Using Self-Assessments in a University Academic English Class in Japan:
Experiences and Analyses

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1. Introduction

Self-assessment, also known as self-evaluation, or self-rating, is defined here as a process in which students are asked to estimate their own knowledge, skills, and performance (Brown 2005:58). Student self-assessment is considered a powerful tool to raise consciousness about language learning among students and as a means to encourage active, self-directed language learning. Nunan (1998:116) mentions a raising of critical awareness and the fostering of new learning skills through the process of self-assessment. Moreover, the opportunity that self-assessment provides for reflection is thought to encourage students to think of their language learning as an active rather than a passive process (Leki 1991). Alternatively, Alexander, Argent and Spencer (2008:277-278) consider self-assessment a sub-skill of reflection, one of the three elements characteristic of a competent learner. Besides reflection, they argue that a competent learner is active and risk-comfortable. Possession of these qualities is also considered a prerequisite towards learner autonomy. The reflective dimension of study competence involves self-awareness, self-evaluation, realistic goal setting, monitoring learning, and critical thinking. Moreover, the quality of reflection is particularly important in academic study in which learner autonomy is essential. Dickinson (1987:26) also notes that, in contrast to external modes of assessment, which can increase inhibition, self-assessment helps to reduce competition in classrooms and increases co-operation among learners. In addition, self-assessment can reduce the need for teacher-centred assessment and thus shift the focus away from products such as marks and grades to an emphasis on learning.

Thus we can identify in the literature claims that self-assessment is a potent method of raising awareness about language skills, of encouraging active learning of new skills, that reflection, of which self-assessment is a sub-skill, is a step toward the goal of learner autonomy, and, finally, that self-assessment can help remove competition and inhibition and shift the emphasis away from products to actual learning. However, despite these claimed benefits and advantages, self-assessment remains a little used and under-researched tool in the English teaching classroom in Japan. Self-assessment is rarely ever experienced by students or employed by instructors.

This present research seeks to help fill the analytical gap in recent research into the use of self-assessment in English language classrooms in Japanese universities and also intends to explore whether learners in such classrooms are inclined to over- or underestimate their English language skills. On the basis of the evidence obtained, the author makes a practical recommendation for English instructors in the university classroom in Japan.

2. Previous studies

The key-point of self-assessment, self-evaluation, or self-rating is that students themselves score their own knowledge, skills, and performance levels. In peer assessments students assess the knowledge, skills, and performance of other students (Brown 2005). In teacher assessment, the instructor assesses the students' knowledge, skills, and performance. In the course in which the study was carried out, peer assessment was used during the course for both writing and presentation activities, as was teacher assessment, however, these types of assessment are not an object of research in the present paper.

Language self-assessment raises issues about the validity and reliability of the scores noted by the student self-assessors, which is borne out by conflicting reports about the correlation between the results of self-assessment and external testing criteria. For example, while Coombe (2010) reports an emerging pattern of high correlation between self-assessment results and a number of external testing criteria, Janulevičienė and Kavaliauskienė (2010) report the opposite: learner overestimation and a lack of correlation between self-assessment and external results. Issues of reliability and validity exist as the constructs to be measured in language learning may be opaque to the learners themselves. This means that the operationalization of the items to be rated must be clear and unambiguous. Moreover, the students are conducting self-assessment in a comparative way that may reference a native speaker, or fellow classmates, or some other referent. While skills such as listening or reading may be easier to judge in self-assessment, speaking skills can be more difficult to assess. A further issue is the need for systematic analysis. A single survey is likely to be of little use. Students should be asked to perform self-assessment at regular intervals and the survey must be careful to focus on the language skills that are being taught in the class.

In a recent study, Yada, Wakui, &Yui (2010), within the framework of a four-pronged approach to develop the English speaking proficiency of the Japanese students in their classes, use self-assessment and reflection in an attempt to have students learn 'actively and positively'. Whilst

acknowledging the claims that previous authors had made about the efficacy of self-assessment and reflection in fostering active and positive learners, there is very little analysis or interpretation by the authors of the results they obtained. While acknowledging vaguely that students were becoming more autonomous, the authors were largely concerned about making syllabus adjustments based on the results they gathered from the study.

In a further recent study, Wakui (2010) investigates the use of self and peer evaluations in developing successful presentations among university students at a Japanese university. In the study it is established that through the self-assessment process students were able to identify their weak points and understand what they should do to overcome such weaknesses. Wakui also states that the process was able to motivate learners and that learner autonomy was increased owing to the reflection inherent in the process of self-rating (2010). In this study Wakui's focus is divided between self-assessment and peer-assessment and her sole concluding inference is that 'the students demonstrated a high level of autonomy through the activities in the course'. While her observations about self-assessment are interesting and encouraging, practitioners may wish for more analysis on the part of the author, for example, to the end of whether she considers that the benefits of self-assessment could be practically transferable and useful for the development of other English skills, such as reading and writing, or speaking and listening, which could lead to practical recommendations for general classroom use.

3. Research questions

This paper explores the changes in self-assessment over the course of a semester in an Academic English 1 class of Japanese EFL learners. The research tests the following hypothesis:

That students would initially overestimate the level of their skills at self-assessment 1, would lower their estimate at self-assessment 2, and that there would be an increase in the estimate at self-assessment 3, because of the effect of those skills gained during the course.

