

My Signature Pedagogy, My Tool for Trade

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Abstract

It has been more than two decades since I have been teaching English as a subject and experienced the dynamic notions of pedagogy. I have employed mixed approaches to teaching as per the plethora of time, content, and context in my long professional journey. This reflective journaling explores my journey in developing the signature pedagogy of Student Self-Assessment in my ELT class. I share my experience with students' self-assessment tools, strategies, and techniques as a part of my classroom instruction. I followed a qualitative approach and employed an open-ended questionnaire, my observations, students' artifacts, rubrics, criteria, and checklists to collect and analyze the data. I explored that the self-assessment technique developed, creativity, critical thinking, metacognition and autonomy in their English language learning. In this paper, I further discuss my pedagogy's genesis, evolution, implication, and applicability and how it can be transferable beyond English language teaching for sustainable learning.

Keywords: accountability, signature pedagogy, student's self-assessment, sustainable learning

Introduction

Pedagogy refers to the method and practice of teaching that encompasses classroom instruction, assessment and feedback. The pedagogical practices get changed and revised as per the demand of time and technological advancement. Doggett (1986) argued that no single and universally accepted approach or method exists to teach a language for all settings. Therefore, teachers' extensive exploration, innovation and critical reflection in the teaching-learning process are essential to create or customize the pedagogical praxis to suit the varied soils. Teachers must design distinctive and distinguishing instruction and learning methods within a certain context. This is what Shulman (2005) first coined the term as 'Signature Pedagogy' to describe a profession's distinct approach to instruction and training. It is something specific and distinctive to that discipline taught to pupils within that framework. It is also possible to learn a great deal about the personalities, dispositions, and cultures of a field from the "signature pedagogy" of that discipline (Shulman, 2005b, p. 52). He suggested the three crucial aspects—thinking, acting, and performing with integrity for professional development in any field.

Pedagogy is a key lever for bringing about improvement in the academic performance of the students (Kapur, 2020). Our pedagogical approaches have progressed from a conventional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach to engage the students for their sustainable learning. The student-centered approach demands the overall development in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of both the learners and the facilitators (McDonald, 2012). The meta-analysis by Aytaç and Kula (2020) stated that the use of student-centered techniques and procedures in the classroom favorably impacts students' capacity for creative thought. The research concluded that the Student-Centered Approach (SCA) had a beneficial and significant impact on students' Critical Thinking Skills (CTS). The student-directed assessment aligns with the terms assessment for and assessment as learning by inviting the students into the assessment process for active learning. Brown (2005) defined "assessment as learning" as a formative assessment process where students evaluate their work, identify strengths and weaknesses, and revise accordingly, covering diagnostic, formative, and summative aspects, allowing them to adjust study strategies

Oli, 2025, My Signature Pedagogy.....

and learn best. Yan and Yang (2022) affirmed that students should monitor their performance and receive the ongoing support they require, an assessment-as-learning task to provide learning opportunities that go beyond simply retrieving and applying their prior knowledge. It must also encourage the development of metacognition and self-regulation in students. With this conception, Students' Self-Assessment (SSA) has been my signature pedagogy. It is a method of including students in the process of teaching, learning, and evaluation (Baidoo-Anu et al., 2023).

Background of the Study

The idea of self-assessment was not generated all of a sudden to me. It slowly crept into my insight and underwent evolution. The idea was developed as a part of formative assessment while serving my responsibility as a hostel superintendent in my residential school. The tutorial classes followed by the progress test for the hosteller in large size got me to brainstorm some innovative ideas for quick and smart checking and handing in the papers with feedback. We gave exams in five major subjects (English, Nepali, Maths, Science, and Social) on school holidays and asked some senior class students to evaluate their performances. The acknowledging system of the excellent performers and evaluators in general hostel assemblies motivated the students to keep on learning and working with sincerity. I felt this technique had enhanced the reading culture at a hostel to a great extent.

