

Second Language Acquisition Assessment: Flexibility in Approaches and How It May Affect Students' Autonomy

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Introduction. Assessment in the second language acquisition (SLA) classroom is a complex phenomenon. Apart from its seemingly straightforward task to evaluate various aspects of students' language proficiency, SLA assessment has many veiled influences. It affects the teaching process and may even define it, as in teaching for testing. Being a measure of academic achievement, it sets a certain threshold level, below which a student will be forced to withdraw from university. Thus, assessment shapes students' motivation externally which may diminish their genuine interest in the subject. Moreover, assessment is a reflection of authority distribution in the classroom: who assesses whom, whether teachers always assess learners, or teachers may delegate some assessment authority to students, at least partially, in order to foster learners' autonomy and enhance their internal motivation.

Aim, Materials and Methods. The aim of the present workshop is to find out how much flexibility in SLA assessment teaching staff consider to be appropriate, and to stir a discussion on that matter. The discussion is going to be threefold: first, what do we assess, is the assessment purpose to evaluate certain knowledge, skills, or competences? Second, how do we assess, what assessment modalities, be they tests, presentations, role plays, portfolios, projects, etc, could be more appropriate for various assessment purposes? Third, how much authority would teaching staff be prepared to delegate to students in terms of peer assessment and self-assessment and how much responsibility would students be able to take?

Results. The expected result of the workshop is a heightened awareness of what may contribute to variety and appropriateness of assessment modalities in the view of assessment purpose, method, and student autonomy.

Conclusions. The importance of a well-balanced repertoire of SLA assessment approaches and techniques cannot be overestimated, as it has a considerable potential for strengthening students' internal motivation through their active involvement in decision making in assessment. However, how much autonomy students should be granted is still an issue to be discussed.