

# SELF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA OF INTEGRATED FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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## Abstract

*Tendencies in the labour market are indicative of the fact that foreign language mastery and its professional usage are indispensable, which manifests itself in different levels of particular language skills (listening, reading, taking part in conversations, monologue, and writing).*

*Aim of the study - to provide criteria, levels and indicators of the self-assessment of foreign language proficiency. In the study, the author analyses theoretical sources and research data. Using statistical methods the results were analyzed on the basis of the examination of the interplay of data by means of the quantitative statistical program SPSS 17, 0 (Statistical package for Social Sciences). In the present research a personalized approach to the assessment of language proficiency level has been adopted. The language proficiency level of each language learner is assessed separately without the juxtaposition of different language learners. To broaden students' experience the self-assessment criteria of language learners' language proficiency established pursuant to the language proficiency levels of European Framework of Reference can be applied. It can be concluded that majority of language learners admit the necessity to perfect the level of language because they encounter difficulties to use oral and written communication in their professional field.*

**Key words:** *higher education, integrated foreign language acquisition, self assessment.*

## Introduction

Changes in higher education in Latvia and on a world scale are inextricably related to the national and social development on the whole. Education system and the processes involved exert a crucial influence on the developmental processes of the state. Improvements in higher education must go hand in hand with the development of the whole society. A deliberate, coherent educational policy fosters the increase of the level of employment and productivity of labour. The current situation testifies that after having graduated from higher educational institutions graduates have not always been adequately trained in compliance with the needs of the labour market. It is absolutely essential that study programmes pursuant to the interests of the society and the needs of the country be implemented in higher education in Latvia. Tendencies in the labour market are indicative of the fact that foreign language mastery and its professional usage are indispensable, which manifests itself in different levels of particular language skills (listening, reading, taking part in conversations, monologue, writing).

### *Problem of Research*

There are not common criteria, levels and indicators of the self-assessment of foreign language proficiency in foreign language studies. The value of the Common European Framework is that it can be used as a basis for educational policy decision makers and for teams of language teachers to negotiate standards of assessment.

Development of modern language assessment have also been influenced by the changes in the way were viewed language and language learning. In order to get a whole picture of what language and language learning involves, we need to be aware of the complexity and wholeness of what language proficiency entails rather than look for a correct presentation of its parts.

## **Methodology of Research**

### *General Background of Research*

After having done the analysis of ideas propounded by different scholars on the acquisition of language skills, certain provisions emerge which are essential for language acquisition.

- Language skills (receptive and productive) are acquired integratively in close connection with the informative and thematic subject matter (*Marsh, Marsland, 1999:52*).
- Language learning and its usage are inextricably related to its informative contents which is perceived and functions as an impetus to thinking and expression of thoughts occurring to someone (*Ñikiforovs, 2007:250*).
- The forming and development of basic language skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening) occur concurrently and interactively (*Skriveners, 2007:29*).
- The linguistic, informative and thematic subject matter is acquired as an integrated entirety and is interrelated. The results of the language acquisition are the best if the aforementioned categories are acquired integratively and systematically, if the acquisition of the chosen topic is connected with the acquisition of the lexis, grammar structures a.o. (*Ur, 2006:46*).
- Integrated foreign language study contents provides a basis for the acquisition of human, national, cultural a.o. values (*Tomalin, Stempleski, 1994:8*).
- The integrated foreign language study contents conforms with the individual idiosyncrasies of a personality (*Scrivener, 2007:65*).
- It is essential that natural environment and usage opportunities be provided in the acquisition of basic skills (*Harmer, 2007:121*).
- Language acquisition and personality growth occurs in doing (*Harmer, 2007:128*).
- In the first place the student perceives the information, reflects on it, creates their own text and contacts another language learner explicitly or implicitly (*Scrivener, 2007:29*).

Language skills are acquired as an integrated whole, they are not independent or isolated (*Muller-Hartmann, schocker-von Ditzfurth, 2007:58*).

When taking notes during lectures the informative contents is of major importance, though in its acquisition writing, listening, reading and speaking skills are involved and upgraded. When interpreting from one language to another, first and foremost, the learner contemplates the gist of the subject matter simultaneously developing reading and writing skills (*Harmer, 2007:167*).