Later during the pandemic of COVID-19, the physical classes shifted to the virtual systems to maintain the protocol of COVID-19. I could see the excitement among the students while they were making their self-assessments and tracking their progress through web tools like Propoofs, Nearpod, Kahoot, and live worksheets. However, in the physical classes, I noticed that the students were copying the written homework, class tests, and unit tests from their friends which disappointed me to large extent. In my opinion, copying writings from others was a waste of time only, not letting the students develop self-exploration, revision, creativity, and critical thinking. In the same vein, Palazzo et al. (2010) also explored a positive correlation between copying homework and declination in students' achievement. The Students' Quality Circle (SQC) at our school explored a serious issue with copying assignments. They

presented some suggestions to sort out the issue however, the problem was not solved as expected. I wanted to know the reason behind the prevalent problem and found the students had no intrinsic motivation to learn because I noticed the students even did not see the feedback that I provided them on their work. In addition, the constructivist method highlights the significance of intrinsic motivation, which is acting in a way that is personally fulfilling (Schmitt & Lahroodi, 2007). The underlying assumptions of this method are that creativity and intrinsic motivation (Norman & Spohrer, 1996) are related to learning best practices and the pursuit of new information and skills by individuals. Their response in the survey form 'Doing assignments and tests is a boring job' demanded an urgency to create or customize something exciting yet challenging for my students.

I learned the concept of self-assessment as a student in a teacher education course in an asynchronous mode back in 2021. During the pandemic of COVID 19, I joined the e-course 'TESOL Core Certificate Practicum Course' for six months and this allowed me to become acquainted with self-assessment tools and techniques. Some self-assessment tools being used in the course were peer commenting on Moodle, reflection sharing, and criterion-based self-assessment tools like rubrics for assignments. Along with the assignment, we were given some criteria-based rubrics to self-assess, cross-check, and revise the assignment as per our wish. I could anticipate my grades, comments and our progress on the dashboard. Receiving the same grades on the progress bar encouraged me and authenticated my learning and assessing process. The rubrics made me conceptualize my perspectives on self-assessment and its authenticity even in the online mode of learning.

Upon reflecting on my teaching-learning, correction, and evaluation process from the past both as a student and as a teacher, I thought about involving my students in the evaluation process by literally wearing the teacher's hat. I wanted to revise and shift the teacher-directed assessment to self-assessment as a technique of student-centered approach. I also believe in employing the feminist pedagogy that emphasizes collaboration, empowerment, and equitable distribution of power to all. Similarly, I planned to have an open discussion with my students and their preferred ways of assessment in the course of daily instruction. My study aims to explore how SSA as a

Oli, 2025, My Signature Pedagogy.....

Signature Pedagogy develops creativity, metacognition and learning opportunities in ELT class. The following research questions were set to meet the purpose of the study.

1. How does SSA develop the creativity and metacognition of the students?
2. How does SSA ensure better learning opportunities for academic achievement?

Literature Review

SSA as a Signature Pedagogy

Self-assessment has historically been ingrained in both Eastern and Western civilizations. One of the well-known disciples of Confucius, the Chinese philosopher Zeng Shen promoted the idea that "I daily examine myself on three aspects (The Analects of Confucius). Socrates stated, "I can't as yet 'know myself' in the West since 'knowing myself'... thus it seems absurd to me to look into other topics as long as that ignorance persists" (Yan, 2022). Yan and Brown (2016) defined self-assessment as "a process during which students collect information about their performance, evaluate and reflect on the quality of their learning process and outcomes according to selected criteria to identify their strengths and weaknesses" (p. 1248). Similarly, Panadero et al. (2016) defined self-assessment as "a wide variety of mechanisms and techniques through which students describe (i.e., assess) and possibly assign merit or worth to (i.e., evaluate) the qualities of their learning processes and products" (p. 804).

Students are not expected to be perceived as passive learners who just participate in assessment activities and are submissive. They ought to be acknowledged for their capacity to evaluate both their own and their peers' learning so that they develop into autonomous, lifelong learners and thoughtful professionals. The knowledge is constructed through active participation in interaction and internalization. Theoretically, Students' Self-Assessment is aligned with constructivist and cognitive theories of learning and motivation (Shepard, 2001). According to the social constructivist viewpoint, learning is not seen as a passive process of instructors imparting information to pupils, but rather as an active process of knowledge building in which students play a major role and get assistance from sociocultural interactions.

