Getting the Most out of Practice: Self-Assessment

What is self-assessment?



You are engaging in self-assessment whenever you critically reflect on your own interpreting performance and evaluate the product *(your output, the target language rendition)* and/or the process *(the mental processes and decision-making involved in interpreting)*. Self-assessment can happen with or without reference to the original source text, and with or without reference to a recording of the target language text. However, on most occasions in your program you will be asked to carry out self-assessment on the basis of a recording of your performance, and many times you will also have access to the source language text to aid you in your assessment.

What does self-assessment have to do with effective practice?

In order to set goals for ourselves and work toward them, we need to have a clear idea of where we are—what is going well, what we are struggling with, and patterns in our performance. Our instructors and classmates will give us some feedback, but we ourselves are an important source of feedback. Taking the time to carefully review and evaluate our work will help us to better understand our process, our strengths, and what we need to work on. Self-assessment also helps us to become aware of our progress and to judge whether we have achieved the goals we are working toward.

What should I focus on when I assess my work?

There are many things that you could pay attention to when doing a self-assessment. Trying to focus on everything at once can be overwhelming. It is better to pick a few things to focus on during any given self-assessment. The specific things that you will focus on when doing a self-assessment depend on:

- Your current skill level
- The goal(s) your instructor has set for you for you, whether for a period of time or for a specific exercise
- The goal(s) you have set for yourself, based on previous feedback and your own understanding of your learning and practice needs

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Below you will find some questions to guide you as you assess your work.

You will not necessarily assess each of these aspects every time you do a self-assessment. What you choose to focus on during a given self-assessment will depend on the specifics of the interpreting performance you are assessing and the goal(s) you were targeting during that performance.

This list is intended as a prompt, not a checklist!

Content & Structure

- Is the information relayed in the SL text present in the TL text? *Remember, focus on meaning, not words!*
- Is the logical structure/argument of the SL text preserved in the TL text?
- If the text is educational/informative, would the TL audience be likely to understand the concepts/ideas presented, including nuance and detail? If applicable, would the TL audience be likely to understand what is expected of them, or how to carry out any process or procedure that was explained?
- If the text presents a specific argument or point of view, would the TL audience be likely to understand it, including nuance and detail?
- Can you identify the issues that led to (were the cause of) any problems with your rendering of structure or content?

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- Is there any pattern to aspects of the content or structure that are not fully/clearly rendered?

Linguistic & Paralinguistic Aspects

- Do I demonstrate good command of TL grammar, syntax (word order), and word choice? Does my TL rendition sound smooth and natural *(unless there is a specific reason for it not to sound smooth/natural, in light of the source text)*.
- Where necessary, do I use specialized TL terminology effectively and correctly?
- Do I use appropriate tone, facial expression, gestures, and body language, given the situation, the participant(s), and the SL input?
- Are my linguistic and paralinguistic choices socially/culturally appropriate, given the situation?

Delivery

- Is the pace of my delivery smooth and even, without excessive hesitations, pauses, or backtracking *(unless there is a specific reason to include these, in light of the source text).*
- Is the speed of my delivery such that the audience will be able to follow along and understand well? Am I too fast, too slow, or varying my speed to the extent that the TL rendition is hard to follow?
- If I am speaking, is the volume of my voice appropriate for the situation? If I am signing, are sight lines, contrast, and lighting appropriate?

Situational Management / Standard Practices

- Do I appropriately and effectively use strategies for requesting pauses, repetition, and/or clarification?
- Are any requests I make of the parties in the interaction appropriate, and carried out politely and smoothly? *(For example, asking someone to slow down; redirecting parties to communicate directly with each other; asking parties to take turns speaking rather than overlapping; asking for external noise to be turned off or for seating to be rearranged to improve sight lines.)*
- Do I introduce myself to both parties, in accordance with the standard protocols that have been taught to me?
- Do I maintain transparency? *(If I have a brief side conversation in one language, do I interpret that side conversation to the other parties?)*
- Do I interpret in the first person *(unless use of the third person is called for, given the situation)*?

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