Foreign language studies should give a guarantee for the competent use of a foreign language in communication, life-long learning and in the interplay of cultures in modern society.

In the study process an attempt has to be made to model situations corresponding to the modes of language use providing for the unity of the development of all language skills. When training productive and receptive language skills, the language learner has to perceive the information heard or read, use it for their own purposes, be able to express their own ideas

fluently both orally and in written form.

In the foreign language acquisition process the development of the foreign language acquisition competence has to be promoted.

The development and improvement of reading skills is especially noteworthy in foreign language acquisition.

Reading is one of the criteria of language acquisition, it is related to learners' experience in terms of their basic knowledge and skills in the given topic for doing reading comprehension. To succeed in reading tasks manifold teaching aids are devised - questions, pictures and texts. When doing listening, speaking, writing and reading tasks the language learner handles the text as a source of information retrieval and an element of communication (Kemnitz, Kohn, F. Poziemski, J. Poziemski, 1994:7). The text embodies a means, an objective and a result.

„To understand the newly obtained information the previous knowledge may be as important as the new one. Comprehension can be affected by the following factors:

- language proficiency level;
- knowledge of the surrounding world;
- a working knowledge of the subject” (Kauliņa, 2009:119).

When doing reading activities the techniques applied can be summarized as follows:

- analysis of the text (reading for the gist, inventing titles, focussing on the meaning of particular text excerpts etc.);
- synthesis (identifying the main idea and the objective, designing a plan etc.);
- creative tasks (completing and complementing a text, spotting and avoiding errors etc.);
- inventing new texts on the basis of the existing ones (relating, reporting),
- creating one's own texts (orally, in writing).

Reading texts can be viewed as a constituent part of an independent work, completing the following tasks: getting a fresh insight into a subject, comprehension of specific details, retrieval and analysis of the necessary information etc. (Ur, 2006:138-150).

In the process of reading the learner is supposed to grasp the meaning of the text instead of clarifying the meaning of separate words (Krashen, Terrell, 1983:139).

In conformity with the regulations issued by the Council of Europe regarding lg teaching and learning, reading activities are aimed at extracting general, specific or particular information.

To improve the language learner's reading skills it is essential to pay attention to the learner's language proficiency level, their abilities to consult a dictionary and seek assistance (particularly in adult classrooms who occasionally attempt to hide their diffidence and ignorance). The work with a text is closely linked with the consolidation of the existing vocabulary and building new vocabulary.

The choice of appropriate texts contributes to the acquisition of all basic language skills, enhancement of thinking and creative experience and the adoption of the set of values of a personality.

The language means applied in the text as a language unit enables one to conceive a language as an integrated entity of the content and form, as a manifold system. The text on a particular topic adopts the qualities of an exercise to train reading, writing, speaking and thinking skills.

The vocabulary is extended by means of a comprehensible subject matter (Krashen, Terrell, 1983:139). In acquiring the new vocabulary it is important to present the new words and expressions at the start of the class, build the vocabulary, compile a list of individual lexicons, acquire the meanings of the new words. At the final stage of text reading oral and written tasks are assigned contributing to the enhancement of the learner's experience and adoption of attitude. When selecting a text students' interests ought to be taken into consideration by engaging them

in the selection process. Post-text tasks are equally worthy, therefore, after having read the text, the tasks activating the vocabulary have to be undertaken (Thornbury, 2007:53).

It is absolutely crucial in the process of developing integrated skills that it is based on interest which is aroused and maintained. Interest ought to be stimulated by means of individual approach which, in its turn, fosters cognition process and enhances study achievements (Čehlova, Grīnpauks, 2003:75).

In the language acquisition process attempting to learn each new word by heart and memorize it is not of paramount importance. If a learner is able to communicate in a target language, can read and perceive the information which arouses their interest, even not understanding each word, extension of their vocabulary tends to persist (Krashen, Terrel, 1983:155).

New words might be learned better if they are interwoven in the context with the familiar vocabulary, if they are exposed in the text where their meaning can be guessed, if they repeatedly occur in diverse texts (E. Maslo, 2003:144).

