

## **The Impact of Omani Twelfth-Grade Students' Self-Assessment on their Performance in Reading in English**

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### **Abstract**

This study is aimed at investigating the impact of Omani twelfth-grade students' self-assessment on their performance in reading in English. The sample of the study consisted of two groups, an experimental group and a control group, of 39 students each. Both groups were selected in Moosa bin Nusseir School for General Education in Muscat. A reading test adapted from previous General Certificate Exams in the Sultanate of Oman was developed. To collect data about the students' progress, the researchers used the technique of students' self-assessment through one-minute papers and rating-scale sheets. The findings of the study revealed that the students' self-assessment had a positive effect on their performance in reading in English. In light of the findings, it is recommended that students be trained on how to use self-assessment to improve themselves. It is also recommended that teachers be aware of the positive effect of students' self-assessment on

students' performance in reading.

**Keywords:** Formative Assessment, Self-Assessment, Authentic Assessment, Autonomous Learning, Strategies of Reading

## **Introduction**

In literature, the terms assessment and evaluation are sometimes used interchangeably (Collins & O'Brien, 2003). However, in this study they are used differently. Assessment, in the broad sense, means "any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses" (Collins & O'Brien, 2003, p.29). According to Crooks (2001), assessment is "any process that provides information about the thinking, achievement or progress of students" (p. 1).

Because assessment is important in teaching and learning, every teacher should assess his/her students' learning regularly. Some of the methods which teachers use to measure their students' learning are written tests, book reports, research papers, homework exercises, oral presentations, and question-and-answer activities. Therefore, teachers spend a great deal of their class time engaged in one type of assessment or another (Stiggins, 2001). On the other hand, assessment of students entails using a well organized system, namely tests, to make judgments about the students' achievement (Gronlund & Linn, 1990). These tests bring anxiety, fear, or disappointment to students which might negatively affect their language learning. Students might suffer from spending long hours of study and preparation for tests haunted by mixed feelings of hope and fear. Unfortunately, they might be disappointed at the fact that what they concentrate on differs from what the teacher emphasizes on in his/her

questions (Guskey, 2003; Shaaban, 2005).

Any learning system needs feedback (Davis, 1998). Sufficient data need to be collected about each student's learning proficiency to take whatever action needed to meet each student's learning needs and to adjust the system. To reach this end, different kinds of assessment could be used to provide reliable information about the students' learning progress. Assessment has "the most powerful influence on student learning" (George & Cowan, 1999, p.8). Therefore, teachers should always keep enough, and accurate, information on which they can build their judgment to improve their students' performance (Shaaban, 2005).

There are two types of assessment: formative assessment, that is, assessment for learning, and summative assessment, or assessment of learning (Stiggins, 2001). In fact, authentic assessment requires both. Summative assessment takes place at the end of a term or a course and is used to provide information about how much students have learned or how well a course has worked (Gipps, 1994). That is to say, a test is usually given at the end of a term, semester or year, the purpose of which is to measure proficiency (Boston, 2002).

On the other hand, formative assessment takes place during a course of teaching and is used essentially as feedback to the teaching-learning process (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). In other words, it is an ongoing process of collecting information about the students' performance through various techniques of classroom assessment. The purpose of formative assessment is not only to measure proficiency, but also to improve it as well.

Formative assessments do not bombard students with questions to be answered within a time limit. On the contrary, they "reflect the concepts and skills that the teacher emphasized in class, along with the teacher's clear criteria for judging students' performance" (Guskey, 2003, p.8). An

assessment is summative when the intention is mainly to give a final judgment on students' achievement. Formative assessment, or assessment for learning as it is sometimes called, is a continuous process in which the main purpose is beyond measurement; rather it is to help students improve. Summative assessment, or assessment of learning, on the other hand, tends to be an end point, usually expressed in grades and concerned with making judgments.

Students' involvement in the teaching-learning process is important for there is much evidence to suggest that students' self-assessment helps improve their performance (Brantmeier, 2005; Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Shaaban, 2005). Self-assessment does not mean that students are allowed to assess themselves in the form of grades; instead they get continuous feedback on their progress to help both the students and the teacher.

One of the techniques used in assessment is the One-Minute Paper which provides very useful information. Angelo and Cross (1993) argued that the One-Minute Paper is the most used technique in assessment since it provides useful and quick feedback on student learning. They also claimed that over one semester, different studies proved that students in classes where minute papers were used out-gained those in classes without minute papers.