According to Boud (1999):

Self-assessment should not imply an isolated or individualistic activity; rather, peers, teachers, and other information sources should frequently be involved. Therefore, self-assessment is less of an ability to judge oneself and more of an instructive instrument; it is a habit that must be formed and practiced rather than a skill that must be mastered (p. 15).

Similarly, Duncan and Buskirk-Cohen (2012) argued that authentic constructivist approaches enable students to participate in the evaluation process by developing their products; they are required to produce their assessments.

In the context of Nepal, a study at Kathmandu University School of Education by Dahal et al. (2022) included, 18 MPhil/Ph.D. students studying STEAM education who participated in peer and self-assessment exercises. Through the use of peer and self-evaluation tools, the study sought to determine the most efficient methods for integrating student-teachers in the learning and assessment processes. Results showed that these evaluation techniques enhanced higher-order skills like analytical and evaluative abilities and raised student involvement. It shows that if given the chance to create or utilize their criteria, rubrics, or checklists to direct their appraisal and the ensuing revision of their work, students are more likely to see self-assessment favorably.

SSA as an Assessment as Learning (AoL)

One novel approach to the assessment system is assessment as learning. This aims to provide students with the ability to study and assess themselves. According to Berry (2011), the goal of assessment connected to metacognition is to enable students to become independent. Students must keep an eye on and assess their learning throughout the process, as well as be aware of what is expected of them. They may be in charge of their learning and use what they have learned to accomplish the predetermined objectives. The focus of this assessment method is on the student's active involvement in the educational process. This kind of evaluation is known as Assessment as Learning (AaL).

Students' Self-Assessment is a continuous and formative process to be adopted

in daily instruction. Students can actively participate in evaluation through learning strategies like peer and self-assessment (Black et al., 2003). Through self-assessment, students gather data, recognize, appraise, and consider their work in light of clear norms that assist students become more self-reliant and reflective learners, the study highlights that assessment as learning is an essential part of formative assessment criteria (Boud, 1986; Brown & Harris, 2013; Yan & Brown, 2016). The self-assessment technique in the classroom promotes deeper learning outcomes and students have a greater grasp of their learning when they participate in the assessment process, including self-evaluation, as Carless and Boud (2020) point out.

In addition to exploring how assessments can be linked to real-world tasks to make learning more relevant and foster deeper engagement with the material, Boud and Molloy (2021) also discuss how assessment as learning encourages students to actively participate in their learning process, which leads to enhanced reflective practices. Therefore, Berry (2011) affirmed the assessment as learning maximizes learning opportunities through self-reflection and critical self-awareness notions. Zhao and colleagues (2017) looked at how self-assessment helps students develop self-regulated learning and reflective skills. They discovered that students take greater ownership of their education when they use evaluation to evaluate their learning and pinpoint areas for development. The emphasis on students using assessment to improve their learning skills is reflected in this approach, which reflects the ideas of assessment as learning.

Similarly, Lam and Wong (2021) looked into how students' academic performance and motivation are affected by assessment as learning. According to the study, students' enthusiasm and academic performance increased when they were encouraged to evaluate their learning progress, think back on their work, and create personal goals.

Metacognition Theory of Flavell

John Flavell's idea of metacognition—the awareness and control of one's cognitive processes—is what I employed in this study (Flavell, 1979). Metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive control are the two main parts of metacognition. According to John H. Flavell, the former relates to comprehending one's cognitive talents and techniques while the latter entails actively monitoring and reflecting on the

learning process. According to him, metacognition is "thinking about thinking." It entails being conscious of and comprehending one's cognitive processes, as well as having the capacity to control them to improve learning and problem-solving.

Metacognition facilitates Self-regulated learning developing the capacity to establish objectives, track results, and modify tactics as necessary.

Similarly, it also develops critical thinking to assess and comment on one's ideas, methods of learning, and mental processes. Similarly, it excels in better problem-solving skills to handle challenging tasks and come up with answers since they are conscious of their cognitive processes.