The research tests this hypothesis and, then, through eight follow-up interviews with students who participated in the class, seeks to understand why self-assessment ratings changed in the way they did over the course of the semester, how helpful self-assessment was perceived to be, and to what level the self-assessment process raised learner awareness about the skills required in an English class.

4. Teaching context

The research was carried out at a private university in the kanto region of Japan. The class was an elective class, Academic English 1, which was held in the spring semester, followed by an autumnal follow-on class, Academic English 2. The class commenced with 22 female and male students. However, only 14 students completed the course. The students who remained were highly motivated. The students were in their first or second years of undergraduate study. All were non-English majors from various departments at the university. The course was designed to improve students' proficiency in English for academic purposes.

The course focused on developing the following sub-skills necessary for learning academic English: listening, reading, speaking, writing, and researching. Listening skills focused particularly on the skill of note-taking. The reading skills taught were aimed at developing critical reading. The speaking skills taught and required of the students were in particular discussion, debate, and presentation skills. The writing skills taught and required of the students during the course were geared toward the production of an academic essay by the end of the semester. The research skills covered finding a research topic, the use of appropriate sources, quoting, citing and referencing sources, and the avoidance of plagiarism. The students were evaluated by means of an academic essay, reaction papers, summary writing, quizzes, presentations, discussions, and a final exam.

The course was unique in that it was not designed as a traditional language-as-object-of-study course, rather the language was integrated with content to be learned. Thus the language skills were contextualized. The course was understood to be an 'EAP-CLIL' course in which the instructor followed the basic principles of CLIL or *Content and Language Integrated Learning*. CLIL is defined by Coyle, Hood & Marsh (2010:1) as 'a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content *and* language (emphasis in original). Here the additional language is English as a foreign language. The AE1 course was designed with a greater emphasis on the development of language and study skills. The subsequent AE2 course was designed with a greater content-orientation, with more emphasis placed upon the learning of academic content. A further special feature of a CLIL-oriented course is the inclusion of the '4Cs' as a core principle: content (new expertise, skills, insights), communication (language knowledge, use, skills, interaction), cognition (understanding, analysing, problem-solving, reflecting), and community (self-confidence and skills in working with others).

The class met once a week for 90 minutes over the course of a semester. There were a total of 15 meetings and a final exam. A TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program) test was administered in the second week of the course. The average TOEFL score for the 13 students who completed the course and took the test was 499 points. The standard deviation was 51.5. The mean score for 80 students across the four AE1 courses being held simultaneously during the semester was 483. The TOEFL ITP test recorded performance in listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension.

5. Methodology

Self-assessment sheets (see Appendix A) were administered at three intervals during the course: on the first day of the course (self-assessment 1 – SA1), at week 7 (SA2) and on the last day of the course (SA3). The students were asked to tick the most appropriate box for each of the five skills to be developed during the course: listening skills, reading skills, speaking skills, writing skills, and research skills. The scale for self-assessment was as follows: excellent, very good, good, intermediate, satisfactory, and weak. Thus the students were to make their judgements holistically (Brown, 2005:59). Half the items of the scale are inclined toward a positive assessment (excellent, very good, good) and the others (intermediate, satisfactory, and weak) toward a more negative assessment. The self-assessment sheet was written in English and, owing to its simplicity and clarity, was not translated into Japanese. The self-assessment sheet was given to students at the beginning of each class in order to avoid any influence through the class content and activities that were to follow. Students may also be able to assess their skills more objectively at the outset of the class, unaffected by tiredness. Some 22 students started the course, however, only 14 completed the course. The completed self-assessment sheets from these 14 students were used for statistical analysis. One self-assessment sheet was missing (SA2 N = 13) owing to the absence of a student.

6. Findings and discussion

The students selected one item on the scale for each of the skills taught in the course. These selections were then computed in frequency and percentage tables (Alreck & Settle 2004:270-271). See Appendix B for the full results. Below the cumulative percentages are used to interpret the data.

Table 1 Listening Skills (cumulative percentages)

Some 78% of students considered their listening skills to be good or very good at the outset of the course. By SA2, the percentage of students had fallen to 76%. By the end of the course, at SA3 the percentage of students who estimated their skills to be good, very good or excellent had risen to 92%. By the end of the course, some 14% considered their listening skills to be 'excellent'.

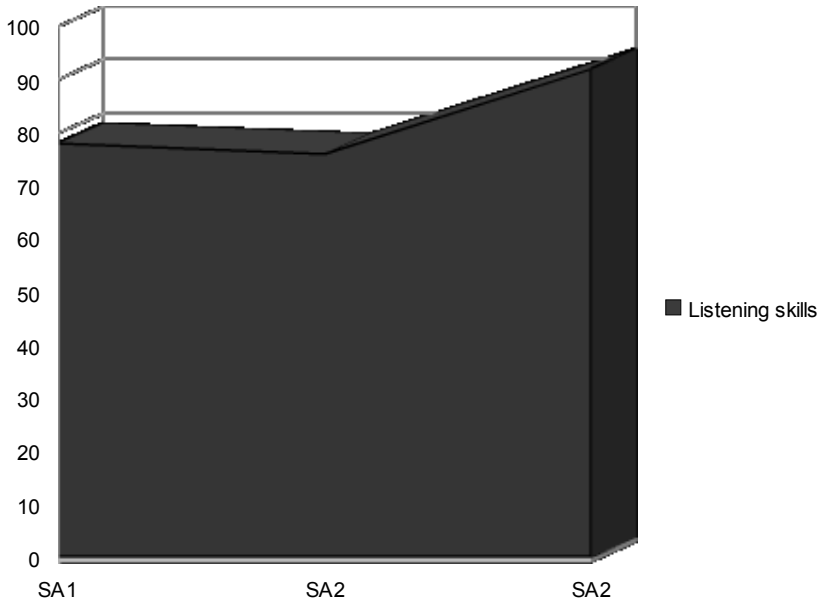
Scale	SA1 (N = 14)	SA2 (N = 13)	SA3 (N = 14)
Excellent	0.00%	0.00%	14.28%
Very good	28.57%	38.46%	85.70%
Good	78.57%	76.92%	92.84%
Intermediate	92.85%	84.61%	92.84%
Satisfactory	92.85%	92.30%	100.00%
Weak	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Positive inclination

