



Ifigenia Kofou
Eleni Griva

**ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT
PRACTICES
IN MODERN
EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS**

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UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN MACEDONIA
University Research and Innovation Center (U.C.R.I) “TEMENUS”
Address: Kila Kozanis, Greece, 50131
Phone: +30 24610 56492
Email: ucri@uowm.gr
Website: <https://ucri.uowm.gr/en/>

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WRITERS: Ifigenia Kofou and Eleni Griva

Digital editing: Chrysanthi Markou

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Introduction

Ifigenia Kofou and Eleni Griva

Assessment is an integral part of any educational system. Actually, “value in any instructional system comes from assessment; what is assessed in a course or a program is what is valued, and what is valued becomes the focus of activity” (Swan et al., 2006).

The landscape of education is ever-evolving, driven by advancements in technology, shifts in pedagogical theories, and a growing recognition of diverse learning styles. Typical methods of assessment, which primarily rely on standardized tests, have long been the cornerstone of evaluating student performance. However, these approaches are increasingly seen as limited in scope, often failing to capture the full spectrum of a student's abilities, creativity, and critical thinking skills (Bruner, 1996). In response to these limitations, educators and researchers have been exploring and advocating for alternative assessment methods (portfolios, journals, diaries, performance tasks, self-assessments rubrics, think aloud protocols etc.) designed to complement and enhance traditional assessments and to emphasize the application of knowledge, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills (O’Malley & Chamot, 1999).

In Europe, assessment remains a powerful pedagogical process to help students progress, and to help teachers teach better. Especially, assessment of learners’ competences is at the core of current efforts to renew educational systems across Europe. Research has consistently illustrated that summary assessments in themselves are not effective enough. Formative feedback which focuses on the learning process and next steps to support progress towards learning goals are more effective (<https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/recommendations-for-making-school-learners-assessment-inclusive>). Thus, the focus is on formative assessment and timely feedback (Peroukidou & Kofou, 2019), since “formative assessment provides timely feedback during the learning process and has the potential to provide information on each student’s progress in learning, thereby enabling teachers and learners to make informed adjustments to the process”. Moreover, “learners’ active engagement in their learning and assessment is key to effective formative assessment as it encourages

them to reflect on their own thinking and learning, thereby developing their learning to learn key competence” European Commission, 2023).

As for Greece, a lot of efforts and pilot researches have been made to include formative, descriptive and alternative assessment in the school curricula (<https://www.iep.edu.gr/el/component/k2/content/39-pilotiki-efarmogi-tis-perigrafikis-aksiologisis>). Even with the implementation of the new system of teachers’ assessment in education (Government Gazette, 2023), special emphasis is placed on learners’ collaborative work and their involvement in alternative modes of assessment.

Taking into account that the interest has been shifted from a teacher-orientated nature of learning to a more learner-centered one and that effective language learning is paramount in the modern educational systems, appropriate assessment methods and techniques have to be adopted in order to respond to learners’ diverse needs and abilities (Griva & Kofou, 2017). Additionally, authentic assessment methods are ‘sensitive’ to students’ background, skills, strengths, needs and they focus on identifying and assessing personalized profiles of each student (Valencia, 1990).

In particular, a culturally 'diverse' environment is enhanced by the application of alternative assessment approaches as an integral part of the teaching process, involving both teachers and students who jointly assess performance and learning, abilities and skills on an ongoing basis, and ultimately, the synergy of appropriate assessment methods can be an essential parameter for the effective acquisition of a language (Leung & Mohan, 2004).

In this educational context, where differentiated teaching approaches are used, with a primary focus on 'what the students learn', 'how they learn', and 'how they show their learning', student achievement should be assessed in multiple ways, applying alternative, formative assessment practices that support the learning process and contribute to the assessment of progress based on the achievement of specific learning objectives (Γρίβα & Κωφού, 2019).

By incorporating various forms of assessment, educators can gather rich, multifaceted data on student performance. This comprehensive approach allows for a better understanding of each student’s strengths and areas for growth, leading to more personalized and effective instructional strategies (Griva & Kofou, 2017; Γρίβα & Κωφού, 2019).

For example, performance tasks and project-based assessments, challenge students to think deeply, collaborate with peers, and engage in meaningful inquiry. Through self-assessment and reflective practices, students become active participants in the educational process. They develop metacognitive skills, learn to assess their own progress, set goals, and take responsibility for their learning (Barrett, 2007).

Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on personalized learning calls for assessment methods that are flexible and adaptable to individual needs. Alternative assessments, with their focus on the whole child, are well-suited to this personalized approach. By leveraging data and analytics, educators can tailor assessments to the unique learning pathways of each student, providing targeted support and interventions.

Despite the numerous advantages, alternative assessment is not without its challenges. One significant concern is the increased time and effort required to design, administer, and evaluate these assessments. Unlike standardized tests that can be scored quickly and efficiently, alternative assessments often involve more complex and time-consuming processes. This can be a barrier for educators already burdened with heavy workloads and limited resources.

The implementation of alternative assessments, while challenging, is a worthwhile endeavor that requires collaboration, innovation, and commitment from all stakeholders in the education community. Through alternative assessment, we can build a more inclusive, dynamic, and effective approach to education, one that empowers all learners to thrive and succeed. By embracing a holistic approach to student evaluation, educators can create a more balanced and equitable system that celebrates all facets of student achievement (Malone, 2011).

In Greece, a lot of language teachers are aware of the key principles of assessment and try to assess the four skills in a communicative and authentic way to a great extent, but most of them are mainstream assessors (Gkogkou & Kofou, 2021). Considering this, assessment in public and private language schools in Greece seems problematic and action needs to be taken to promote teachers' professional development in alternative assessment and communicative testing, and therefore in developing teachers' assessment literacy. "Assessment literacy", a relatively new term coined by Stiggins (1991), refers to how literate teachers are in regarding what, why, and how they assess in order to generate "good examples of student performance" (p. 240). Alternatively, Popham (2018, p. 2) describes this concept as "an individual's understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely

to influence educational decisions”. Clearly, assessment literacy can empower teachers (Grabowski and Dakin, 2014) who need to be aware of the assessment purpose and tools they use, the testing conditions, and the utility of the learners’ results, as well as the importance of their decision making (Inbar-Lourie, 2008, in Gkogkou & Kofou, 2021).

Taking all the above into consideration, the book aspires to offer insights, practical guidelines and examples to language teachers who want to pilot and integrate alternative modes of assessment in their classes.

In the 1st chapter *Language assessment: The basics*, Ioannis Galantomos summarizes the key issues that have ensued in the field of language assessment. The chapter describes what language assessment is, what it entails and its relationship to other related notions, such as evaluation and testing. It also describes the developments in language testing research in earlier periods, the approaches to language assessment, test types and their qualities.

In the 2nd chapter the *Alternative Assessment Methods: Language Teachers’ Viewpoints*, Christina Moutsiouna presents the findings of a qualitative research study aimed at exploring the perspectives of Greek language teachers regarding alternative assessment approaches. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty Greek Language teachers. The teachers declared that they employ some alternative assessment techniques, however, they underlined the need for additional training provision in this area.

In the 3rd chapter *Dramatization as an alternative assessment method in Primary Education*, Areti Anatolaki provides insight into the suggestion of dramatization as an alternative assessment method in Primary education. The benefits of Drama as a technique are pinpointed and their value is discussed with reference to EFL. Drama techniques are also outlined and dramatization is linked with assessment.

In the 4th chapter *The portfolio as a basis for descriptive assessment in language teaching and learning in secondary education*, Marina Kollatou presents a pilot implementation of the portfolio as a form of alternative assessment for the receptive language skills. The purpose of this action research is to investigate whether the language portfolio can function as a basis for descriptive assessment in the language teaching and learning in secondary education. Particularly, it is investigated if the portfolio can address students’ needs in the receptive skills, correlate with the official testing results in these skills and function as a framework for descriptive assessment.

In the 5th chapter *Implementing descriptive assessment in combination with the Portfolio in an attempt to assess young learners' writing skill*, Eleni Sofou investigates the development of young EFL learners' writing skills, by implementing descriptive assessment in combination with the method of Portfolio. It is a case study conducted on young EFL learners who face difficulties in writing skills.

In the 6th chapter *Developing the writing skill through culture-based portfolio and writing strategies*, Garyfallia Mazioti relates language to culture and sets up a culture-based portfolio and, by using various assessment tools, she measures the effectiveness of a culture-based writing portfolio as a teaching and assessment method.

In the 7th chapter *The Cultural Portfolio as a Vehicle to Raising Culture Sensitivity and Awareness in High School*, Alexandra Pasi, experiments with the cultural portfolio as a tool for promoting language learning and as a means of developing learners' reading skills and strategies while developing their vocabulary. She also uses it to raise intercultural awareness by offering learners the unique opportunity to critically reflect on and compare their own culture with that of the foreign culture.

In the 8th chapter *Engaging Minds, Transforming Skills: The Power of Alternative Assessment in Wiki-Based Environments*, Anastasia Geralexi presents how 21st century skills can be developed through project work. Additionally, she searches the use of technological tools in facilitating the assessment process, as well as the impact of students' active involvement in the assessment process on academic performance.

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Language assessment: The basics

Ioannis Galantomos

Introduction

In the context of foreign/second language (henceforth FL/L2) learning and teaching, language tests and other forms of assessment are concerned with procedures, tools and techniques for testing and assessing knowledge, skills and abilities in a first, second or additional languages of individuals and groups (Purpura, 2016; Shohamy, 2023).

In the field of language assessment, three terms are present and used widely and, in many occasions, interchangeably. The first is “test”, the second is “assessment” and the third is “evaluation”. More particularly, a test is a form of assessment and refers to instruments, such as multiple-choice questions or cloze tests, designed to elicit information about a learner’s language development at a given time in numerical form (Richards, 2015). On the other hand, assessment covers a wider range of activities than testing and includes both formal and informal procedures for gathering reliable and relevant information, such as observations and interviews for the purpose of making decisions (Douglas, 2010; Weiss, 1972). In addition, the term “evaluation” is broader than assessment, in that evaluation is the act of collecting information other than a learner’s language progress, including the effectiveness of the teaching methods, the materials, the feasibility of teaching goals and so on (Council of Europe, 2001).

Some applied linguists treat assessment and testing as synonymous terms, whereas others distinguish them (Green, 2014). In particular, Clapham (2000) argues that assessment is used both as an umbrella term to refer to all methods of testing and assessment and as a term to differentiate alternative assessment from testing. Vallete (1994) relates testing to large-scale proficiency tests, whereas assessment to school-based testing procedures. Although some researchers (e.g., Clapham, 1997; McNamara, 2000; Shohamy, 1997) view testing and assessment as synonymous and use both terms interchangeably, others (e.g., Davies et al., 1999; Green, 2014; Purpura, 2016) consider assessment as a broader term than testing referring to various

formal and less formal methods for obtaining test and non-test language data for the purpose of making inferences or claims about certain aspects of a speaker's language knowledge. In the same vein, tests are understood to be parts of a much general array of options regarding the measurement of a speaker's performance (Green, 2014). According to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (henceforth CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), all language tests are instances of assessment. Regardless of their distinct meaning, the common feature of tests and assessments is that both of them make inferences about certain language-related characteristics of individuals or groups (Chapelle & Brindley, 2002). Nowadays, testing and assessment are used interchangeably, and assessment is the preferred term to testing (Richards, 2015).

Language assessment is vital for all the people involved in the education process, be them language instructors or language learners (Johnson, 2001), as it serves many purposes (Richards, 2015). Thus, it is essential to develop a critical understanding of the way language assessment provides information in practical and research contexts for both test designers and takers (McNamara, 2000).

In particular, the most important feature of testing is fairness in measuring learners' language ability (Douglas, 2010), given that in testing conditions, learners are presented with the same instructions and the same amount of information in order to perform up to their potential (Douglas, 2010). Furthermore, tests are a useful instrument for gathering information about learners' performance and their actual needs (Douglas, 2010). In addition, tests allow for some standardization by which language performance is measured and by extension learners can be compared (Douglas, 2010). Also, tests lay the ground for reliable assessment, in that they make possible the measurement of learners' progress in pretty much the same way from time to time (Douglas, 2010). Finally, assessment procedures allow those involved in designing tests or interpreting the information they provide to be assured that learners are progressing according to widely and mutually agreed accepted standards (Douglas, 2010).

In the same vein, Green (2014) claims that language assessment is carried out to collect two kinds of information, firstly to assess the degree of progress regarding a learning goal and secondly to elicit data for the purpose of making judgements about a learner's language ability compared to certain, predetermined standards or needs. The

first form of assessment falls under the heading of “educational assessment”, whereas the second one is known as “proficiency assessment” (Green, 2014).

Lastly, Bachman (1990), summarizes the uses of tests as follows, firstly, tests are sources for making decisions within teaching and learning contexts, that is an educational program, and secondly, tests are indicators of learners’ progress which is of interest in language acquisition and language teaching. Bachman (1981) argues that there are two types of decisions when considering the uses of testing in educational programs, decisions about individuals (i.e., the language learners and the language educators) (=micro-evaluation) and decisions about the program itself (=macro-evaluation). Decisions about learners are concerned with selection issues, placement into appropriate group according to certain predetermined standards, diagnosis of learners’ strengths and weaknesses and information regarding learners’ progress. In addition, tests provide information about teachers, such as their effectiveness and their communicative language ability. On the other hand, tests serve as sources of educational programs’ appropriateness and effectiveness.

Approaches to language assessment

Different accounts of language and theories of language assessment have given rise to various tendencies/trends in language assessment (Green, 2014). Shohamy (1997) argues that three approaches (periods) can be identified in the history of language testing. These are the discrete point or psychometric approach, the integrative or holistic testing period and the communicative period (Johnson, 2001; Shohamy, 1997). On the other hand, Spolsky (1977) identified four phases/tendencies in language testing, namely, the prescientific/traditional phase, the psychometric-structuralist phase, the psycholinguistic-socio-linguistic phase and the communicative phase. Green (2014) added two more categories claiming that Spolsky (ibid.) was more concerned with formal assessment, whereas the two categories he added are more closely related to classroom-based assessment. The two categories are the “formative testing” and the “assessment for learning”.

More specifically, the prescientific phase was mapped to Grammar-Translation method and favored techniques, including translation, written essays and grammar exercises (Spolsky, 1977).

The psychometric or discrete-point phase was associated with Audio-lingual language teaching (Spolsky, 1977). During this period, there was an attempt to establish language testing as an academic discipline by combining Structural Linguistics with psychometrically based assessment (Shohamy, 1997). Thus, there was a heavy emphasis on the testing of decontextualized language structure (Johnson, 2001) using techniques, including multiple-choice questions, phonetic discrimination, vocabulary tasks, true-false and other types of objective and accurate measuring (Johnson, 2001; Shohamy, 1997). Multiple-choice questions were a distinctive feature of the psychometric approach, given that it comes with certain advantages, such as easiness in marking and clear-cut right and wrong answers (Johnson, 2001). However, Baxter (1997) and Weir (1990) mention many disadvantages. These are the possibility of guessing the correct answer without referring to the text, difficulty in writing good multiple-choice questions, limited language skills' measurement and harmful "washback" (cf. 4).

Integrative (or holistic testing) moved away from decontextualized language and took a holistic perspective on learner's progress, in that it focused on complete paragraphs and full texts (Shohamy, 1997). In other words, integrative testing does not deal with just one component of the language system (Green, 2014), but it is concerned with a learner's performance when using language knowledge, skills and abilities together (Johnson, 2001). Cloze test has pride of place in the integrative testing (Green, 2014). In this technique of testing, words are deleted from longer texts and test takers are expected to fill in the gaps and thus recall various aspects of their linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge (Shohamy, 1997). Other popular integrative testing techniques are translation, written essays, oral interviews and dictation (Oller, 1976).

The approaches to language assessment discussed thus far share a view of language as an abstract system, with no relation to the social contexts in which it occurs (Green, 2014). The advent of communicative language teaching prompted new directions in language assessment (Richards, 2015) with an attempt to develop tests based on the premise that language is interactive, social, direct and authentic (Shohamy, 1997). Johnson (2001) argues that communicative testing exhibits certain characteristics, such as an emphasis on language functions, use of authentic texts and task authenticity and measurement of the four skills separately, providing information about a learner's ability in each. In other words, communicative testing requires from

test takers to replicate real interaction occurred in real life situations using various linguistic and extra-linguistic features (Shohamy, 1997). Popular communicative tests are role plays, groups discussions, reports and simulations (Shohamy et al., 1986).

Formative assessment is associated with behavioral objectives, which are presented in the form of “can do” statements. These objectives specify the desired behaviors related to successful language learning (Green, 2014) and ideally, they should reflect real and authentic applications of the skill taught and acquired (Block, 1971). The innovative feature of formative assessment is that it does not measure what learners should do after being taught various language elements, but how to support learners who fail to keep up with their classmates (Green, 2014).

Finally, assessment for learning provides learners and test takers with real and immediate opportunities to learn based on the feedback they receive. In addition, it informs learners how far they have to develop their knowledge of the target language so as to perform independently (Green, 2014). Poehner (2008) and Wiliam (2011) argue that assessment for learning focuses on how a language learner learns, under what conditions her/his performance can be improved and is concerned with identifying the obstacles to a better level of language performance, with provision of individualized support and repeated opportunities to overcome these obstacles.

Types of tests

Not all tests are of the same type (McNamara, 2000). Bachman (1990) classifies language tests according to five features, the purpose or the use, the content, the frame of references, the scoring procedure and the testing method. More specifically and based on the intended use, Bachman (ibid.) identifies selection, entrance and readiness tests with respect to admission purposes, placement and diagnostic tests with regard to identifying the appropriate entry level or specific language areas where further support is required and progress, achievement, attainment or master tests with respect to learners’ progress. According to the content upon which they are designed, tests can be theory-based or “proficiency tests” or syllabus-based or “achievement tests” (Bachman, ibid.). The results of tests are interpreted either in relation to the performance of a particular group of learners (=norm-referenced tests) or in relation to a particular ability or language domain (=criterion- or domain-referenced tests) (Bachman, ibid.). Based on the way tests are scored, “objective tests” are distinguished from “subjective tests”. In objective tests, learners’ responses are

measured without the intervention of the scorers, whereas, in subjective tests, the scorer must measure learners' responses based on her/his subjective view of scoring criteria (Bachman, *ibid.*). Finally, Bachman (*ibid.*) argues that the methods used for language tests are exhaustive and thus it is not possible to provide a full list of them. Nevertheless, a popular type of test method is "performance test" where learners are expected to replicate their language abilities in non-test conditions.

McNamara (2000) argues that language tests differ with respect to their content (=method) and their goals. Under this perspective, McNamara (2000) identifies two types of tests, in terms of method/content, namely, "paper-and-pencil language tests" and "performance tests". In particular, paper-and-pencil language tests take the form of the examination paper and they measure either separate language skills or receptive understanding (McNamara, 2000). Moreover, the most common instruments of this type of tests are test items and multiple-choice questions (McNamara, 2000). On the other hand, performance tests focus mainly on speaking and writing and are concerned with measurement of language knowledge, skills and abilities in a communicative context (McNamara, 2000).

With respect to test purpose, tests are either achievement or proficiency tests. Achievement tests measure what learners have learnt at the end of a course and thus they relate to the past of the education process, whereas proficiency tests are concerned with the future of language use, in that they aim to establish a learner's readiness for a particular communicative role in real life communicative situations (McNamara, 2000).

Similarly, Johnson (2001) refers to two broad categories of tests, namely, "achievement" and "proficiency tests". Achievement tests measure a learner's overall progress usually at the end of an educational program. A particular type of achievement tests are diagnostic tests that assess a small stretch of teaching so as to record strengths and weaknesses and suggest remedial support where it is required. On the other hand, proficiency tests measure the general proficiency level reached by a learner and stand independent of any course. A sub-category of proficiency tests are placement tests which are administered in order to help language educators decide the appropriate level learners should be put into (Johnson, 2001).

Lastly, Richards (2015) does not adopt any specific classification. Thus, he lists the following types of tests:

- “high-stake tests” (=standardized tests administered by educational organizations to measure examinees’ general or particular skills);
- “norm-referenced tests” (comparison of a learner’s scores to other test takers’);
- “criterion-referenced tests” (=measurement of learners’ performance according to a particular predetermined standard or criterion);
- “standards-based assessment” (=assessment of learners’ performance according to a set of standards);
- “placement tests” (=tests that place learners into a particular proficiency level);
- “diagnostic tests” (=tests that provide thorough information with respect to their needs and skills);
- “formative assessment” (=assessments carried out from time to time so as to determine students’ progress) and
- “summative assessment” (=assessment that takes place at the end of a course or a period of teaching).

Properties of tests

A good test manifests certain qualities (Richards, 2015). Green (2014) argues that “practicality”, “reliability”, “validity” and “beneficial consequences” are the elements that make up useful assessment systems.

In particular, practicality (or “feasibility” as Johnson, 2001 calls it) is mainly concerned with administrative issues and the resources required to carry out a testing event (Green, 2014). These resources have to do with aspects, including sufficient time, appropriate equipment, financial support and expertise to operate an assessment (Green, 2014). An assessment procedure that will lack the necessary resources will not be sustainable (Green, 2014).

Reliability is a test quality concerned with consistency of results (Harrison, 1983). A test is reliable if it yields the same/comparable results when given at different times, by the same or different assesses and marked by the same or different raters (Bachman, 1990). Green (2014) claims that even the best assessment procedures involve substantial uncertainty or “measurement error”. According to Hughes (2003), there are various sources of measurement error, including the clarity of the test instructions, the availability of objective scoring, the familiarity of test markers with

the test, the context in which the test is administered, and the size of the learners' samples the test measures. Hughes (2003), Brown (2005) and Douglas (2010) suggest seven ways to make assessment procedures more reliable, including clear and more tasks, limited scope of what is being assessed, standardized conditions, provision of clear and unambiguous rating scales, involvement of more trained raters and measurement of a wider range of abilities and skills.

A test is valid when it “measures what it is supposed to measure and nothing else” (Heaton, 1988, p. 159). There are different forms of validity (Johnson, 2001). “Content validity” is whether a test covers what it should cover, that is the test's content should be representative of the intended ability that is assessed (Richards, 2015). “Face validity” is concerned with the judgements made by non-experts with respect to what they think about the test's content (Green, 2014). “Construct validity” focuses on the consistency between the content of a test and the particular learning theory it is based on or reflects (Johnson, 2001). “Empirical validity” (or “concurrent validity” following Richards, 2015) deals with how a test's results are consistent with other forms of testing the same ability, skill or knowledge (Johnson, 2001). Finally, “predictive validity” refers to the information a test yields regarding future actions and decisions (Johnson, 2001).

Lastly, beneficial consequences are concerned with the impact tests have upon test takers, test markers and more generally society (Green, 2014). Tests can be life changing (Green, 2014) given that they potentially serve as instruments of social and cultural inclusion or exclusion (McNamara, 2000). The content, purpose and administration of tests may favor one group of assesses and disfavor another (Green, 2014). A truly useful assessment procedure is the one that has more benefits than drawbacks for everyone involved in test administration (Green, 2014).

A term that is of particular interest to educators due to its impact on teaching and learning is “washback” (Wall & Alderson, 1993). Washback refers to the effect of assessment on teaching, broadly interpreted. Under this perspective, all assessment procedures have washback (Davies, 2005). Washback stems from the notion that assessment procedures should and can drive teaching and thus learning (Cheng & Curtis, 2004). A distinction is made between the extent (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) or intensity (Cheng, 2005) of washback and its direction (Alderson & Wall, 1993).

The importance attributed to a test has traditionally been regarded as the driving force that guides washback, leading to more or less intense effects (Bailey, 1996).

Washback intensity refers to the degree to which test takers will adjust their behavior to meet the requirements of a test (Cheng, 2005). Washback is usually evaluated as taking a beneficial or harmful direction to the extent that it encourages or discourages types of teaching or learning intended by the test designers and administrators. Positive washback occurs when a test encourages good teaching practices. For instance, if a test emphasizes speaking skills, it might lead tests designers to incorporate more speaking tasks into their lessons. On the other hand, negative washback happens when a test narrows the focus of teaching and learning. This can happen if the test only assesses a limited set of skills or abilities. Educators, in turn, might focus their instruction on those aspects at the expense of other important learning goals (Fulcher, 2010; Wei, 2014).

Test production

Test development is the process of developing and administering a test (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Brown (2003) suggests that five key points and questions should be kept in mind when designing or revising a test, including the goal of the test, its objectives, its specifications, tasks' selection and rating scales and feedback.

In particular, a test can serve many purposes, such as learners' placement into the appropriate proficiency level. Objectives should be clear, coherent and should reflect the content of the course. Test specifications are concerned with what goes into the test, that is what skill(s) will be assessed, what types of tasks will be included, how much time will be allocated for the entire test or for a particular feature of it and so on. Having set the test specifications, test items' design follows, be them multiple-choice tests, false-true tests, essays or any form of test item that best suits the test's purposes, objectives and specifications. With respect to scoring method, a test marker can give a separate score to the different aspects of a task or can adopt analytic (=a learner's overall performance equals to the sum of a test's separate parts that are measured), holistic (=provision of a single scoring to language samples on the basis of hypothesized learner's overall performance) or computer-based scoring (Richards, 2015).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) identify three stages in the test development process. These are the "Design" (Stage 1), the "Operationalization" (Stage 2) and the "Test administration" (Stage 3). The design stage includes certain components that will serve as the background to the test development. These components are the

articulation of the test purpose, the description of the language domain that will be assessed and the tasks that will be included towards this goal, the description of the test takers, the definition of the construct to be assessed, the description of the qualities a test should meet in order to be useful and management of the required resources. The operationalization stage involves the development of test specifications, including the tasks, a blueprint, that is the actual description of how the test will look like, clear and unambiguous instructions and the selected rating scale. Finally, the test administration stage is concerned with giving the test to certain individuals to collect information for the usefulness of the test and make decisions about it. Test administration happens in two phases, try-out and operational testing. Try-out testing is about giving the test in order to collect information about its usefulness and make the necessary adjustments, whereas the operational phase refers to the actual giving the test in order to accomplish the intended goal of the test, score the learners, collect feedback from both test takers and users and make the decisions regarding its overall usefulness.

In a similar vein, Green (2014) identifies seven stages in the assessment development process (or “assessment cycle” in the words of Green, *ibid.*), which more or less have the same content with Bachman and Palmer’s (*ibid.*) test development stages. These are the following: Stage 1: Designers, objectives and specifications, Stage 2: Producers and assessment forms, Stage 3: Organizers and guidelines, Stage 4: Assesses and performance, Stage 5: Administrators and reports, Stage 6: Scorers and results and Stage 7: Users and decisions.