The information collected through formative assessment is used to detect the strengths and weaknesses of the learners for the purpose of improving proficiency (Collins & O'Brien, 2003; Shaaban, 2005). It provides useful information for both the teacher and the student upon which appropriate action can be taken (Guskey, 2003; Shaaban, 2005). Both forms of classroom assessment, formative and summative, are needed to determine how much learning has occurred.

Black and Wiliam (1998b) defined the assessment process to include all activities undertaken in class, either by teachers to assess their students or by

the students to assess themselves, which can be used as feedback to adjust the teaching-learning strategies. According to this definition, assessment includes teacher observation, classroom discussion, marking tests and collecting information from the students themselves about their own learning; namely *students' self-assessment*.

Students' self-assessment is considered to be one of the most important formative classroom assessment techniques. One of the purposes of this technique is to improve the quality of students' learning. It can also lead to modifications when teaching strategies have not met the required learning outcomes. Some educators have argued that students often find external assessment by teachers or supervisors unjust. Therefore, if students are given the chance to assess themselves, they will be more confident to give more accurate information about their progress, (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

By assessing their own learning, students can increase their awareness of what is happening in class (Gipps, 1994). Perhaps the most important factor of a successful teaching-learning process is active student involvement (Stiggins, 2001). This requires teachers to provide their students with feedback and teach them to use it effectively for learning. Consequently, students can learn how to assess themselves so that they can learn what they need to do in order to achieve success (Black & Wiliam 1998b). Hence, successful formative assessment depends on active student involvement.

Regarding reading comprehension, some researchers (The National Capital Language Resource Center NCLRC, 2004; Abraham, 2005) believe that it is a bit difficult to assess it accurately. That is simply because "reading is a complex behavior composed of many skills" (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1988, p. 354). It cannot be assessed in isolation from other skills (Rivas, 1999). In other words, a number of factors have to be taken considered when assessing

reading, among which are the purpose of reading, the overall linguistic level of the student, and the role of previous knowledge. Assessment of reading ability depends mainly on the purpose of reading. “Reading for a purpose provides motivation – an important aspect of being a good reader (Grabe, 1991, p. 378).”

### ***What to Assess in Reading?***

So what do teachers assess in reading? They assess a number of sub-skills relating to reading. According to the Omani Ministry of Education (MOE) (2003-2004), teachers assess whether students are able to comprehend the general idea of a text; recognize the type of a text, e.g. interactive, informative, narrative, or evaluative; arrange the sequence of information in a text; use pre-reading activities to predict what a text would be about; guess the meanings of particular words from context; extract specific information from a text; and use different reading strategies, e.g. skimming, scanning, speed reading, paced reading, or timed reading.

The MOE seeks the implementation of all the above skills in its schools in order to improve students’ achievement in reading. The students’ command of those skills means that the MOE has succeeded in fulfilling its goals.

The MOE in the Sultanate of Oman has started a new evaluation system in General Education Schools: formative assessment which concentrates on self assessment, seeking improvement in students’ performance. This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of students’ self-assessment on their performance in reading in English. Moreover, throughout the researchers’ experience of teaching English, they have very often come across students whose reading skills were below average. Therefore, they decided to investigate the issue more closely.

## **The Educational System in Oman**

The educational system in Oman is very similar to the educational systems in many other Arab countries. A child joins school at the age of 6 and graduates from school after 12 years of study.

A lot of money is spent each year on education in the Sultanate of Oman, yet there is a great dissatisfaction with the educational system. Efforts to improve the system have given much attention to the role of assessment in students' performance. Many educators have started to think of new measures, other than the traditional ones, to monitor the students' performance in English on the basis that traditional measures have failed to achieve significant learning outcomes.

In the past four years or so, the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman has seen great advances in understanding of how students learn. At the same time, tremendous developments have been done to support learning and to lead to better outcomes.

To meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, considerable changes have been undertaken to reform the educational system. The MOE has launched the Basic Education System in 1998, seeking improvement in the quality rather than quantity of teaching and learning (Ministry of Education in Oman, 2005). This new system is composed of two phases: 'Basic Education' and 'General (Secondary) Education'. Basic education consists of two cycles: Cycle One which includes Grades 1 – 4 and was implemented in 1998 and Cycle Two which includes Grades 5 – 10 and was implemented in 2001. The secondary education phase, also called General Education, extends for 2 years and includes Grades 11 - 12 (Sasidharan, 2005). Within this new system learners are given a more active role in the learning process than ever before.

