ASSESSING LEARNERS ONLINE: NOTICING, SELF-CHECKING AND ONLINE QUIZ TOOLS

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Introduction

Continual assessment has always been important to see the progress of learners and to get a sense of their level. However, this has often been a neglected area. When teaching remotely, keeping track of what learners know and can do might seem more difficult, but it is possible. It will make assessment easier in the long run for both yourself and your learners. We all know the importance of building trust and autonomy in our learners. Remote assessment is another opportunity to develop these critical skills of learning.

Getting started

With any new system, some planning and preparation needs to take place at the beginning. Think about what you want to assess, both during the lesson and for homework and other assignments. You can also include non-traditional forms of assessment, such as participation, creativity or confidence. Having an ongoing record helps you see how learners are progressing over time. This makes it easier to plan your lessons and write the end-of-term/year reports for each learner.

- Start with a list of names in the same order as your register.
- Make columns next to each learner to record scores and comments.
- Label each column with the assessment tasks you do.

Remember – start simple. Assess one or two aspects and make a note against each learner. Over time, you can build on this.

Noticing

Using these techniques, you can see how well learners understand the lesson. Make a note of who is doing well, who needs more support, areas that need review, and things that everyone has mastered:

- thumbs up/thumbs down
- traffic lights where learners show green/yellow/red signs or objects to show how much they understand
- mini-whiteboards (learners write and hold up answers)
- learners use private chat to send answers to you. This way learners aren't influenced by others. Note: you may need to save the chat and review later if the class is large.

Self-checking

- **Learners check their own answers** against a key, and report back on the answers they need more clarification on. This is instead of going over every answer individually as a group and builds learner autonomy.
- Teacher shows the answers, but **one answer is wrong**. Students say which one. This is a way to focus on what the learners need rather than spending time on what learners already know.
- Use an **error correction code** for learners to correct themselves and report back on areas that need more work. Remember to explain the code to learners.
- **Peer assessment**. Learners exchange answers by chat functions or email and correct each other's work. Again, learners report back on areas of strength and areas that need more work. Using peers means that the pressure is taken off individuals.
- *Can do* **statements** can be used for self-assessment to identify areas of strength and development. For example, *I can make questions in the past tense* or *I can express my opinions on a range of topics*. You can write these using the objectives of your lesson. Learners can use *can do* statements to identify any areas they need more help with and then feed this back to you at the end of the week.

Online polls/quizzes

Using polls and quizzes is a useful way to assess your learners without having to spend lots of time marking. Using an online poll or quiz can also be anonymous, which can encourage less confident learners to engage in the task. Here are some tools you can use:

- **Google Forms** – this can be used for true/false, multiple choice, tick boxes, drop-down answers, short answers or longer answers. You can also have a scale (useful for *can do* statements). You can upload pictures, video, audio or text and ask questions about the activity. You can set which answer is correct so that the computer does all the marking for you. **SurveyMonkey** is another site with similar functions. The free version allows up to ten questions.
- **Quizlet** – this is an online tool to make quizzes using images or words. It is often used for flashcard or matching activities. These quizzes can be used for homework or in class.
- **Kahoot** – this tool helps you create quizzes that can be played on individual devices or as a team.

Useful links

- Language assessment in the classroom FutureLearn free course: https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/language-assessment
- Short videos explaining various aspects of assessment: https://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/research/assessment-literacy