One important tactic for helping pupils improve metacognitive abilities is self-assessment. Students practice metacognitive regulation, which is actively tracking their cognitive efforts and modifying tactics progress by commenting on their writing and comparing it to a rubric or checklist. Students are prompted to consider their strengths and areas of weakness in their work through this process, which promotes deeper reflection on their learning objectives and tactics. Students are encouraged to gain metacognitive knowledge—an understanding of their areas of strength and growth—through self-assessment. They learn what makes good writing and where they need to improve, such as their grammar, vocabulary, or organization, by using a rubric to evaluate their work. They have a greater understanding of their cognitive methods, such as how they approach planning or editing their work, and become more self-aware learners as a result of this process.

The metacognitive process is further improved by peer feedback and internet resources. Students are given the chance to track and examine their thought processes concerning other people's viewpoints when they receive feedback on their self-assessments. Their capacity to control their learning is strengthened by this kind of independent feedback, which encourages students to modify their methods or look for other materials to help them write better.

In the framework of metacognition, some scholars like Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) made a substantial contribution to the idea of feedback for learning. They investigated how feedback and self-evaluation can increase metacognitive regulation and assist students in modifying their learning approaches for better results. Torrance

and Pryor (2001) investigated the use of formative assessment to promote students' metacognitive reflection. They maintained that students have a deeper comprehension of the evaluation criteria and their cognitive processes when they actively participate in self-assessment.

In the study by Siow (2015), peer and self-assessments were seen as helping students think more deeply, work more methodically, and develop their critical thinking skills. Assessment by peers was particularly valued since students thought they gained more knowledge from the comments and developed their analytical skills as a result. The majority of students thought that both the peer and self-assessments took a lot of time, but they would want to have peer evaluation in their next project.

The study by Wang (2016) presents a classroom investigation of how students view the use of rubrics in self-assessment in the setting of English as a foreign language, as well as the variables influencing its efficacy. The study involved 80 students from a Chinese institution. Retrospective interviews with six case study informants and their reflective notebooks were among the material gathered. The findings indicated that by helping the students through the phases of goal-setting, planning, self-monitoring, and self-reflection, the rubric was thought to help promote their self-regulation. The usefulness of the rubric in student self-assessment was found to be influenced by both rubric-user and within-rubric elements.

Upon going through the studies at the national and international levels, I came to learn that there were plenty of studies done in formative and summative based assessment. However, there was a dearth of study particularly based on the students' self-assessment at the secondary level in the context of Nepal. Therefore, my study aimed to fill the contextual and subjective gap exploring how SSA as a signature pedagogy develops the metacognition of the students and fosters critical thinking and learning opportunities in English language class.

Methodology

My study adopts a qualitative approach allowing my students to share their experiences with the SAA along with my reflective observations and the artifacts of the students. I have implemented SAA as a class activity in my classes at the secondary level, where I have a class size between 30-40 students. The 80 minutes for a class is

Oli, 2025, My Signature Pedagogy.....

sufficient time to practice students' self-assessment techniques in my context. My goal behind using assessments for learning is to ensure the active engagement of each student, creating accountability, integrity, and ultimately enhancing the sustainable development of the students. For example, Once I taught and assessed the guiding writing 'Message of Condolences' to be published in a newspaper. At first, some brainstorming questions were discussed in the pre-writing phase. The objective and tone of the message, format, and relevant vocabularies were also discussed. The rubrics and checklists were interpreted. This encouraged students to pay attention to the learning process rather than just concentrating on their final scores. Some samples/ models were presented to them that supported internalization of the format, relevant vocabulary and contextual use of them. My students were asked to produce similar writings based on the outlines provided. After the allocated time, they finished their tasks and started self-assessing their writing using checklists and rubrics provided to them. I experienced that the students had been self-motivated in learning and had taken ownership of their learning since they received prompt results in their involvement. Unlike previous writings, I received improvised and personalized versions of their writings that projected their will to learn and uniqueness to innovate. That time I realized that it was worth implementing throughout the class instruction.

This technique integrates all the skills of language including metacognitive and critical thinking skills. My students learn the vocabulary, Grammar, and contextual use of the content and critical analysis skills, too. I appreciate the integrity rather than the grades of the students with some extrinsic motivation like emoji, toffees, and prizes upon cross-checking their self-assessed tasks and feedbacks.