## **Teaching and Assessing English in Oman**

Because of the importance of English the ministry of education in Oman (MOE) introduced a new educational system in which English started to be taught from grade 1 instead of 4. This new system has brought to light new continuous assessment techniques which are used now to assess students' achievement. The Educational Evaluation Department in the MOE in Oman has introduced a new system of Continuous Assessment (CA) in the secondary level in the beginning of the academic year 2004 – 2005. This new system of CA is currently implemented along with the other formal assessment techniques used, namely semester tests. CA is meant to continuously measure the students' needs through "assessment of attainment..., measurement of the value of teaching methods and procedures, and diagnosis of individual or group difficulties" (Sasidharan, 2005, p. 60).

There are two English textbooks that are taught to Grade 12 students; 'Core English' and 'Elective English'. Core English is compulsory to all twelfth-grade students, whereas Elective English is taught only to those who choose it, for twelfth-grade students have the chance to choose Elective English amongst other subjects.

The 'Core English' *Our World Through English (OWTE)* consists of two books: the *Activities Book (AB)* and the *Pupil's Book (PB)*. Both books are produced by the English Language Curriculum Department (ELCD). Moreover, 'Core English' is taught through six periods per week of 45 minutes each. On the other hand, the 'Elective English' consists of one textbook, *Reading and Writing Targets 3*, which is published by Express Publishers. It is taught through three periods per week of 45 minutes each.

In spite of all the efforts done by the Omani Ministry of Education to improve students' abilities in reading, the researchers have very often come across students whose reading skills were below average. Therefore, they

decided to investigate the issue more closely.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although classroom assessment has been given much attention in the evaluation system in general education schools in the Sultanate of Oman, the performance of students is still not at the desired level. The researchers believe that neglecting the students' role in assessments may be one of the main factors behind this low performance. Moreover, students' self-assessment, in particular, has so far been completely disregarded, even though it may have a powerful and positive effect on students' learning.

In general education schools in the Sultanate of Oman, students are solely assessed by teachers; which is supposed to improve the students' performance. However, students' performance is far from what is expected. Class size has its negative effect on learning and teaching. "How much is a teacher successful?" is a typical question in such situations. In classes greater than 20 students, teachers cannot always be clear of what their students' needs are. That is simply because learning depends on what teachers and students do in class; teachers have to cater for 35 students or more in each class in order to help them become better learners (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). That is why students should play their role to help themselves become better learners. Thus, self-assessment increases the role of the student; however, the teacher remains the main source of assessment (Borg, 2006).

### **Purpose and Questions of the Study**

This study addresses the following three questions:

1. Is there any significant effect of Omani Twelfth-Grade male students' self-assessment on their performance in reading in English?

2. Is there any significant difference in variance of achievement in the two groups?
3. What size is the effect of self-assessment on reading?

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

This study hypothesized that:

1. There is no significant difference ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the Omani twelfth-grade male students who apply self-assessment and the mean scores of those who do not apply self-assessment in the English reading performance test ( $H_0: \mu_E = \mu_C$ ).
2. There is no significant difference in variance of achievement in the two groups ( $H_0: \sigma_E^2 = \sigma_C^2$ ).
3. The difference between the two means is not practically significant.

### **Significance of the Study**

Studies investigating the impact of students' self-assessment on their performance in reading in English in Oman are rare and non-comprehensive to the best of the researchers' knowledge. There were two studies investigated by Al-Jardani, Khalid and Al-Balushi (2002). Al-Jardani investigated the evaluation of the effectiveness of self-assessment in teaching English to young learners, whereas Al-Balushi investigated the EFL teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment tools used in the first cycle of Omani Basic Education Schools. Therefore, this study is one of the first studies to deal with this technique. If the results of the study are in favor of the experimental group, then it will shed some light on the importance and the value of this technique in improving students' performance in reading in

English. Thus, the Educational Evaluation Department in the MOE in the Sultanate of Oman will benefit from it and it might encourage them to launch their ‘Self-Assessment Project’, which, as they say, “... is ... now very much in the documents and on the agenda” (O’Reilly & Al-Lawatia, 2005, p. 23).

It might also urge English teachers in the Sultanate of Oman to think about trying this particular classroom assessment technique in their classrooms. It could help them decide on the suitable strategies to use for particular lessons.

Moreover, students themselves can benefit from the results of this study. The results can help students detect their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they can guide themselves to overcome their weaknesses.

The lack of research investigating the impact of students’ self-assessment on their performance in reading in English in Oman also raises the need to conduct further studies.