・78% estimated LSs good or very good at SA1.

・76% estimated LSs good or very good at SA2

・92% estimated LSs good or very good or excellent at SA3.



Positive inclination – listening skills

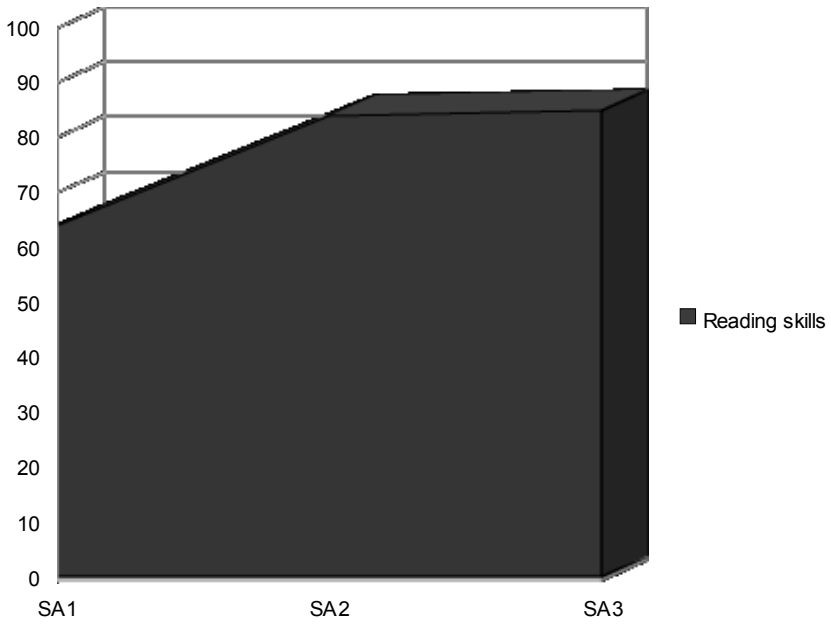
Table 2 Reading Skills (cumulative percentages)

At SA1, at the beginning of the course some 64% of students considered their reading skills to be good or very good. By SA2, the percentage had risen to 84%. By the end of the course, at SA3 some 85% of students estimated their reading skills to be good or higher. Notably, 21% of students estimated their reading skills to be 'excellent'.

Scale	SA1 (N = 14)	SA2 (N = 13)	SA3 (N = 14)
Excellent	0.00%	0.00%	21.42%
Very good	28.57%	38.46%	49.99%
Good	64.28%	84.61%	85.70%
Intermediate	100.00%	92.30%	100.00%
Satisfactory	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Weak	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Positive inclination

- 64% estimated RSs good or very good at SA1.
- 84% estimated RSs good or very good at SA2.
- 85% estimated RSs good or very good at SA3.



Positive inclination – reading skills

Table 3 Speaking Skills (cumulative percentages)

At SA 1, some 28% of students estimated their speaking skills to be at the level of good or very good. This figure rose to 38% by SA2. At the end of the course at SA3, some 71% of students considered their speaking skills to have reached a good or very good level.

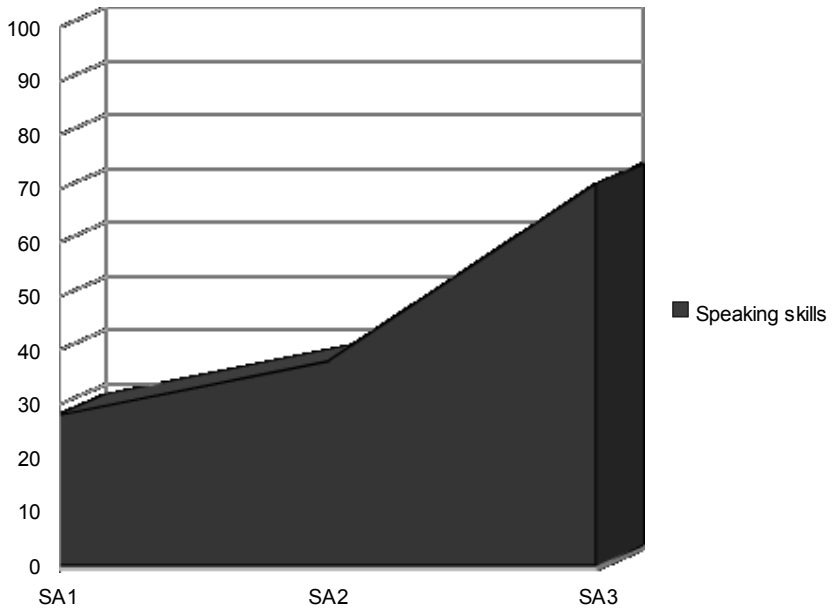
Scale	SA1 (N = 14)	SA2 (N = 13)	SA3 (N = 14)
Excellent	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	14.28%	0.00%	21.42%
Good	28.56%	38.46%	71.42%
Intermediate	42.84%	69.22%	92.84%
Satisfactory	71.41%	84.60%	100.00%
Weak	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Positive inclination

・28% estimated SSs good or very good at SA1.