**Listening** is a receptive skill and a criterion of language acquisition characterized by the ability of the language learner to perceive the information by ear. Listening makes sense if it is done actively, it occurs when the speech is adequately adapted to the listener's language proficiency level. To master listening skills recordings are available for independent practising, while during contact hours language learners may listen to the speech of their lecturers or any other speaker, for example, guest students or guest lecturers by interrogating them and responding.

One can distinguish between:

- global listening;
- intensive listening;
- target-based listening (Bakejūra, Mangerūda, 1999:18).

Global listening is related to the natural environment of language usage: street, bus, shop, radio. Global listening is also possible in the classroom if not all the students are involved in the activities. Such situations should be avoided in the classroom since the diverse language proficiency levels of the students may produce a disastrous effect. Being unable to perceive the subject matter of the class, language learners of lower proficiency levels may be doomed to distraction and may lose self-confidence. Target-based listening presumes gaining an overview of the message or getting the gist. This listening strategy is indispensable to train the language learner for language use in real-life situations when it is important to make sense of the message instead of catching separate words due to shortage of time. Language learners can understand texts which are more complex than those potentially produced by themselves. Therefore, texts chosen for listening practice should be more complicated than those which are likely to be produced by the learners themselves. (Harmer, 2007:303-319).

**Writing** is a criterion of language acquisition which reflects the language learner's ability to express their ideas or speech in written form using special signs and writing techniques.

Writing functions as a medium of the repetition of the subject matter and consolidation of language means. Taking writing exercise may increase the likelihood that the language learner will consolidate their grammar and active vocabulary. Writing on a topic is believed to foster memorising the material previously heard or read, contributes to its understanding and analysis. Writing encourages the dialogue between the learner and the teacher. Tasks envisaged for writing are related to the themes to be acquired (Harmer, 2007:4).

In our contemporary world it is of paramount importance to be able to express one's own views in writing using a literary language, therefore, in exams and tests the major assessment criterion is the quality of the piece of writing. Among the assessment criteria in school exams both form and contents are of equal importance. Nevertheless, when marking students' written papers teachers attach more significance to the form, neglecting the contents. Evaluating

both the content and the form is regarded to be equally important. A written paper which is grammatically correct, but lacks coherence, novelty, attitude may get higher marks than a paper which is interesting and complex in terms of the topic chosen, but abounds in grammar and spelling mistakes. Such an approach may fill the language learner with disgust at expressing their views in writing for fear of committing errors. Proper assessment of the contents of a piece of writing may prove crucial for the positive attitude of the language learner towards writing and for the further success in terms of accuracy as well.

Written assignments are completed independently, thus, firstly, the foreign language course has to embark on the presentation of the language structure followed by further clarifications and particular follow-up tasks (Maslo, 2003:154).

Students may often seem shy to convey their views orally, hence they may be offered opportunities for doing it in writing on the topic chosen by themselves. Students who are unable to work independently and manage their study process may require the lecturer's guidance on writing and following the given pattern. By assigning sequential tasks habits of independent work of such students and their attitudes should be changed making them well accustomed to independent work and responsible attitude towards their studies and language study achievements.

**Grammar** is believed to be learnt in conjunction with language skills: reading, language usage: both oral and written, it is an integral part of language use (Thornbury, 2007:153). Particular grammar forms and structures, for example, personal pronouns, question forming etc. can effectively be incorporated in dialogues, in questioning and responding. Formal accuracy is assumed to be perfected after language fluency has been mastered. Accuracy awareness follows the stage of expression and interaction (Thornbury, 2007:140). In mastering accuracy the involvement of the language learner in correcting mistakes, in setting grammar tasks is substantial. Formal accuracy is increased through language use, though, taking into account students' needs, students' awareness of grammar structures is raised by means of pinpointing them when reading, listening to clarifications, fulfilling the appropriate tasks and consulting the teacher.

It is generally agreed that learning grammar contributes to understanding the meaning. In fact, the language form is acquired because we grasp the meaning of utterances. Language acquisition is dependent on whether the subject matter we perceive is comprehensible (Krashen, Terrell, 1983:71).

