a lot of effort in the reports. These are the points I want to improve." (15.8 %, 46 students out of 290)

3. "I regret not having studied before quizzes. I should have reviewed the content. I also regret not having done all of the written assignments. But I enjoyed the class." (15.1 %, 44 students out of 290)

4. "I was absent once and missed a quiz. Otherwise I would have achieved a higher grade. I will do everything I can to achieve a higher grade for the next course." (11.7 %, 34 students out of 290)

5. "It was good that I participated in class activities actively." (8.2%, 24 students out of 290)

6. "I barely passed. The biggest reason is that I didn't study hard, but also not having done the homework properly and not preparing for class beforehand. I will review what

I didn't do well this time before moving on to the next course.” (8.2%, 24 students out of 290)

7. “Reviewing after class helped a lot so I will continue reviewing in the next course. That way, I can ask teachers questions before I become totally lost.” (4.1%, 12 students out of 290)

8. “The reason why my total quiz score was not satisfactory was that I made a few careless mistakes in each quiz that accumulated over time. I will remember to double-check before handing in my quizzes next time.” (3.4%, 10 students out of 290)

9. “I only achieved X% on the attitude score and that's the reason I did not receive the desired grade. I realized that everyday effort is what leads to success at the end.” (2.7%, 8 students out of 290)

Limitations

The participants in this study were from the university where the author works, and were not selected according to any other criteria. While it allowed the author to access groups of similar age, gender, ethnicity, academic capability, educational background, social class, and socioeconomic status, respondents were not randomly selected.

This paper has argued that providing students with opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their performance will result in student efforts to develop learner autonomy. It may be argued that having quizzes in every class is itself restrictive to developing autonomy. However, even in an environment where there is a department policy of administering daily quizzes, it is still the educator's

responsibility to provide tools to foster autonomy. The method of assessment is not always left to be decided by the students or teachers. In this study, using daily quizzes for assessment was compulsory. Therefore, the introduction of the quizzes was explained carefully at the beginning of each semester to ensure that students focused on the positive aspects of having daily quizzes. The student comments above suggested that some students saw the daily quizzes as limited and achievable incremental steps which led to the desired outcome on the final grades.

Another limitation of the survey was that the responses were elicited by means of a questionnaire using Likert-scale questions. Thus, some of the respondents may have chosen a neutral non-opinion option ‘sometimes’ in the survey presented in this study. The validity of data drawn from the questionnaire is also questionable, since it is not possible to determine if the respondents answered the questions truthfully. However, the principal goal of the Self-Reflection Survey is to ask if students did what was expected of them, and if they were satisfied that their results compared favorably with their effort. As for the alternative strategies, regardless of whether or not they really used the strategies such as “answering all questions silently in class,” they were given the time to think about these strategies shown in the Self-Reflection Survey. Irrespective of the accuracy of the data, the strategies introduced in the survey are available to students, should they decide to implement them in a future learning opportunity.

Discussion and conclusions

The data collected in this study shows that the Self-Reflection Survey used along with the Progress Record

Sheet seems to have served as sufficient tools for students to reflect on their effort and performance. The Progress Record Sheet was introduced to students on the first day of class so that they would know the range of tasks and activities they were expected to complete in the course. The Self-Reflection Survey discovered which tasks and activities written on the Progress Record Sheet were favored and neglected by students. It also showed which strategies were preferred. However, it can be seen from the students' comments that the items which were checked "generally not" or "never" served the purpose of helping students realize what more they could have done.

According to these comments, some students seem happy and proud of their accomplishment. Others are not as content but seem to know what went wrong. What surprised the author was how hard students tried to accurately evaluate their own performance, and how accurate the observation of their own performance became by completing the survey. There was no need to tell students what they needed to do anymore.

Reflecting on one's own efforts is an essential part of language learning. However, it does not always occur spontaneously. It is vital for teachers to provide students the chance to evaluate their performance as well as give them opportunities to openly discuss their thoughts including suggestions regarding their teachers. The survey introduced in this study helps students walk out of the classroom knowing their strengths and the areas on which they need to focus. There are no more surprised looks on students' faces at the end of the course. Instead, there are faces beaming with self-confidence, satisfaction, motivation to study, and

there are some faces heavy with regret.

The Self-Reflection Survey does not represent an end to a course: it is a learning opportunity that benefits both students and teachers. In order to become autonomous learners, students need to know and accept their current level of achievement and recognize strategies for better performance. College students will have countless learning opportunities in their lives, inside or outside the classroom. Hopefully, the Self-Reflection Survey will help them feel better equipped and confident enough to start on the road to autonomy.

Ayako Hisatsune is an Assistant Professor at Kanazawa Institute of Technology, Ishikawa Japan. Her research interests include learner motivation/autonomy, student-centered learning, and learning strategies.

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