・38% estimated SSs good at SA2.

・71% estimated SSs good or very good at SA3.



Positive inclination – speaking skills

Table 4 Writing Skills (cumulative percentages)

At the outset of the course at SA1, some 21% of students estimated their writing skills to be good. By SA2, the figure had risen to some 30% of students who considered their writing skills to be good or very good. By the end of the course, some 85% of students estimated their writing skills to be good or above.

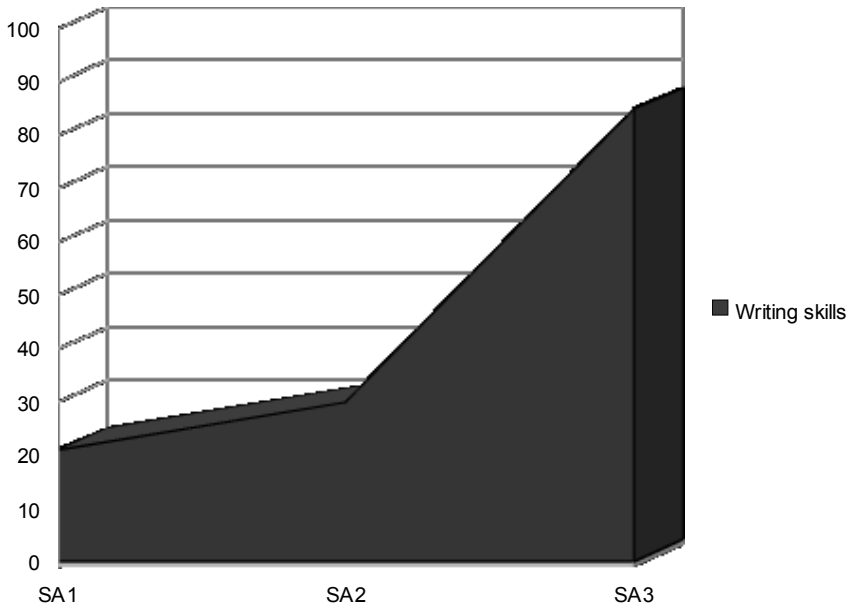
Scale	SA1 (N = 14)	SA2 (N = 13)	SA3 (N = 14)
Excellent	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	0.00%	7.69%	42.85%
Good	21.42%	30.76%	85.70%
Intermediate	71.42%	84.60%	100.00%
Satisfactory	92.84%	92.29%	100.00%
Weak	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Positive inclination

・21% estimated WSs good at SA1.

・30% estimated WSs good or very good at SA2.

・85% estimated WSs good or very good at SA3.



Positive inclination – writing skills

Table 5 Research Skills (cumulative percentages)

At the outset of the course, some 42% estimated their research skills to be good or above. Some 7% of students considered their research skills to be 'excellent' at SA1. By SA2, some 76% of students estimated their research skills to be at a level of good or very good. None of the students considered their research skills to be 'excellent' at this stage nor at SA3. By SA3, all the students (100%) estimated their research skills to be at a level of good or very good.

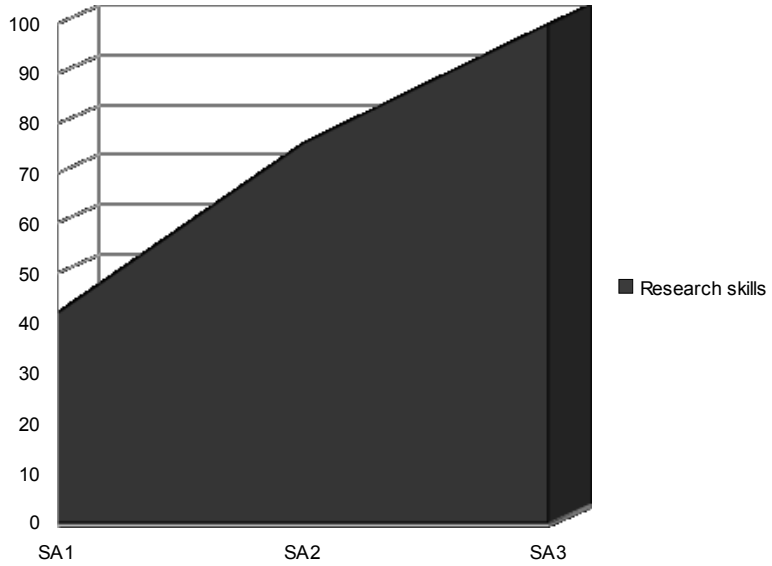
Scale	SA1 (N = 14)	SA2 (N = 13)	SA3 (N = 14)
Excellent	7.14%	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	28.56%	15.38%	50.00%
Good	42.84%	76.91%	50.00%
Intermediate	85.69%	91.91%	100.00%
Satisfactory	92.83%	100.00%	100.00%
Weak	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Positive inclination

・42% estimated RSs good, very good or excellent at SA1.