### **Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of all male twelfth-grade students in general education schools in the Muscat Region, Sultanate of Oman during the academic year 2006/2007. More specifically, there were 4010 students. The sample of the study consisted of two 12<sup>th</sup> grade sections (39 each) from Moosa bin Nusseir Secondary school in Muscat. One section was assigned as the control group and one as the experimental group.

### **Design and Procedures**

This study is a quasi experimental study. Two methods of assessment were compared. They were:

- a. Self-Assessment method
- b. Traditional method of assessment

One section of the sample was assigned as the experimental group and the

second section as the control one. The experimental group consisted of 39 students. The students in that section were taught by one of the researchers, using the technique of students' self-assessment, along with other traditional techniques of classroom assessment. Certain methods to measure how well students have learned the taught material were used. A One-Minute Paper at the end of each reading class period was used (Appendix 2) and a Rating-Scale Sheet at the end of each topic/unit (Appendix 3) as quick diagnostics that helped students reflect on their learning and gave the researcher immediate feedback. The control group also consisted of 39 students. The students in that group were also taught by the same researcher, using only the traditional techniques of classroom assessment.

In order to examine the equivalence of the experimental and control groups, the researchers developed and administered a reading test before the subjects were exposed to the treatment. Table 1 shows the results of the *t-test* of the students' scores in the test of equivalence.

Table 1:

*Results of the t-test of the Students' Scores in the Reading Comprehension Test before the Study Started*

Source	N	Mean	SD	St Err	DF	T-Value	P
Experimental Group	39	48.00	26.49	4.24	76	-0.191	0.85
Control Group	39	49.13	25.54	4.09			

Table 1 shows that there was no statistically significant difference at  $\alpha=0.05$  between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the reading comprehension test before the study started (t-value = -0.191,

$P = 0.85$ ). This means that the two groups were equivalent. The mean of the control group was 49.13 with a standard deviation of 25.54, and the mean of the experimental group was 48.00 with a standard deviation of 26.49.

### **Instrument of the Study**

Since this study aimed at investigating the effect of students' self-assessment on their performance in reading in English, the researchers developed a reading test which was conducted before and after the treatment as an instrument to achieve the purpose of the study (**Appendix 4**). This test was adapted from previous GCE in the Sultanate of Oman. The researchers made the necessary changes to fit the purpose of the study. The test in its final form consisted of four different reading questions. Question One consisted of 6 items, worth 2 marks each. The students had to match each item to the left with the suitable text to the right. There were 4 extra texts to the right. Question Two consisted of 6 items, worth 3 marks each. The students had to read the 6 short texts given and then to write one word to complete the sentences which follow each text. Question 3 consisted of 9 items, 2 marks each. The students had to read the given text and then to answer the 9 multiple items which followed. Question 4 consisted of 4 items, 3 marks each. The students had to read a given text then to tick the items given according to whether they were TRUE, FALSE, or DOESN'T SAY. 'Doesn't Say' means that the piece of information is not mentioned in the text. The total score of the test was out of 60, which was converted later to 100 to suit the statistical calculations. The time allotted for the test was 60 minutes.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

To guarantee the validity of the instrument, it was given to a jury of TEFL specialists; three professors in the English Department at Sultan Qaboos University, two school supervisors at Muscat Directorate of Education, and three experienced EFL teachers working in the schools of the MOE, Sultanate of Oman. The jury examined the test and provided their comments and suggestions for modifications to fit the purpose of the study. They evaluated the test according to language, clarity, appropriateness of the questions to the level of the students, relevance to the skill it meant to test, and timing. The jurors' comments and recommendations were appreciated and taken into consideration. Necessary modifications were made accordingly. The test in its former shape consisted of 5 questions of 30 items. The majority of the jurors suggested that the number of questions should be reduced to 4 questions in order to fit the allotted time for the test. Other modifications concerning structure, words choice, and layout of the test were recommended. Moreover, question one had two distractors in the box. The jurors recommended that one more distractor be added. In its final form, the test consisted of 4 questions of 25 items as mentioned in the instrument section above.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in a neighboring school, Al Khaudh School for General Education, three weeks before the pre-test was given to the two groups. Thirty-five male students of twelfth-grade sat for the exam. The researcher conducted the test for the first time on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2006. Before the test started, the researcher gave some

explanatory notes and instructions to the students about the test. The students were given enough time to answer the four questions of the test. The researcher noticed that 60 minutes was enough even for average students.

During the test, the researcher noticed that the students showed considerable interest in answering the questions. It could have been because the test was some kind of practice for them since the final examinations were approaching. That is why they took it seriously. To guarantee authentic results, two teachers, as invigilators, were in the room, including the researcher. At the end of the test, the papers were collected and marked.