**Speaking** - represents the formation of speech, expressing thoughts in the communication process. A language is a medium of the historically established communication mode. Dialogue is a form of interaction between two interlocutors, a conversation. Monologue is an individual's speech, narrative, expression of one's thoughts. Speech as a criterion of language acquisition demonstrates the learner's ability to speak a foreign language. Mastering speaking requires much more time than acquiring receptive skills. A great majority of language learners are endowed with an ability to comprehend a foreign language rather than use it. Receptive skills are acquired better and faster than productive skills (Scrivener, 2007:147). Speaking skills are closely related to all the three others. To improve speaking skills the previously prepared, previously read or written text is used, a certain amount of vocabulary and grammar structures acquired which provides information for the exchange of thoughts on the given topic. When developing speaking skills it is important to make use of the experience and views of adult foreign language learners. Situations enabling exchange of experience between the teacher and language learners or among language learners themselves may occur spontaneously during classes. To improve speaking skills the topics prepared beforehand may be made use of: the texts dwelt upon before, the latest news, interviews, previously prepared reports. It is essential to model real-life situations. Since students may be unaware of their usefulness, preliminary clarification is required. Students should be aware of the criteria of language use and the

conditions of language acquisition. When planning classes reasonable time should be allowed for spoken interaction. Exercising all other skills seems probable also individually, while speaking skills can be mastered only during contact hours.

To acquire the language successfully the equal balance between the contents and the form in communicative activities should be achieved contributing to the enhancement of the form and contents. In foreign language studies one should abide by conditions of the systemic unity of foreign language learning and usage (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Conditions of the systemic unity of foreign language learning and usage.**

Aims of integrated language acquisition	Integrated language acquisition process	Results of integrated language acquisition
Comprehend and perceive the subject matter	1. Group exploration	Can understand the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oneself, family, dwelling, employment place;</li> <li>• conversations in presence and over the phone.</li> </ul>
Enhance communicative competence	2. Planning	Can have a dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• on professional issues.</li> </ul> Can construct a narrative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• out of diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• professional issues.</li> </ul>
Enhance reading skills	3. Choice of materials, approaches and methods	Can understand and use the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyday life;</li> <li>• profession.</li> </ul>
Enhance writing skills	4. Skill assessment	Can write: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letters;</li> <li>• notes;</li> <li>• presentations;</li> <li>• reports on professional issues;</li> <li>• fill out a form.</li> </ul>
Adopting positive attitude	5. Creating positive learning environment	Positive attitude towards the target language and its subject matter. Development of one's set of values

When diagnosing proficiency levels of foreign language acquisition descriptions of language proficiency levels included into European language portfolio are applied (Eiropas valodu portfelis pieaugušajiem, 2005). At the start of the studies language learners undertake self-assessment on the basis of the descriptions of different proficiency levels. The idea of the joint document on assessing language proficiency level according to a uniform table of assessment originated in Switzerland. The language portfolio project was started in 1998 with 15 member states of European Council participating in this project. In 2001 a project embracing Europe was initiated by European Council - European language portfolio involving 43 member states of European Council. European language portfolio is a set of documents being endowed with two basic functions: informative and pedagogical. The language portfolio accumulates



the information regarding the level of the foreign or second language proficiency pursuant to the joint European table of six-level proficiency. The aforementioned table can be applied by a potential employer in selecting employees or a higher education institution in enrolling university entrants.

The pedagogical function of the language portfolio manifests itself in the active involvement of the language learner: they set their individual specific aims and make a commitment to fulfil them in a span of time. The language learner makes an assessment which is not corrected by the teacher, but given as complementary information. The language learner has been given the opportunity of assessing their performance by impartial and responsible considerations.

At the start of diagnostics assessment is two-fold: the language learner makes self-assessment according to the European six-level language proficiency table followed by a self-assessment table designed by the teacher specifying what is to be acquired and in which period of time. Before commencing the work the teacher has no information on the proficiency level of language learners, therefore, apart from self-assessment, language proficiency level should be assessed by means of tests. Next to self-assessment teachers take their notes with conclusions to be considered when setting aims.

The European Common Framework of Language Acquisition: teaching, learning and assessment is a task too huge and tough to be easily conceived by every language learner, it may often lead to some misunderstanding between levels A1 and A2, levels B1 and B2, as well as levels C1 and C2. In compliance with the descriptions of language proficiency levels included into European language portfolio the criteria for adult foreign language acquisition and professional usage were designed.