Assessing the four skills

This section offers insights into the assessment of the aspects that make up the language ability, namely, reading, listening, speaking and writing.

More particularly, reading is an interaction of a reader’s background, be it intelligence or affect and the text and its characteristics, be them topic, genre or structure (Alderson & Banerjee, 2002). Although, the process of reading is an essential language skill (Hubley, 2012) and it is easier to be tested in an objective way (Johnson, 2001), it is difficult to be observed directly (Hubley, 2012) because reading, as listening, is an obvious example of covert language behavior (Johnson, 2001). In reading assessment, the goal is twofold. Firstly, to find out in what ways the learners’

reading skills have improved after reading instruction and secondly to develop reading effective strategies to assist learners with reading difficulties (Richards, 2015). Under this perspective, Hubley (2012) summarizes the main practical considerations when designing and administering reading tests, including making decisions about what reading skills are essential for language learners, development of test specifications, selection of appropriate texts exhibiting familiar topics, restriction of unfamiliar words to the minimum, question development in the order of the text, development of questions that are less difficult than the reading text, use of various formats in a test, testing of various subskills, provision of feedback, reading assessment in the classroom with a special emphasis on reading strategies. Hughes (2003) argues that reading is often tested in the multiple-choice or short answer or gap filling or information transfer format.

Listening comprehension is the skill most instructors take for granted and learners take less time to develop it (Flowerdew & Miller, 2012). Listening is based on the interaction of both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge (Alderson & Banerjee, 2002). Moreover, it involves knowledge of language areas, such as phonology, vocabulary and syntax and interpretation (Buck, 2001). In addition, it exhibits certain characteristics, including the variable nature of the input, which in turn is characterized features, such as by elision and intonation (Alderson & Banerjee, 2002). Listening is a receptive skill and as such its assessment parallels in most cases the testing of reading (Hughes, 2003). Flowerdew and Miller (2012) argue that the type of listening test will depend on the overall type of the test being administered. In proficiency and placement tests, the test designer should focus on tasks that measure general listening abilities. On the other hand, in achievement and diagnostic tests, the goal is to measure how much listening has been developed. Following Hughes (2003) the commonest reading tasks are multiple-choice questions, short answers, gap filling activities, note taking transcription and partial dictation.

Speaking tests are the most difficult tests to develop and administer (O'Sullivan, 2012). The difficult nature is associated with time issues, the various levels of speaking ability to be assessed and objectivity issues related to face-to-face contact (Johnson, 2001). The most popular techniques in speaking testing are the oral interviews, role plays and simulation and imitation (Johnson, 2001), reading aloud tasks, information transfer and oral presentations (O'Sullivan, 2012).

Finally, writing assessment involves testing many aspects, including vocabulary knowledge and use, spelling, grammar and issues of cohesion (Johnson, 2001). Weigle (2012) claims that writing assessment has to do with certain issues that should be taken into consideration. These are, the nature of writing ability, the purpose of writing tests' administration in the classroom, the properties of a good writing test, the writing tasks and the scoring method. In addition, when designing writing tasks, these tasks should be representative of all the tasks of a test, they should elicit valid samples of writing so as to be assessed validly and reliably (Hughes, 2003).

Green (2014) offers generic recommendations for preparing tasks for receptive skills (listening and reading) assessment that can be summarized as follows:

- preparation of the needed tasks which should exhibit certain characteristics depending on the sub-skill measured. For instance, tasks aiming at skimming should have overt and accessible ideas;
 - tasks should reflect the current learners' proficiency level;
 - tasks should be accessible and familiar to every learner;
 - tasks should come from sources that are not known to learners;
 - sources should not be changed constantly;
 - expected answers should be clear and not depend on culturally specific knowledge;
- answer choices should be supported by the text, be unique and similar (Green, 2014).

On the other hand, the tasks for the productive skills should have clear and unambiguous instructions, sufficient allocated time for each skill or sub-skill, clear scoring rates and focus, realistic tasks and topics related to learners' life experience or world knowledge (Green, 2014).

Ethics and Politics in language assessment

Language tests are used for various goals and in many contexts. In addition, test scores are used to make decisions about people and programs. These uses of language tests have led to increasing interest in appropriate and inappropriate uses of assessment instruments and by extension in concerns about the ethical and political aspects of designing and administering tests (Brown, 2012). In the same vein,

Shohamy (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2007a) discusses the strong power of language tests given their uses, impact and consequences and their role in educational, social, political and economic contexts. This power stems from the fact that tests have been constructed as symbols of success, achievement and mobility (Spolsky, 1995).

The social consequences of language assessment bring forward the issue of ethics (Wei, 2014). Those researchers who claim that language assessment is an ethical activity, adopt either a broader or a more restricted view of the ethics of testing. The broader view is usually referred to as the “social responsibility view”, whereas the narrow view is known as the “traditional view” (McNamara, 2000).

The social responsibility view is concerned with the responsibility taken by the test developers and administrators with respect to the effects of testing (McNamara, 2000). Testers are all those who participate in decisions and actions related to a testing event and a testing experience (Shohamy, 2001a). These include, among others, policy makers, researchers, tasks’ writers and statisticians. All these agents share the social responsibility of having some contribution to the design and the administration of any test (Shohamy, 2001a). Within this framework, the notions of “accountability”, washback and “impact” are of particular interest (McNamara, 2000). Accountability has to do with the responsibility to the people affected by any type of assessment, principally assesses. It also involves those who will use the information any test provides (McNamara, 2000; Wei, 2014). Washback is concerned with the effect of testing on teaching and learning (cf. 4) and impact with the wider effect of testing on the educational and social world (McNamara, 2000).

On the other hand, the traditional view restricts the social responsibility of test takers to issues related to the professional ethics of their professional practice (McNamara, 2000). In other words, the ethical dimension of language testing should be regarded the same as it happens with other areas of professional practice, such as law (McNamara, 2000). Thus, the emphasis is on the development of quality language testing instruments (McNamara, 2000).

Following Spolsky (2004), tests are not only a way to assess language ability, but also a mechanism to impose national ideologies and beliefs about the strength and by extension the hierarchy of languages and the suppression of cultural and linguistic diversity. Shohamy (2007b) argues that tests are indirect instruments through which much of language policy is realized. Within this context, language policy objectives are achieved by language tests because tests determine the status and prestige of

languages, they standardize the accepted use of a given language, that is, they promote the language norm and thus underestimate speakers of non-standard varieties and they suppress language diversity (Shohamy, 2006). In other words, tests serve as tools which are used by educational bodies to turn language ideologies and beliefs into standard language practices (Shohamy, 2008). Additionally, tests serve as requirements for granting citizenship regardless of length of residence, status and occupation (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008). In many cases, the above language tests are accompanied by additional tests that assess cultural knowledge (McNamara & Shohamy, 2008). Many policy makers use assessment procedures to impose educational policies knowing that those who are affected will modify their behavior due to their willingness to succeed on tests and avoid the consequences that come with failure (Shohamy, 2001b).

Given the above, Shohamy (2001b, 2001c) adopts a critical view on language testing and puts forth what she calls “democratic assessment” as an alternative. Democratic assessment is an effort to alleviate the harmful effects of testing and create more democratic assessment practices. Shohamy (ibid.) bases her approach on principles which reflect the major tenets of liberal democracy as exemplified by Taylor (1998).

These principles are the following:

- the need to monitor and limit the uses of tools of power that suppress human rights;
- the need for citizens to be active and participate in democratic procedures and for elites to transfer and share power with local entities;
- the need for those who design mechanisms of power to assume responsibility for their consequences;
- the need for members of cultural and linguistic minorities to have a say in multicultural societies and
- the need to protect citizens’ various rights from powerful bodies (Shohamy, 2001b, 2001c).

According to Shohamy (2001c) the above-mentioned principles transferred to language testing imply:

- the need to apply Critical language testing (CLT) in order to monitor the uses of tests as tools of power, to challenge their goals and to examine their wider effects on the community as a whole;
- the need to design and administer tests in collaboration with the test takers;
- the need for those who participate in the act of testing to assume responsibility for their tests and their effects;
- the need to acknowledge different groups in tests and
- the need to protect the human rights of the assesses (McNamara, 2000; Shohamy, 2001c).

Recognizing that tests have unlimited power in education and society in large, they are usually used for goals which they were not intended and the need to avoid harmful effects and preserve test takers' rights (Shohamy, 2023), Shohamy and Pennycook (2019) offer six strategies for transforming language tests resulting in greater justice.

These strategies are the following:

- formulation of critical testing questions that will provide guidelines for designing language tests that will take into consideration issues, including tests' openness to monitoring by society or the inclusion of minority languages' regardless of their status;
- formulation of codes of ethics and of practice that will put an emphasis on the protection of learners' and test takers' rights by ensuring the positive uses of tests;
- formulation of bi-multilingual tests that will measure multilingual competence and will assure introduction of bi-/multilingual educational policies in educational contexts;
- exclusion of test items that discriminate and are biased on factors including gender, ethnicity or country of origin;
- focus on assessment literacy that will make the involved agents aware of issues of justice;

- other themes, such as focus on content and less on language ability, carrying out of empirical studies, both qualitative and quantitative for examining the consequences of tests and thereby limiting harmful impact, if any.

Conclusions

Language assessment is a multifaceted phenomenon. It can take many forms depending on the purpose, the context, the approach and the test takers. The construction and administration of a language test raises several technical issues, with respect to certain qualities of a test, including practicality, reliability, validity and beneficial consequences. On the other hand, tests are powerful devices of language policy with wider consequences for the involved sides, such as policy makers and the assessees. Tests are therefore seen as mechanisms for enforcing overt or covert declared agendas of various authorities. Lastly, assessment is concerned with ethical issues that need to be addressed in order to assure democratic testing based on certain principles that acknowledge cultural and linguistic diversity, human rights and test developers' responsibilities.

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Alternative Assessment Methods: Language Teachers' Viewpoints

Christina Moutsiouna

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing number of proponents advocating for the adoption of alternative assessment methods. They enumerate several benefits of its utilization, with the primary one being the transformation of the nature of the process and the way it is perceived and approached. According to this view, assessment is seen as a constantly evolving dynamic process. (Griva & Kofou, 2019; Smith, 1999).

Alternative assessment follows the imperatives of the contemporary learning environment and is based on a dynamic and multi-level process (McKay, 2006). It emphasizes “assessment for learning” (Black & Wiliam, 1998), shifting the focus of assessment from measuring “quality” and grading learning to enhancing learning (Hamidi, 2010). As a process, it is characterized by a “holistic orientation” in which students' learning, achievements, motivation and attitudes are assessed in the activities that take place in the classroom (Kohonen, 1999). Students are positioned as the focal point, actively participating in the learning and assessment process. They are expected to practically demonstrate various aspects of their personality in authentic conditions and are assessed based on primary sources. Nonetheless, their evaluation is not solely reliant on them, as it encompasses not only the significance of the “learning products” but also all the relevant “processes” that occur. This indicates, among other things, the close relationship between learning, teaching and assessment (Griva & Kofou, 2019).

By functioning in this manner, alternative assessment methods foster active student involvement in both the learning and assessment procedures, prompting them to reflect on their own progress (Hamayan, 1995). Their objective is to engage students directly in the assessment process, transforming them into reflective and discerning appraisers of the learning journey, effectively bridging the gap between learning and assessment (Earl, 2003). At the same time, they also contribute to the enhancement of higher cognitive skills and the development of metacognitive strategies and critical

thinking skills, as well as decision-making, self-regulation, self-esteem and self-confidence skills (Griva & Kofou, 2017; Griva & Kofou, 2019). In addition to the abovementioned alternative assessment ensures equality of opportunity in educational activities and the opportunity of achieving education success (Kohonen, 1999; Tzagari & West, 2004). It also gives teacher the role of a facilitator and mentor who provides opportunities for his students to construct knowledge (Mussawy, 2009). At the same time, it enables him/her to observe and assess a range of students' abilities and skills through a variety of different ways and thus to monitor and evaluate the teaching process. Through this approach, the instructor also receives essential feedback, enabling him/her to enhance his/her teaching methods (Genesee & Hamayan, 1994).

The study

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study was to record the views of Greek language teachers on alternative assessment methods.

- In particular, the following four research questions were posed:
- How do Greek Language teachers define the concept of assessment?
- What alternative assessment methods do they use to assess students?
- What the feasibility of assessment methods used in the language classroom?
- Do they feel confident in using the alternative assessment methods?

Sample

The sample of the study, which was conducted on May 2023, consisted of 20 secondary education Greek Language teachers; 17 teachers were female and 3 of them were male. As for their formal qualifications, 60% of the sample (12 persons) declared that they hold a Master's degree as the highest level of education, 20% (4 persons) have a PhD while the remaining 20% (4 persons) have only a basic degree. Their teaching experience varied: the least experienced teachers had been working from one to ten years in mainstream education (9 teachers), while the most experienced teachers had been teaching from 11 to 30 years (9 teachers) and 2 of them had been working more than 31 years.

Method

Semi-structured interviews were used as the basic instrument to collect data with regards to the following: a) Conceptualization of assessment, b) alternative assessment methods in language classroom, c) estimating the feasibility of assessment methods qualitatively through the following procedures which were suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994): (i) Data Reduction: involved first and second level coding as well as pattern coding, which involved placing descriptive or conceptual names. Codes resulted in groups of categories, “labelled” by a specific name. Then, similar concepts with common characteristics were clustered into themes, to reduce the number of categories. (ii) Data Display: The data were tabulated and displayed on tables (tables 1-4). (iii) Conclusion drawing: The third component of data analysis involved conclusion drawing (Griva & Stamou, 2014; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

Conceptualisation of assessment

A conceptual framework of student assessment

Regarding the term “student assessment”, in the initial phase, there is unanimous agreement among the research participants, with all of them considering it as an essential and vital educational procedure. In an effort to support this perspective, many contend that student assessment “is a process intricately linked with teaching practice”, with quite a few asserting that this connection is even more profound. They express that student assessment is not merely “an integral component of the educational process” but rather, without it, the educational process is viewed as unfinished, as “teaching and assessment are inseparable. Without assessment, the entire endeavor remains incomplete”.

A significant number of the participants stated that evaluating students is an essential process because only through it can “the progress of the student be evaluated” and “the extent to which the student has mastered certain knowledge”. As a result, they consider it a highly valuable instrument that serves as a feedback mechanism for both themselves and the students. It allows both parties to identify “what was successful and what was not”. It sheds light on “areas for improvement”

and, more broadly, “challenging aspects”, which refer to “topics that students struggle to grasp”. In turn, these serve as signals for educators regarding the necessity for “revised instruction” and “customized interventions”.

For Greek Language teachers, assessment in the school environment is a process that “prepares students for their later life in society”. “It brings them into contact with and familiarizes them with principles and values that play an important role in a society”, such as meritocracy, moral reward, rewarding effort and consistency. “It teaches them in a practical way that they have to try to achieve something”, while giving them a “motivation to improve”.

Determining assessment in the language classroom

For the participants, student assessment in language learning is directly linked to the ongoing process of monitoring each student's “learning path. As most of them mentioned, it is a process of investigating each student's language knowledge and abilities, but also a process that helps to reveal a student's “language weaknesses”. For others, it is a process of evaluating students' multiple abilities and skills, given that “the scope of language learning is broad. It may focus on the language part but it gives you the opportunity to see much more than just someone's language skills”.

Some of the participants underlined the significance of communication and pointed out that, at an initial stage, it's assessed “whether students can comprehend the texts they are provided with”, and at a subsequent stage, “whether they can generate texts on their own”. At the same time, they argue that great importance is also attached to investigating the knowledge and correct application of grammatical and syntactic rules, since it is important for a philologist to establish “whether the student produces correct speech by applying the rules he has been taught”. Some others pointed out that, in addition to the correct use of language, it is also the “effective use of language in various contexts and communication situations”, which is the degree of acquisition of skills of various types of literacy.

The majority of the participants thought of the assessment being directly linked to the written examination of the student and the exam, since “it is the most common and frequently employed way of assessment”, since “it is compulsory”. Indeed, there are many who consider assessment to be a particularly difficult and demanding process, and many who express doubts and concerns about the objectivity of the whole process. Of course, two of the Greek Language teachers note that, despite the

“subjectivity” that characterizes the whole process, a number of improvements have been made and it is “clearly better and more objective than it has been in the past”.

On the other hand, there are also some Greek Language teachers who viewed assessment as a process that can improve students' language proficiency, as it “compels the student to engage with language”, “utilize their linguistic knowledge, and gain insights from their errors”. Besides, they consider that it is also a process that activates students' imagination and can also contribute to the development of their critical thinking, since “very often they are asked to step into a role, take a position and write a text about a specific situation”. This “forces students to think, to seek information, to assess”.

Objectives of student assessment in language teaching

The views of the participants on the goals of student assessment in language classroom differed. Initially, they all understood these objectives within a broader framework, asserting that the foremost goal is to examine and evaluate students' overall language proficiency, before delving into specific aspects. Most of them expressed their intent to determine, throughout the assessment process, whether students can comprehend both written and spoken language. Regardless of the point they focus on, for most of them the improvement of students' language skills is an equally important objective of assessment, since, as they argued, “this is the essence of assessment” and “its basic function”. “What matters is that students learn from their mistakes”, “to identify the gaps, the difficult points and to intervene”.

Some of the Greek Language teachers explained it even further, arguing that the basic objectives of classroom evaluation include the assessment of students' ability to use the language correctly, to “correctly produce and use the Greek language”. For them, the knowledge of grammatical and syntactic rules and appropriate vocabulary is of particular importance. They wanted to establish “whether the students apply the grammatical and syntactic rules they have been taught”, whether “correct use of vocabulary” is being made and whether they are able to present “a spelling text”. In other words, they are interested in identifying whether students are able to produce a text, with the correct structure and organization, and whether, through that, they can “respond clearly to what is asked of them”.

For others, the aim of assessment is to identify and assess the degree of possession of certain skills which they consider “particularly useful” and “necessary for the

times”. For the majority of them, the emphasis lies on fostering students' critical thinking skills and their critical evaluation of texts. They contend that it is crucial to assess “how students engage with texts” and determine “whether they can grasp and discern the key aspects of a text, interpret the author's viewpoint, and express it in their own words”, as well as to evaluate their ability “to scrutinize whatever material is presented to them with a discerning perspective”. For some, critical ability is also directly related to argumentation, which is considered “an important part of the curriculum and is given particular attention in teaching”. Therefore, exploring and evaluating students' ability to produce and assess arguments and, more generally, their ability to formulate and support their views is one of the aims of assessment.

Table 1. First thematic strand: Conceptualization of assessment

Categories	Codes
1. A conceptual framework of the student's assessment	NECESEDP=Necessary educational process PRINERTP=Process closely intertwined with the teaching practice INTEPAEP=Integral part of the educational process INCOEDPR=Incomplete educational process without student assessment NECPRASP=Necessary process for student's assessment FEEDTEST=Process providing feedback to both teachers and students INSHSOCF=Process closely intertwined with the school's social function REMORARE=Process of rendering moral reward to students REWSTEFF=Process of rewarding students' efforts RESCONTA=Process of rewarding students' consistency in their tasks MOTSTIMP=Process of motivating students to improve
2. Definition of assessment in the language classroom	MONSTLEP=Monitoring of each student's learning path INSLAKAB=Investigation of student's language knowledge and abilities IDESLAWE=Students' language weaknesses Identification ASMUABSK=Students' multiple abilities and skills assessment AUNUSSWL=Assessment of receptive and productive language

	<p>skills</p> <p>ASSKLITE=Assessment of skill acquisition of literacy's different types</p> <p>INDASWRE=Identification of the assessment with written exams</p> <p>DIFASLAC=Difficult process of assessment in the language course</p> <p>COIMPOSL=Concern about the objective assessment in the language course</p> <p>SIMPRLCA=Significant improvement in language assessment</p> <p>STRSLAEX=Strengthening students' language expression</p> <p>ACTSTIMA=Activating students' imagination</p> <p>DEVSCRTH=Contribution to the development of students' critical thinking</p>
<p>3.Objectives of the student's assessment in language teaching</p>	<p>IASLANKN=Investigation and assessment of students' language knowledge</p> <p>IAUNDWSL=Investigation and assessment of four language skills</p> <p>IAWRSLPA=Investigation and assessment of students' ability to produce written and spoken language</p> <p>IMPLANSK=Improving students' language skills</p> <p>IAKNGRSR=Investigation and assessment of knowledge of grammatical and syntactical rules</p> <p>IASVOCAB=Investigation and assessment of the students' vocabulary</p> <p>CHSPEKNO=Checking the students' spelling knowledge</p> <p>ASTORCOT=Investigation and assessment of students' ability in structuring, organizing and composing a text</p> <p>IASCAPEC=Investigation and assessment of students' capacity for precision and clarity</p> <p>IASCRIAB=Investigation and assessment of students' critical ability</p> <p>IDUDATMP=Investigation and assessment of students' identification and understanding ability of texts' main points</p> <p>IDUNTAUP=Investigation and assessment of students' identification and understanding ability of a text's author perspective</p> <p>ABPREARG=Investigation and assessment of students' ability in producing and evaluating arguments</p> <p>ABFORSOP=Investigation and assessment of students' ability regarding the formulation and support of their opinions</p>

	<p>AADCOMCO=Investigation and assessment of the students' adaption to the required communication conditions ability</p> <p>ABSTYVCC=Investigation and assessment of the adaption of students' style to the various communicative contexts ability</p>
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Alternative assessment methods in language classroom

The alternative assessment methods used

As far as alternative assessment methods and their use for the assessment of students in the language course are concerned, at a first level, we find complete unanimity among the research participants. All of them are familiar with the relevant terminology and are very comfortable and easy to position themselves in this regard. Most of them even list the main methods of alternative assessment, declaring themselves to be very familiar with them. On a second level, concerning the use of alternative methods for evaluating students in language course, their perspectives are diverse. The majority state that they use at least one of the alternative assessment methods, while four Greek Language teachers differ by stating that they do not use any alternative method to evaluate their students. Of the Greek Language teachers who state that they use alternative methods, all but one use a combination of more than one method. In more detail, the resulting reports are as follows: 13 Greek Language teachers state that they use self-assessment, 9 peer assessment, 7 project, 6 systematic observation, 4 portfolio, 3 diary and 3 oral externalization.

Reasons for using self-assessment

Describing the reasons why they choose and use the method of self-assessment, most of the Greek Language teachers state that this way they want to bring students “in direct contact with their mistakes”. They seek to get them to “engage with their texts and assignments and reflect on what they have done. To identify their own mistakes” in order to understand them better and to check their progress directly.

In conjunction with the previously mentioned perspectives, numerous Greek Language teachers link self-assessment with the cultivation of critical thinking. They contend that by involving students in this approach, it results in the enhancement and reinforcement of their overall critical thinking abilities. At the same time, for some others, the direct and active involvement of students in the whole process and the

assumption of roles and responsibilities on their part is of particular importance. They argue that they choose and use the method of self-assessment because in this way “the student ceases to be the passive recipient. He becomes part of the whole process, he also has a role, or rather a leading role”. “He is given a task and he must respond to it responsibly and consistently”.

Also, in this context of students taking on a role, some Greek Language teachers point out that through self-assessment “students become teachers. They put themselves in the teacher's shoes, they understand how difficult and demanding the assessment process is, and they do not demand high grades”. Doing so, among other things, “gets the message across to students that a grade or any result is not an end in itself”. Therefore, they should not be solely interested in it, but “it is worth and should be given more importance to the whole process”, as through it they can also gain very useful knowledge and experience.

Reasons for using “peer assessment”

For the Greek Language teachers who took part in the survey, the method of peer assessment is seen as an extension of self-assessment. As they point out: “the basic prerequisite is that students practice the processes of self-assessment”. “Once they are familiar with self-assessment, we can move on to peer assessment”.

More specifically, as regards the reasons for choosing and using the method of peer assessment, most of them state that this is a way of motivating students, involving them directly and actively in the whole process, giving them roles and responsibilities. For them it is an opportunity to give “space and time” to students and to “give them a share of responsibility”. “As soon as something is assigned to the children and they take on a role, they feel the need and responsibility to respond in the best possible way. They learn to become responsible”.

Equally important are the reports of the Greek Language teachers on the correlation of the method of peer assessment with the development and cultivation of students critical thinking and ability. They argue that this “is one of the key issues”, a “fundamental objective of education” and try to involve students in such processes at every opportunity. For them, peer assessment is the ideal opportunity as it “requires a predominantly critical approach”, in other words, it encourages students to make “informed critique of the written or spoken words of others”. This has a double benefit for students. Not only does it “strengthen their critical sense” but it “also

works didactically for them”, since, by identifying the mistakes of their peers, it helps them “to understand what they need to do to improve themselves”.

Conversely, a portion of the Greek Language teachers believes that having students actively participate in the assessment process “places them in the challenging role of the instructor” and they acknowledge that “assessment is a complex undertaking”. Furthermore, this approach helps students grasp the significance of the entire procedure and “recognize that it holds as much significance as the final outcome”. Therefore, peer assessment “teaches” them that they should not only be interested in the result, but should pay due attention to the whole process that preceded it.

Lastly, a few Greek Language teachers employ peer assessment, asserting that it offers broader advantages for students. They contend that by engaging in such a practice, it promotes their social interaction and fosters greater confidence in their peers. In other words, students “learn to judge, but also to be judged”, “to accept critique and to respect the opinions of others”.

Reasons for using “ project method”

The majority of Greek Language teachers employing the project method assert that their primary reason for selecting this approach is the positive reception by students, with “the majority of them embracing it with enthusiasm”. They find that it piques the student's interest because “it offers something unique, diverting from the conventional, traditional teaching methods”. Equally important for them is the contribution of this method to children's cognitive and social development, since students “develop on both levels at the same time”.

Some of the Greek Language teachers even elaborate on the above view and emphasize the contribution of the method to active learning, since “students are motivated”, “are forced to take initiatives, to search and create”. Others, on the other hand, emphasize the collaborative nature of the method, arguing that it contributes to the development of cooperation and dialogue between students, as well as to the understanding and acceptance of each other. As they argue: “the students have a common goal and they all work together to achieve the best possible result”. “They learn to cooperate, to help each other, to complement each other”. “They learn to listen to each other's point of view and to accept differences”.

Finally, there are some Greek Language teachers who state that they choose the project method because it enables them to take an interdisciplinary approach to many

subjects. By using it, they can approach “a subject from many different perspectives”, “through different subjects, which undoubtedly arouses the interest of the students”.