Three weeks later, precisely on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 2006, the same test was conducted to the same subjects for the second time. The same procedures were followed to conduct the test for the second time. This was necessary to ensure the validity of the results. To show the internal consistency of the test, the reliability coefficient was computed. Its value was calculated and turned to be  $r = (0.83)$ .

### **Data Collection**

To collect the data for this study, the researchers adapted a One-Minute Paper in which students had to give short answers to three questions given (Appendix 2). The One-Minute Paper had a typical format. This format was that students were given three short questions. They had to reflect on their learning by answering those questions in brief. The researchers had the questions ready on paper beforehand. This One-Minute Paper was adapted from Angelo & Cross (1993).

Some modifications were made to meet the need of the study. This One-Minute Paper helped students to reflect on the reading lessons which were taught by the researcher. It also gave the teacher immediate feedback about the students' learning. The researchers decided to use the One-Minute Paper at the end of each class period because they wanted to check the students' understanding of what had been taught in that particular class period. Then at the end of each topic/unit, they decided to distribute a Rating-Scale Sheet to check the students' understanding of the topic as a whole (Appendix 3). Both, the One-Minute Papers and the Rating-Scale Sheets, were pre-printed in order to save time. The researchers gave their students time to respond. They sometimes asked them to discuss their thoughts in pairs. The purpose of this instrument was to let the students 'think aloud' which provided both the teacher and the students with true data about the students' learning outcomes. Therefore, after analyzing the students' feedback, if the researcher felt that the class had failed to understand a certain point, he could try another teaching strategy for the next class to teach that particular point again. To achieve this goal, the researcher collected the students' feedback and sorted it into major topics in order to have a clear idea of what to discuss in the next class. For example, some students stated that they faced problems with referencing tasks. Others said that they faced problems with guessing meaning of new vocabulary from context. A third group declared that they encountered difficulty in finding the main idea of a given paragraph. The researcher had to take the necessary procedure in order to help those students to overcome their problems.

To ensure the appropriate use of the One-Minute Paper, the researchers trained the subjects of the experimental group for two

weeks, before the treatment, on how to self-assess so that they were able to use the One-Minute Paper correctly and effectively. That was necessary so that they were able to give accurate information about their learning. The researchers undertook two actions to ensure that the use of the One-Minute Paper was going smoothly. The first action was to prepare printed sheets so that they could distribute them to the students more easily. The second action was to emphasize the reason behind using the One-Minute Paper and what it is hoped to achieve.

The researchers conducted a test twice on both groups; before the treatment to check the equivalence of the two groups, and after the treatment to check if there was any significant difference between the two groups concerning performance in reading attributed to the treatment.

The study lasted for 13 weeks, starting from the 17th of February 2007 to the 16<sup>th</sup> of May of the same year, during which the researchers used the technique of students' self-assessment in teaching the subjects of the experimental group to monitor their progress in reading. Nine reading texts of different topics were included in the study. At the end of the study, a post-test was administered to both groups to investigate the students' achievement in reading. The test was marked by the researchers and the results, along with the results of the pre-test, were analyzed, using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Means and standard deviations were calculated to find out whether there was any significant difference between the reading achievements of the experimental group compared to the control group.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the collected data:

1. A Two tailed t-test of independent samples was used to compare the means of the two groups.
2. An F-test was used to measure the effect of students' self-assessment on the achievement in individual differences.
3. The effect size equation was used to check the significance of the practical effect of students' self-assessment along with the statistical significance through the level of improvement in standard deviation:

$$\Delta = \frac{\bar{X}_E - \bar{X}_C}{\left(\frac{\sigma_E + \sigma_C}{2}\right)}$$

Table 2 below presents the means and standard deviations of the students of the experimental and control groups after the treatment.

Table 2

*Results of the t-test of the Students' Scores of the Two Groups after Treatment*

Group	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-Value	P	F
Experimental	39	65.74	18.31	76	2.23	*0.0287	1.77
Control	39	54.87	24.34				

\*  $P < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that there are differences between the mean scores of the students of the experimental and control groups. The mean score of the

experimental group is (65.74) with a standard deviation of (18.31) while the mean score of the control group is (54.87) with a standard deviation of (24.34). In order to test if the difference is significant, a t-test of independent samples was run. The results show that there is a significant difference between the reading achievement of the students of the experimental group over the students of the control group after treatment due to the method of assessment at  $\alpha = 0.05$  ( $T = 2.23$ ,  $P = 0.0287$ ). This result supports the alternative hypothesis of the study ( $H_1 : \mu_E \neq \mu_C$ ) which says that there is a significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0 : \mu_E = \mu_C$ ) is rejected.