At the start of the study course one should be aware of the level of students' language proficiency, at the end of the course professional foreign language usage skills are tested and examined. Assessment of language proficiency level can be divided into two groups:

- assessment of language proficiency level of an individual pursuant to particular standards;
- evaluating of personal language skills of an individual.

#### *Sample of Research*

In the article a personalised approach to the assessment of language proficiency level has been adopted. The language proficiency level of each language learner is assessed separately without the juxtaposition of different language learners. To enable students to broaden their self-experience and gain creative self-experience self-assessment of language learners' language proficiency is applied which was devised in conformity with the European foreign language skill assessment levels (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Criteria, levels and indicators of the self-assessment of foreign language proficiency (In conformity with Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment).**

Criteria	A level	B level	C level
Perception, comprehension	Ability to comprehend incompletely the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oneself, family, dwelling, employment place;</li> <li>• conversations both in presence and over the phone.</li> </ul>	Ability to comprehend well the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oneself, family, dwelling, employment place;</li> <li>• conversations both in presence and over the phone.</li> </ul>	Ability to comprehend perfectly the subject matter about the acquired themes.
Reading	Ability to comprehend incompletely the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyday life;</li> <li>• profession.</li> </ul>	Ability to comprehend well the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyday life;</li> <li>• profession.</li> </ul>	Ability to comprehend perfectly the subject matter about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• everyday life;</li> <li>• profession.</li> </ul>
Speaking (dialogue)	Ability to hold a dialogue with difficulty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• on professional issues.</li> </ul>	Ability to hold a good dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• on professional issues.</li> </ul>	Ability to hold a very good dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• on professional issues.</li> </ul>
Speaking (monologue)	Ability to create a narrative following a pattern out of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• professional issues.</li> </ul>	Ability to create a narrative partly following a pattern out of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• professional issues.</li> </ul>	Ability to create a narrative creatively out of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diverse everyday situations;</li> <li>• professional issues.</li> </ul>
Writing	Ability to write following a pattern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letters;</li> <li>• notes;</li> <li>• presentations;</li> <li>• reports on professional issues;</li> <li>• fill in forms.</li> </ul>	Ability to write partly following a pattern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letters;</li> <li>• notes;</li> <li>• presentations;</li> <li>• reports on professional issues;</li> <li>• fill in forms.</li> </ul>	Ability to write creatively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letters;</li> <li>• notes;</li> <li>• presentations;</li> <li>• reports on professional issues;</li> <li>• fill in forms.</li> </ul>

At this research stage, after having conducted a scientific literature review, conditions of the systemic unity of foreign language learning and usage were clarified, criteria were established. Criteria for self-assessment and assessment were put into practice for approbation. Basis for the Research: Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy and Latvian University. Participants of the research - 212 students of the above educational establishments - RTTEMA and LU. The following study programmes have been represented in the research: LU Teacher of Social sciences, LU Teacher of Home economics and Housekeeping, LU Teacher of Visual arts and History of Culture, RTTEMA Preschool and Primary school teacher, RTTEMA Preschool teacher, RTTEMA Dance and Rhythmics teacher, RTTEMA School Management.



*Instrument and Procedures*

The empirical part of the research provides for the analysis and practical implementation of the integrated foreign language acquisition: the use of a foreign language in one's professional activity, while learning and collaborating, as well as reaching the attainable goals. The empirical research involves the obtained result (foreign language professional usage skills).

Using empirical methods (quantitative graphic representation of the data, calculation of the statistical frequency of the data, data analysis applying the analytical data processing program SPSS 17.0) the dynamics of the data changes were analysed, the results were evaluated and generalized.

*Data Analysis*

At the beginning of the research learners' objective needs analysis was carried out based on the self-assessment criteria, levels and markers of the acquisition of L2 skills as well as integrated assessment of skills, learning and professional use of a foreign language. The obtained data were interpreted quantitatively (see Figure1).