Reasons for using systematic “observation”

When it comes to systematic observation, the majority of Greek Language teachers claim that they employ it as an instinctive means of assessing students in language courses. For them it is more “a common and everyday tactic” than a stand-alone mode of assessment and usually “the results obtained are complementary to those of more explicit and obvious modes of assessment”. Indeed, many of them are quick to describe it as an “invisible” form of assessment, since neither they nor the students are aware that they are using it as a method of assessment.

On the other hand, even those Greek Language teachers who state that they consciously use systematic observation as a method of assessment, emphasize this invisibility as the reason for this particular choice. They assume that students don't typically realize they are being assessed in this manner, allowing them to “navigate without concerns of ongoing evaluation”. Furthermore, several instructors also allude to the value of the information obtained. They claim that they use this method because it allows them to evaluate “students on multiple levels” and form a complete picture of each one. In this context, some even point to the superiority of systematic observation over other assessment methods, which is an additional motivation for them to use it. They stress that this method of assessment, unlike most methods that primarily evaluate students only on the cognitive part, it grants them “the chance to assess the students' overall engagement in the classroom”, offering “a comprehensive overview of each student's progress over an extended period”.

Reasons for using “portfolio”

Most of the Greek Language teachers who use the portfolio method report that they make this choice because this method allows them to directly search for samples of each student's work. It acts for them as “a consultative folder” to which they refer to “any time they need to find samples of students' effort”. For some, this prospect is also associated with a more “accurate” and “equitable” evaluation, as it aids in constructing a comprehensive portrayal of each student. Finally, there are also Greek Language teachers who claim that they use the portfolio because it enables both them

and the students to monitor “their development” and “their progress” by “comparing samples of their work”.

Reasons for using the journal

Greek Language teachers who use journals to evaluate their students in language classes state that they choose this method because it enables them to monitor the development and progress of their students. They report that they note on it “almost daily everything related to the presence of each student in the classroom”, wanting to observe “the differences that exist from lesson to lesson. That is, if there has been any change, any development”. They go so far as to believe that “these informal personal notes” assist them in creating a well-rounded and impartial impression of each student, as, in their view, “every aspect counts, including the students' behavior and their interaction with one another”. In other words, they can record in the diary both attitudes and behaviors that they will take into account during the assessment. Besides this, however, for some Greek Language teachers this information is also particularly useful for informing parents, since they consider it their duty “to provide parents with detailed information about their children's progress”.

Reasons for using “think aloud process”

The Greek Language teachers who use the “think aloud” method that they make this choice because this method enables them to identify their students' mistakes in time. They hold the belief that “when you encourage the student to vocalize their thoughts, you promptly detect the mistake right from the outset”, and this prevents them from persisting in the wrong direction. In this way, they argue that the students themselves understand their mistakes better, “they understand where the mistake is and why” since “the philologist monitors their thinking and where he/she detects the mistake, he/she intervenes, explains and corrects”. This, among other things, they believe that helps to better understand the subject under examination, since apart from repeating and clarifying things that seem not to have been understood, “the way each student thinks, the way he or she perceives and approaches the subject, can help the other children to understand it better”. Finally, one of the Greek Language teachers claims that he chooses and uses the “think aloud” method, because it helps to cultivate students' metacognitive skills. As he argues “students should learn how to learn, they

should learn how to direct the learning process themselves. This will be useful for them in later life”.

Willingness to use alternative assessment methods

Most of the Greek Language teachers express their desire to use alternative assessment methods, pointing out the benefits that can be gained. These include those who had stated that they do not use alternative methods and some of those who stated that they do use some of them. However, there are also those who stated that they are satisfied with the methods they already use and do not consider it necessary to use others.

Inhibiting factors in the use of alternative assessment methods

Regarding the reasons that inhibit the use of alternative assessment methods, most of the Greek Language teachers argue that the way the educational reality and the educational system are shaped is not compatible with the use of alternative assessment methods. In particular, they refer to the extensive volume of content and the “limited time constraints”, which restrict their flexibility in the assessment phase. Others consider the few hours of teaching in several different classrooms to be a constraint, while some argue that the large number of students per classroom is also a limiting factor. For them, “alternative methods require time and space which unfortunately does not exist”. Finally, there are also some Greek Language teachers who claim that they are not themselves familiar with alternative assessment methods. To them, “it’s an entirely unfamiliar subject”, an area for which they lack the requisite expertise, and they are not furnished with any official instructions or guidelines, which is why they are hesitant to utilize it.

Table 2. Second Thematic strand: Alternative assessment methods in language classroom

Categories	Codes
4.The alternative assessment methods used	KNALASME=Knowledge of the term alternative assessment methods USSELASS=Utilization of self- assessment USPEERAS=Utilization of peer assessment

	<p>USPROJEC=Utilization of the project</p> <p>USYSTOBS=Utilization of systematic observation</p> <p>USPORTFO=Utilization of the portfolio</p> <p>USCALEND=Utilization of the journal</p> <p>UNTHIALM=Utilization of think aloud method</p> <p>ABSALASM=Absence of alternative assessment methods</p>
5.Reasons for using the self- assessment method	<p>BUNDMIST=Contribution to a better understanding of mistakes by the students themselves</p> <p>MONPROST=Monitoring of progress by the students themselves</p> <p>DEVSCRTH=Contribution to the development of students' critical thinking</p> <p>DIRACSAP=Direct and active involvement of students in the assessment process</p> <p>ENSROLPE=Encouraging students regarding the adoption of roles and responsibilities</p> <p>SUNASDIR=Students' understanding of the assessor's difficult role</p> <p>FOCSPROC=Focusing students on the process rather than the result</p>
6.Reasons for using the peer assessment method	<p>ACTINVOS=Active involvement of students</p> <p>ROLRESST=Taking on roles and responsibilities on the part of the students</p> <p>DECRITHA=Development and cultivation of students' critical thinking and ability</p> <p>IMIDMISC=Improving students by identifying the mistakes of their classmates</p> <p>UNDIFRAS=Understanding the difficult role of the assessor</p> <p>FOINPROC=Focusing students' interest on the process rather than the result</p> <p>ENHSOITR=Enhancing social interaction and trust in others</p>
7.Reasons for using the project method	<p>BESTRESP=Better student response</p> <p>CONCOGSD=Contribution to children's cognitive and social development</p> <p>COACTILE=Contribution to active learning</p> <p>TECOLLME=Team-collaborative character of the method</p> <p>CODECOOP=Contribution to the development of cooperation between students</p>

	<p>CODEDIAL=Contribution to the development of dialogue between students</p> <p>COUNACCE=Contribution to the understanding and acceptance of others</p> <p>APPMASUB=Possibility approach of many subjects</p>
8.Reasons for using observation	<p>SUBCOUPH=Subconscious usage by Greek Language teachers</p> <p>INVIWASS=Invisible way of assessment</p> <p>FOROVEVI=Formation of an overall view for each student</p> <p>ASSESBEH=Assessment of student's behavior</p> <p>MONIESPR=Monitoring each student's progress</p>
9. Reasons for using the portfolio	<p>ACSAMSWO=Instantly access to a sample of each student's work</p> <p>MULFAIAS=Multifaceted and fairer assessment</p> <p>MOSPRPHS=Monitoring of students' progress from both Greek Language teachers and students</p>
10.Reasons for using the journal	<p>MONDEVPS= Monitoring the development and progress of students</p> <p>MUFAIRAS=Multifaceted and fairer assessment</p> <p>UTINFOPA=Utilization of it when informing parents</p>
11.Reasons for using the oral think aloud method	<p>IMMIDSER= Immediate identification of students' errors</p> <p>BEUNMIST=Better understanding of mistakes by students themselves</p> <p>BEUNDSUB=Better understanding of the examined subject</p> <p>DEVSMETS=Development of students' metacognitive skills</p>
12.Desire as regards the utilization of alternative assessment methods	<p>WILUALAM=Willingness regarding the use of alternative assessment methods</p> <p>DESUALAM=Desire for using more alternative assessment methods</p> <p>SATIUAAM=Satisfaction with already used alternative assessment methods</p>
13.Inhibiting factors in the use of alternative assessment methods	<p>IMERSAAM=Incompatible way of shaping the educational reality and the educational system with the use of alternative assessment methods</p> <p>MCESYLPM=Mandatory covering of the entire syllabus as prescribed by the Ministry</p> <p>LACKTIME=Lack of time</p>

	<p>TEFHMDCL=Teaching a few hours in many different classrooms</p> <p>MASTCLAS=Many students in each classroom</p> <p>PHNOFAMI=Greek Language teachers are not particularly familiar with them</p> <p>ABINSDIR=Absence of relevant instructions and directions</p>
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Estimating the feasibility of the assessment methods used

Estimating the feasibility of the assessment methods used, in terms of the data provided

Most Greek Language teachers consider that the assessment methods they use work effectively in relation to the data and information provided. They characterize their functioning as positive or satisfactory in relation to the conclusions drawn about students' knowledge and progress as they can understand “to a large extent what level each student is at”, “what knowledge they have mastered and where they are struggling”. Some even go a step further and argue that they enable them to form a clear picture. They stress in particular that “the combined use of different methods can cover many different areas”. They, therefore, provide them with safe conclusions, which “are unlikely to deviate too much from reality”.

Estimating the feasibility of the assessment methods used regarding their impact on students' learning effects

Most of the teachers who took part in the survey positively *estimate the feasibility of the assessment methods used*. They consider that they provide them with useful information about their knowledge and their progress in general. Through them students “can in many different ways test their knowledge” and thus “become aware of their strengths and weaknesses”. This is seen as a wake-up call for students and at the same time enhances their learning pathway, as they “try to improve any weaknesses” and “focus more on those areas where there seems to be a gap”.

Apart from all of the above, however, there are also several Greek Language teachers who claim that the methods they use work encouragingly for their students. According to them, “the combination of many different alternative assessment methods gives students a sense of security. Their performance may not be what they expected, but they know that they will have another chance”. “They know that they

will be evaluated in other ways that may suit them better. Therefore, they have a strong motivation to keep trying”.

Finally, for some of the Greek Language teachers the positive function of alternative assessment methods extends beyond school. For them, familiarizing students with the various assessment procedures is considered useful for their whole lives, as through them they develop their judgement and at the same time acquire broader social skills. As they argue, “students interact with the various assessment methods. They become familiar with contact, cooperation and dialogue. They learn to listen, to accept each other's point of view”. At the same time, “their critical thinking is sharpened, since they are called upon to make informed critique and to accept it”. Overall, it is a process that helps students “not only to meet the demands of the course, but also to cope with difficulties and challenges in the context of their academic and later life”.

Estimating the feasibility of the assessment methods used, in terms of how students deal with them

The majority of Greek Language teachers do not identify any problem in the way students deal with the assessment methods they use. They consider that the process of assessment is familiar to students already from their first contact with the school. Hence, “they are aware that it is an integral aspect of the educational system, and they have embraced it”. They show that they understand its necessity and cooperate with teachers and their peers.

It is worth noting, however, that most Greek Language teachers associate the positive attitude and response of students with the use of alternative assessment methods. In fact, several of them point out the lack of fear on the part of students about being evaluated using these methods, as the feeling of satisfaction from their own participation in the whole process prevails. As they state: “In cases where children have an active role in the assessment process they respond better”. “They seem more cooperative because, most of the time, they do not realize that they are being evaluated”. “They feel liberated when they feel that they are not only evaluated by tests but by their overall presence in the classroom”. Moreover, as they note, this positive attitude of students towards these methods is confirmed by the various descriptions they attribute to them, such as “more interesting”, “more active”, “participative”, “fairer” and “more demanding”. As they specify: “sometimes even the

children themselves seek this type of assessment (alternative)". "They consider it to be fairer because they are not evaluated only by their performance on a simple exam". Of course, some students "admit that they are more demanding but still prefer them. They like that interaction with their classmates". According to some, this positive attitude of students is also due to the nature and objectives of these methods. They argue that students "have understood that the assessment methods used do not focus on their mistakes", nor do they "seek to put them in a category", but instead seek to empower students in a context of total respect and appreciation.

On the other hand, there are also Greek Language teachers who argue that most students have a negative attitude towards any form of assessment. As they note: "Any form of assessment scares children". "It causes pressure and anxiety even to good students and affects their performance".

Table 3. Third thematic strand: Estimating the feasibility of the assessment methods used

Categories	Codes
14. Evaluation of the used assessment methods based on data provided	POFUSLEP=Positive assessment of their functioning in relation to the conclusions drawn for the students' learning process SATSKNOP=Satisfaction with the conclusions drawn for each student's knowledge and progress PRDERSKP=Provision of more detailed reports regarding students' knowledge and progress
15.Evaluation of the used assessment methods regarding the impact on students' learning effects	POFUNCRS=Positive assessment of their function in relation to the students USINDSKN=Provision of useful information to students about their knowledge AWAKPRST=Awakening process of the students BOOSLEAP= Boost of the learning process ENCOUPRS= Encouraging process for the students UFAMVAPR=Useful for students' entire lives familiarity with the various assessment procedures DEVSCOCS=Development of students' social skills DEVSCRSK=Development of students' critical skills
16.Evaluation of the used	FAMASPRS=Familiar assessment process for students

assessment methods based on how students deal with them	<p>SUNNECAS=Students' understanding of assessment necessity</p> <p>SRESCOAP=Student response and cooperation in the assessment process</p> <p>POASALFA=Positive attitude of students towards alternative forms of assessment</p> <p>LAFESASM=Lack of fear on the part of students for their assessment with the specific methods</p> <p>FESASPAP=Feelings of satisfaction for the students' own participation in the assessment process</p> <p>CHAMINTE=Characterization of the assessment methods used as interesting</p> <p>CHAMACTI=Characterization of the assessment methods used as more active</p> <p>CHAMPART=Characterization of the assessment methods used as participatory</p> <p>CHAMFAIR=Characterization of the assessment methods used as fairer</p> <p>CHAMDEMA=Characterization of the assessment methods used as more demanding</p> <p>SUNOBJAM=Students' understanding as regards the real objectives of these assessment methods</p> <p>SNEGATAS=Students' negative attitude towards any form of assessment</p> <p>CRFEPRAN=Creation of fear, pressure and anxiety in the students due to assessment procedures</p>
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Further training needs in assessment and related suggestions

Need for further training on alternative assessment issues

The overwhelming majority of the Greek Language teachers who participated in the survey expressed a desire for further training on assessment issues. Most of them describe it as not only “useful” but also “necessary” as they consider it contributes to updating their knowledge and to their personal growth and development. Moreover, some of them argue that there can be multiple benefits from further training, as it will “have a direct impact on the quality of their work” and “can contribute to improving the quality of our education system”.

At the same time, some make particular reference to the nature and organization of such further training. They propose the implementation of organized further training

courses, of long duration, of a compulsory nature, with specific and common criteria for all teachers. They stress that any training provided “should be substantial and should cover the subject in full”. But to be effective, it should be “compulsory and common to all”. This, they argue, can ensure the objectivity of the institution of assessment, since “everyone will be fully informed” and “apply the same things with the same rules”.

On the other hand, there are three Greek Language teachers who differ and argue that training is not necessary. Two of them limit themselves to this statement only, while the third one justifies this opinion. As she states, “the way of teaching and assessment is indicated each year by the Ministry of Education. The instructions are clear, so no training is needed”.

Further training on theoretical level

Regarding the content of further training on assessment issues, most of the Greek Language teachers indicate that it would be particularly useful to provide support and guidance at a theoretical level, as “there is still confusion with various concepts and their content”, and at a second level they consider practical application necessary, i.e. they would like training with a “laboratory character”. They state that the ideal would be “to have further training combining theory and practice”, describing this combination as “a complete training course on assessment” that can properly inform and prepare teachers.

Some are more specific in their needs and argue that it would be particularly useful to have further training that “focuses on the less widespread methods of alternative assessment, so that their usefulness and effectiveness can be known”. For them, “they are a new part of the assessment field”, with which they are not particularly familiar. For this reason, they consider that it would be “important to observe experimental applications in a real classroom in order to have a clear and direct insight into the appropriate way of handling and implementing alternative forms of assessment”. In addition, for some, the supporting material provided is an important factor. They argue that the existence of a manual with a clear and detailed presentation of all assessment methods, accompanied by examples, would be helpful and encouraging for them.

Finally, there are also some Greek Language teachers who express their desire to be informed about the assessment model followed in other countries. They find it

valuable and advantageous to obtain “a comprehensive overview of how students are assessed in various countries”. In general, they contend that it is essential to “consistently consider international data and incorporate the beneficial aspects”.

Table 4. Fourth thematic strand: Further training needs in assessment and related suggestions

Categories	Codes
17. Necessity of further training on assessment issues	<p>WILLTRAM=Willingness for further training in assessment matters</p> <p>TRNECUSE=Training always necessary and useful</p> <p>UKNASIST=Updating knowledge on assessment issues through further training</p> <p>COTRPPDT=Contribution of further training to the personal progress and development of teachers</p> <p>MPBETEDP=Multiple positive benefits from further training for the entire educational process</p> <p>WLONTRAM=Willingness for long-term organized further training in assessment matters</p> <p>PRMANCHT=Proposal for mandatory character of further training</p> <p>ENSOBAIT=Ensuring the objectivity of the assessment institution through further training</p> <p>UNNTRASM=Unnecessary further training in assessment matters</p>
18. Further training on theoretical level	<p>TRAITHEO=Further training in assessment issues at a theoretical level</p> <p>TRAIPRAC=Further training in assessment issues with lab courses and practical application</p> <p>TRALTASM=Further training on alternative assessment methods</p> <p>MEIMAFCL=Monitoring the experimental implementation of alternative assessments' forms in a real classroom</p> <p>MANASFOM=Provision of a manual with a detailed presentation of all assessment forms and methods</p> <p>EDMAEAFM=Provision of educational material with examples of the application of all assessment forms and methods</p> <p>INASTOCO=Information regarding the assessment standard followed by other countries</p>

Conclusion

Based on the results presented above, it's evident that the Greek Language teachers who took part in the study consider student assessment as an extremely significant educational process. They highlight the advantages it can offer to both students and the overall educational system by providing the very useful information about their students' language skills and their overall presence and behavior in the classroom. Equally important are the references to the positive response of students to these methods. However, despite familiarity that seems to exist, the majority of the participants state that they do not feel particularly self confident in using alternative assessment methods. For this reason, they underline the need for specific training in this area.

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Dramatization as an alternative assessment method in Primary Education

Areti Anatolaki

Introduction

This chapter provides insight into the suggestion of dramatization as an alternative assessment method in Primary education; in other words the benefits of Drama as a technique are pinpointed and their value is discussed with reference to EFL. Next, drama techniques are outlined and finally it is attempted to link dramatization with assessment.

Prevailing changes in global educational paradigms demand a more innovative curriculum that involves all students. It is supported that current language instruction should be based on real-life discourse, using authentic tasks in context (Celce-Murcia, 2008; Lee, 2013) and that children promptly grasp their language as a tool of action and thought while being involved in playful activities with supportive partners (Bruner, 1983). Similarly, Black *et al.* (2002) suggest that teachers should depart from being content presenters to becoming ‘leaders of explorations’.

The literature involving Drama and its relation to literacy is lengthy and due to space constraints only a snapshot can be tackled here. Drama is not a new approach in foreign language teaching. An expanding list of Drama academics recommends the use of drama across the curriculum to achieve non-drama curriculum goals. For over the last two decades Drama has been widely recognized as conducive to language learning (e.g., Heathcote, 1984; Kao & Neill 1998; Schewe & Shaw 1993, to name but a few). More particularly, recently, research has demonstrated that in language teaching drama acts as vehicle towards L2 oral competence (Marini-Maio 2010; Miccoli 2003).

Definition of Drama

In the field of language teaching, Drama is used as an umbrella term to name different types of drama-based language teaching approaches such as educational

drama (Moody, 2002), creative dramatics (Sam, 1990), role-plays, drama activities (Dougill, 1994), drama techniques (Maley & Duff, 2003), and the list is still growing.

The term 'drama', according to New World Encyclopedia (<https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Drama>), derives from the Greek verb '*dráō*' (δράω, δρω) which means to do, and it is the art of reciting a story via action and dialogue or rather 'the imitation of an action' according to Aristotle. As reported by Susan Holden (1981), drama is equivalent to the idea of 'let's pretend' where action rather than presentation is the focal point. For Heathcote (1984, pp. 61-62), educational drama engages people 'in active role-taking situations' and aids them to employ their imagination to create a 'moving picture of life'. Via (1987, p. 110) defines drama as communication between people that forwards meaning.

In 1987, Wessels stated that Drama, unlike theatre, does not only concern the product (the performance) but it also concerns the process of language learning. It lets children master the simple and fixed language they use by involving their personalities. Thus, "Dramatizing" is a more appropriate term for this than drama. Dramatizing indicates that children become actively engaged eagerly in a text. This personalization turns language more significant and noteworthy than mechanical drilling or repetition can (ibid). In this chapter, the terms dramatization and drama are used interchangeably to denote the personalized process of using language actively in order to interact and convey meaning.

Drama and Learning

It is widely known that dramatizing is elemental in children's lives from an early age. According to Piaget (1962) dramatic play is natural for children and plays a vital role in their construction of meaning. To start with, Maley & Duff (1982) and Wessels (1987) have highlighted the value of drama in education. They state that drama turns the learning of the new language into an enjoyable experience, sets realistic goals for the students and connects students' own life with language-learning. Also, drama enhances the use of imagination through the exploration of different viewpoints and possibilities (Cremin et al., 2006b). Grounded in social interaction, drama is forceful in aiding children interact positively, negotiate and acquire self-esteem and confidence (Winston, 1998). Furthermore, it caters for their cognitive and linguistic advancement through fostering active learning and accommodating different learning styles. These

characteristics of drama, however, coincide with the ways children acquire knowledge.

They are an important aid in helping learners to become more confident in their use of the FL by allowing them to experience the language in operation (Dougill, 1987, p. 7).

Collectively, Drama pedagogy is a holistic learning approach that simultaneously engages intellectual-linguistic, kinesthetic and emotional characteristics that makes learning meaningful (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

The Use of Drama in EFL

The shift in mindset towards the use of drama in language teaching occurred owing to a stronger emphasis on meaningful communicative tasks instead of mechanical drills.

Within the context of TEFL, drama is considered a technique of communicative language teaching (Wessels, 1987, p. 10). In accordance with Kao & O'Neill (1998, p. 4), language and drama share common characteristics which bring these two terms close:

‘Drama does things with words. It introduces language as an essential and authentic method of communication. Drama sustains interactions between students within the target language in which the learner is an active participant [...]. The language that arises is fluent, purposeful and generative because it is embedded in context. Students are required by this context to be alert, to listen, and to demonstrate their understanding in immediate and imaginative responses.’

Drama can be employed in the EFL teaching for a variety of purposes. First, it uses language in context (Maley & Duff, 2005, p. 1; Mordecai, 1985). Also, it makes learning meaningful and amusing (Mordecai, 1985) and reinforces learned language (Fernandez and Coll, 1986; Mordecai, 1985). Moreover, it becomes the tool that may engage both the intuitive and the rational part of personality in language learning (Stevick, 1980). Last but not least, drama techniques shift the learning process starting with meaning and heading towards form which is ordinary in real life. Precisely, drama, as a communicative form, facilitates the students to use language that is both appropriate and grammatically correct (Melville, 1980, p. 16).

In EFL learning, drama has been successful because it transcends learning grammatical structures to engage students in second language culture and literature

(Kao & O'Neill, 1998). Some of the benefits of using drama in the EFL classroom entail the learning and practice of meaningful, fluent interactions in the target language, the contextualized acquirement of new vocabulary and structures and students' boosted feelings of confidence in their ability to learn the target language (Wessels, 1987, p. 10). Drama suggests an excellent way to assist students to employ a combination of language structures and functions to communicate appropriately in a meaningful context. Dramatizing a text is very exciting and enjoyable. Moreover, the same activity can be exploited at different levels simultaneously, which indicates that all students can do it properly.

There has been a substantial amount of research that there can be a strong relation between drama and the enhancement of literacies (Baldwin, 2012; Baldwin & Fleming, 2003; Podlozny, 2000 among others). Both qualitative (Crumpler and Schneider, 2002) and quantitative studies (Fleming et al., 2004) display that drama can notably contribute to children's writing if employed in literacy sessions. Numerous studies inferred that the integration of dramatic activities in the classroom promoted the linguistic productivity and complexity (Anderson & Loughlin, 2014), the enhancement of oracy (Tzitzzi, 2004) and the learning of vocabulary (Stamatatou, 2018). On the other hand, the literature is scarce on the connection between dramatization and alternative assessment which is the focus here.

Dramatization Techniques

It is not the aim of this chapter to provide an exhaustive description of dramatization techniques. However, a brief description of the most commonly used drama techniques in the classroom will follow.

Mime or Pantomime

According to Dougill (1987), mime is a non-verbal portrayal of an idea or story through gesture, physical movement and expression. It accentuates the paralinguistic aspects of communication. He argues that the power of mime derives from the visual element and that memory is enhanced by visual association. It is especially appealing to children who quickly learn its use. For (Somers, 1994, pp. 24-25), mime imitates the real-life speech and movement.

Simulation

Simulation can be delineated as a 'structured set of circumstances that mirror real life and in which participants act as instructed' (Dougill, 1987, p. 20). For Jones (1982, pp. 4-5), simulation is 'reality of function in a simulated and structured environment'. The simulation is made as lifelike as possible and the simulated functions become real. In simulations, students bring their own viewpoints and perform based on their perspectives and impulses about the problem (Livingstone, 1983; Via, 1987).

Games

For Wright et al. (2006, pp. 1-2) the word 'game' means an enthralling and amusing activity in which the learners play and usually communicate with others. Through games, students use the target language in meaningful contexts and feel it rather than solely study it (ibid). Moreover, since they are immersed in situations they may experience in real life, they open up the world of the classroom to implicate the world outside (Harmer, 2001).

Roleplay

Roleplay appears to embrace an intensely diverse collection of activities which vary from highly-controlled guided conversations to improvised drama activities; from simple drilled dialogue performance to greatly structured scenarios (Maley in Ladousse, 1987, p. 3). Schewe (1993) pinpoints the goal orientation of roleplay where language is merely a byproduct since students are trying to accomplish a goal.

Likewise, Slaven and Slaven (1991, p. 49) acknowledge the importance of roleplay in mother tongue for children as it facilitates them to associate others' experiences to their own and incorporate feelings and thoughts inaccessible to them in other ways. They suggest that the same techniques can be adopted in EFL in an enjoyable manner which could lead to the internalization of language and its appreciation as a communicative tool from an early age.