Comparing the average scores of the subjects involved in the study to the scores of the students in the control group on the same test, F was found to be around 1.77. This indicates that the implementation of students' self-assessment had a positive effect on the students' performance in reading at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This result supports the alternative hypothesis of the study ( $H_1 : \sigma_E^2 \neq \sigma_C^2$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0 : \sigma_E^2 = \sigma_C^2$ ) is rejected.

The effect size equation was used to check the significance of the practical effect of students' self-assessment along with the statistical significance through the level of improvement in standard deviation. The effect size was

calculated  $\Delta = \frac{\bar{X}_E - \bar{X}_C}{\left(\frac{\sigma_E + \sigma_C}{2}\right)}$  and found to be 0.5, which is significant at  $\alpha$

$= 0.05$ .

## Results and Discussion

The findings of the study proved that due to the implementation of the self-assessment technique there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the performance of the subjects of the experimental group

over the period of the study compared to the mean scores of the subjects of the control group. Moreover, the results of the study revealed that there is significant difference in variance of achievement between the two groups. The effect size of self-assessment on reading is practically significant.

It took students about two weeks from the first introduction of the One-Minute Papers and the Rating-Scale Sheets to learn how to use them effectively to assess themselves. At the beginning, many students were reluctant to express themselves. They wrote very few and vague comments. Some weak students even did not like the idea of revealing their failure in comprehending certain texts. Sometimes they wrote that they understood when they really did not, which was similar to the “nod” mentioned earlier. The researchers had to spend some time with those students to explain to them that the technique aimed at helping the teacher to determine the students’ problems so that he can handle them properly and to be aware of the students’ strengths in order to reinforce them. However, as time went on, they became more confident and so their comments became clearer, more accurate, and more to the point.

The results showed that almost all students understood the aim behind the use of the technique of self-assessment which, in turn, helped the researchers to collect accurate information about his students. This in itself was an important achievement. Angelo and Cross (1993) argued that it is important for students to understand the purpose of a continuous assessment technique and to be aware of their role within it in order to be able to be active participants.

The second point worth noting is that the researchers noticed that the use of the One-Minute Papers and the Rating-Scale Sheets was very useful, especially for students who were shy and reluctant to voice what they did not understand.

One more significant advantage to self-assessment was that it helped to show the students that there were other students who shared such problems with them. This meant that they were not alone in the arena facing certain difficulties. This fact helped reluctant students to freely reveal their problems which were kept as sacred secrets for quite some time.

During the study, the researchers found out that students' self-assessment had several advantages. He found out that it did lead to improvement in students' learning, as the results of the post-test show. It encouraged students to participate more openly which was clear from the researchers' day-to-day observation. It directed students to give more accurate and honest answers, especially when they felt that they would not be judged by marks. It also helped students to direct their own efforts more effectively which was clear in the paper work which they had submitted, especially towards the end of the study. More importantly, it made students more involved and motivated in the learning process which was very clear in their participation inside and even outside the classroom. They started to feel that they have a role to play and when they play it right they gain more. That is to say, when they were able to assess themselves correctly and give accurate feedback to the teacher, the teacher played his role in helping them with their problems. Consequently, they started to overcome their reading problems and their reading comprehension improved. That is why they started to participate in the morning broadcast more effectively; they started preparing class magazines on their own; they even took the risk to prepare and organize a book exhibition in the school; they became more active in the English Club activities that were held inside or outside the school; and they started to visit the library more often.

There were 22 failures in the experimental group before treatment. However, the number decreased into 9 failures, whereas, the number of

failures in the control group decreased by 1 only (from 21 failures to 20). Moreover, the increase in the scores of the individual low achievers in the experimental group was higher than in the case of the control group. The increase in the experimental group ranged between 16 and 35 marks, whereas it ranged between 3 and 12 marks only in the control group. This indicates that the low achievers in the experimental group made a lot of progress due to the implementation of the technique of students' self-assessment.

Comparing the raw scores of the high achievers in both groups, before and after the treatment, it is noticed that the subjects of the experimental group gained much progress in comparison to the subjects of the control group. However, comparing the increase in the scores of the high achievers and the low achievers of the same group, the experimental group, the researchers found out that low achievers gained a much higher increase in their scores. This indicates that low achievers could benefit more from the implementation of the technique of students' self-assessment, not to mention that the high achievers could benefit from it as well.