At the beginning of the study course 212 students carried out their own self-assessment of L2 level skills in accordance with the European Framework of Languages (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Results at the beginning of the study course.**

<b>Comprehension and perception ( listening skills ):</b> A level - 91 students B level - 118 students C level - 3 learners	<b>Acquisition of reading skills :</b> A level - 72 students B level - 137 students C level - 3 students
<b>Speaking skills (dialogues):</b> A level - 154 students B level - 57 students C level - 1 students	<b>Speaking skills (monologues):</b> A level- 176 students B level – 34 students C level - 2 students
<b>Writing skills</b> A level - 173 students B level - 37 students C level – 2 students	

**Table 4. Results at the end of the study course.**

<b>Comprehension and perception ( listening skills ):</b> A level - 7 students B level - 182 students C level - 23 students	<b>Acquisition of reading skills:</b> A level - 8 students B level - 184 students C level - 20 students
<b>Speaking skills (dialogue):</b> A level - 20 students B level - 167 students C level - 24 students	<b>Speaking skills (monologues):</b> A level - 62 students B level - 125 students C level - 25 students
<b>Writing skills</b> A level - 76 students B level - 121 students C level - 15 students	

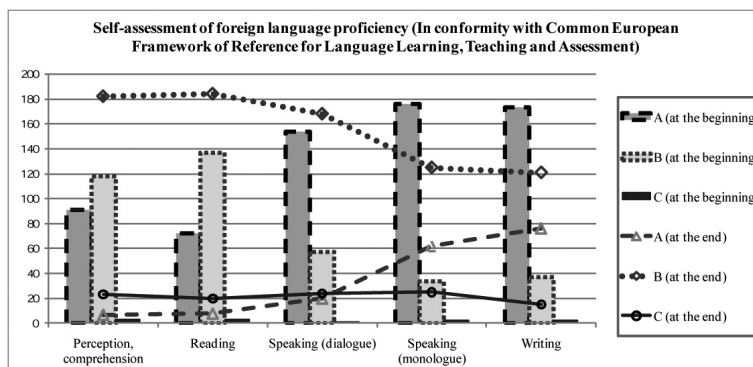
The obtained self-assessment results (see table 4) show that learners assessed their speaking skills about various daily situations as well as their professional issues much lower, for instance, 176 students can speak according to a certain pattern, 34 students can talk quite well but 2 students can do it very well. 154 students are convinced they can make dialogues with great difficulties, 57 students are sure they can do it well and only 1 student admits he/she can make dialogues very well. 173 students can do written assignments according to a certain pattern, 37 students can partly do them according the given samples, but none of them can do written tasks creatively without a pattern. 72 students comprehend the content partly while reading it; 137 admit they understand it well, 3 students understand it up to the point. The self-assessment of listening skills is lower than the self-assessment reading skills. 91 learners assume that they partly comprehend and perceive the content, 118 learners point out they can do it appropriately but 3 can do it properly. Students assess L2 writing skills and speaking skills as the lowest ones; thus it can be concluded that during the learning and teaching process more time should be devoted to L2 in use. Further development of reading and writing skills is planned during learners' independent study process; also, to make use of the obtained information within practical sessions. L2 comprehension, perception as well as reading skills cannot be assessed highly, either. It means that within the L2 study process integrated acquisition of all skills should be focused on; also, a sufficient amount of time should be planned for learners' independent assignments.

After comparing the self-assessment results at the beginning and at the end of the research it was clarified that the learners have enhanced their comprehension skills to a great extent; for instance: only 7 students comprehend the content partly; moreover, 182 learners comprehend the content very well whereas 23 students can do it excellently. 8 learners have partly bettered their comprehension of the reading; 184 learners can comprehend it quite well whereas 20 learners can do it perfectly. 20 learners make dialogues according to a pattern; 167 learners make dialogues quite well; 24 learners can make excellent dialogues creatively.

During the L 2 study course learners have improved their levels of writing skills. 76 students admit they can do writing tasks according to a pattern; 121 point out they can do writing assignments partly as well as partly in accordance with the sample or pattern; 15 learners can write creatively ( see Table 4).