According to Richards (1985), role-play entails a situation in which a setting, participants and a problem are outlined. Participants have to carry out the task given using any language resources they dispose. Thus, in such activities students interact spontaneously while they complete the task.

Widely speaking, role-playing activities are centered upon an information gap and concentrate on the creative perception of the situation rather than on the mechanical learning of dialogues. In ELT, role-play is undeniably useful in the classroom since it boosts language fluency and the employment of different registers in the classroom.

Dramatization and assessment

Byron (1986, p. 153) has claimed that attempting to assess drama is like attempting to assess a party. This is because the drama lesson is volatile and complex with multiple social interactions and scarce, if any, final products to scrutinize afterwards as a base for observation and assessment. Nevertheless, Owens and Barber (2001, pp. 92–93) state that we assess learning in drama because we need to grant the possibility of development on personal levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. They recommend that drama should be assessed according to its goals and learning outcomes.

Also, Chan (2009) supports that roleplay can also be used as an assessment form. He recognizes that learners pick up new languages competently when they are involved in authentic communication, are actively engaged and obtain clear input during role-play. Role playing seems especially powerful in second language learning because it offers invaluable opportunities for the practice and development of the new language. Language acquisition becomes more efficient when students obtain comprehensible input and are actively involved in authentic communication during the role playing.

In the same vein, Raquel (2012) suggests an assessment framework which perceives linguistic expression through aesthetic expression contrasting with other assessment approaches that perceive it as an ambiguity. She supports that the adoption of Dynamic Assessment as a framework for the teaching and assessment of L2 through theatre productions is a headway because it allows for a more intense connection between learning goals and assessment (Bachman & Cohen, 1998), a view which is promoted in this chapter.

Standardized tests do not necessarily adhere to the above criterion and usually test only two skills i.e. reading and writing. Thus, performance-based assessment was chosen complementarily with standardized tests in this case because (i) there is an evident link between assessment tasks and learning goals; (ii) it allows the assessment

of integrated skills in a systematic way; and (iii) it can serve as a teaching tool when teachers involve learners in the evaluation process (i.e. formative assessment). Nevertheless, performance-based assessments grant a closer connection between assessment and teaching goals, teaching and assessment are still regarded as two distinct activities and thus only disclose a learner's current ability.

For Georgiou (2003), assessment allows the teacher to monitor and assist students' progress and to be continually attentive of what the children know and what difficulties they are facing. Based on assessment results, teachers are able to give individualized help to each student, supply students with proof of their development and boost motivation. When students know what is required of them within a specified time-frame, they feel motivated, as they approach their goal. This motivates them to work harder to accomplish their goal. With positive assessment outcomes, they feel their endeavors are worthy. This inspires them to carry on trying (ibid). This is why it is so significant to adjust assessment activities to the students' level.

Teachers' attitude towards dramatization

Despite the positive impact of dramatization on learning, teachers seem reluctant to implement it in their classrooms. Wessels (1987:14) attributes their reluctance to their training that views education as the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the student instead of the formation of a learning setting where the student may also be the teacher. According to the writer, the former is best elaborated by Maley & Duff (1980) who state that: "Language teachers sometimes behave like the owners of large estates, putting up high walls round their territory and signs saying 'No Trespassing'. Drama is like the naughty child who climbs the high walls and ignores the "No Trespassing' sign. It does not allow us to define our territory so exclusively—it forces us to take as our starting point *life* not language".

On the other hand, Neelands, (2009, p. 11) aptly notes that drama does nothing on its own and that the difference is made only with what teachers do with drama. After all, as Gill (1995, p. 79) reminds us, teachers are training learners not for an everlasting existence in the classroom, but for real life where language is not textbook-like but used meaningfully.

Dramatization and alternative assessment share common features. They are both holistic and student-centered. They promote cooperative learning, reflection, they are

based on the goals set and provide feedback about learners' performance (Griva & Kofou, 2017; Γρίβα & Κωφού, 2019). They enhance empathy, imagination and emphasize problem-solving. Grounded on their convergence, an assessment framework of English through dramatization is suggested as a way to connect learning and teaching with assessment.

Action Research

The purpose

In this section, the students' experience from the use of dramatization as a teaching, learning and assessment tool will be presented. An 'Action research', which is usually run by the teachers in order to better understand the educational environment and enhance the effectiveness of their teaching (Dornyei, 2003), was used in this case to obtain further in-depth information on the impact of dramatization on students' productive skills, motivation, use of paralinguistic elements, presentation skills, cooperation and communicative competence. It was based on the following questions which are a part of a questionnaire addressed to teachers of English in Primary Education during my postgraduate studies (Anatolaki, 2021). Its goal was to explore the potential of employing dramatization as an alternative assessment form in Primary Education (Table 1).

Table 1. EL Teachers' attitude to dramatization

Dramatization as an assessment tool has a positive impact on students					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree/ agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communicative competence					
Cooperative learning					
Receptive skills					
Productive skills					
Motivation					
Use of linguistic elements					

Use of Paralinguistic elements (body language)					
Presentation skills					
What elements of students' performance would you focus on?					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree/ agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Fluency					
Pronunciation					
Turn taking					
Interaction					
Use of strategies					
Cooperative learning					
Receptive skills					
Productive skills					
Cognitive skills					
Problem-solving skills					
Imagination and Creativity					
Mediation					
Integration of skills					

Procedure- Activities

Students were involved in dramatization activities which were both associated with the coursebook material and the UCFL (2011) descriptors for A1-A2 level so that their agreement with the curriculum would be established and learners could exploit pre-existing knowledge more easily. They presented a weather forecast, they prepared roleplays about their daily habits, future jobs, recipes, ordering food from the school canteen and they also created advertisements using appropriate language in context.

Activities were aligned with the learning objectives and they were structured accordingly. Also, the learning process was scaffolded by breaking the activities to smaller parts. What was expected from the students was clearly explained. Both formative and summative assessments were used. Students' prior knowledge and needs were taken into consideration and activities were built on their expectations. Since learners need time to absorb new information, they were encouraged to practice what they were learning in front of their peers and also be self-critical.

Like all language learning activities, drama demands accurate preparation before it is implemented into a lesson. Holden (1982) suggested the subsequent five-point plan for incorporating drama activities into the lesson. Initially, the teacher delineates the idea to the students and organizes any prior work to make sure that the students know exactly what they have to do. Then, the students discuss in groups and prepare what they are going to do. Next, they try it out in groups. Afterwards, students present their work to one or more groups. Finally, the students discuss their work in groups or with the rest of the class. This discussion could be a form of evaluation for the students' work. The discussion session could be conducted either by the teacher or by a student. It could also be done in groups under the guidance of a selected group leader, and this would undoubtedly increase individual student talking time (Holden, 1981).

I followed the above and Van Ments's (1983) rationale in using role-playing as a teaching, learning and assessment method. He suggests that teachers should start by asking themselves what precisely their goals are in teaching through role-play. Deciding on why role-play is used, for example, to teach facts, or skills, or awareness, it can be integrated in the teaching program in a number of ways: as an introduction to the topic, as supplementary, as the central point of a unit, as a break from the routine of the classroom, as an alternative for revision, as a means of assessment (ibid). In this respect, I decided to use role-play as learning, teaching and assessing method. To begin with, I set the objectives and then, decisions were taken on the type and structure of the role-play. Afterwards, the materials were written and the task was performed with a consecutive debriefing and follow-up.

No teacher wants disruptive students and it is true that role playing, like any pair or group activities can cause discipline matters if it is not set up well. To avoid this, I began with pair work rather than group work since it is easier to talk to one person without having to upset the layout of the whole class and also students feel more relaxed when they engage in one-to-one communication. The activities were kept short until students got used to them. Also, easier tasks were used in the beginning to avoid that students would use their native language. Follow-up activities were also used with the groups that finished earlier.

Initially there was a planning stage when the theme was selected. I delineated the task (Smith and Herring, 1993) and set the objectives. Drama activities were introduced to the whole class and students were informed about the procedure. Emphasis was given on meaningful communicative activities instead of mechanical

drills where language was used meaningfully (Early and Tarlington, 1982; Mordecai, 1985). Drama activities were used to reinforce language learnt (Mordecai, 1985; Fernandez and Coll, 1986), extend and retain vocabulary and sentence structure and offer the opportunity to use language appropriately. Students re-cycled known language and had the opportunities for use of language already learnt. Additionally, warm-up exercises were used to lessen the *affective filter* and heighten students' self-confidence.

Students formed pairs to get used to role-playing and facilitate the teacher to regulate the progress of the students' role-playing activities and to keep the classroom less noisy. Each pair was given a situation and was asked to write a script cooperatively. Students wrote the scripts of their role-plays based on the relevant units of their English textbook in accordance with the UCFL descriptors using transactional, interactional and interpersonal functions for their role-playing. They decided the pairs and later the groups they were going to work with and prepared the realia they would use (for example: shop signs, food items, etc.). Then, they rehearsed their scripts repeatedly until the required degree of competence had been achieved. Tanaka (2002) maintains that when students rehearse repeatedly their roles, their initial fear of using a foreign language in front of others is decreased. Also, this repetitiveness is a good way to practice and improve their pronunciation and fluency. Furthermore, as they practice life-like roles and situations, they become more prepared for the real world where they will have to speak naturally without the safety of their textbooks (ibid).

The students referred to their textbooks and asked the teacher's help whenever they needed it. The teacher gave instant feedback to the students with some suggestions for expressions and grammar. Finally, while each pair or group performed the script in front of the class, they were filmed by the teacher. Students felt motivated when they knew that they were being filmed.

Students' filmed role-plays were watched and discussed. Role plays were evaluated by the teacher and the students themselves. Performance-based assessments (e.g., writing a script, taking part in an interview) and tools such as rubrics and evaluation sheets were used to check L2 competence acquisition. Checklists and rubrics were used on the basis of students' command of structures and vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, communicative competence, as well as their presentation skills and use of non-verbal cues as it will be seen further (see Tables 2 & 3).

I often employed, brief role-plays that handled a similar topic and offered examples of the recommended type of language. Next, the brief role-plays were expanded into more complex role-plays, which were practiced and presented by each group in the classroom. My role was to assist each group with any language problems, provide them with relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures and to stimulate them to use language creatively instead of reproducing mechanically fixed phrases.

The class atmosphere was supportive and all students were encouraged to participate. Students felt comfortable when they made mistakes because they knew that their classmates would not make fun of them. More silent students had a more passive role at first but gradually they gained confidence and participated more actively.

Feedback was given in various ways: individually, to student groups, or to the whole class. It was given in the form of self-assessment or peer- assessment. Feedback assists students to detect their strong and weak points, stimulates them, and also aids them to insist on learning.

After the role-play, there was a debriefing in the form of a class conference. It was fulfilled either orally or in written form when time was not enough. It is valuable to reconsider their tasks at the end of the lesson: it urges them to contemplate on their conduct and enhance their knowledge/understanding as well. Follow-up activities involved a stage of contemplation and discussion during which students conveyed their feelings about the role-plays and described potential successes or difficulties they encountered. Students felt free and comfortable to utter their opinions and express their feelings about their performance.

Debriefing was adopted not just to merely check what had been learnt and give feedback to the teacher. But rather, as a bilateral process, during which mistakes can be corrected and the teacher can extract information of what the students have been undergoing and then design the furtherance of their learning about the specific topic (Van Ments,1983). The teacher planned the ways that each role-play exercise would guide students naturally into the following learning task.

In the debriefing session, we discussed the questions who participated, who did not and why, who was very good and who could have done better. This offered an opportunity for genuine and on-the-spot interaction. The teacher insisted on evaluation rather than criticism and ensured that students would first comment on what went well before discussing what did not, in order to boost positive thinking

about role-playing. The video was watched during the session since it was helpful to focus on errors, analyze interactions and illustrate the use of paralinguistic elements. This was done discreetly in order not to intimidate students who had not performed very well. Students were able to suggest ways in which they could have performed better.

As Georgiou (2003) notes it takes some time before students can implement peer-assessment successfully. But recurring practice of peer-assessment, clear-cut assessment criteria, and the teacher's guidance will prompt students to resolve most in the long run. Following, Megarry (1978) suggests the use of checklists from learners' positive and negative learning experiences as role-playing assessment techniques.

The aforementioned questions formed the basis of the checklist. Assessment took place at each stage of the process in order to note improvement in the areas determined in the rubric. Each assessment task stated a set of criteria outlining what the students should be able to do in order to display their comprehension of the specific assessed area. The assessment criteria were expressed as can-do statements through which students showed their competence. Descriptors covered areas connected with personal identity such as the child's family, possessions, free-time activities like hobbies, social interaction such as ordering food from a school canteen and shopping.

Under this light, students consulted the rating scales so as to assess themselves more objectively and completed a checklist that reflected the assessment criteria rationalized into a number of statements describing skills, competence and strategies. They were also encouraged to relate ideas and concepts learned in dramatization activities to other areas of their lives (Megarry, 1978) since they can develop awareness and try out for themselves potential manners of behavior (Van Ments, 1978), both qualities that promote the holistic cultivation of learners (UCFL, 2011). It is noteworthy that the preceding assessment techniques concentrate on the process rather than the product of role-playing. Furthermore, checklists were the same for all learners to ensure reliability and internal validity and they were written also in students' native language as it is suggested for young learners. The same rating scales were also completed by the teacher.

While a pair was acting, the rest of the students carefully watched their classmates and filled in a self-assessment checklist, which was based on the UCFL descriptors according to their level, taking into consideration certain criteria which were

described in a rubric. They had to decide whether the dramatization activities helped them to:

- take part in the tasks and suggest ideas
- use their imagination creatively
- carefully listen to their classmates both in groups and in the classroom
- cooperate with their teacher and classmates
- use what they have been taught in each unit
- use body language to reinforce what they are saying
- prepare and organize what they plan to say
- prepare and organize what they plan to write




They were also asked whether they:

- liked the dramatization experience
- felt comfortable
- enjoyed their role
- believe that they learn without pressure
- believe that they improve their writing
- believe that they improve the way they speak
- believe that they improve the way they listen
- believe that they improve the way they read
- prefer to be assessed through roleplay
- The checklists helped them to assess themselves

Furthermore, they had to respond to the following ‘can-do’ statements and decide whether they can:

- Give information about themselves and their family
- Describe people and their daily habits
- Answer simple questions in English
- Understand specific information (for example, the interlocutor’s personal information)
- Give or ask about personal information
- Use what they are learning in their daily life




Table 2. Post dramatization Students' Self-assessment checklist

			
Συμμετέχω στις δραστηριότητες και προτείνω ιδέες			
Χρησιμοποιώ τη φαντασία μου δημιουργικά			
Ακούω προσεκτικά τους συμμαθητές μου στις ομάδες και στην τάξη			
Συνεργάζομαι με τη δασκάλα και τους συμμαθητές μου			
Χρησιμοποιώ το περιεχόμενο της ενότητας που διδάχτηκα			
Χρησιμοποιώ τη γλώσσα του σώματος για να ενισχύσω αυτά που λέω			
Προετοιμάζω και οργανώνω αυτά που θα πω			
Προετοιμάζω και οργανώνω αυτά που θα γράψω			
Μου άρεσε η εμπειρία της δραματοποίησης			
Νιώθω άνετα			
Απολαμβάνω το ρόλο μου			
Πιστεύω πως μαθαίνω χωρίς πίεση			
Πιστεύω πως βελτιώνω τον τρόπο που γράφω			
Πιστεύω πως βελτιώνω τον τρόπο που μιλάω			
Πιστεύω πως βελτιώνω τον τρόπο που ακούω			
Πιστεύω πως βελτιώνω τον τρόπο που διαβάζω			
Προτιμώ να αξιολογούμαι με παιχνίδια ρόλων			
Οι φόρμες αξιολόγησης με βοήθησαν να αξιολογήσω τον εαυτό μου			

Μπορώ να:			
δίνω πληροφορίες για τον εαυτό μου ή την οικογένεια			
περιγράφω καθημερινές μου συνήθειες και ανθρώπους			
απαντώ σε απλά ερωτήματα στην ξένη γλώσσα			
κατανοώ συγκεκριμένες πληροφορίες (π.χ. προσωπικά στοιχεία του ομιλητή ή πληροφορίες σχετικές με το άμεσο οικογενειακό περιβάλλον του)			
δίνω ή να ζητώ προσωπικές πληροφορίες			
χρησιμοποιώ αυτά που μαθαίνω στην καθημερινή μου ζωή			

**Βασισμένο στο ερωτηματολόγιο και στους δείκτες του ΕΠΣ-ΞΓ (Α1 επίπεδο)*

Table 3. Post dramatization Students' Self-assessment checklist (English version)

			
I take part in the tasks and I suggest ideas			
I use my imagination creatively			
I carefully listen to my classmates both in groups and in the classroom			
I cooperate with my teacher and classmates			
I use what I have been taught in each unit			
I use body language to reinforce what I am saying			
I prepare and organize what I plan to say			
I prepare and organize what I plan to write			
I liked the dramatization experience			
I feel comfortable			
I enjoy my role			
I believe that I learn without pressure			
I believe that I improve my writing			
I believe that I improve the way I speak			
I believe that I improve the way I listen			
I believe that I improve the way I read			
I prefer to be assessed through roleplay			
The checklists helped me to assess myself			

I can:			
Give information about myself and my family			
Describe people and my daily habits			
Answer simple questions in English			
Specific information (for example, the interlocutor's personal information)			
Give or ask about personal information			
Use what I am learning in my daily life			

**Based on the questionnaire and A1 UCFL descriptors*

Kempston (2012) examined the use of a patterned rubric with a 6-point scale that assessed: pronunciation and delivery, vocabulary and language patterns, communication strategies, and ideas and organization. In this case, rubrics were also used to evaluate the development of skills and ensure that students take up the necessary vocabulary, grammar, confidence, fluency it is expected to acquire according to their level. Rubrics evidently manifested what would be assessed and how it would be assessed. Both the teacher and the students used the same role-playing rubric to assess their classmates (Tables 4-5). The criteria were clearly set and thoroughly discussed with the students. Students used a scale from 1-4 to judge:

- Participation in Preparation and Presentation
- Use of Non-Verbal Cues (voice, gestures, eye contact)
- Imagination and Creativity
- Organization
- Achievement of Purpose
- Use of Language
- Focus on the task

Table 4. Role-playing rubric (Greek version)

Κριτήρια	4	3	2	1
Συμμετοχή Προετοιμασία Παρουσίαση	Πάντα πρόθυμος/η και αφοσιωμένος/η κατά την ομαδική	Συνήθως πρόθυμος/η και αφοσιωμένος/η κατά την ομαδική	Μερικές φορές πρόθυμος/η και αφοσιωμένος/η	Σπάνια πρόθυμος/η και αφοσιωμένος/η κατά την

	εργασία και την παρουσίαση.	εργασία και την παρουσίαση.	κατά την ομαδική εργασία και την παρουσίαση..	ομαδική εργασία και την παρουσίαση..
Χρήση μη λεκτικών στοιχείων (τόνος φωνής, χειρονομίες, οπτική επαφή)	Εντυπωσιακή ποικιλία μη λεκτικών στοιχείων που χρησιμοποιούνται με υποδειγματικό τρόπο.	Ικανοποιητική ή ποικιλία μη λεκτικών στοιχείων που χρησιμοποιούνται με επιδεξιότητα.	Καλή ποικιλία μη λεκτικών στοιχείων που χρησιμοποιούνται με αποδεκτό τρόπο.	Περιορισμένη ποικιλία μη λεκτικών στοιχείων που εξελίσσεται.
Φαντασία και δημιουργικότητα	Οι επιλογές δείχνουν διορατικότητα και ενισχύουν δυναμικά το παιχνίδι ρόλων.	Οι επιλογές δείχνουν περίσκεψη και ενισχύουν πλήρως το παιχνίδι ρόλων.	Οι επιλογές δείχνουν επίγνωση και ενισχύουν το παιχνίδι ρόλων.	Οι επιλογές δείχνουν ελάχιστη επίγνωση και ενισχύουν ελάχιστα το παιχνίδι ρόλων.
Οργάνωση	Έξοχη εισαγωγή, λεπτομέρειες, σύνθεση, μεταβάσεις, επίλογος, συνοχή.	Ικανοποιητική ή εισαγωγή, λεπτομέρειες, σύνθεση, μεταβάσεις, επίλογος, συνοχή.	Καλή εισαγωγή, λεπτομέρειες, σύνθεση, μεταβάσεις, επίλογος, συνοχή.	Περιορισμένη εισαγωγή, λεπτομέρειες, σύνθεση, μεταβάσεις, επίλογος, συνοχή.
Επίτευξη του σκοπού	Ο στόχος καθορίζεται ξεκάθαρα και υποστηρίζεται αποτελεσματικά.	Ο στόχος καθορίζεται ξεκάθαρα και γενικά υποστηρίζεται.	Ο στόχος καθορίζεται αλλά ίσως δεν υποστηρίζεται.	Ο στόχος καθορίζεται αόριστα και ίσως δεν υποστηρίζεται.
Χρήση της γλώσσας	Χρησιμοποιείται το κατάλληλο λεξιλόγιο.	Χρησιμοποιείται προσεκτικά επιλεγμένο και σύνθετο λεξιλόγιο.	Χρησιμοποιείται γενικά ακριβές λεξιλόγιο.	Χρησιμοποιείται αόριστο και μη κατάλληλο λεξιλόγιο.
Αφοσίωση στη δραστηριότητα	Πλήρης αφοσίωση στη δραστηριότητα.	Αφοσίωση στη δραστηριότητα	Μερική αφοσίωση στη δραστηριότητα	Απουσία αφοσίωσης στη δραστηριότητα.

	Αυτορρύθμιση.	την περισσότερη ώρα		
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* Adapted from: *Our Schools in Action— an integrated teacher resource Assessment.*
Alberta Learning, Alberta, Canada

Table 5. Role-playing Rubric (English version)

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Participation in Preparation and Presentation	Always willing and focused during group work and presentation.	Usually willing and focused during group work and presentation.	Sometimes willing and focused during group work and presentation.	Rarely willing and focused during group work and presentation
Use of Non-Verbal Cues (voice, gestures, eye contact)	Impressive variety of non-verbal cues used in an exemplary way.	Good variety of non-verbal cues used in a competent way.	Satisfactory variety of non-verbal cues used in an acceptable way.	Limited variety of non-verbal cues are used in a developing way
Imagination and Creativity	Choices demonstrate insight and powerfully enhance role play.	Choices demonstrate thoughtfulness and completely enhance role play.	Choices demonstrate awareness and enhance role play.	Choices demonstrate little awareness and do little to enhance role play.
Organization	Introduction, detail, arrangement, transitions, conclusion and coherence are excellent.	Introduction, detail arrangement, transitions, conclusions and coherence are very good.	Introduction, detail arrangement, transitions, conclusion and coherence are satisfactory.	Introduction, detail arrangement transitions, conclusion and coherence are limited.
Achievement of Purpose	Purpose is clearly established and effectively sustained.	Purpose is clearly established and generally sustained.	Purpose is established but may not be sustained.	Purpose is vaguely established and may not be sustained
Use of	Appropriate vocabulary used.	Carefully chosen and	Generally precise	Vague or inappropriate

Language		complex vocabulary is used.	vocabulary is used.	vocabulary is used.
Focus on the task	Always focused on the task. Self-regulated.	Focused on the task most of the time.	Focused on the task some of the time.	Focused on the task seldom.

**Adapted from: Our Schools in Action— an integrated teacher resource Assessment
Alberta Learning, Alberta, Canada*

Reflection

Students' answers to the checklist affirmed Taylor and Walford's (1972) views of the possible advantages and disadvantages in the use of classroom simulation and role-playing exercises. For instance, students' motivation was enhanced, the traditional role of the teacher-student relationship was transformed, students' interest in learning was heightened and the dynamic nature of the role-playing activities brought novelty and freshness in the classroom. Also, learning took place not only on cognitive but also on emotional and social level. Moreover, these activities served as a bridge between real life and school (Robson, 2002, p. 363). They treat real-world situations but in the safety of the classroom.

Learning, teaching and assessing through role-playing assisted students to take part in the activities, propose ideas and use their imagination creatively while collaborating with their peers and teacher. It also facilitated them in writing using their imagination and the already taught vocabulary and phrases. They also learned to work with their classmates both in groups and in pairs. Teamwork enabled the students to listen to their interlocutors carefully, and it also aided them to express themselves during group discussions. The vast majority of the students agreed that they became confident and their self-esteem was built gradually.

Most of the students thought that the experience was beneficial. The greater number of the students agreed that they enjoyed the experience of dramatization and felt comfortable in a stress-free environment while learning at the same time. Additionally, they mostly believed that the rubrics and the checklists helped them assess themselves and that they developed both receptive and productive skills. They seemed to prefer to be assessed through dramatization since they learn without

pressure and can use what they learn in real-life situations. Nearly all believe that they can achieve most of the can-do statements in the checklist.

Papadopoulos & Kosma (2018) drew similar conclusions in their action research. They found out that the use of dramatic teaching methods developed conversational learning environments which were substantial for optimum learning. As Taylor (2006) supports, in equivalent environments education resembles more a laboratory than a waiting room. This kind of self-evaluation enables learners to become aware of their progress and motivates them to study and practice constantly.

Such activities offer students the chance to refine early literacy skills. By incorporating movement and gestures with vocabulary lessons and dialogue, teachers promote the improvement of students' semantic and conceptual knowledge, as well as narrative discourse (Huss, Verney, Fosker, Mead, & Goswami, 2011). By playing invented characters, students discover how interaction might occur in various situations outside the classroom in real life. Yet, as Ladousse (1987) notes, none of the real life risks of behavior and communication exist in the safety of the classroom, making the activity fun and pleasant to the students. Consequently, through authentic settings and roleplaying, students are able to generate more natural communication, enhance their fluency and use the target language competently (Govas et al. 2007).

During the different drama activities students not only had to listen carefully to each other and the teacher, ask questions and answer relevantly, but they also participated competently as group members and started to use different language registers in accordance to the context, role or situation.

There were times that although students had themselves written the scripts and had rehearsed them, when they were filmed, some of them used language and phrases without planning and their classmates had to respond spontaneously to the new data. This resembled real life where authentic interactions are unpredictable.

When students worked in groups they had to settle the order themselves by using the silences. This helped them to develop their listening skills by acknowledging and analyzing the structure of talk.

Students suited their talk to the requirements of different contexts. They used varied vocabulary and organized their talk to interact clearly. They established an understanding of the language choices demanded for different contexts and decided how and when they participated. The pairs were given necessary talk time to discuss and hone the oral text they would share with the rest of the classroom.