・76% estimated RSs good or very good at SA2.

・100% estimated RSs good or very good at SA3.



Positive inclination – research skills

Percentage Bar Chart 1 – Positive Inclinations of the Five Skills

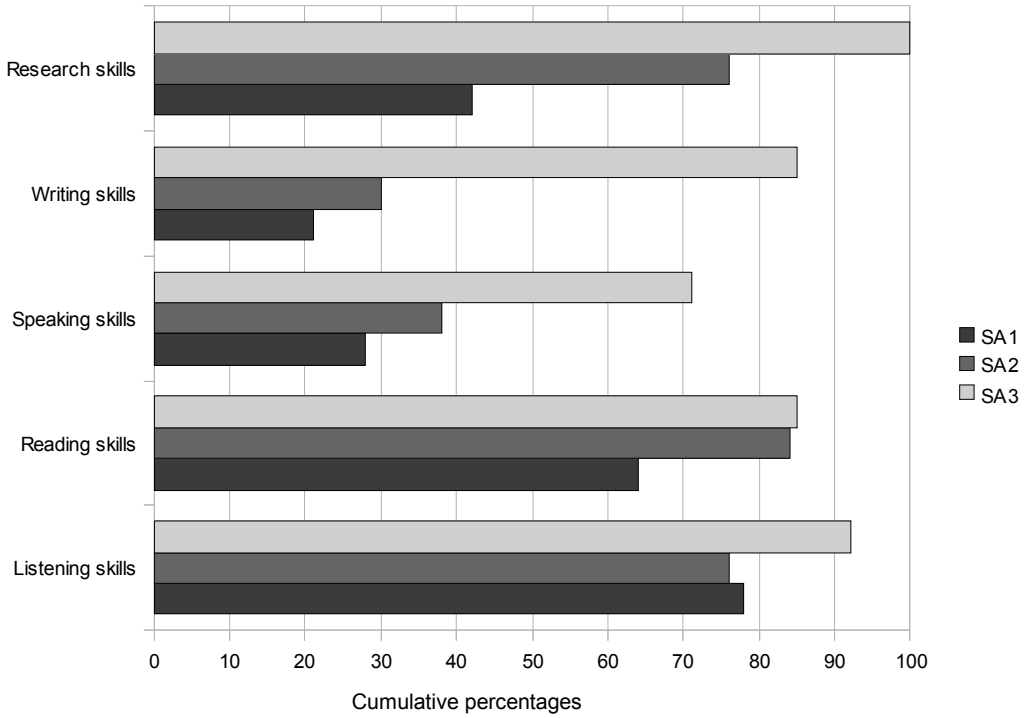


Chart 1 shows students were least confident about their writing skills at the outset of the course. Students also showed little confidence in their speaking skills. There was also a less than 50% positive inclination towards their research skills. Reading skills scored an over 60% positive inclination, while listening skills were rated most highly – almost 80% of students grading their skills at a level of good or above. However, at SA2 students scored their listening skills at a slightly lower level. Listening skills were the only skill subset to see a reversal in positive inclination at any stage.

By SA2 students' confidence in their writing skills grew somewhat, however, only to a level of 30% positive inclination. Estimations of speaking skills rose somewhat, too, however, to a level of less than 40% positive inclination. While students' confidence in their listening skills declined slightly, there was a large increase in estimations of research skills to well over a 70% positive inclination. Students ranked their reading skills at a higher level of over 80% positive inclination.

At SA3 students showed least confidence in their speaking skills. However, the positive inclination was at a level of over 70% and increased markedly over the SA2 assessment. Students also estimated a large increase in their writing skills to well over 80% positive inclination. There was a minimal increase in the estimation of reading skills. However, students'

confidence in these reading skills was already at a high level at SA2 of over 80%. Students' reversed the negative trend in their estimation of their listening skills and the positive inclination rose to a level of over 90%. Notably, students assessment of their research skills had reached a level of 100% by the end of the course.

The self-assessment at SA1 was done on the first day of the course after an explanation of the syllabus. The students were in their first or second year of undergraduate study. All were non-English majors. They had taken or were taking basic skills English classes at the university during their first year of study. The AE1 and AE2 courses were to act as a bridge for students who wanted to later attend content-based courses solely in English. At the stage of SA1, students are still most likely to be influenced by their experiences of English during their time in the Japanese high school system. It is well known that exams, in particular senior high school entry and university entry exams, have a backwash effect on the type of English taught in Japanese high schools. The results of this type of English education carry through to university. For example, it is not surprising that students rated their speaking skills at less than 30% and also their writing skills at just over 20%. The Japanese high school exam system focuses more on reading and listening skills, and often answers are given in the form of multiple choice selections.

At SA1 reading skills were rated at above 60% and listening skills at almost 80%. Studying for senior high school and university entrance exams exposes the students to a high level of English vocabulary. At SA1 research skills were rated at a level of over 40%. The research skills involved a lot of especially critical reading activities and techniques. At the inception of the course, although students were told what research would be required – the location of three different written sources (book/academic journal, newspaper/magazine, and internet) for an interesting topic to be developed into an academic essay -, there may have been a lack of clarity about what research would really be required during the course. The research skills and reading skills were concretely linked.