I have developed tools like rubrics, criteria, and checklists with the help of my students and surfing the internet sites and customizing from AI. Regarding the impact of rubrics-based assessment in the context of Nepal, Dahal (2022) explored rubrics that incorporate students' expectations, maintain uniformity, provide timely feedback, foster self-evaluation, and ensure fair assessment, promoting consistency in learning grading. It is essential to have a discussion with students and to explicitly outline the evaluation criteria.

My reflective journals are another tool for sample writings for guided and free text from the textbook, and the internet is also used for authentication. I have made a logbook to record the grades of the students and let the students make comparisons between their present and past learning. I have also asked my students to make some expectations or targets for my subject and make frequent revisions and interventions of the plans. Goal setting and revising their plans have helped them stay focused on learning. Setting goals helps students know where to go next in their learning, and metacognitive techniques support them in achieving their learning objectives (Clift, 2015). According to pertinent research, goal-setting is a strategy that helps students actively participate in their education and can improve autonomy and competence, which in turn influences students' intrinsic motivation and ability (Papanthymou & Darra, 2023).

Results and Discussion

A thematic analysis was performed on the gathered data. Upon interpreting data from the open-ended questions, artifacts of the students, and my reflective journals the two major themes emerged which are presented below. These two themes serve as the answers to the research questions of my study.

SSA for the Development of Creativity and Metacognition

Students' engagement for self-assessment develops the metacognition of the students. I could observe the creative and comprehensive class and home assignments of students after the engagement of the students in self-regulation and assessment procedures. In the same vein, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) stated self-assessment can improve metacognitive competence and help students adjust their styles of learning for enhanced results. The students said that they had to internalize their areas of strengths and weakness this helped them minimize their errors in writing and enhance creativity. Prakash (pseudonym) said *I now do my assignments myself and become conscious not to repeat the similar mistakes. Before, I did not see the corrections made my teachers but now I revisit my assignments and make revisions. I can consult the rubrics and check my works myself.* Using instructional scaffoldings of self-assessment, such as checklists and rubrics (Wang, 2016) are typically thought to be beneficial.

Besides, the feedback from the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), peers and teachers also provide some directions to some students. One of my students said *I enjoy the feedback from my peers from which I can also know the status of my friends*. Students' assessment is influenced by instructional elements. For example, obtaining feedback from peers and teachers (Harris & Brown, 2013).

Schunk discovered that students who use metacognitive techniques- such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection- are better at evaluating their learning processes and modifying their approach. This is essential to succeeding academically. My students also set their target for the terminal exam, worked accordingly and analyzed their results making comparisons and contrast. One student (Chetana) stated *my goal-setting and reviewing directed me to achieve my desirable goal in my academics*.

Students need to be well informed about their work, checklist, and rubrics system to develop self-confidence in self-monitoring and develop the metacognitive level. Students' learning will be hindered if they believe that the feedback they receive during the self-assessment process is degrading and unsatisfactory (Tavsanli & Kara, 2021). In this regard, one student (Sandesh) asked, *how can I be sure that my assessment is authentic and satisfactory? I need support from my friends and teachers for my self-assessment*. This shows that apart from scaffolds for self-assessment, a supportive and psychologically safe learning environment is vital. The environmental support could be incentives for self-assessment, emotional support from peers, or a learning setting that values and encourages self-assessment. Similarly, Sargeant et al. (2011) affirmed peer emotional support promotes the use of self-assessment in the classroom environment. Therefore, they suggest that teachers should explicitly communicate the benefits of self-assessment to students and help them understand how it can support their learning and development. Additionally, teachers can provide students with opportunities to practice self-assessment under clear guidance in a safe and supportive environment to help them improve their self-assessment skills and self-efficacy.

Similarly, Peer review and reflective diaries helped many students become more aware of their writing techniques, I noticed. One student (Jiwan) said *I discovered that I*

frequently neglect to review my vocabulary after using the rubric to check my work. I now make it a point to consider it before turning in my work. This reflection illustrates how self-evaluation aids in developing metacognitive information, which students can then use to enhance their cognitive processes.