Each group assigned roles and, using their short script, at first they read their extract of the scene. The groups' rehearsed readings enabled students to listen and observe their classmates, evaluate their work and improve their own scripts. Following a short reflective discussion, the students were required to use the rubrics and evidence their comments.

Writing within the drama process catered for a purposeful context where pupils had to bear in mind the audience, purpose and style. The teacher helped the pupils to consider the characters and other features of the text extensively. The teacher wished students' writing to be in accordance with the context. Therefore, she asked them to take into account the language in which they were writing. They also had to ponder on the way in which they would handle the choice of language and structure to gain a specific result.

Writing skills, and the use of appropriate vocabulary and structures from their textbooks, were directly communicated through the drama activities. Since the students had to make choices and build on the language and ideas associated, they were able to classify and choose all relevant information from the textbook to back up their ideas. The drama activities complemented each other.

Improving the ability to observe and engage in the tasks implies that, in a new situation, or context, students will be able to transmit their analytical skills to the new situation. Students count on what they know, examine the possibilities and delve into their ideas thoroughly.

Investigating contexts and ideas through drama practices indicates that students start to pick up and organize the relevant information. They are enabled to work as autonomous learners because they have a proper understanding of the learning process and the necessary critical thinking skills. They can illustrate the learning process its objectives to their peers and others, when such a display is needed. They are enabled to arrange information and, through understanding, turn it into knowledge.

This stress on critical thinking and the ability to study closely and understand the learning process urges students to become autonomous learners who are able to transfer their skills and knowledge to new contexts concerning more challenging situations.

A longtime proponent of drama as a beneficial teaching strategy, Dorothy Heathcote (in Wagner, 1976) stated:

‘‘If you cannot increase reflective power in people, you might as well NOT teach, because reflection is the only thing in the long run that teaches anybody. Reflection is what makes the knowing something that can be touched on and assimilated for further use’’.

In sum, it seems that dramatization had a multifaceted effect on students and the teacher as it created interactional learning environments which are essential to accomplish the best possible learning and it fostered teacher development (Papadopoulos & Kosma, 2018). Therefore, dramatization turns out to be one of the best integrated teaching and learning methods, as students can gain knowledge both from watching the other students’ play and from acting out themselves.

A toolkit of dramatization as an alternative form of assessment

The following sample of the toolkit has been realized based on the research findings during my postgraduate studies (Anatolaki, 2021). It seemed obvious from the teachers’ responses to the questionnaire that most of them acknowledged the value of dramatization as an alternative assessment form. Hence, they did not seem prepared to implement it in their classroom routine due to a number of reasons such as: lack of theoretical background, training, large classrooms, and classroom management issues. On the other hand, students’ positive feedback after the use of dramatization as a learning, teaching and assessment tool was more than encouraging.

It is not time to delve deeper into the literature related to alternative assessment and dramatization, but, the convergence between the UCFL (2016) and drama should be brought under the spotlight.

Basically, UCFL (2016) advocates the meaningful and contextualized use of language that resembles real life. It also promotes equity and respect to each student’s background and needs. On the whole, it centers on learning a language through communication. Thus, it becomes apparent that these dimensions are in harmony with what dramatization entails.

Therefore, the toolkit (Table 7) has been designed in order to facilitate teachers to incorporate dramatization in their teaching and assessment practices and motivate their students. It focuses on the A1 speaking descriptors as articulated in the UCFL (2016), the official Curriculum for foreign languages (Table 6). It suggests practical activities that address each speaking descriptor. These suggested activities, though,

can be modified to suit all levels, skills and ages. Also, the use of checklists and rubrics with clear assessment criteria can further assist in assessing students and thus connect teaching with assessment.

Table 6. UCFL (ΕΠΣ-ΕΓ) general A1 descriptors

A1	-Να κατανοούν και να παράγουν προτάσεις με απλή δομή, με λέξεις ευρείας χρήσης και τυποποιημένες εκφράσεις, προκειμένου να ανταποκριθούν σε ανάγκες της καθημερινής ζωής
	-Να χαιρετούν, να συστήνονται, να δίνουν ή να ζητούν πληροφορίες για τον εαυτό τους, να ευχαριστούν, να κατονομάζουν αντικείμενα, να περιγράφουν έναν χώρο, ένα άτομο κ. τλ.
	-Να κάνουν διάλογο (σε προσομοίωση) με ομιλητές που γνωρίζουν καλά τη γλώσσα- στόχο, προκειμένου να εξυπηρετήσουν βασικές ανάγκες επικοινωνίας υπό την προϋπόθεση ότι ο συνομιλητής τους μιλάει αργά και είναι πρόθυμος να βοηθήσει την επικοινωνία
	-Να αποδίδουν στην ελληνική ένα μήνυμα διατυπωμένο στην ξένη γλώσσα

Table 7. The Toolkit

Κατανόηση προφορικού λόγου
<p>Οι μαθητές/τριες θα πρέπει να είναι σε θέση:</p> <p>1. να απαντούν σε απλά ερωτήματα στην ξένη γλώσσα (ή σε πιο σύνθετα ερωτήματα στην ελληνική) σχετικά με το περιεχόμενο σύντομης εκφοράς λόγου (καθαρά ηχογραφημένης), όπως ερωταποκρίσεων, οδηγιών (π.χ. δασκάλου, γυμναστή, γιατρού κλπ), είδησης κλπ.</p> <p><i>Act out a story</i></p> <p><i>Language:</i> Responding through action to what is said.</p> <p><i>Preparation:</i> Think of a story or situation in which actions play a major part.</p> <p><i>Procedure:</i></p> <p>Ask the learners to sit in a circle, if you have enough room. Otherwise, they may remain at their desks.</p> <p>Tell a story in which actions play a major part and encourage the learners to act it out. For example:</p> <p>Teacher: You've got a little cat in a box. Put the box on your desk.</p> <p>Say, 'Sit still. Don't move.' Now stroke the little cat and say, 'You're a nice cat.' Take the cat out of the box, very carefully and slowly. Put it down. Give it some milk in a saucer. Don't spill it! Say,</p>

‘Do you like the milk?’

Stroke the cat again. Now say, ‘Come on, little cat. Let me put you in the box.’ Pick up the cat carefully and put it back in the box. Say, ‘Stay there. Go to sleep. Go to sleep, little cat.’

Show your friend your little cat. Tell her what it’s like and what it is doing.

2. να κατανοούν πολύ βασικές, τυποποιημένες εκφράσεις που χρησιμοποιούνται σε καθημερινές συνθήκες διαπροσωπικής επικοινωνίας (π.χ. χαιρετισμούς, συστάσεις κλπ.).

Learning names

Language: Introducing oneself and others, learning names

Variation: Sharing likes or other personal information, learning names

Preparation: Set a friendly classroom atmosphere by putting on some music, if you wish.

Procedure:

- Ask the learners to mill about, nodding and smiling, in a space in the classroom. It is an advantage if you can have some cheerful music playing and stop it when you want them to stop.
- Ask them to stop in front of another learner and introduce themselves.
- You can demonstrate this.
- Learner 1: *Hello, I am Lars.*
- Learner 2: *Hello, I am Zakia.*
- Let the learners mill again until you stop them and ask them to introduce themselves again.
- You can add to the challenge by asking them to point at and name the other people they have already met. They can help each other to do this, if necessary. This is a very effective way of practicing the paradigm of the present simple: *I am, he/she is.*

Learner 1: *She’s Barbara and she’s Yvonne and he’s Harry.*

I’m Ferdinand.

Examples of other types of information to add

Family, home area, job

Favourite thing to do when not working, favourite food

3. να κατανοούν συγκεκριμένες πληροφορίες (π.χ. προσωπικά στοιχεία του ομιλητή ή πληροφορίες σχετικές με το άμεσο οικογενειακό περιβάλλον του), διατυπωμένες με απλό λεξιλόγιο και τυποποιημένες προτασιακές δομές.

What are you doing?

Stand in a circle. The first person (A) starts miming an activity, such as eating an apple. The person to their left (B) says "What are you doing?". A keeps miming and at the same time says the name of a different activity. For example, if A was miming eating an apple, they could say "playing the piano". B then starts playing a piano. A stops their mime. Now the third person (C) asks B, "What are you doing?". B keeps playing the piano and names a different activity, which C must mime. And so it goes on.

There should be no repetition and no similar activities. For example if you are miming climbing a ladder you cannot say, "Climbing the stairs". Equally you should not name an activity that looks like

the one you are actually doing. For example, if you are cleaning a window you cannot say "waving good-bye" - because it looks very similar!

Pecking order

In groups of three, decide on a situation and three characters, e.g. a surgery, with a doctor, nurse and patient. One person leaves the room and the others decide on their own pecking order or status - 1, 2 or 3. They also decide what status the other person is (without telling them). The person re-enters and the improvisation begins. After a while, the improvisation is stopped and the third person has to guess their own status and that of the other two.

4. να ακούν και να τοποθετούν στη σωστή σειρά απλές προτάσεις οδηγιών.

Traffic lights

A physical warm-up game. The leader calls out traffic light colours in any order, trying to catch people out.

- "Green" - Walk/run around the space.
- "Amber" - Stand on one leg without over-balancing.
- "Red" - Stop still - or lie down on the ground!
- Yes, let's!

Whole group game. One person starts with a suggested action - "Let's play the piano", for example. Everyone else shouts, "Yes, let's!" and the whole group carries out the action with as much enthusiasm as possible.

After a while someone else can suggest a new action - "Let's be spies!" - "Yes, let's!" The aim is for the whole group to fully commit to the activity. Try not to rush too quickly from one activity to the next - explore each one for a while.

A good warm-up for impro work.

Παραγωγή προφορικού λόγου και προφορική διάδραση

Οι μαθητές/τριες θα πρέπει να είναι σε θέση:

1. να απαντούν και να θέτουν απλές ερωτήσεις που αφορούν σε άμεσες ανάγκες καθημερινής επικοινωνίας (π.χ. να δίνουν ή να ζητούν προσωπικές πληροφορίες ή πληροφορίες σχετικά με το άμεσο περιβάλλον, την οικογένεια κλπ.).

Who am I?

Played by the whole class or by a large group. One person leaves the room. The others choose where the improvisation takes place and who the player will be. Ideally the character should be one who is surrounded by a lot of activity; for example a newsreader in a studio or news room, an Inspector at a police station, a porter in a factory.

The activity begins and the first player is asked to return. The other players should relate to the first player and try to include him in what is happening. It is important that the focus is on an improvisation rather than a guessing game. The first player should be open to what happens and not try to rush the discovery.

2. να διατυπώνουν μια στοιχειώδη αφήγηση, συνδέοντας τις φράσεις και

προτάσεις με απλούς συνδέσμους ή επιρρήματα (π.χ. «και», «αλλά», «ή», «μετά» κλπ.).

Yes, and...

It's really important to accept each other's ideas in drama. Here is a game played with a partner to help you do just that. One person begins by making an "offer" (putting forward an idea) and the partner replies with a sentence that begins "Yes, and...".

Try not to block your partner's ideas, which can so often happen in improvisation. Instead, try and build on each other's suggestions. As soon as confidence develops, you can add in actions.

- A: It's raining
- B: Yes, and I've got a large umbrella
- A: Let's shelter under it
- B: Yes, and the wind is blowing us into the air
- A: We are flying over the sea
- B: Yes, and we have landed on an island...
- And so on.

Participants should avoid trying to push their own idea at the expense of their partner's.

3. να περιγράφουν άτομα, αντικείμενα, τοποθεσίες, χρησιμοποιώντας λεξιλόγιο υψηλής συχνότητας και πολύ απλά προτασιακά σχήματα.

Scene from your life

A good exercise for learning about directing or for getting to know one another. Divide into small groups. One member of the group tells the others a true story of an event from her life. It should involve the same number of people as there are in the group (excluding the teller of the story, who becomes the director). The director chooses members of the group to play the various characters involved, including herself. Once the actors are sure of the story, they improvise it from beginning to end. The director gives them notes and they improvise it again, trying to make it as true as possible.

You can take time to develop short sections of the story if the director feels they are not accurate enough.

4. να ζητούν βοήθεια ή διευκρινίσεις σε συγκεκριμένες, καθημερινές περιστάσεις επικοινωνίας, χρησιμοποιώντας πολύ απλές προτάσεις.

Miming

Language: Miming and watching mimed actions Speculating about mimed actions using the following tenses:

Main game: Present continuous for actions in progress (e.g. *You're carrying a book*).

Variation 1: Present continuous for actions in progress (e.g. *What am I doing?*) and present simple for routine actions (e.g. *What do I do in my job?*).

Variation 2: Present simple for actions performed at the same time every day (e.g. *What do you do at 7 o'clock?*).

Procedure:

- Divide the class into two teams.
 - Randomly ask one learner from one team to mime an action (or sequence of actions).
 - The mimer's team must try to guess what he or she is miming. If they guess correctly, they win a point. The mimer can nod or shake their head as the team make their guesses. For example:
 - Team: *You're carrying something.*
 - Mimer: (nods head)
 - Team: *Is it a gun?*
 - Mimer: (shakes head)
 - Team: *Is it a stick?*
 - Mimer: (nods head)
 - Variation 2 Present simple
 - Draw on the board a number of clock faces, each showing a different time of day.
 - Explain that you are going to mime what you usually do at those times on weekdays. Point at the first clock face, ask the question (before the mime, so that the general symbolic nature of your mime is more important than the individual action) *What do I do at ... o'clock?*, then mime.
 - Teacher: (pointing at the first clock) *What do I do at seven o'clock?*
 - (then miming waking up)
 - Learner: *You wake up.*
 - Invite learners to take over your role once they are familiar with the game.
- Other verbs suitable for miming are:

get up, get dressed, get washed, brush your teeth, have breakfast, leave the house, catch a bus, get to college, start work, have a break, have lunch, leave college, get home, have a meal, go to the gym, watch TV, go to bed.

Notes

- Add variety by asking what the learners always or sometimes do at the weekends away from school.
- Ask the learners to mime what they would like to do at the different times of the day related to the clock faces, using *I would like to ... if I could.*

5. με αφορμή γραπτό ή προφορικό κείμενο στην ελληνική (π.χ. αγγελία, διαφήμιση), να απαντούν στην ξένη γλώσσα σε προφορικό ερώτημα που αφορά στη μορφή του κειμένου, το περιβάλλον στο οποίο θα το συναντούσε κανείς κλπ.

People poems

Divide into small groups of around four or five. Each group is given a word - e.g. "Time".

Each person writes down or remembers two or three words associated with the theme, e.g. slow, fast, boredom, quickly, centuries. Now the group has to make an object out of the members, linked to the theme (such as a clock). Ideally the object should move. Next the group brings the object to life and works out a way of bringing in some or all of their words - linked to their movements.

They show the resulting People Poem to the rest of the class, who can try and guess the theme.

Themes could include:

- Elements - earth, air, fire, water
- Opposites – cold/hot, fast/slow, high/low
- Colours

The activities have been taken from:

Farmer, D. (2011). *Learning through drama in the primary years*. David Farmer; Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2006). *Games for Language Learning Third Edition*.

Conclusion

Overall, in this chapter, the rationale about using dramatization as an alternative assessment form has been introduced. An emphasis was given to role-play and its connection to assessment has been attempted. It opted to emphasize the importance of implementing a student-centered assessment method in which students could learn a language in an entertaining way while being assessed. Furthermore, the teachers would be familiarized with an innovative rationale in order to depart from traditional types of assessment and engage themselves in more alternative ones which coalesce to reality and young students' nature.

In sum, dramatization as an alternative learning, teaching and assessment tool is promoted in order to advance students' authentic language use, literacies, social skills and positive feelings while learning English. Conclusively, in this respect, EFL lessons might equip students with experiences outside the limits of language learning and smooth the way for their life.

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The portfolio as a basis for descriptive assessment in language teaching and learning in secondary

Marina Kollatou

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the pilot implementation of the portfolio as a form of alternative assessment for the receptive language skills. The study took place in the 3rd Senior High school of Larissa during the school year 2017-2018 (Kollatou, 2018).

The initial idea for this study came up after an initiative taken by the Institute of Educational Policy for a two-year pilot implementation of descriptive assessment in junior high schools back in 2016. That initiative aimed to address the shortcomings of traditional assessment applied in Greek schools and seemed to intend to gradually put into effect alternative forms of assessment which had been recommended in all student evaluation related laws and Presidential Decrees since 1998 but failed to be implemented.

In Greece, and in secondary education in particular, there has not been any systematic change in the evaluation system yet and learners' progress and performance are practically assessed on the basis of summative assessment tests. Alternative forms of assessment including the portfolio have been only tentatively implemented and failed to have any sustainable and durable continuation mainly due to lack of consistent and efficient training of the teaching staff (Παρούτσας, 2011).

Portfolios are one example of alternative assessment methods that have been in use in educational settings for some decades now. In literature it is labelled as performance assessment, authentic assessment, informal assessment, situated (or contextualized) assessment and assessment by exhibition (García & Pearson, 1994). It serves the objectives of formative assessment and encompasses a number of alternative assessment methods like self-or peer assessment, performance assessment or portfolio assessment, this being the most representative and comprehensive of all.

Educational portfolios have been defined as collections of learners' work produced over a period of time demonstrative of their progress (Genesee & Upshur, 1996;

Stiggins, 1994). They are characterized by the systematic and purposeful collection of their content (Arter & Spandel, 1992; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996) and they can serve pedagogical and reporting purposes (Little, 2002; Westhoff, 1999). Westhoff (1999) elaborates on this last characteristic explaining that the portfolio can be product-oriented that is functioning as a reporting tool or process-oriented which is connected to its pedagogical function. The latter function can be divided into two sub-functions that of eliciting learning activities in the cognitive domain and that of eliciting activities that facilitate learner autonomy and learning to learn which fall into the metacognitive domain. As a result, it is up to the teachers to decide why they decide to implement the portfolio in their classes and design it accordingly.

Advocates of the portfolio as a learning and assessment method draw their enthusiasm from the multiple advantages of it. First of all, portfolios potentially measure almost any observable skill, learning process or content knowledge and as a consequence they provide a more authentic picture of a learner (Gomez, 2000). They also remove the stress and the time constraint that traditional testing bears with it (Griva & Kofou, 2017) and help learners acquire meta-language that facilitates discussing language issues (ibid). Perhaps the greatest advantage of the portfolio assessment is that the learners are trained to become independent thinkers and learners (Hancock, 2004) and improve their self-confidence and skills like organization and development (Afrianto, (2017).

On the other hand, portfolios are not free from downsides. Their quality and effectiveness depend on a number of factors such as the teachers' efficacy to guide appropriately their learners in selecting, organizing, evaluating the portfolio content and their ability to convince learners of the importance of reflection and their consistency in giving constructive and comprehensive feedback on a regular basis (ibid). Moreover, portfolios can be bulky thus difficult to evaluate and store. Finally, for those who do not accept their learning potential, portfolios function at the expense of the teaching time and add extra work load on the teachers and learners' shoulders.

The study

Purpose and Objectives

The research strategies applied in this study are those of action research. The purpose of the research was to investigate whether the language portfolio can function

as a basis for descriptive assessment in the language teaching and learning in secondary education. In particular, the research was expected to provide answers to the following questions:

- Can the portfolio address the students' needs in the receptive skills at B2 level?
- Can the portfolio data correlate with the official testing results in these skills?
- What are the restrictions of the portfolio implementation for the receptive skills in the language classroom?
- Can the portfolio function as a framework for descriptive assessment?
- Can the portfolio data be transformed in descriptive evaluative statements?

The context of the study

The sample of the research consisted of 40 Greek sixteen-year-old students. Their language level was estimated as B2 according to the C.E.F.R (Council of Europe, 2001) based on a placement test¹ they all took, at the beginning of the school year. These 40 learners formed two different groups each consisting of 20 individuals. One of these groups that is the experimental one (n=20) implemented the portfolio assessment for the receptive skills while the other one namely the control group (n=20) followed the established approach of assessment for these skills.

All learners had been taught English for 8 years both at school and in private language schools and most of them were highly interested in obtaining a language certificate of the highest level possible. The experimental group seemed to be only fairly heterogeneous in terms of language level since only a small number of the learners were of level other than B2. More specifically one learner was of level C2 and two learners of level A2. On the other hand, the control group seemed to be quite heterogeneous as 7 out 20 learners were of C2 level and 3 out 20 of A level with the

¹http://www.englishjet.com/english_courses_files/test_level_answers.asp

rest 10 learners being of B2 level. Finally, all learners came of more or less the same socioeconomic background.

The course book used for this class was *Above & Beyond B2* (Steele, 2016) which is accompanied with an audio CD, a workbook, a study pack, a test pack, a teacher's book with overprinted answers and a teacher's guide. The book has been designed to develop learners' language skills and prepare them for language exams and as a result, although all units include tasks for all four skills, their design is basically exam based. For this reason, quite too often, authentic material was used to promote learners' exposure to real life language use and the development of their capacity to respond adequately in real life situations.

Research tools

Several tools were employed in this study to measure the impact that the portfolio had on the learners' receptive skills. First of all, the learners of the experimental group were asked to complete a needs and skills analysis questionnaire (Table 1) so that data related to the learners' reading and listening competences could be collected. More specifically, the content of this questionnaire was intentionally selected to relate to receptive skills strategies and sub-skills as they were the core of the learning objectives.

Table 1. Needs and skills questionnaire

Needs and skills questionnaire	
This questionnaire is for students of foreign language. Its aim is to trace your needs and skills in receptive skills (reading and listening). Please read each statement carefully and check the answer that best describes your situation.	
Your options are:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Never or almost never	(1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely	(2)
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	(3)
<input type="checkbox"/> Usually	(4)
<input type="checkbox"/> Always or almost always	(5)
Please answer honestly about how you feel.	
There are no right or wrong answers to these statements.	

Competences in reading

1. When reading in FL, I can	Never or almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always or almost always
1a. understand the main points of a text					
1b. read a text quickly and establish a general idea of the content (skimming)					
1c. read a text slowly and carefully and understand the details of it					
1d. look through a text quickly and locate specific information (scanning)					
1e. guess unknown words in a text					
1f. understand a text organization					
1g. read a text and respond critically					
1h. understand a writer's attitude and purpose					
1i. understand a text without looking up every new word					

Competences in listening

3. When listening to FL, I can	Never or almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always or almost always
3a. can take effective notes.					
3b. understand lengthy descriptions in English					
3c. understand spoken instructions.					
3d. understand the subject matter of a talk.					
3e. understand people who speak very fast					
3f. understand people who speak very quietly					

3g. understand when more than one person is speaking, (group discussions)					
3h. understand the speaker's tone, mood, etc.					
3i. understand standard spoken language, unless there is extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage					

Based on the fact that self-assessment is closely related to the portfolio, self-assessment checklists were prepared, one for the skill of reading (Table 2) and one for the skill of listening (Table 3) and they were used every after a reading and listening lesson had been completed, respectively. The self-assessment entries were chosen on the basis of the needs and skills questionnaire that learners had answered at the very beginning of the study.

Table 2. Self-assessment checklist for reading

Name:				
Date:				
Self-assessment checklist for the skill of reading				
Put a V in the box that best describes your situation				
	When I read the text, I was able to	Very much	To some extent	A little
1	understand the main points of a text			
2	establish the general idea of the content reading the text quickly (skimming)			
3	understand the details of the text reading it slowly and carefully			
4	locate specific information looking through the text quickly (scanning)			
5	guess the unknown words in the text			
6	understand the text without looking up every new word			
7	understand the text organization			


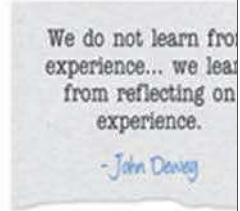
8	respond critically to questions about the content of the text			
9	understand the writer's purpose			
10	understand the writer's attitude			

Table 3. Self-assessment checklist for listening

Name:				
Date:				
Self-assessment checklist for the skill of listening				
Put a V in the box that best describes your situation				
	When I listened to the English audio texts, I was able to	Very much	To some extent	A little
1	take effective notes			
2	understand lengthy descriptions			
3	understand spoken instructions			
4	understand the subject matter of a talk			
5	understand people who speak very fast			
6	understand people who speak very quietly			
7	understand when more than one person is speaking			
8	understand the speaker's tone, mood, etc.			
9	understand standard spoken language, unless there was extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage			
10	make assumptions from what I heard			

Besides, learners answered open-ended questions in a reflection guide (Table 4) that the teacher-researcher prepared in order to collect data related to the learners' conceptions and feelings about the portfolio.

Table 4. Reflection Guide

	Reflection Guide	
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Name:	Date:
Review your portfolio and reflecting on its content answer the following questions:	
How did the portfolio help you become a better reader?	
How did the portfolio help you become a better listener?	
Did the portfolio help you become more involved in the learning process? If yes, how?	
Do you think that with the portfolio implementation you became more autonomous and more confident as learner? If yes, how?	
To what extent do you think your portfolio should contribute to your final mark? Justify your opinion.	
Would you like to continue the use the portfolio and expand it to more skills? Which ones? Why?	

Finally, a class conference was held where the learners discussed mottos they adopted or created to indicate the main idea that the portfolio experience left on them and completed the portfolio evaluation form (Table 5).

Table 5. Portfolio evaluation criteria

Portfolio evaluation rubric			
Content	Learning objectives	Overall presentation	Points

The portfolio includes all required items (reading texts and tasks, self-assessment checklists, reflections, mottos, table of contents)	The portfolio demonstrates that all learning objectives have been achieved	<input type="checkbox"/> Items are well organized in separate sections for reading and listening <input type="checkbox"/> All entries are dated <input type="checkbox"/> Cover page is creatively designed <input type="checkbox"/> Motto is greatly reflective and absolutely demonstrative of metacognitive knowledge	very good (90-100)
The portfolio includes most required items	The portfolio demonstrates that most learning objectives have been achieved	<input type="checkbox"/> Items are quite well organized <input type="checkbox"/> Most entries are dated <input type="checkbox"/> Cover page shows some creativity <input type="checkbox"/> Motto is quite reflective and quite demonstrative of metacognitive knowledge	good (70-89)
The portfolio includes some required items	The portfolio demonstrates that some learning objectives have been achieved	<input type="checkbox"/> Items are quite well organized <input type="checkbox"/> Some entries are dated <input type="checkbox"/> Cover page does not show any creativity <input type="checkbox"/> Motto is somewhat reflective and somewhat demonstrative of metacognitive knowledge	fairly good (50-69)
No portfolio submitted			0

To ensure that there would be quantitative data to complement the data collected from the learners' self-assessment checklists thus triangulating the research findings, standardized reading and listening tests were given to learners of both groups at the end of the research.