At SA2 students' rating of listening skills dropped slightly. During the course students received intensive practise opportunities in note-taking skills. This required close listening to an academic lecture. Some students may have struggled initially with the accuracy of listening comprehension required to efficiently take notes. At SA2 students rated their reading skills at a higher level of over 80%. During the first weeks of the course, SA2 was carried out at week 7, intensive work was done on the reading skills required for critical reading and research. Students practised skimming and scanning techniques, reading for the main idea, as well as

summarising. This may have led to students noticing an improvement in their reading skills. Students rated their speaking skills at SA2 somewhat higher at over a 40% positive inclination. Students were receiving extensive exposure to spoken English through the many listening tasks that were required. This may have prompted a higher rating even through the discussion and presentation activities were clustered more in the second half of the course syllabus. The evaluation of writing skills rose to 30% positive inclination. There was some practise in summary writing and reaction paper writing. However, this was for all the students the first time to experience academic writing tasks. Students' assessment of their research skills rose to over 70% to a level similar to their rating of their reading skills.

At SA3, which was administered on the final day of the course, the student rating of listening skills rose to a level of over 90%. Students had by this stage had intensive practise of note-taking skills, which required very careful listening on the part of students, and had also extensively debated topics in group and classroom formats. Students had also listened to many presentations made by fellow class members. Ratings of reading skills remained largely unchanged, though with a slight rise, at over 80% positive inclination. Students had been at this stage using their reading skills extensively for sources for the academic essay writing project. Speaking skills rose markedly to over 70% by the SA3 stage. In the final weeks of the semester students were presenting in groups and to the class which required them to use their speaking skills. The presentation activities had first been practised within the safer and less daunting environment of the group, and then finally at the class level. This allowed students to develop confidence in the delivery of a spoken presentation. The assessment of writing skills rose significantly to over 80% positive inclination. Between SA2 and SA3 students underwent an intensive academic essay writing process, which required the development of thesis statements, supporting evidence and conclusions. The writing process involved writing a number of drafts and submitting them to peer and teacher scrutiny. By the end of the semester, the students had to submit a final draft with references and citations. The intensive learning process necessary for academic essay writing may have led to this large increase in the self-rating level. Finally, at SA3, students assessed their research skills at a level of 100% positive inclination. This is surprising as reading skills and research skills are closelg linked and students did not rate their reading skills at such a high level. Care should also be taken with this high level of rating as students may have still misunderstood exactly what research skills involve.

In follow-up interviews with a total of 8 of the 14 students who completed the course, a questionnaire was administered (see Appendix C). The questionnaire contained two questions. The results are shown below.

Responses to the self-assessment questionnaire

Did you find the self-assessment sheet helpful? 1 Very helpful ..... 6 Not helpful Range of responses: 2 2 2 3 3 3 3 4 Average: 2.38

Did the self-assessment sheet raise your awareness of the skills you needed in the AE1 class? 1 A lot .....6 Not at all Range of responses: 1 1 1 2 2 2 3 4 Average: 2.00

In response to the first question about the helpfulness of the self-assessment sheets the respondents ranked the process on the whole with a positive inclination of 2.38. This shows, among the respondents, a positive attitude toward the value of using self-assessment sheets in the language classroom.

In response to the second question of whether the self-assessment sheet raised awareness of the skills needed in the course the respondents scored the process highly at 2.00. This demonstrates a significantly positive response to the efficacy of such self-assessment sheets to raise awareness of the skills that were targeted in the course.

In comments related to question 1 of the questionnaire, students seemed to appreciate to be given the three opportunities to check how their skills were improving during the progression of the course. Two other students stated that it was important to think about the current level of abilities and thereby to understand which skills would need to be worked on. However, two students also commented that the motivational boost given by the self-assessment sheet soon passed and that it was difficult to remember how they had evaluated their skills the previous time. One further student commented on the difficulty of carrying out a self-assessment and mentioned he could not assess himself well.

In comments related to question 2 of the questionnaire, students were unanimous in their comments that the sheets had raised awareness of the skills needed. One student commented thus, 'By evaluating myself, I could see myself more subjectively and it encouraged me to study more.' Though perhaps the student was planning to use the word 'objectively' rather than

'subjectively', we can see that the increased awareness of the skills required in the class was motivational to the end that the student was encouraged to increase her study efforts. Another student commented that using the self-assessment sheet made it very clear to her what skills she would need to work on, thereby raising awareness of her possible weaknesses. In a similar comment, a further student became more acutely aware of his lack of speaking skills and he was motivated to try hard to improve those speaking skills. Another student commented that the self-assessment sheet raised awareness of the levels of his individual skills and again that by using the sheet he was motivated to improve those skills.

7. Conclusion

In a hypothesis the assumption was that students would overestimate the level of their skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing, and research) in a self-assessment process after being presented with the objectives and goals, via the syllabus, of an academic English course, and that there would be a subsequent downward re-adjustment in the assessment at the mid-term stage of the course, which would be followed by an increase in the levels of rating at the end of the course owing to the practice and development of those skills during the semester.

The first part of the assumption that there would be an overestimation in the self-assessment of the levels of the requisite skills does not appear to have been borne out. Solely in the case of listening skills was there a downward adjustment of 2% at SA2 in accordance with the second part of the assumption. However, this reversal is too small to carry significance. Self-assessments for reading, speaking, writing and research skills all rose significantly at SA2. There was a further increase in the levels of self-assessment at SA3 for all five skills, significant in all cases except for reading skills. This further increase, in turn, appears to bear out the third part of the assumption. Because the first two parts of the assumption were not borne out, the hypothesis has no validity. Solely the third part of the assumption that the skills would improve during the course may have validity.