## Results of Research

The self-assessment results at the beginning, at the end as well as within the L 2 study course approve the necessity of a systematic approach in order to perform the foreign language teaching- learning process, the language acquisition and implementation of pedagogical pre-conditions in the study process (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Self-assessment of foreign language proficiency (In conformity with Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment).**

On the whole, learners' levels as well as skills had greatly improved. It is worth mentioning that specific attention was paid to promote the development of speaking skills that were closely linked with the learners' independent tasks while getting ready for practical sessions. During the study course all language skills had improved; also, comprehension of grammar in use was developed. The better acquisition of L2 skills can be linked with proper planning, organisation as well as consideration of pedagogical pre - conditions of the study course; apart from that, integrated approach and consideration of pedagogical pre - conditions fostered the satisfaction of learners' individual needs as well as interests. The results of all students cannot be explained alike as the learners have had a diverse impact of the previous L2 teaching - learning experience, character traits, motivation to master L2, attitude to the study process, family status as well as work conditions. A part of students possess conservative learning stereotypes, for instance, doing grammar tasks, translating the text and learning lexis by heart. This sort of learning experience can have a negative impact on the L2 acquisition results. Situations can arise when learners comprehend the organisation and pre-conditions of the acquisition of L2 basically whereas their actions are grounded on the previously acquired learning ways/ habits. There is an interaction / interconnection between the conservative learning style and their openness to new approaches as well as the study results. Up to this day learners from different age groups associate study process with an authoritative educators' actions, i.e., setting tasks and demanding to reproduce the same tasks.

## Discussion

In common with all courses taught at the Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy and Latvian University, language courses are organized on a semester based credit – system. As far as English is concerned, all students leaving the institution are required to pass an exam in order to obtain their pedagogical degree. The self assessment results show that students are faced with various difficulties arising from their language learning experience, organisation and demands of the study process. The causes of the difficulties encountered could be classified in the following way:

- the first and foremost, the type of learner is not clearly defined. The students' motivations, precise needs aren't analysed;
- secondly, the pedagogy used is adaptation of traditional secondary school methodology. The result is a lack of interest in the course.

The self-assessment results at the beginning show that students' language levels are different and students need individual approach during the language studies. While institutional constraints (time pressure, small teaching blocks) often keep us from engaging in project as outlined above, there are hardly any alternatives to this approach. Students should be involved in determination the skills that they would like to acquire. Also, students should know what skills would be required of them after leaving institution (even if these desirable skills are difficult to acquire or of little interest to them in the short term). For these reasons it should be reasonable to base the course on the learner himself, with introduction of a pedagogy based on specific objectives and situation in which the teacher acted as the supervisor of self-directed learning.

Does and how self-assessment ( process and results) contribute to better foreign Language acquisition?

What should be improved in self-assessment method?

What are the reasons for low self-assessment and how to overcome them?

## Conclusions

Language acquisition occurs integratively. An integrated approach is adapted to the study process where in is the acquisition of the language system, thematic contents, communicative skills, cultural and linguistic knowledge incorporated. Most situations of language use involve a mixture of skills which are interrelated: for example, someone is listening to a radio, while doing so, she is writing down some notes on bits of information she would like to talk to her friends about later. In language learning situations, too, skills may be developed in an integrated way, that is, not in isolation and independently from each other. Integration of foreign language acquisition components contributes to students' acquiring knowledge and skills intended to provide the accomplishment of the anticipated objectives and results, establishment of positive relationship, proactive and productive performance in diverse real-life situations. To acquire the language successfully the equal balance between the contents and the form in communicative activities should be achieved contributing to the enhancement of the form and contents. In foreign language studies one should abide by conditions of the systemic unity of foreign language learning and usage.

In compliance with the descriptions of language proficiency levels included into European language portfolio the criteria for adult foreign language acquisition and professional usage were designed. After comparing the self-assessment results at the beginning and at the end of the research it was clarified that the learners have enhanced their comprehension skills to a great extent. During the L 2 study course learners have improved their levels of writing skills. On the whole, learners' levels as well as skills had improved. It is worth mentioning that specific attention was paid to promote the development of speaking skills that were closely linked with the learners' independent tasks while getting ready for practical sessions. The self-assessment results at the beginning, at the end as well as within the L 2 study course approve the necessity of a systematic approach in order to perform the foreign language teaching- learning process, the language acquisition and implementation of pedagogical pre-conditions in the study process.

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