The procedure

Different approaches about the design and implementation stages of portfolio assessment have been suggested so far with those proposed by Barnhardt, *et al.* (1998) Fenwick & Parsons (1999), Moya & O'Malley (1994) and Pierce and O'Malley (1992), being some of them. However, according to Pierce and O'Malley (1992) and later according to Coombe and Barlow (2004), there is no such thing as a “correct” way to design portfolios and therefore portfolios can be different both in terms of design and content provided the purpose for their use is clear to teachers and learners (Arter, 1990; Moya& O' Malley, 1994).

Taken all the suggested models by the above-mentioned researchers into account, the researcher of this study developed the following model.

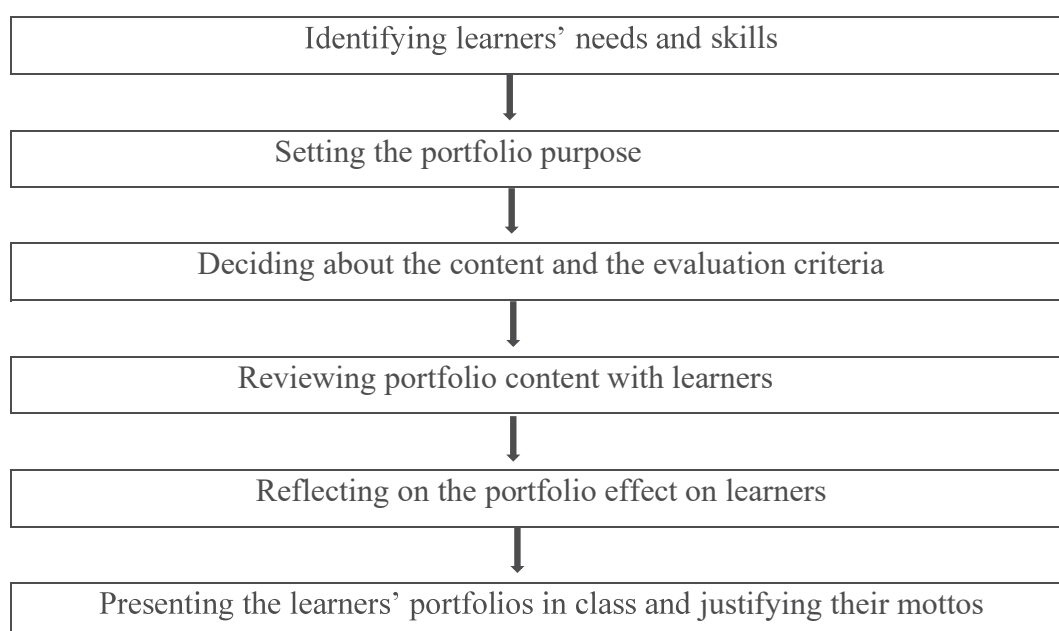


Figure 1. The portfolio assessment model

The action research started in November 2017 and was completed at the end of April 2018. In this six-month span, two 45-minute-teaching periods per month were spent on the portfolio that is 12 teaching periods in total. Following the portfolio model described above the experimental procedure of the study consisted of three stages which were (a) planning - organization (b) implementation and (c) evaluation.

Planning and organization

Adopting Moya and O' Malley's (*ibid*) view that a sound portfolio procedure must be predetermined, systematic and comprehensive, during the planning stage there was

preparation as far as the purpose, the content and the evaluation criteria (Appendix VI) of the portfolio.

The preparation started with an introduction to the idea of the portfolio and its potential benefits for the learners' development. During this first introductory session, learners familiarized themselves with the alternative form of assessment that the portfolio entails, they were shown examples of educational portfolios and finally they expressed their eagerness to try it as a counterweight to their performance at tests.

The two following sessions were devoted to delineate the learning objectives of the portfolio approach and its orientation. To this end, during the first session, the teacher devoted some time to raising the learners' awareness of the strategies one applies while reading or listening and their importance for their development as readers and listeners.

During the second session, third in a row, the teacher distributed the needs and skills questionnaire (Table 1), which was an adaptation of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and was intended to investigate the learners' needs only in the receptive skills for the sake of the research. Then bearing in mind the educational objectives theory (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, *et al.*, 1956) she set the learning objectives which summarized as follows:

At the end of the portfolio implementation the learners would be able to:

- Identify the reading and listening sub-skills and strategies
- display an awareness of the reading and listening sub-skills and strategies they have improved
- recognize the reading and listening sub-skills and strategies they need to improve
- display an independent attitude as learners
- organize their work

Having made the learning objectives clear to the learners, the teacher researcher informed learners about the schedule for the portfolio implementation as well as its expected contents and the portfolio evaluation criteria (Appendix VI).

Implementation

The lessons in both groups were generally carried on as planned. The experimental group though was treated differently whenever the lesson was a reading or a listening one. More specifically, learners were provided with self-assessment checklists (Tables 2 & 3) aiming at having them reflecting on the strategies they used while reading or listening and the sub-skills they improved. Besides they were asked to write down in their portfolio the date of the reading and listening lesson and any thoughts of theirs or advice by their teacher that they considered worth remembering. For the lessons the teacher used texts and tasks from the book as well as authentic tests and tasks she had developed giving particular emphasis on the instruction of strategies with tasks like those included in the appendices (Tables 6 & 7). Besides, after each task she kept asking them to discuss the strategy they had been using while reading or listening aiming at having them reflecting on the learning process thus improving their strategy awareness.

Table 6. Reading tasks

<p style="text-align: center;">Pre-reading stage</p> <p><i>Task 1:</i> What are two reasons why you want to attend a summer course in Britain? Fill in the list below.</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">While-reading stage</p> <p><i>Task 2:</i> Read the text quickly to check if the course described in is appropriate for you. Mark your answer by circling Yes or No. Check how long it took you to do this task</p> <p>Starting time: _____ Ending time: _____</p> <p><i>Task 3:</i> Underline the parts in the text that are relevant to your intentions and circle the parts that provide useful information</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Post-reading stage</p> <p><i>Task 4:</i> Tell the class how you worked to find out whether the text is possible to have the information you need. Tell the class what reading strategy you used.</p> <p><i>Task 5:</i> Use the underlined or circled parts of the text to explain why you would or would not apply for the course.</p>
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The text is available at <https://www.oxfordcollegesummerschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/General-English-Overview.pdf>

Table 7. Listening tasks

Pre-listening tasks

Task 1.

Fill in the advance organiser below

Mexico is a ----- in Central America

Mexico is ----- the USA

Texas is on the ----- of Mexico

Task 2

Look at the map at the back of the page and check your answers.



Task 3.

With your partner fill in the advance organizer below

Texas has a lot of -----where Texans grow ----- and -----

Texans also breed _____, horses, _____, goats

While- listening tasks

Audio input. Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0510chn>

Task 1.

Listen carefully to the recording and fill in the note-taking chart

Who is the speaker?	
What does he do?	
Where does he live?	
Who is he talking about?	
What problem is he talking about?	
What languages does he speak?	

Task 2.

Listen again and fill in the information you missed. Compare and contrast the information in your chart with your partner's. Discuss what helped you understand the speaker.

Post-listening

Task 1.

Use your notes and tell the class what you learnt from what you heard.

After four lessons, two reading and two listening ones, during which emphasis was given to the process rather than the product, one teaching period was devoted to students' revising their reading and listening texts and tasks, their answers in the self-assessment checklists and their notes in their portfolios and to answering six open-ended questions in the reflection guide (Table 4) they were provided.

The 8th and 9th teaching periods were spent in order that standardized tests for reading and listening could be taken by the learners of both the experimental and the control group with the aim at measuring possible variance in their reading and listening competence. For the case, there were selected the Kpg reading and listening test B2 level May 2010.

During the 10th teaching period, the learners dealt with the organization of the content of their portfolios and the designing of the cover page and the contents page. They also checked whether they had all the obligatory entries as agreed and they arranged all the materials in folders of their choice. Based on Pierce and O' Malley's (1992) view that the aim of portfolio contents is to expand understanding of a learner's development based on multiple measures, teacher and learners agreed that portfolios would include the needs and skills questionnaires, all reading and listening tests and

tasks, all self-assessment checklists, the reflection guide and the reading and listening tests.

Evaluation

At the 11th portfolio session learners were asked to either compose a motto or adopt a quote by someone famous that would represent the portfolio stamp on them and would reflect their feelings after participating in the portfolio procedure. This aimed at fostering learners' metacognitive skills and at the same time it might offer evidence of any possible impact the portfolio could have had on learners' attitude towards learning in general.

The last 12th portfolio session was spent on learners' presentation of their portfolios and particularly their mottos which functioned as stimuli for further discussion. They then completed a portfolio evaluation form (Table 8) in which they assessed their own portfolio against the pre-set criteria they had agreed upon.

Table 8. Portfolio evaluation form

Student's name <hr/>	Portfolio evaluation form			
	Very good (90-100)	Good (70-89)	Fairly good (50-69)	No grade(-)
Required items: 1. Reading texts 2. Reading tasks 3. Self-assessment checklists for the skill of reading 4. Audio texts 5. Listening tasks 6. Self-assessment checklists for the skill of listening 7. Reflections 8. Motto 9. Table of contents	The portfolio includes all required items	The portfolio includes most required items	The portfolio includes some required items	No portfolio submitted
Student				

Teacher				
Learning objectives	Very good (90-100)	Good (70-89)	Fairly good (50-69)	No grade (-)
a) Identify the reading and listening sub-skills and strategies b) display an awareness of the reading and listening sub-skills and strategies that have been improved c) recognize the reading and listening sub-skills and strategies that need improvement d) display an independent attitude as learner e) organize his/her work	The portfolio demonstrates that all learning objectives have been achieved	The portfolio demonstrates that most learning objectives have been achieved	The portfolio demonstrates that some learning objectives have been achieved	
Student				
Teacher				
Overall presentation	Very good (90-100)	Good (70-89)	Fairly good (50-69)	No grade(-)
a) Item organization b) Entry dates c) Cover page d) Motto	<input type="checkbox"/> Items are well organized in separate sections for reading and listening <input type="checkbox"/> All entries are dated <input type="checkbox"/> Cover page is creatively designed <input type="checkbox"/> Motto is greatly reflective and absolutely	<input type="checkbox"/> Items are quite well organized (Sections are not always clear) <input type="checkbox"/> Most entries are dated <input type="checkbox"/> Cover page shows some creativity <input type="checkbox"/> Motto is quite reflective and quite	<input type="checkbox"/> Items are fairly well organized (Sections <input type="checkbox"/> Some entries are dated <input type="checkbox"/> Cover page does not show any	

	demonstrative of metacognitive knowledge	demonstrative of metacognitive knowledge	creativity □Motto is somewhat reflective and somewhat demonstrative of metacognitive knowledge	
Student				
Teacher				

The results

The study focused on the personal experience of learners who participated in the action research and the way they perceived the effect that the portfolio had on them as learners and on their receptive skills in particular. In order to ensure reliability of the findings, apart from qualitative research tools quantitative research tools were used together with tests thus triangulating the research measures.

Qualitative findings

The reflection guides, the mottos and the notes taken during the conference at the end of the portfolio project were sources of qualitative data which were organized, stored and analyzed in order that an in-depth interpretation of them could be achieved. For the faster and more effective organization, storing, administration and recovery of these data there was used the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA (<http://www.maxqda.com>). After reading the material several times, data units were isolated and were attributed codes which then were united in categories that led to two thematic units: (a) the portfolio effect on learners and (b) setting learning goals.

The portfolio impact on learners

(a) Improvement of cognitive strategies and sub-skills

Regarding the reading strategies 16 out of 20 learners maintained they improved their ability to understand the writer's purpose and the main idea of a text and 14 out of 20 learners claimed they improved their ability to locate and establish the general content of a text through scanning and skimming.

As for listening, 16 out of 20 learners named one or more listening sub-skills that they felt they improved during the portfolio implementation. The sub-skills that were high in the learners' references were understanding spoken instructions and understanding people who speak fast. As for strategies, 15 out of 20 claimed they had improved in taking notes and making assumptions.

(b) Improvement of the learners' metacognition

There was an effect on the learners' metacognition both in terms of metacognitive knowledge that is knowledge that relates to factors that facilitate or inhibit learning (Wenden, 1998) and metacognitive strategies for the majority of learners. The findings after the analysis of the data collected from the reflection guides and the mottos appear to be significant in terms of metacognitive knowledge as to be shown below.

CODE 001: "Yes because now I know what I need to improve and I don't have to depend on my teacher"

CODE 004: "I think I need more practice. I feel I am 100% ready to be more involved in the learning process".

CODE 011: "I understand now that it is important for me to pay more attention during the lesson and always give my best performance in the classroom".

CODE 012: "It helped me for many reasons. Firstly, the listening with background noises or fast speakers made me realize that I should improve the real and daily listening of the language".

CODE 016: It helped me because with the listening exercises we became familiar with it and we weren't afraid of it.

CODE 019: It helped me understand my level and prompted me to read English books.

CODE 018: It helped me a lot by doing self-assessments I saw what I was able to do and what I wasn't so ready.

In the learners' responses one can distinguish characteristics of metacognitive knowledge like motivation, self-regulated learning and learning effectiveness. Their declared commitment to learning and awareness of their learning situation and

constraints like low-self-esteem or lack of systematic attendance are factors which are expected to facilitate learning. Besides, given that self-regulated learning is referred to be positively associated with goal-setting and academic achievement (Zimmerman, *et al*, 1992), it seems at this stage that the portfolio can contribute to learners' active involvement in learning and the development of their autonomy and confidence as learners.

Setting learning goals

When learners were asked to summarize in the form of a motto the experience of implementing the portfolio, they responded very willingly and revealingly. All their mottos either composed by them or selected from renowned quotes reflected an eagerness to learn and a belief in the value of trying.

CODE 002: "If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you".

CODE 006: "The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a CHOICE. By Brian Herbert".

This willingness to enhance their trying becomes more concise and becomes determination in many cases as the learners' words show:

CODE 008: "Working hard is important. But there is something that matters more: believing in yourself"

CODE 019: "It does not matter how slowly you go ... so long as you don't stop".

It is clear from the learners' statements that they can all identify reading and listening sub-skills and strategies and that they are all aware of which ones they have improved and which ones they need to work on. Besides, their statements provide evidence for a positive change in attitude towards language learning and the receptive skills in particular by displaying a determination for enhancing their efforts, being in many cases very explicit about their intentions which manifests an independent, self-directed stance towards learning.

Quantitative findings

Quantitative data were collected with a number of research tools such as a needs and skills questionnaire, self-assessment checklists, reading and listening standardized tests and the portfolio evaluation form.

The needs and skills questionnaire

The data collected from the needs and skills questionnaire were analyzed by the statistical program SPSS, and the reliability index was high as the table below indicates (Table 9).

Table 9. Needs and skills questionnaire reliability index

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.933	52

As shown in the table below (Table 2), the majority of learners can usually (50%) oralways (40%) understand the main points of a text and can usually (15%) oralways(65%) read a text slowly and carefully and understand the details of it. Sub-skills like understanding a text organization, reading a text and responding critically and understanding a writer’s attitude and purpose are those that only a narrow majority of learners can demonstrate (almost 1/3 of the total).

Regarding reading strategies, it seems that looking through a text quickly and locating specific information (scanning) is a strategy that most learners can usually or always employ (85%). The strategy that appears to need treatment more than the others is that of guessing unknown words in a text since it is the strategy that the majority of learners cannot apply but for only sometimes (50%) or rarely (10%). Finally skimming, that is reading a text quickly and establishing a general idea of the content, is a strategy worth noticing as half of the learners can perform more often than sometimes.

Table 10 Reading sub-skills and strategies

1. Competences in reading					
When reading in FL, I can	Never or almost never	Rarely	Some times	Usually	Always or almost always
1a. understand the main points of a text			10%	50%	40%
1b read a text quickly and establish a general idea of the content (skimming)	5%	10%	35%	20%	30%

1c. read a text slowly and carefully and understand the details of it		10%	10%	15%	65%
1d. look through a text quickly and locate specific information (scanning)			15%	65%	20%
1e. guess unknown words in a text		10%	50%	20%	20%
1f. understand a text organization		10%	35%	30%	25%
1g. read a text and respond critically		10%	35%	30%	25%
1h. understand a writer's attitude and purpose		5%	40%	30%	25%
1i. understand a text without looking up every new word	5%	10%	25%	35%	25%

As far the listening sub-skills are concerned (Table 11), it was shown that the listening sub-skills that learners need to improve more than others are the ability to understand people who speak fast and understand standard spoken English, unless there is extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage. This results from the learners' reports since only half of them maintain that they can usually (25%) or always (25%) understand people who speak fast. Almost similar are the percentages for the latter (understand standard spoken English unless there is extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage) as roughly half learners can always (20%) or usually (35%) demonstrate this sub-skill. On the contrary, a big number of learners (85%) reported that more often than sometimes they can understand spoken instructions and group discussions. Almost as many learners namely 80% cumulatively stated that they can usually or always understand lengthy descriptions and speakers' tone or mood.

Table 11. Listening sub-skills and strategies

Competences in listening					
When listening to FL, I can	Never or almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always or almost always
3a. can take effective notes.		10%	25%	40%	25%
3b. understand lengthy descriptions in English		5%	15%	45%	35%
3c. understand spoken instructions.		5%	10%	35%	50%
3d. understand the subject	5%	5%	20%	30%	40%

matter of a talk.					
3e. understand people who speak very fast	15%	10%	25%	25%	25%
3f. understand people who speak very quietly		10%	15%	20%	55%
3g. understand when more than one person is speaking, (group discussions)		5%	15%	35%	45%
3h. understand the speaker's tone, mood, etc.		5%	15%	40%	40%
3i. understand standard spoken language, unless there is extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage		10%	35%	35%	20%

Self-assessment checklists

The reading and listening self-assessment checklists were administered to involve learners in the assessment process and help them as well as the teacher-researcher monitor their progress. They consisted of a list of sub-skills and strategies related to reading and listening and a 3-level-Likert scale including degrees of achievement such as very much, to some extent, little. The analysis of the data collected from all these self-assessment checklists gave the following results.

Regarding reading sub-skills, understanding the main points of a text, understanding a text organization and understanding the writer's purpose are those sub-skills that appear to have improved by most learners as shown in the figure below (Fig. 2). More specifically, after the third reading the level "very much" was indicated by 16 out of 20 learners (80%) compared to 14 out of 20 learners (70%) in the first reading for the sub-skill of understanding the main points of a text. The increase for the sub-skill of understanding the text organization appears to be bigger as "very much" is chosen by 80% learners after the third reading whereas 65% reported so after the first reading. Finally, "very much" for understanding the writer's purpose was selected by 75% of learners after the third reading whereas only 55% of learners had done so after the first reading. Besides, understanding the text without looking up every new word is a sub-skill that shows improvement for the whole group as learners declared either very much (65%) or "to some extent" (35%) after the third reading

whereas percentages for the same sub-skill after the first reading ranged from 60% for “very much” to 20% for “to some extent” and 20% for “little”.

As for the reading strategies (fig. 2), skimming seemed to improve as after the first reading “very much” was selected by 35% of learners while that percentage rose to 65% after the third reading. A slight improvement was noticed in scanning as 95% of learners chose “very much” (40%) or “to some extent” (55%) to describe their performance after the third reading while after the first reading 90% of learners selected “very much” (45%) or “to some extent” (45%).

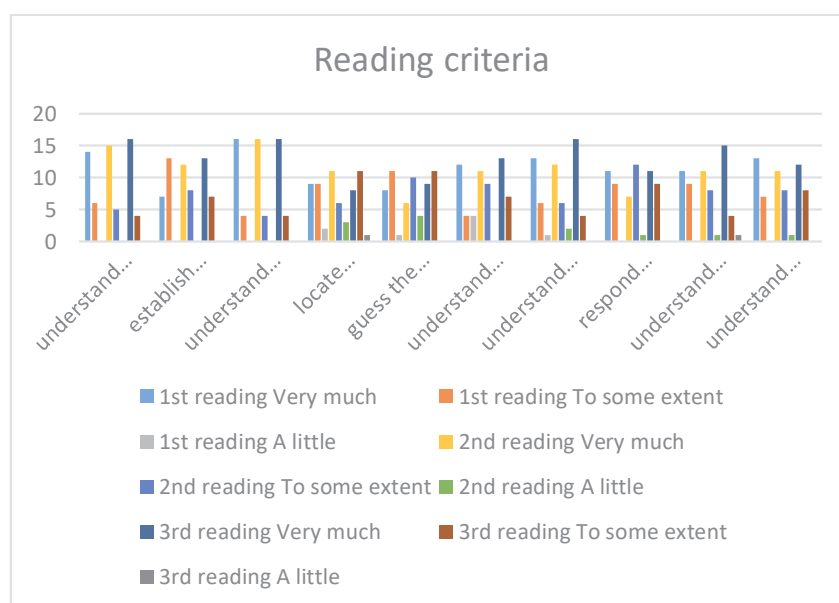


Figure 2. Reading criteria

As far as listening is concerned, understanding spoken instructions is the sub-skill at which the biggest improvement was noticed (fig. 3). More specifically, after the third listening 95% of learners marked “very much” for this sub-skill while after the first listening the percentage of learners who answered so was 60%. Understanding the subject matter of a talk shows some improvement as 25% more learners selected “very much” to evaluate this sub-skill after the third listening. Understanding standard spoken language, unless there was extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage is also a sub-skill that almost all learners said they had acquired to a great extent. 25% of them selected “very much” after the first listening and more than twice as many did so (55%) after the third listening. Understanding people who speak very fast is a sub-skill for which 35% learners selected the level “very much” after the first listening while 50% of learners did so after the third listening. Understanding lengthy descriptions and understanding when

more than one person is speaking are two sub-skills with only a slight improvement noticed as the learners who selected “very much” to evaluate these sub-skills after the third listening were by 5% more than those who did so after the first listening. Finally no significant findings were there regarding improvement at understanding the speaker’s tone and understanding people who speak very quietly.

As for listening strategies (fig. 3), taking effective notes shows a significant improvement made by learners as, while only 25% of learners claimed that they were able to apply this strategy after the first listening, the percentage rose to 55% after the third listening. Making assumptions from what is heard is also a strategy that more learners claimed to have been able to apply it “very much” after the third listening than those who claimed so after the first listening with percentages 75% to 55% respectively.

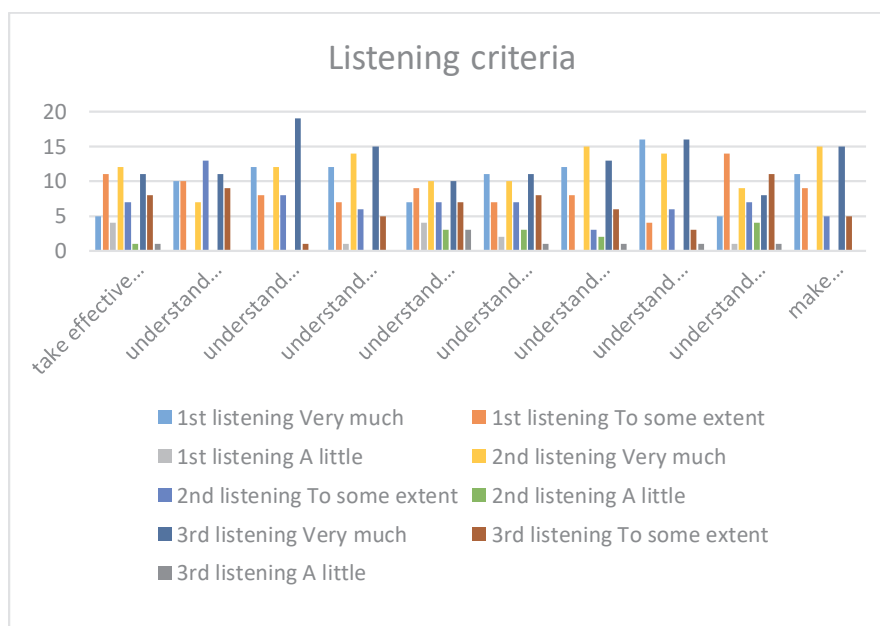


Figure 3. Listening criteria

Portfolio evaluation

Portfolio evaluation forms (Table 8) containing the portfolio evaluation criteria (Table 5) were used for the portfolio overall evaluation. As shown in the figures below (fig. 4 & fig.5) the vast majority of learners’ portfolios received the highest grade (very good) by both the teacher and the learners themselves in all three criteria.

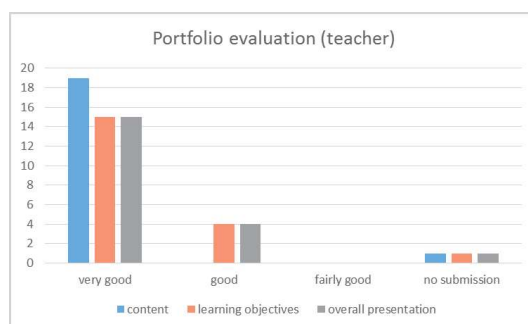


Figure 4.: Portfolio evaluation by the teacher

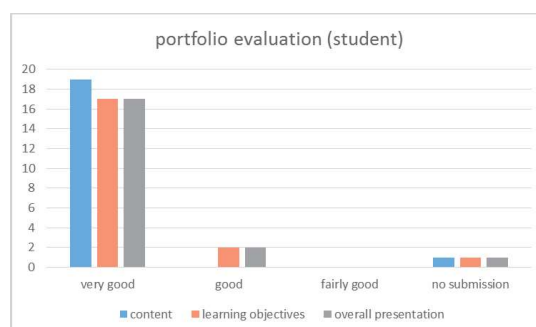


Figure 5: Portfolio evaluation by the student

The summative tests

At the end of the tentative period a reading and a listening test were administered to learners of both the experimental and the control group in order to investigate whether the implementation of the portfolio had any impact on learners' performance in those skills tests. The performance that learners of the groups had in these tests showed a difference in the scores of the B2 level learners of the two groups that is the 20 learners in the experimental group and the 13 learners in the control group. The comparison of the scores attained by these learners gave the following results.

The mean score of the experimental group in reading was 84.2 while the mean score of the control group was 83.1. 5learners from the experimental group had a score lower than the mean and 12 learners had a higher score than the mean while 9 learners from the control group had a lower score and 4 learners had a higher score than the mean for their group.

In listening the mean score for the experimental group was 83.2. The mean score for the control group was 81.9.7 learners in the experimental group achieved a lower score than the mean and 10 learners achieved a higher score than the mean while 7 learners achieved a lower score than the mean and 6 learners achieved a higher score than the mean in the control group.