As discussed above the initial self-assessments were shaped greatly by the English backgrounds of the students within the Japanese educational system and the backwash of high school and university entrance exams upon the skills developed during the high school period of education: in particular reading and listening skills. This phenomenon of focusing on passive skills is well-known (Japan Times, 2010) and is recognized as problematic owing to the demand for active skills, that is, speaking and writing, in the real world. From this basis onwards,

subsequent self-assessment ratings were then primarily influenced by events and teaching practices in the course.

Therefore, a further approach to an interpretation of the results would be to assume that students underestimated or were cautious about the level of their skills at the outset of the course at the point of SA1, and that they adjusted their evaluations upwards at SA2, and then, owing to the study and learning practices experienced during the course and a subsequent increase in level of confidence, at SA3 effected a final upward adjustment. These assumptions would be borne out by the data collected.

This interpretation, backed up by the data available, suggests that the students tend to be cautious or even underestimate the level of their skills at the beginning of the course. They then readjust the self-assessment of their skills upwardly at the mid-term point. Finally, at the end of the course, the students are expressing greater confidence in the levels of their skills, on the basis of the instruction received. Thus an instructor who administers a similar self-assessment process to Japanese university students in a four/five language skills course may witness a similar pattern in student self-evaluation levels: initial underestimation, subsequent upward readjustment, and the highest level of self-assessment at course end.

The follow-up questionnaire administered to 8 of the 14 students who completed the course demonstrated that students were positive about the helpfulness of such self-assessment procedures and even more positive about the potential of the process to raise awareness of the skills needed in this particular academic English class. Students were unanimous in their opinions that the sheets had raised awareness of the skills needed in the course and commented that such self-assessment was motivational in overcoming weaknesses that they had identified themselves.

In sum, when using self-assessment sheets of the type employed in this study, instructors should be aware that students may cautiously underestimate skills at the inception of the course. This undervaluation may then be followed by a steady upward readjustment as students gain confidence and as the positive effects of course instruction have an impact. Even though the sample size was small in the present study, in view of the positive evaluation given and the comments made by students in the follow-up questionnaire, particularly as regards the potential to raise awareness in the skills needed and the motivational impulse given to improve perceived weaknesses, the use of self-assessment sheets is highly recommended in undergraduate

university EFL courses in Japan, whatever the skill or the skills being taught in the course. As one student commented, 'Teachers should use self-assessment sheets in class because it gives a chance to think about our own skills.' Should we be denying our students this opportunity?

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Appendix A

Academic English 1 – Student Self-Evaluation Sheet

Learner self-grading of academic English sub-skills at course begin.

Instruction: Tick (√) the most appropriate box.

Self-assessment	***Listening skills***	***Reading skills***	***Speaking skills***	***Writing skills***	***Research skills***
Excellent					
Very good					
Good					
Intermediate					
Satisfactory					
Weak					

Note: Self-assessment is a tool to raise learner awareness of language use and may help to develop learner responsibility and autonomy.

Appendix B

Completing Students Only Frequency Tables

Self-assessment 1 (completing students)	Listening skills	Reading skills	Speaking skills	Writing skills	Research skills
(a) Excellent					1 (7.14%)
(b) Very good	4 (28.57%)	4 (28.57%)	2 (14.28%)		3 (21.42%)
(c) Good	7 (50.00%)	5 (35.71%)	2 (14.28%)	3 (21.42%)	2 (14.28%)
(d) Intermediate	2 (14.28%)	5 (35.71%)	2 (14.28%)	7 (50.00%)	6 (42.85%)
(e) Satisfactory			4 (28.57%)	3 (21.42%)	1 (7.14%)
(f) Weak	1 (7.14%)		4 (28.57%)	1 (7.14%)	1 (7.14%)

(N = 14)

Self-assessment 2 (completing students)	Listening skills	Reading skills	Speaking skills	Writing skills	Research skills
(a) Excellent					
(b) Very good	5 (38.46%)	5 (38.46%)		1 (7.69%)	2 (15.38%)
(c) Good	5 (38.46%)	6 (46.15%)	5 (38.46%)	3 (23.07%)	8 (61.53%)
(d) Intermediate	1 (7.69%)	1 (7.69%)	4 (30.76%)	7 (53.84%)	2 (15.38%)
(e) Satisfactory	1 (7.69%)	1 (7.69%)	2 (15.38%)	1 (7.69%)	1 (7.69%)
(f) Weak	1 (7.69%)		2 (15.38%)	1 (7.69%)	

(N = 13)

Self-assessment 3 (completing students)	Listening skills	Reading skills	Speaking skills	Writing skills	Research skills
(a) Excellent	2 (14.28%)	3 (21.42%)			
(b) Very good	10 (71.42%)	4 (28.57%)	3 (21.42%)	6 (42.85%)	7 (50.00%)
(c) Good	1 (7.14%)	5 (35.71%)	7 (50.00%)	6 (42.85%)	7 (50.00%)
(d) Intermediate		2 (14.28%)	3 (21.42%)	2 (14.28%)	
(e) Satisfactory	1 (7.14%)		1 (7.14%)		
(f) Weak					