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## **Appendix 2**

### **One-Minute Paper**

**Dear Student,**

Self-assessment is a vital component in learning. You are kindly requested to frankly comment on your own learning. You are encouraged to share responsibility for your own learning. Teaching cannot be effective unless the teacher comes to know your strengths and weaknesses. Your responses will help me find out how the course is going on and give me an idea on whether any changes are needed. This one-minute paper is mainly prepared to help you, and it won't take much of your time. The more you are open and accurate in answering these questions, the more progress in teaching and learning there will be.

1. What are the most important things you have learnt in today's class period?

.....

.....

2. Which area(s) of the lesson did you fail to grasp?

.....

.....

3. Which point(s) of the lesson is/are still not clear enough in your mind?

.....

.....

I appreciate your cooperation.

*Adapted from Angelo, T. & Cross, K. (1993). Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.*

**Appendix 3**  
**Rating-Scale Sheet (Self-assessment for Reading)**

<b>Name:</b> .....	<b>Date:</b> ..... / ..... / <b>2007</b>
<b>Before I read “.....,” I:</b>	
Yes    No	
_____	_____ thought about the title and what it suggested the text was about.
_____	_____ previewed the whole text or parts of it.
_____	_____ thought about the subject or situation.
_____	_____ set a purpose for my reading.

**While I was reading “.....,” I:**

Yes No

- developed a dialogue with the writer (e.g., What is the writer communicating? What is the main idea? What do I already know about this?).
- visualized what places, people, events might look like.
- connected my personal experience to what I was reading.
- made inferences from textual clues given by the writer.
- tried to distinguish between fact and opinion.
- predicted and then checked what the writer might say next.
- went over the parts I found confusing.
- checked words that I did not know the meaning of from context.

**After I read “.....,” I:**

Yes No

- determined my initial impression of what I had read.
- discussed what I had read and my impressions with someone.
- reflected on what I had read.
- reviewed and summarized what I had read and learned.
- made notes in my notebook.
- developed a more thoughtful interpretation of what I had read (considered why the writer wrote the text, what was being presented, and how it was constructed).
- evaluated what I had read and supported my judgments with references to the text.

*Adapted from: Saskatchewan Education. (1998). English Language Arts 20: A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level. Regina, SK: Saskatchewan Education.*

*Retrieved February 9, 2007 from,*

*<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/ela20/teach5.html>*

## **Appendix (4) Reading Test**

**2006 / 2007**

Page 1

**Student's**

**Name:**

**Grade 12 /**

**READING 1 ( Items 1 – 6 ) ... ( 12 points )**

Match the six texts on the left with the texts in the box. Write the correct letter, as in the example. There are three extra texts in the box.

EX. She finished Grade 12 in 1999.

F

1. Maria Borgia was born in \_\_\_\_\_  
1958 in a village in the south  
of Italy.
2. Three months ago, Leila  
\_\_\_\_\_ started going to French  
classes in the evenings.
3. After leaving university, my  
\_\_\_\_\_ sister got a job with an  
archaeologist.
4. After visiting her uncle in  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dubai, Salma got into her car  
and drove back to Muscat.
5. I know that many people  
\_\_\_\_\_ complain that Muna talks  
too much.

- A The journey was fine but, she got home late because she had to wait a long time at the border.
- B She's such a careless driver. I'm amazed she's never had a serious accident.
- C She started with a four-week training course. Then she joined a team who were studying the ruins of Troy.
- D But actually I like her. What she says is always very interesting, and she has a great sense of humour.
- E They don't have a photo of her, but they say that she is tall and thin, has short blond hair and wears glasses.
- F Then she went to Sultan Qaboos University to study Law.
- G She's really enjoying herself. She's met some very nice people, and she's already learnt to speak the language quite well.
- H If I phoned her or wrote her a letter, there could easily be a misunderstanding.
- I So, she stayed in cheap hotels, and instead of renting a car, she travelled everywhere by bus or train.
- J However, when she was only six months old, her family moved to a large industrial city in the north.

6. Police in Singapore are \_\_\_\_\_  
looking for a German woman  
in her late thirties.

**READING 2 ( Items 7 - 12 ) ... ( 18 points )**

Page 2

*Read each short text, and then write **ONE** word or number to complete the sentences.*

In the 1970s, the populations of Nizwa and Sohar were almost the same, but since then many people have moved to Sohar looking for work, while Nizwa has been much less successful. Both cities have, of course, much larger populations than the country's third city, Sur.

.....  
.....