After comparing the needs as depicted in the needs and skills questionnaire with the data collected from the learners' checklists, a number of findings can be highlighted. As far as the skill of reading is concerned, it seems that sub-skills that needed treatment like those of understanding the text organization and understanding a writer's purpose have improved during the portfolio implementation. Besides, reading strategies like scanning and particularly skimming strike as having greatly improved.

As for listening, the sub-skills of understanding people who speak fast and understanding standard spoken English unless there is extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage initially seemed to be the ones that needed to be enhanced. After the portfolio implementation period these two sub-skills seem to have improved on the basis of the learners' claims in the self-assessment checklists. Sub-skills which showed little improvement were those that appeared to be quite developed before the portfolio implementation as shown in the needs and skills questionnaire. Concerning the listening strategies, taking effective notes when listening and making assumptions from what is heard showed improvement according to the findings.

Besides, in retrospect of the findings from the reflection guides, the mottos and the portfolio overall evaluation and in co-examination with the learning objectives set at the outset of the portfolio implementation, it can be argued that the action taken had altogether positive results as all the objectives were attained to some or greater a degree by all learners. Finally, the B2 learners' scores in the summative tests justify all the above findings.

Discussion

It goes without saying that assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and when used for formative purposes needs to be effective. On this basis, it is important to find out whether the portfolio can address the learners' needs in the receptive skills at this level which is the first of the research questions. Taking all the findings both qualitative and quantitative into consideration, it can be argued that the portfolio can definitely address the learners' needs in the receptive skills. More specifically, with the portfolio procedure, learners improved reading and listening sub-skills and strategies that were reported to need treatment. What is more,

learners developed their meta-language for receptive skills and displayed behaviours that indicate characteristics of self-directed, learning-conscious individuals. Having developed their awareness of what is going on during the reading and the listening process, learners seemed more motivated to take on the responsibility for their learning which is a long-term benefit the portfolio offered to learners.

Another question posed by the researcher was whether the portfolio data can correlate with the official testing results in receptive skills. Sitzmann, *et al.* (2010) in their research found that the correlation between self-assessment and cognitive learning was moderate while ‘self-assessment’s strongest correlations were with motivation and satisfaction, two affective evaluation outcomes’ (*ibid*, p. 169). The former findings are verified with the present study as shown earlier in this chapter. However, the fact that learners who participated in the action research and implemented the portfolio for the receptive skills achieved higher scores in the summative tests of reading and listening compared to the learners of the same language level in the control group leads the researcher to affirm a correlation between self-assessment data included in the portfolio with the official testing results.

Considering the restrictions of the portfolio implementation for the receptive skills in the language classroom, the action research in this case showed that they are closely connected with the teaching context of the Greek public schools. For example, the fact that at the summative test learners are tested on one of the reading texts taught during the school year (PD 46/GG74/22-4-2016, 1923) prevents teachers from using authentic reading materials extensively. Besides, the fact that all learners attending the same class in a school must take the same test at the final exams means that all teachers are expected to harmonize their syllabus so that all learners may be taught at least some common texts. It is clear therefore that for a long-term implementation of the portfolio a radical change in the educational system is needed.

Things are even more difficult for the portfolio implementation when it comes to the skill of listening. This is due to the fact that in the Greek educational system listening is not officially tested or assessed in any way in Senior High Schools. This, as a consequence, leads many teachers to neglect teaching listening in favour of other aspects of language like grammar or writing. As a result, a condition like this acts as a restriction to the implementation of the portfolio for the skill of listening since implementing the portfolio means spending a great amount of instruction time at the expense of other aspects of language, which results in learners - portfolio users not

having been taught the same things at the end of the school year and consequently their being at a disadvantage during the final examination.

As regards the question whether the portfolio can function as a framework for descriptive assessment this study gives ample evidence for such a view to be supported. First of all, when learners get involved in the portfolio procedure, they engage in planning their course of learning, reflecting upon it and assessing their progress in a systematic way. During this process they become aware of specific learning objectives, of the criteria against which their performance is assessed and guided by particular descriptors for each skill they come to assess themselves and/or their peers. This leads them to acquire a language to think and talk about their learning and understand their teacher's feedback. Besides, the portfolio can include a lot of evidence of learners' work which is reviewed and assessed against certain criteria and as a result teachers have at their disposal a rich source of information about learners' progress that they can draw from to complete a report card thus giving descriptive assessment to learners.

Considering the fact that when it comes to the skill of reading teachers are confronted with a difficulty in assessing the process in a direct way and, even worse, the fact that regarding the skill of listening, apart from a similar difficulty, it is a skill that is not tested officially, one can clearly realize how the lack of evidence makes the task of assessing learners in a descriptive way almost impossible. Besides it is absolutely difficult to transform a test result into meaningful information (Cole & Trenkner, 2008) as mentioned earlier, let alone when there are no test results at all as in the case of listening. It is therefore obvious that the portfolio can function as a basis for descriptive assessment.

The study shows that the portfolio data can be transformed in descriptive evaluative statements as the portfolio can include not only samples of learners' work but also lists of learning objectives, needs and skills questionnaires, evaluation criteria, self-assessment checklists, reflection guides as in the case of the portfolio of this study. All these portfolio components along with the descriptive assessment criteria (Table 12) can be deployed by teachers to design, adapt and complete report cards like the following one (Table 13).

Table 12. Descriptive assessment criteria

Student's name: X	Very much	To some extent	Little
Reading strategies			
locate specific information looking through the text quickly (scanning)			
establish the general idea of the content reading the text quickly (skimming)			
guess the unknown words in the text			
Reading sub-skills			
understand the main points of a text			
understand the details of the text reading it slowly and carefully			
understand the text without looking up every new word			
understand the text organization			
respond critically to questions about the content of the text			
understand the writer's purpose			
understand the writer's attitude			
Listening strategies			
take effective notes			
make assumptions from what is heard			
Listening sub-skills			
understand lengthy descriptions			
understand spoken instructions			
understand the subject matter of a talk			
understand people who speak very fast			
understand people who speak very quietly			
understand when more than one person is speaking			
understand the speaker's tone, mood, etc.			
understand standard spoken language, unless there was extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage			
Metacognitive skills			
Self-awareness of competences and needs			
Organization			
Setting goals			


Motivation			
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Table 13. Report card

<p>Name of School _____ Class: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report card on receptive skills</p> <p>Student's name: _____ School year _____ Term: _____</p> <p>Part I Reading Achievements: _____ </p> <p>Recommendations: _____ </p> <p>Part II Listening Achievements: _____ </p> <p>Recommendations: _____ </p> <p>Part III General Comments </p> <p style="text-align: right;">Your teacher (Teacher's signature) (Teacher's name)</p>

The applicability of this can be testified with the report cards completed after the implementation of the portfolio during the action research described in this study as shown from the sample of learner's report card (Table 14).

Table 14. Sample of report card

3 rd Senior High School of Larissa	
Class: A	
Report card on receptive skills	
Name: <u>Amalia</u>	Term: <u>2nd</u>
School year: 2017-2018	
Part I Reading	
Achievements:	
You have managed to employ, while reading, strategies like scanning and skimming more effectively this term. You seem to have developed a lot reading sub-skills like understanding the main points of a text, the text organization, the writer's purpose and attitude. You are also able to respond critically to questions about the content of a text, understand the details of a text when you read slowly and carefully and you can understand a text without looking up every new word.	
Recommendations:	
I think you could practice more the techniques that will help you guess the unknown words in a text. It would help you a lot in your reading.	
Part II Listening	
Achievements:	
You have improved at understanding spoken instructions and lengthy descriptions this term. Your performance during the listening lessons showed that you can understand the subject matter of a talk even when more than one person is speaking. You can also understand the speaker's tone, mood, etc. and make assumptions from what you hear.	
Recommendations:	
I suggest you practice more taking notes while listening and watch videos without subtitles. That will help understand people who speak fast or quietly or when there is extreme background noise.	
Part III General Comments	
You have developed into a self-confident learner who can set goals for your improvement as a learner. You have been very organized and highly motivated this term. I believe your ability to direct your learning is at a very good level. Keep up the good job!	
Your teacher	
	
Marina Kollatou	

Limitations of the study

The results of the present study cannot be considered without taking into account a number of limitations that the researcher was faced with during the research. First and foremost, learners did not have enough time to get fully accustomed to the new for them type of assessment because the actual time spent on the portfolio in the six

months period of its implementation was only 12 forty-five-minute teaching periods. Although most learners seemed to be enthusiastic about the challenge of assessing themselves, there were, though, a few learners who had difficulty in agreeing that getting involved in assessing themselves could be worthwhile. In the beginning they considered the whole process a purposeless, time-consuming task and it took them some time to start getting seriously involved.

Nor was there time enough for the new teaching approach as far as reading and listening were concerned as teaching strategies was totally novel to learners, let alone having them reflecting on the learning process. Besides, little previous research on the portfolio used for the receptive skills made the whole endeavor look pretty challenging to the teacher-researcher as there was a need for her to decide almost from scratch about the design of the portfolio and its content for these specific skills. What is more, the limited time of the implementation of the portfolio deprived the teacher of the opportunity to include and systematically use more assessment tools in the whole process as for example structured or semi-structured observation grids which could facilitate even more the needs that the completion of a descriptive report card entails.

Concluding remarks

The action research described in this study aimed at investigating whether the portfolio can function as a basis for descriptive assessment in language teaching and learning in secondary education. The receptive skills were chosen to be the focus of the research mainly due to the fact that little research has been done in portfolio use for these skills. The study led to interesting conclusions about the impact the portfolio had on learners' reading and listening competence and offers tangible evidence that the portfolio can be a source of information that can be transformed into evaluative statements to serve descriptive assessment requirements.

More specifically the research provided evidence that the portfolio has a positive impact on learners' receptive skills and particularly when it comes to their developing reading and listening strategies thus enhancing their sub-skills competence. Most importantly the portfolio proved to stimulate learners to want to try to learn and take on the responsibility for their learning. It also helped learners develop a meta-language that facilitated their reflecting on their learning and assessing their progress.

Finally, it contributed to learners' gradually evolving into more autonomous self-directed learning individuals.

Another important aspect of the research is the impact it had on the teacher-researcher who engaged in a constantly reflective process always reexamining the steps she had taken and thinking of what could have been done differently. The portfolio project enhanced the teacher-learner relationship and transformed it into an absolutely cooperative partnership sharing the same goal of seeing learning as a worthwhile life-long experience. Besides, the portfolio can prove to be of practical utility to teachers as it facilitates them in providing descriptive assessment to their learners due to the ample information it can include about the learner progress.

Valencia et al. (1990) remark that the portfolio may be clearly a choice; however "the road to more enlightened assessment practices is neither well paved nor well marked" (ibid,p.11) and their view was experienced in the case of this study which is an example of applying the portfolio theory in a particular context with certain characteristics that are dependent on the general educational policy which, at the time, though not in theory, in practice was not representative of a disposition toward a continuous, multidimensional, collaborative and authentic assessment. However, it seems that things have started changing for the better as the new curriculum for the teaching of English in Upper-secondary education promotes the use of educational scenarios based on authentic materials for both reading and listening skills and, most importantly, encourage the use of alternative forms of assessment, including the portfolio.

Summing up, it appears that despite the limitations of the study such as the duration of the portfolio implementation and the amount of teaching time devoted to it, this study brings to light a number of benefits the portfolio can have for teacher and learners which are remarkable and appreciable. Even most importantly, the study adds to paving the way toward a portfolio use as a framework for descriptive assessment in language teaching and learning in secondary education, a process that calls for more long-term research if it were to provide teachers with tangible guidance in integrating the portfolio in their teaching and assessment practices.

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Implementing descriptive assessment in combination with the Portfolio in an attempt to assess young learners' writing skill

Eleni Sofou

Introduction

Learning and assessment are profusely inextricable in the foreign language learning process. Learning a language is associated with the procurement of knowledge and skills which intend to reinforce the generation of substantial verbal communication (Griva & Kofou, 2017). Considering that learning is necessary to be evaluated, “standardized” tests have been utilized by stakeholders to gauge learners’ manifold facets of performance. Albeit “paper-and-pencil” tests score students’ learning based on consistent and reliable patterns addressing them in the identical manner, discontentment emerged owing to the collation of data via high-stakes/standardized tests, objective testing approaches, traditional methods, teacher-made tests monitoring students’ advancement (Tzagari & West, 2004) and lack of authenticity (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002). Seeing that “standardized” tests are not functional and effective for gathering information apropos of learners’ beliefs, attitudes, motivation, interests and learning strategies (Genesee & Hamayan, 1994), alternative assessment has been revealed as a variegated kind of assessment over the past few decades.

Alternative assessment proffers learners opportunities to ameliorate their personal skills evaluating their performances (Race et al, 2005). In consequence, students are encompassed in the assessment procedure which is an integral constituent of the learning process (Earl, 2003), become assessors of their own learning via self-assessment and comprehend their potentials and vulnerabilities by means of peer-assessment and collaboration with the tutor (Heritage, 2007). When learners have sense of their involvement in the learning process, their self-confidence is amplified and they are stimulated to learn (Kostopoulou, 2010).

Self-assessment and language portfolios are interwoven given that the former is an indispensable constituent of the latter one. Portfolio is a student-led approach which

amalgamates assessment with the learning process (Griva & Kofou, 2017); it is defined as a “compilation of an individual child’s work, showing his/her language abilities, effort, and language development over time” (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p.23) which has been implemented in multitudinous educational frameworks and with sundry age groups, levels and purposes (Tzagari, 2004). In this alternative method of formative and summative assessment to conventional forms, both educators’ and learners’ standpoints towards learning and assessment are integrated along with the record of students’ learning advancement (Herrera et al., 2007). Learners’ are provided with prolific feedback in the Portfolio practice, including both behavior and performance descriptions.

The aforesaid descriptions can productively be depicted in a descriptive approach, which paves the way for the descriptive assessment. Descriptive assessment is remarkably valuable for the educators for the adoption of a resolution in addition to specific teaching patterns and amend the learning process, as it gathers profound data from miscellaneous forms of alternative assessment (UNESCO, 2017); concurrently, learners are proffered resonant accounts of their merits and flaws, skills and competences (Griva & Kofou, 2017).

Descriptive assessment was implemented as a form of alternative assessment in Greek schools in 2016 by the Institute of Educational Policy by means of a two-year pilot; as Konstantinou (2017) asseverates, the Greek educational system is not in position to integrate descriptive assessment owing to the stakeholders’ inveterate attitude and inclination in favor of evaluating via conventional grades instead of assessing. To all intents, the particular study endeavors to investigate the implementation of a portfolio-based method as form of alternative assessment for the writing skill and its utility as a reason for descriptive assessment in a group of young learners in the private sector.

The study

The purpose and Objectives

The study aimed to develop and assess young EFL learners’ writing skills, implementing descriptive assessment in combination with the method of Portfolio. The case study is conducted on young EFL learners of a foreign language center who face difficulties in writing skills. In the word of Cohen (2007), ‘case studies’

“...observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effect”. Despite the fact that the students of the specific group are proficient in listening, reading and speaking skills, the teacher-researcher observed the learners’ vulnerabilities in the writing skill compared to the aforementioned ones; therefore, she chose to investigate the young learners’ competencies in writing skill via the Portfolio method. Through the implementation of the Portfolio method, the learners’ strengths and weaknesses are observed and the process of writing is facilitated. Additionally, the study results and the implications of the process are studied and evaluated using descriptive assessment tools exhibiting the learners’ performance and attitude. The aim is to provide the students and parents with meaningful and purposeful feedback depicting the trainees’ progress collecting evidence, observing and studying the outcomes of the process. Lastly, the research is expected to focus and answer the following questions (Sofou, 2021):

1. What difficulties do young learners face in writing skills?
2. How can the Portfolio method facilitate their learning and handling of their writing difficulties?
3. What are the students’ and parents’ opinions about the implementation of the Portfolio and descriptive assessment?
4. Does the Portfolio improve young learners’ writing skill?
5. Does the feedback in the form of descriptive assessment help young learners see their weaknesses?

Case Study & Action Research

The Case Study was implemented by the researcher in the specific research as a method of collating and organizing information with a view to optimizing a thorough comprehension of particular individuals, seeing that it a qualitative method (rather than technique) which accentuates the ‘Particular One’ (Dornyei, 2007). The learners’ progress was gauged via the gathering of valid data. Duff (2006) recommends the conduction of case studies with 4-6 central participators, referring to them as ‘multiple instrumental’ case studies. Even though the case study is associated with ‘generalizability’ of conclusions, which triggered restrictions and controversies about its validity, it can result in valid outcomes by means of meaningful sampling and meticulous generalization (Dornyei, 2007), which proffers potentials to solve problems (Strach & Everett, 2008) and implements for researchers to investigate

intricate phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In tandem, as one of the study purposes is to examine the impact of the Portfolio practice on a group of 4 young learners, the case study method would be considered as a beneficial means. In the opinion of O Cinneide (1997), the case study reinforces dynamic learning and students' autonomy in learning serving, therefore, the purpose of education.

In view of the fact that the case study can be combined with further research approaches in amalgamated method studies, action research was additionally conducted by the teacher-researcher. In action research the initiation of transformation into the social enterprise along with amplification of practice are focal factors (Burns, 2005); researchers gain ameliorated insight of their educational environment and amend the impact of their teaching (Dornyei, 2007). Throughout action research, a collaborative alteration emerges involving the individual participants in dynamic participation, action and reflection (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), an aspect which was investigated in the particular research, searching for applicable solutions to society matters (*ibid.*). On the whole, action research is deemed an influential and efficacious implement for alteration and refinement (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

The context of the study

The sample of the population of the research constitutes 4 young female EFL learners of a foreign language center in Evosmos, Thessaloniki, aged between 12 and 13. All of them are Greek native and monolingual speakers. They have been learning English as a Foreign Language for 5 years. Their level is the Elementary based on a diagnostic test they all completed at the beginning of the term and exposed a heterogeneous language level as all of the learners are of level A2. Therefore, according to the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2018), the learners are identified as Basic Users of the English language. They “[c]an write simple texts on familiar subjects, linking sentences with connectors like ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘because’, give impressions and opinions in writing about topics of personal interest, use basic everyday vocabulary and expressions” (p.77).

Research Methods and Materials

The procedure began in October 2019 with the distribution of the students' and parents' introductory letters. The teaching and learning process started in November

2019 and was completed at the end of March 2020 with the Teacher-Parent Student-Led Conference. A systematic procedure took place and plentiful of steps were followed which would benefit the researcher-teacher to observe the students' advances, have information about the progression of the Portfolio and about the alternative assessment practice.

First of all, 14 teaching sessions were conducted in the teaching and learning process. The preparatory stage started with a 50-minute introductory teaching session. According to Seiz and Bartholomew (2008), the prominence of defining goals and purposes before the evaluation process is indubitable. That being the case, a class conference occurred and the learners were informed and explained the idea of Portfolio, its purposes, criteria and benefits for their improvement. A short discussion (Table 1) about their writing difficulties displayed in the past takes place as well. The learners were notified of their provision with additive authentic material by the educator.

Table 1. Student-Teacher Writing Conference Form

Name:	Date:
Things I do well in my writing:	
.....	
Things I want to improve in my writing:	
.....	
Teacher's Comments:	
.....	

They were also distributed a letter written by the teacher introducing them to this alternative method of assessment and defining the objectives and intentions of the Portfolio implementation concerning their strengths and weaknesses in writing, the development of their writing skill in combination with autonomous writing. At the end of the Portfolio incorporation, the learners would be able to:

- identify the writing sub-skills and strategies
- display increased awareness of the writing sub-skills and strategies they had improved/needed to improve
- display an independent attitude as learner and writer
- organize their work

Likewise, the learners were explicated and apprised of the evaluation of their growth and advancement in writing and the Portfolio composition at the end of the whole practice exposing them to the idea of the integration of the writing scale criteria and the descriptive assessment. The students' intimidation was not pursued by the teacher, thus, the aim of the assessment was explained. In other words, the fruitful reinforcement and development of their writing skills, which delineates from grading, was promoted. Last of all, the students posed their questions and expressed their concerns which were replied and clarified by the researcher-instructor.

In the second session, the teacher responded to the pupils' further queries and elaborated on the procedure the trainees had to follow so that the goal of a successful Portfolio practice could be accomplished. Additionally, the pupils were dispensed a Checklist of Writing and Interest Awareness (Table 2) based on which the teacher aimed to gain insight into the students' interests, necessities, lacks and considerations with reference to their abilities in writing for the sake of the planning and organization of the following steps in the case study. As Worley (2001) advocates, specific behaviours, traits, abilities or characteristics are displayed through simple checklists. Clarifications and explanations were given to the learners in cases of difficulties in the comprehension of some words or sentences. In parallel, the findings collected from the checklist would offer assistance to the tutor in order to determine the miscellaneous genres, topics and materials to be integrated and applied in the whole practice.

Table 2. Initial Checklist of Writing Interest and Awareness

Tick ✓	the boxes.	Yes	No
1	I think writing is easy		
2	I think writing is important for my education		
3	I like writing in English		
4	I like writing about any topic		
5	I like writing to friends		
6	I am a good writer		
7	I have to improve my writing		
8	I can organize my writing in paragraphs		

9	I know how to construct a paragraph		
10	I know which tenses to use		
11	I use linking words when I write		
12	I use details to make my writing good		
13	I create feelings		
14	I enjoy working with peers		
15	I enjoy giving advice to my peers		
16	I pay attention to my peers' comments		
17	I enjoy sharing my papers with other people (e.g teachers, friends)		
18	I learn from working with others		
19	I am making progress in class		
20	I want to get feedback from my teacher		

In the third session, an in-class conference was held. Both the educator and the trainees defined the format and the content of the Portfolio and decided to formulate a dossier which was going to include each student's first and last name. The teacher and the learners agreed the pupils to write down in their Portfolios the date of the writing lesson and encompass a cover letter as well. The entries of the 'Evaluation Portfolio' were decided to be associated with the contents of the course book. The students were encouraged to select by themselves and without restrictions or reservations the layout, colours and decorations of their Portfolios.

The 'Story Writing', 'Description' and 'Review' were the three genres related to the course book. Based on the participants' answers in the Checklist of Writing Interest and Awareness the tutor decided to adapt the contents of the coursebook and implemented a supplementary topic, namely, an 'Invitation Email' as the students had expressed their fondness in writing to friends. In tandem, the researcher-teacher aimed at the learners' exposure to various writing genres. Last but not least, the pupils were involved in the selection process as regards the contents of the Portfolio with the tutor's counselling and supervision. Therefore, the learners were not only trainees but also participants in the practice who took responsibilities rendering themselves autonomous learners and independent writers in a student-led procedure. In

accordance with Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou (2003), the sentiment of dependability and ownership is enhanced when the students are involved actively in the practice.

The final stage of the preparatory stage encompassed the students' orientation concerning the evaluation criteria for the Portfolio (Table 3) and their assessment through a descriptive approach delineating from the conventional grading system for both their writing skill and the Portfolio organization. In addition, the students' parents were informed about the implementation of the alternative method of assessment, the purpose and the reasons for the utilization and application of the innovative Portfolio method.

Table 3: Portfolio Evaluation Rubrics

Content	Learning Objectives	Overall Presentation	Grade
Required items: <input type="checkbox"/> Writing tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Writing texts <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Evaluation samples <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Reflection Samples <input type="checkbox"/> Peer-assessment samples <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback-Scoring	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify the Writing sub-skills and strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Display an awareness of the writing sub-skills and strategies that have been improved <input type="checkbox"/> Display an independent attitude as learner and writer <input type="checkbox"/> Organize his/her work	<input type="checkbox"/> Selection of Artifacts/Optional Elements <input type="checkbox"/> Organization <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Cover Page	
The portfolio includes all required items	The portfolio demonstrates that all learning objectives have been achieved	All artifacts and work samples are clearly and directly related to the purpose of the portfolio. A wide variety of artifacts is included. Portfolio is complete and neatly organized. A reader can easily find things. Reflection of awareness of the portfolio goals and the process of revision. Evidence of progress over time and full explanation of choices. High levels of reliability in	8-10 Excellent

		<p>self/peer assessment. Draw of conclusions about his/her learning.</p> <p>Cover page is creatively designed</p>	
<p>The portfolio includes most required items</p>	<p>The portfolio demonstrates that most learning objectives have been achieved</p>	<p>Most artifacts and work samples are related to the purpose of the portfolio.</p> <p>Portfolio is well-organized. A reader has little difficulty finding things.</p> <p>Reflection of awareness of most portfolio goals and the process of revision to a fair extent. Most evidence of progress over time and fair explanation of choices. Adequate relation to self/peer assessment.</p> <p>Cover page shows some creativity</p>	<p>4-7 Good</p>
<p>The portfolio includes some required items</p>	<p>The portfolio demonstrates that some learning objectives have been achieved</p>	<p>Some of the artifacts and work samples are related to the purpose of the portfolio.</p> <p>Portfolio is fairly well-organized. A reader may have a little difficulty finding things.</p> <p>Reflection of some awareness of portfolio goals and process of revision to a certain extent. Relevant evidence of progress over time and limited explanation of choices and relation to self/peer assessment.</p> <p>Cover Page does not show any creativity</p>	<p>1-3 Pass</p>
<p>No portfolio submitted</p>	<p>The portfolio does not</p>	<p>The artifacts and work</p>	<p>No grade</p>

	demonstrate achievement of learning objectives	<p>samples do not relate to the purpose of the portfolio.</p> <p>Portfolio shows some attempt at organization. A reader has difficulty finding things.</p> <p>Reflection of limited awareness of portfolio goals difficulty understanding the process of revision. Little evidence of progress over time. Limited explanation of choices and difficulty relating to self/peer assessment.</p> <p>Cover Page is not included</p>	<p>(-)</p> <p>Fail</p>
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Various additional tools were employed during the research procedure which facilitated the researcher to respond to the research questions and gauge the impact which the writing portfolio and descriptive assessment had on the learners' writing skills. First and foremost, the learners were asked to complete Checklists of Writing Interests and Awareness, before and after the practice (tables 1, 4), so that the teacher could collect evidence affiliated with the students' writing competences and interests.