SSA for Better Learning Opportunities of Academic Achievements

I found the SSA has maximized the learning opportunities for my students besides making them responsible for their own learning. There was a positive correlation between the SSA and academic achievements in the terminal examinations. According to Zimmerman (2002), students who practice self-regulated learning—that is, learning by planning, tracking, and assessing their progress—perform better academically. One student shared, that *I could do better in the free writing question in the second term exam and my marks were increased.* The opportunities to recognize their areas of weakness and strengths allowed the students to stay goal-oriented and achieve better results. Zimmerman pointed out that metacognitive knowledge—the awareness of one's cognitive strengths and weaknesses—and metacognitive regulation—the modification of tactics based on introspection—are both components of self-regulation.

Students could learn some skills to manage their time, work hard, set goals, and stay committed to their learning as Pintrich (2002) investigated the role that metacognitive regulation and knowledge play in self-regulated learning. He discovered that students are more equipped to manage their learning, set objectives, and persevere in the face of difficulties when they can evaluate their learning process.

The way that students view assessment also affects how they learn and how assessment affects them. My students developed a positive attitude toward their self-regulated learning. That is one reason behind doing better in the paper-pencil tests. Therefore, students' perceptions of assessment, specifically its goals, have been examined by (Brown & Wang, 2013). They discovered that how students perceived assessments affected their learning-related behaviors, including academic success and self-control. My role was to convince my students to actively participate in self-assessment and create learning opportunities for each of the students. I was also sure

about providing clear and well-informed guidelines for the SSA procedures so that the students could build up a positive perception of it. Panadero et al. (2019) also stated students' opinions of self-assessment may influence whether it can be used as intended and how it can affect their learning, as it is a student-directed process that significantly depends on students' active participation. My student (Sagar) *shared I did not like the idea of self-assessing before but when I was working on rubrics and checklists, I found myself busy, engaged and wanting to perform better than before, later I was interested in it.*

Active engagement in classroom instruction, sense of autonomy for learning, and interest in self-regulating provided the students with better learning opportunities for academic enhancement.

Implication of SSA Beyond English

Students' Self-Assessment can be equally applicable to pedagogical practices beyond English subjects. In other subjects too, teachers can assist pupils in efficiently utilizing these strategies. Since students are more likely to analyze their learning and consider their professional practices, alternative evaluation methodologies like SSA are essential for students learning in any subject and field. The students can better acquire the ability to critically analyze their learning when they receive clear standards, concrete examples, and feedback on their self-assessment attempts. In this regard, Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) affirmed a crucial component of formative assessment is self-assessment, which encourages students to consider the caliber of their work rather than depending exclusively on their teacher for evaluations.

I found it less time-consuming and worth applying for the large class size. If the students are provided with the authority to correct their work and provide feedback themselves, they are proactive and communicative with their peers and teachers for meaningful learning. Therefore, acquiring the capacity to evaluate oneself is an important life skill that goes beyond academics. Students are better prepared for professional growth and lifetime learning when they can assess their performance.

Conclusion

The SSA is an integral technique for student-directed learning approach that brings the students into the mainstream of the learning making them self-aware of their

Oli, 2025, My Signature Pedagogy.....

strengths and weaknesses. It is meant to make the learners self-motivated and accountable for their learning. The involvement of the learners in-class instruction and assessment process sustains the learning as well. The well-known Chinese proverb (Teaching how to fish is better than providing a fish) might be used to explain this occurrence. Teaching students how to fish (i.e., giving them the will and skill of self-evaluation) may be a long-term and sustainable solution while giving a fish (i.e., providing feedback through teacher-directed formative assessment). The SSA techniques reduce the workload of the teachers in assessment. A crucial tenet of self-assessment is avoiding an exclusive emphasis on instructors in the evaluation process. This SSA is effective for both summative and formative assessment processes. The students can develop creativity, critical thinking and analytical skills through SSA. In the research by van Helvoort (2012), the adult learners reported that summative self-assessment helped foster a critical mindset toward their own and others' writing both during the course and in subsequent courses. The clear instructions, checklists and rubrics can provide a solid guideline to incorporate the SSA technique. Similarly, the SSA is transferable for all subjects allowing the students to better performance.

In the future, I hope to better include metacognitive techniques in my instruction by fostering greater introspection and a more thorough reaction to criticism. Students who develop metacognitive skills, in my opinion, will not only write better but also become more self-regulated learners who can confidently handle future learning obstacles.

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