(N = 14)

Frequency Tables for Listening Skills (Completing Students only) Self-Assessments 1-3

Self-assessment 1	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	4	28.57%	28.57%
Good	(c)	7	50.00%	78.57%
Intermediate	(d)	2	14.28%	92.85%
Satisfactory	(e)	0	0.00%	92.85%
Weak	(f)	1	7.14%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Self-assessment 2	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	5	38.46%	38.46%
Good	(c)	5	38.46%	76.92%
Intermediate	(d)	1	7.69%	84.61%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.69%	92.30%
Weak	(f)	1	7.69%	100.00%

(N = 13)

Self-assessment 3	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	2	14.28%	14.28%
Very good	(b)	10	71.42%	85.70%
Good	(c)	1	7.14%	92.84%
Intermediate	(d)	0	0.00%	92.84%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.14%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Frequency Tables for Reading Skills (Completing Students only) Self-Assessments 1-3

Self-assessment 1	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	4	28.57%	28.57%
Good	(c)	5	35.71%	64.28%
Intermediate	(d)	5	35.71%	100.00%
Satisfactory	(e)	0	0.00%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Self-assessment 2	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	5	38.46%	38.46%
Good	(c)	6	46.15%	84.61%
Intermediate	(d)	1	7.69%	92.30%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.69%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 13)

Self-assessment 3	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	3	21.42%	21.42%
Very good	(b)	4	28.57%	49.99%
Good	(c)	5	35.71%	85.70%
Intermediate	(d)	2	14.28%	100.00%
Satisfactory	(e)	0	0.00%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Frequency Tables for Speaking Skills (Completing Students only) Self-Assessments 1-3

Self-assessment 1	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	2	14.28%	14.28%
Good	(c)	2	14.28%	28.56%
Intermediate	(d)	2	14.28%	42.84%
Satisfactory	(e)	4	28.57%	71.41%
Weak	(f)	4	28.57%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Self-assessment 2	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Good	(c)	5	38.46%	38.46%
Intermediate	(d)	4	30.76%	69.22%
Satisfactory	(e)	2	15.38%	84.60%
Weak	(f)	2	15.38%	100.00%

(N = 13)

Self-assessment 3	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	3	21.42%	21.42%
Good	(c)	7	50.00%	71.42%
Intermediate	(d)	3	21.42%	92.84%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.14%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Frequency Tables for Writing Skills (Completing Students only) Self-Assessments 1-3

Self-assessment 1	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Good	(c)	3	21.42%	21.42%
Intermediate	(d)	7	50.00%	71.42%
Satisfactory	(e)	3	21.42%	92.84%
Weak	(f)	1	7.14%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Self-assessment 2	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	1	7.69%	7.69%
Good	(c)	3	23.07%	30.76%
Intermediate	(d)	7	53.84%	84.60%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.69%	92.29%
Weak	(f)	1	7.69%	100.00%

(N = 13)

Self-assessment 3	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	6	42.85%	42.85%
Good	(c)	6	42.85%	85.70%
Intermediate	(d)	2	14.28%	100.00%
Satisfactory	(e)	0	0.00%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Frequency Tables for Research Skills (Completing Students only) Self-Assessments 1-3

Self-assessment 1	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	1	7.14%	7.14%
Very good	(b)	3	21.42%	28.56%
Good	(c)	2	14.28%	42.84%
Intermediate	(d)	6	42.85%	85.69%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.14%	92.83%
Weak	(f)	1	7.14%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Self-assessment 2	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	2	15.38%	15.38%
Good	(c)	8	61.53%	76.91%
Intermediate	(d)	2	15.00%	91.91%
Satisfactory	(e)	1	7.69%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 13)

Self-assessment 3	Code	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Excellent	(a)	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very good	(b)	7	50.00%	50.00%
Good	(c)	7	50.00%	100.00%
Intermediate	(d)	0	0.00%	100.00%
Satisfactory	(e)	0	0.00%	100.00%
Weak	(f)	0	0.00%	100.00%

(N = 14)

Appendix C

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

	Very helpful.....Not helpful					
1. Did you find the self-assessment sheet helpful?	1	2	3	4	5	6

Why? Why not?

_____

_____

	A lot.....Not at all					
2. Did the self-assessment sheet raise your awareness of the skills you needed in the AE1 class?	1	2	3	4	5	6

Why? Why not?

_____

_____

Using Self-Assessments in a University Academic English Class in Japan:
Experiences and Analyses

Neale Cunningham

Abstract

Self-assessment, also known as self-evaluation, or self-rating, is defined here as a process in which students are asked to estimate their own knowledge, skills, and performance. Student self-assessment is considered a powerful tool to raise consciousness about language learning among students and as a means to encourage active, self-directed language learning of new skills. Moreover, self-assessment can help remove competition and inhibition and shift the emphasis away from products to actual learning. However, despite these claimed benefits and advantages, self-assessment remains a little used and under-researched tool in the English teaching classroom in Japan. Self-assessment is rarely ever experienced by students or employed by instructors.

This present research seeks to help fill the analytical gap in recent research into the use of self-assessment in English language classrooms in Japanese universities and also intends to explore whether learners in such classrooms are inclined to over- or underestimate their English language skills. On the basis of the evidence obtained, the author makes a practical recommendation for English instructors in the university classroom in Japan.