7. The city with the largest population is \_\_\_\_\_.

The tourist guide told us that the trip would start at seven o'clock. So we got up early, and waited patiently at the entrance of the hotel. However, the bus was two hours late, so we didn't reach the fort until twelve o'clock.

.....  
.....

8. The bus left the hotel at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.

We are worried about Salim's behaviour during the last few weeks. He doesn't pay attention in class, and he's always late in completing his project work. Would it be possible for us to have a meeting to discuss this?

.....  
.....

9. The letter is to a \_\_\_\_\_.

The 'Ultra-Lex' is full of useful information for you. It tells you the meaning of a word; how it is spelt; how it is pronounced; and how it is used. It also provides real-life examples of more than 10,000 words in the English Language. Available as a book or as a CD.

.....  
.....

10. This is an advertisement for a \_\_\_\_\_.

We are arriving in Singapore harbour tomorrow afternoon. The passengers are very excited, as they haven't been on land for two weeks now. Some of them got very sick during the big storm that we went through last Friday. We had to work very hard to help them.

.....  
.....

11. Where is the writer? On a \_\_\_\_\_.

I didn't take my umbrella with me because the weather's usually dry at this time of the year. But after half an hour, a light drizzle started. Then it got heavier and heavier, and by the time I arrived, I was soaking wet. Just my luck!

.....  
.....

12. The word 'soaking' means \_\_\_\_\_.

**READING 3 ( Items 13 - 21 ) ... ( 18 points )**

Page 3

*Read the text and then, for each item, choose the correct option: A, B or C.*

In October 1767, Isabel Grameson decided to leave her home in Ecuador and travel to Brazil to find her husband. Seven years before, he had left on a journey of exploration along the Amazon River. For years, she had heard nothing from him, until finally news came that he was on the north coast of Brazil and that he was seriously ill.

When they heard of her decision to leave, Isabel's family were very worried. She had no experience of travelling, and the journey across the South American continent would be extremely dangerous. Finally, it was agreed that her brother would travel with her, as well as a doctor and two Indian servants.

At first, as they walked down the eastern slopes of the Andes mountains, everything went well. After twelve days, they reached the Bobonaza River. Here the Indians built a small boat, which they piloted down the river. This wasn't easy because the water was rough, and soon they hit a large rock in the middle of the river. The boat sank, all their food and clothing was lost, and the doctor and both Indians drowned.

Isabel and her brother managed to swim to safety, but now they were stuck on a flat muddy piece of land, with no food, no shelter and no boat. So they agreed to try to walk through the forest. This was not a wise decision.

They were soon completely lost and very hungry. At night, they were kept awake by the noise of animals in the forest and bitten by thousands of ants, flies, and mosquitoes. Finally, after six days with no food, Isabel's brother died. At first, she thought she would stay where she was and die, but then she decided that she had to survive. She kept on walking and was able to find some wild fruit to eat. After four more days, she was found by an Indian family, who nursed her back to health and then took her to the nearest town. A month later, she was finally re-united with her husband.

13. Isabel's husband was \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. a doctor                      B. a writer                      C. an explorer
14. She had not seen him since \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. 1757                      B. 1760                      C. 1767
15. At the beginning of her journey, she travelled \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. by horse                      B. by boat                      C. on foot
16. In the accident on the River Bobonaza, \_\_\_\_\_ people died.
- A. two                      B. three                      C. four
17. The boat sank because the river was not \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. calm                      B. shallow                      C. deep
18. Isabel and her brother were attacked by \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. local Indians                      B. insects                      C. wild animals
19. Her brother died of \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. hunger                      B. illness                      C. his wounds
20. Isabel was saved by \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. her family                      B. her husband                      C. some Indians
21. Isabel was a very \_\_\_\_\_ person.
- A. brave                      B. wise                      C. experienced

**READING 4 ( Items 22 - 25 ) ... ( 12 points )**  
 Page 4

*Read the text. Then for each statement, put a tick (√) in the correct column: 'True' or 'False' or 'DNS' (Doesn't Say).*

A dead body of a twenty year-old female worker has been found in an isolated motel in Plymouth. Apparently the victim had been doing her cleaning when she was struck by a killer. She was shot twice in the head and died immediately. Police reports said that no personal belongings were found except for a pair of sunglasses, a towel and an empty handbag. What's amazing is that these items belonged to a female who died twenty years ago.

*Example: The dead body was a woman.*

**22.** The victim was on duty when she was killed.

**23.** The killer was a woman.

**24.** The victim died on arrival at the hospital.

**25.** The police found the victim's glasses in the bag.

TRUE	FALSE	DNS
√		