Table 4. Final Checklist of Writing Interest and Awareness

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I enjoyed writing in English					
2	I consider myself to be a better writer than I was before					
3	I enjoyed working with peers					
4	I enjoyed giving advice to my peers					
5	Before writing I paid attention to the tasks and instructions					
6	In pair work I discussed my ideas with my classmate before writing					
7	Before I began to write, I took notes and wrote ideas in my draft					
8	Before writing I took notes in my native language					
9	During writing I used my previous knowledge to develop my ideas					

10	I used the “writing checklists” to help me as I was writing					
11	During writing I developed my ideas in my native language and then translated them into English					
12	While I was writing, I used dictionaries or grammar books to help me when I didn’t know something or I wasn’t sure about it					
13	After writing I reread my writing to check and edit grammar-syntax, punctuation/spelling/capitalization mistakes					
14	I revised the content and ideas of my writing in the end and then I exchanged it with my partner					
15	I gave my partners feedback about mistakes/errors and improvements on their writing in the end					
16	I got feedback from my classmates about mistakes/errors and improvements on my writing					
17	I got feedback from my teacher about mistakes/errors and improvements on my writing					
18	In the end I kept notes about the mistakes/errors I made in my writing so that I would avoid repeating them on the future					
19	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in coming up with ideas					
20	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in organization					
21	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in choosing appropriate style					
22	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in using appropriate vocabulary					
23	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in spelling-punctuation-capitalization					
24	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in supporting and developing the main ideas/details					
25	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in using my knowledge					
26	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in capturing attention in the introduction or in the conclusion					
27	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in using linking words					
28	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in using correct grammar-syntax					

29	When I wrote in English I faced difficulties in creating feelings					
30	I enjoyed giving advice to my peers					
31	I paid attention to my peers' comments					
32	I enjoyed sharing my papers with other people (my classmates/teacher)					
33	I learned from working with others					
34	I made progress in class					
35	I wanted to get more feedback from my teacher					

Besides, since self-assessment is an integral part of the portfolio assessment and process assessment (Griva & Kofou, 2017), both self-evaluation and self-reflection (Table 5) entries were used and completed by the learners after the accomplishment of the writing and Portfolio implementation process promoting, as Scholes (2003) accentuates, 'self-directed' learning. In the opinion of Bromley (2007), opportunities for self-assessment create strong writers. The implementation of self-assessment provided the trainees with awareness and reflection on their strengths and weaknesses enhancing, simultaneously, their autonomy (Richard & Renandya, 2002). In tandem, the pupils' answers to open-ended questions on a self-reflection Portfolio sheet were embedded so that the researcher could congregate details about the learners' impression and attitudes towards the Portfolio application. In addition, the students' answers on the Checklist of Writing Interest and Awareness were taken into consideration by the researcher for conformation of the self-assessment samples.

Table 5. Students' Self-Reflection sheet on entries

<p>After you have selected each writing piece you will include in your Portfolio, come to the following statements.</p> <p>1. I selected this writing piece because </p> <p>2. The strong points of this writing piece are </p> <p>3. The weak points are </p> <p>4. I think it is a "good"/ "bad" writing piece as </p> <p>5. I can see progress or improvement in</p>

.....

6. I found/didn't find it difficult because

.....

7. If I had additional time, I would work more on

.....

By the same token, peer-assessment was integrated by the educator aspiring to create a communicative and collaborative environment. More explicitly, peer-judgement checklists and sheets (Tables 6 & 7) were completed by the pupils during the revising stage of the process providing their peers with meaningful feedback on their work-in-progress and Portfolio organization. In the opinion of Woodward (2001), peer-directed feedback via pair work is constructive and facilitating. The learners commented on their peers' strengths, weaknesses and ambiguities judging the quality of their written work, interacting and cooperating, concurrently. The existence of particular audience and realistic context urged the pupils to be in communication and have the confidence of participating and sharing viewpoints. As O'Brien (2004) and Flower (1994) demonstrate, 'collaborative talk' and negotiation of meaning are reinforced by means of peer interaction.

Table 6. Peer Evaluation and Editing Form for Writing and Portfolio

My classmate	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. Cared about the portfolio			
2. Included various and plenty of tasks			
3. Improved the samples of written work according to the teacher's instructions and discussions in the class			
4. The portfolio is well-organized and kept.			
5. Valuable and wide vocabulary was included in the written work			
6. The pieces of writing had a proper organization (introduction, main body, conclusion)			
7. The paragraphs were well-written (topic sentence, details, transition words and sentences)			
8. Management of genres is obvious			
9. Sense of task/purpose is present			

10. There weren't many grammar or syntax mistakes			
11. There weren't many spelling mistakes			
12. There is management of coherence/flow or sense of direction			
13. Self-assessment has taken place and my classmate is aware of her weaknesses which she has to improve			
14. Now, you have to write some more specific notes and comments about your classmate's portfolio (e.g. which sample you liked most, what you would like your classmate to improve, your classmate's strongest and weakest points)			

Table 7. Peer-Assessment Checklist

Tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the boxes.	Yes	No	Not Sure
The email includes specific phrases in the opening paragraph			
The email includes specific phrases in the closing paragraph			
The writer describes her house using specific words and phrases			
The writer describes her area/neighborhood using specific words and phrases			
She suggests her friend different activities			
She suggests different places they can visit			
There is different information in different paragraphs			
The writer used Future Tenses in the email			
The writer used Modal Verbs in the email			
The writer used linking words in her invitation			

What is more, two Alternative-Descriptive Assessment Checklists (Tables 8 & 9) had been developed by the teacher-researcher. The first checklist was oriented towards the learners and the second one directed at their parents. The checklists were distributed to the students and their parents after receiving descriptive feedback by the tutor concerning the learners' written products based on the defined criteria. The

educator intended to acquire feedback regarding their impressions and feelings about the implementation of alternative and descriptive assessment in the writing process.

Table 8. Students' Checklist

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1. Alternative Assessment promotes higher order thinking instead of rote-learning.			
2. Alternative Assessment promotes your collaboration with your classmates.			
3. Alternative Assessment emphasizes strengths instead of weaknesses.			
4. Alternative Assessment actively engages you in the learning and assessment process.			
5. Alternative Assessment helps you become more self-directed and autonomous.			
6. Descriptive Assessment provides a fuller image of your level, personality, attitude, interests and growth.			
7. Descriptive Assessment is worth the time and effort since it reveals your strengths and weaknesses.			
8. Descriptive Assessment reduces the opportunity of mutual competition among you thus reducing your motivation due to competitiveness.			
9. Descriptive Assessment contributes to the evaluation of your achievement, work and progress.			
10. Descriptive marks are brief comments that are mostly general and are not appropriate for each student individually.			
11. Through descriptive assessment you take responsibility of your own progress and development.			
12. Your mark-related stress is decreased with the use of descriptive assessment so you are able to perform better.			

13. Descriptive grades with positive comments can have a positive influence on your motivation.			
14. Descriptive Assessment helps you understand and improve your weaknesses.			
15. Descriptive Assessment makes you self-satisfied since you do not fear the appointment of bad marks.			
16. Descriptive Assessment can totally substitute traditional assessment.			
17. Your final evaluation should include only traditional grades instead of descriptive marks.			
18. You would prefer a combination of both traditional and descriptive assessment marks.			

Table 9. Parents' Checklist

1. You are satisfied with your child's portrayal, which descriptive assessment provides you with.			
2. Descriptive Assessment reduces the pressure you put on your child regarding grades.			
3. Descriptive Assessment informs you about your child's strengths so that you can reward them for their achievements.			
4. Descriptive Assessment informs you about your child's weaknesses and the prospect of improvement.			
5. You are not satisfied with descriptive assessment as you consider it a general and vague way of evaluation.			
6. Descriptive Assessment provides a fuller image of your child's level, personality, attitude, interests and growth.			
7. Descriptive Assessment is worth the time and effort since it reveals your child's strengths and weaknesses.			
8. Descriptive Assessment reduces the opportunity of mutual competition among students			

in class thus reducing their motivation and effort.			
9. Descriptive Assessment reduces students' stress so they are able to perform better.			
10. Descriptive Assessment is overindulgent and makes students self-satisfied reducing their effort.			
11. Descriptive grades with positive comments can have a positive influence on your child's motivation.			
12. Descriptive marks are brief comments that are mostly general and are not appropriate for each student individually.			
13. The final evaluation should include only traditional grades instead of descriptive marks.			
14. Descriptive Assessment can totally substitute traditional assessment.			
15. You do not comprehend the accurate result of your child's progress via descriptive marks instead of traditional grades.			
16. You would prefer a combination of both traditional and descriptive assessment marks.			
17. You would like to be informed about descriptive assessment and its benefits.			
18. You are interested in meeting the teacher in the future so that you will be informed to a greater extent about your child's progress.			

Last but not least, a Post-Portfolio Checklist had been produced and dispensed to the pupils so that the researcher-tutor could gain valuable and profound insight into the learners' beliefs about the Portfolio itself and the process which took place.

Additionally, the instructor evaluated the students' progress by means of Report Cards (Table 10) which were distributed to both the pupils and parents accordingly. The Report Cards encompassed descriptive assessment of the learners' writing skills, attitudes and collaboration. The recipients were also provided with the teacher's general comments and a descriptive holistic score. In the end, the students and parents

were asked to annotate in a provided space what they have read. The aim of the tutor was to inform the learners and their parents in an alternative descriptive manner deviating from the traditional grading system, and apprehend their opinions.

Table 10. Report Card

Student's Name	
School Year:	Class:
Writing Skills:	
.....	
Attitudes:	
.....	
Collaboration:	
.....	
General Comments:	
.....	
Overall Grade:	
Your teacher	
Student's Comments:	
.....	
Parent's Comments:	
.....	

Conference was a supplementary research tool used by the teacher-researcher. The Portfolio Conference Questions sheet (Table 11), which included open-ended questions, addressed to the learners and pursued the comprehension of the students' perception on the topic of writing practice and the Portfolio process. Likewise, the Student-Teacher Conference Form (Table 12) was a brief conversation between the teacher and the student as regards writing. The pupils were asked to illustrate their comments on their strengths in writing so far, as well as the problems they desire to overcome. In compliance with Worley's (2001) notion, substantial communication is established via student-teacher conferences with regard to the learners' educational progress. In the end, the learners were provided with their teacher's remarks on their considerations. Lastly, the instructor conducted a Student-Led Conference with the students and their parents aiming at the debriefing and discussion about the pupils'

performance and the outcomes of the process. At the end of the conference the parents were handed out a form (Appendix VIII) with open-ended questions concerning the student-led conference and their involvement in the whole practice so that the tutor could appreciate their impressions and notions.

Table 11. Portfolio Conference Questions

1. What do you like writing about? What makes it interesting?
2. How has your writing improved?
3. How has your English improved since the last report period?
4. What can you do now that you could not do before?
5. What does your portfolio show about you as a writer?
6. What are your goals for becoming a better writer?
7. Did you like keeping the Portfolio? What did you like the most?
8. What are you going to do with the Portfolio now that we have completed the process?
9. What are your feelings about the Portfolio?
10. Would you like to keep a Portfolio for other skills or in other subjects?

Table 12. Parent-Teacher Student-Led Conference Form

<p>What did you expect from the conference with the teacher and your child?</p> <p>2. What do you believe you have learnt from the conference?</p> <p>3. What do you believe your child has learnt from the conference?</p> <p>4. Did you feel comfortable speaking with your child about her learning?</p> <p>5. Do you believe you are now in a better position to help your child? In what way?</p> <p>6. Did the conference give you a more in-depth view?</p> <p>7. Would you like to attend a student-led conference again?</p> <p>8. What are your feelings/impressions about your involvement in the whole practice?</p>
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As far as the marking scheme of the writing tasks is concerned, analytic rating scales were used by the teacher (Table 13). Both the criteria of assessing writing and the descriptors of each criterion were developed. The specific marking scheme facilitated the researcher-rater to evaluate and mark the learners' written products in a valid and reliable manner, increasing indications of objectivity instead of rater's subjectivity. The defined criteria of the rating scales focused on Genre, Content/Focus, Organization/Purpose, Grammar/Syntax, Vocabulary/Word Choice, and Conventions/Mechanics. The used descriptors banked on a five-point rating scale ranging from 1=Unacceptable to 5=Excellent.

Table 13. Analytic Rating Scales for Writing Genre

5= excellent	Absolutely focused on the topic. Ideas are completely developed; specific and relevant details. Addressing the task.
4= fairly good	Main ideas are efficiently focused and developed; Meaningful and purposeful details. Addressing most of the task.
3= satisfactory	Ideas are relatively focused; specific and/or general details.

2= needs improvement	Ideas are slightly focused; general and/or limited details. Addressing the task insufficiently.
1= unacceptable	Ideas are unfocused; underdeveloped details and examples. Failing to address the task.

Content/Focus

5= excellent	Main ideas are stated clearly and accurately supported by detailed formation; change of opinion very clear. Addressing the task.
4= fairly good	Main ideas are stated fairly and accurately supported by fair information; change of opinion relatively clear. Addressing most of the task.
3= satisfactory	Main ideas are somewhat unclear or inaccurate supported by general information; change of opinion somewhat weak
2= needs improvement	Main ideas are not clear or accurate; incomplete elaboration and many deviations. Change of opinion weak. Addressing the task insufficiently.
1= unacceptable	Main ideas not all clear or accurate; aimless information. Change of opinion very weak. Failing to address the task.

Organization/Purpose

5= excellent	Writing is well organized and perfectly coherent; appropriate to the material and genre; clear and logical flow of ideas.
4= fairly good	Writing is fairly well organized and generally coherent. Fairly clear flow of ideas.
3= satisfactory	Writing is loosely organized but main ideas are clear; logical but incomplete sequencing. There are

<p>2= needs improvement</p> <p>1= unacceptable</p>	<p>some problems with connection.</p> <p>Ideas are disconnected. Writing lacks logical sequencing, is brief and weakly developed. Lacks elements of genre.</p> <p>Writing is incoherent, disorganized and deficient. The ideas are vague and disconnected. No logical sequence. Lacks elements of genre.</p>
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Grammar/Syntax

<p>5= excellent</p> <p>4= fairly good</p> <p>3= satisfactory</p> <p>2= needs improvement</p> <p>1= unacceptable</p>	<p>Accurate and full control of complex structure. Variable and manageable use of syntactic structures.</p> <p>Nearly accurate and effective control of complex structure. Efficient use of syntactic structures.</p> <p>Fair control of structures. Adequate use of simple and complex syntax.</p> <p>Poor control of structure. Frequent morphological errors. Although simple sentences seem to be accurate, more complex ones seem to be incorrect.</p> <p>Dominated by errors in sentence structure and word order; no control of structure. Subject-verb agreement, tense and word formation deficiencies.</p>
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Vocabulary/Word choice

<p>5= excellent</p> <p>4= fairly good</p>	<p>Highly effective and purposeful choice of words. Idioms and word forms are appropriately used. Natural placement of words and broad variety of vocabulary.</p> <p>Dynamic choice of words. Idioms and word forms are adequately used. Quite natural placement of words and sufficient variety of words.</p>
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3= satisfactory	Adequate choice of words. Idioms and word forms make the meaning clear. Vocabulary use is appropriate.
2= needs improvement	Limited range of vocabulary; confusing use of words, idioms and word forms with frequent errors.
1= unacceptable	Very limited and incorrect use of vocabulary; ineffective choice of words, idioms and word forms.

Conventions/Mechanics

5= excellent	Mastery of spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Limited errors in standard English conventions.
4= fairly good	Few errors in spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Almost no errors in standard English conventions.
3= satisfactory	Fair number of spelling, punctuation and capitalization errors. Agreement is obvious between parts of speech.
2= needs improvement	Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation and capitalization which cause confusion. Between parts of speech there are discrepancies.
1= unacceptable	No control over spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Frequent and serious problems. Lack of consistency is evident between parts of speech.

Simultaneously, Portfolio Evaluation Rubrics (Table 3) were developed so that the researcher-teacher could evaluate the final products of the learners' Portfolios. The Portfolio Evaluation Rubrics included Content, Learning Objectives and Overall Evaluation criteria and the grading system ranged from No Grade (-)=Fail to 8-10=Excellent.

Evaluation of the Practice

Authentic and substantial data were collected which ameliorated the learners' writing skills, reinforced their dynamic involvement in the process, enhanced self- and peer-assessment and advocated self-reliant learning along with self-esteem. The implementation of analytic rating scales along with self-/peer assessment and Post-Portfolio checklists reinforced the triangulation of marking.

The research proffered evidence that the Portfolio practice had auspicious ramifications rather than demotivating influence on the young learners' writing competence, promoting favourable attitudes such as amplified motivation and development of learning-to-learn strategies. Guided by the tutor's instructions, the learners improved the depiction of their ideas, developed the planning and organization of their written work, revised and redrafted via the teacher's and peers' feedback, set goals, responded to the demands of the Portfolio learning objectives, assessed themselves and evaluated their class fellows providing them with beneficial feedback.

Writing and Portfolio Conference Findings

The data collected by means of qualitative and quantitative sources manifest the trainees' and parents' favourable disposition towards the Writing and Portfolio practice along with descriptive assessment method. More specifically, students' optimistic viewpoints and feelings concerning alternative and descriptive assessment were depicted in the Alternative-Descriptive Assessment Checklist their responses in the Post-Portfolio Checklist exhibit their positive reactions and inclination towards the Portfolio as an efficacious and constructive teaching, learning and assessment implement for the writing skill (Fig. 1). In tandem, the participants' responses in the Final Checklist of Writing Interest and Awareness reveal the learners' positive receptions concerning the writing practice via the Portfolio implementation demonstrating their preferences and attitudes compared to the conventional methods of evaluation, rendering it a reliable and appropriate assessment approach (Fig. 2). In tandem, the parents' involvement in the whole practice was definitely productive as it was demonstrated by their approving feedback-reactions towards the Portfolio and Alternative-Descriptive assessment method (Fig. 3). The feedback in the form of descriptive assessment assists learners to perceive not only their strengths but also

their weaknesses, proffering them the opportunity to ameliorate them focusing on the analytic written accounts. (Fig, 4)

Learners' Feelings about the Portfolio

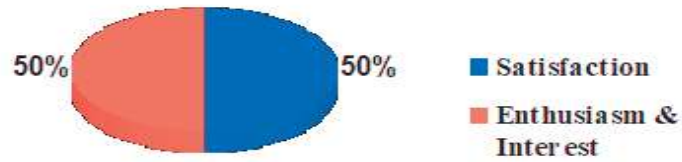


Figure 1. Learners' Feelings about the Portfolio

Learners' Goals for becoming better Writers

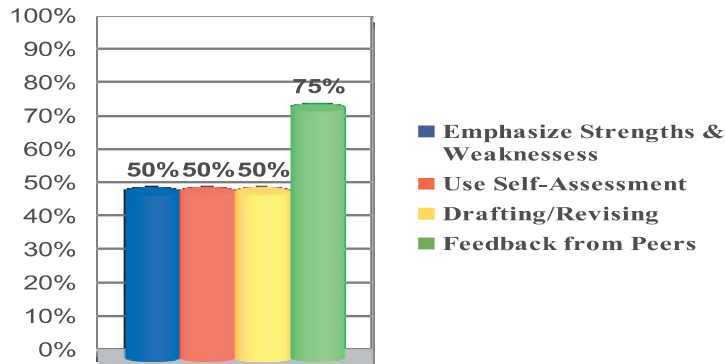


Figure 2. Learners' Goals for becoming better Writers

Parents' Evaluation of Portfolios

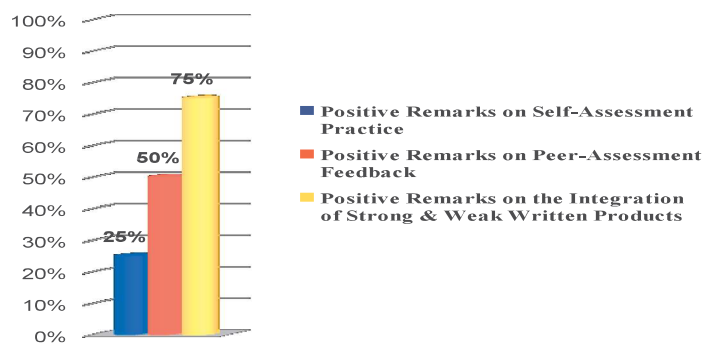


Figure 3. Parents' Evaluation of Portfolios

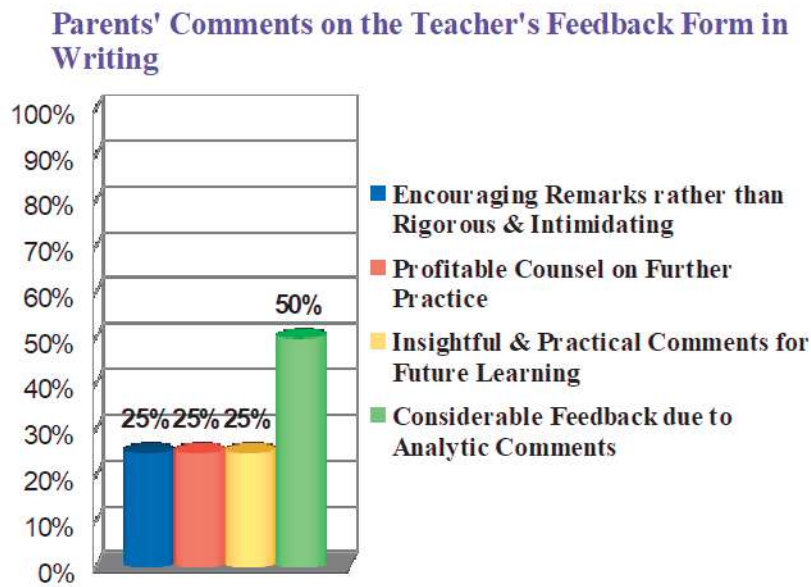


Figure 4. Parents' Comments on the Teacher's Feedback Form in Writing

Regarding the teacher-researcher's stance, the process rather than the product was of great importance for the educator to gauge the learners' writing skills and progress. The implementation of the writing Portfolio and descriptive assessment was proven to be advantageous for the teacher-researcher as well, given that she was offered the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Portfolio practice on the trainees' gradual advancement of their writing skills and performance, reconsider material and methods which had been engaged and incorporate supplementary or differentiated tools which would foster the process. Equally prominent, the teacher-researcher endeavored to be objective so that the reliability of results could be accentuated.

Concluding remarks

The Portfolio and descriptive assessment implementation was of great importance throughout the process. Nevertheless, the limitations of the research cannot be dissimulated. In the first place, time constraints were of greatest significance and consequential, seeing that an extended period of teaching time was devoted to the process and the concentration on the rest skills was diminished. Besides, the Portfolio

practice was time-consuming for the teacher-researcher since the planning, preparation and assessment of the integrated material took considerable time.

In parallel, the educator was unaccustomed with the implementation of the writing Portfolio method and meticulous descriptive feedback and assessment. Therefore, both the unawareness of the aforementioned and the lack of experience constituted the venture intellectually demanding for the teacher-researcher along with the integration of rating scales and rubrics for the evaluation of the learners' writing competence and Portfolios. A matter of importance was the educator's rigorousness as regards the collection, illustration and evaluation of data emanated from the learners' and parents' responses seeing that they responded to several open-ended questions, proffering multiple answers most of the time. Simultaneously, the trainees were inexperienced with the Portfolio practice and an important amount of time was consecrated to the organization and compilation of their portfolios.

Additionally, the parents' involvement in the whole practice was challenging. More explicitly, the educator was responsible for the parents-contributors' debriefing and instruction as well as the conduction of conferences introducing them to the notion of descriptive assessment combined with the traditional grading system and their incentivizing to provide both their children and the educator with feedback. Conducted Conversations which are associated with Portfolios reinforce the entanglement of all the components of the learning public in enlightening children for educational purposes (Gregory et al., 2001; Fu & Lamme Jan, 2002).

All in all, the Portfolio practice had auspicious ramifications on young learners' writing skills in a self-directed, student-led learning environment along with metacognitive skills. Self-assessment amplification took place considering that the learners became responsible and self-reliant writers in addition to designers and assessors of their personal writing Portfolios monitoring their language learning, which is a central point in formative assessment (Bailey & Heritage, 2008). Concurrently, peer-assessment and group/pair work developed seeing that the students participated actively in the learning process collaborating, evaluating and providing their class fellows with feedback.

To all intents, the practicality of the Portfolio and descriptive assessment were portrayed via the learners' and parents' favourable remarks and auspicious perceptions. More specifically, the overwhelming preponderance deemed the Portfolio an impactful learning and assessment implement for the writing skill compared to the

conventional marking scores which enhanced autonomous and self-regulated writing. Further to this, the descriptive feedback was accounted precise and conceivable compared to the traditional total marks. As Black and William (1998) asseverate, descriptive feedback which concentrates on achievements and paves the way towards improvement has favorable efficacy on learning.

The feasibility and practicality of the Portfolio method in conjunction with the reliability of descriptive assessment as an evaluation approach were scrutinized. Authentic and substantial data were collected which ameliorated the learners' writing skills, reinforced their dynamic involvement in the process, enhanced self- and peer-assessment and advocated self-reliant learning along with self-esteem. The implementation of analytic rating scales along with self-/peer assessment and Post-Portfolio checklists reinforced the triangulation of marking.

With reference to the first question, Vocabulary/Word Choice and Organization difficulties in writing skills were demonstrated throughout the research. In spite of the difficulties the participators had to confront with in the writing skill, they avidly organized their Portfolios in course of events. Although the learners uttered their vacillation and reservations concerning their involvement in the process, they participated actively in the Portfolio practice, organized their Portfolios eagerly and were vigorously engaged in self- and peer assessment potentiating their autonomous learning and confidence.

As regards the second and fourth question, the research proffered evidence that the Portfolio practice had auspicious ramifications rather than demotivating influence on the young learners' writing competence, promoting favourable attitudes such as amplified motivation and development of learning-to-learn strategies. Guided by the tutor's instructions, the learners improved the depiction of their ideas, developed the planning and organization of their written work, revised and redrafted via the teacher's and peers' feedback, set goals, responded to the demands of the Portfolio learning objectives, assessed themselves and evaluated their class fellows providing them with beneficial feedback.

Apropos of the third question, the data collected by means of qualitative and quantitative sources manifest the trainees' and parents' favourable disposition towards the Writing and Portfolio practice along with descriptive assessment method. More specifically, students' optimistic viewpoints and feelings concerning alternative and descriptive assessment were depicted in the Alternative-Descriptive Assessment

Checklist; their responses in the Post-Portfolio Checklist exhibit their positive reactions and inclination towards the Portfolio as an efficacious and constructive teaching, learning and assessment implement for the writing skill. In tandem, the participants' responses in the Final Checklist of Writing Interest and Awareness reveal the learners' positive receptions concerning the writing practice via the Portfolio implementation demonstrating their preferences and attitudes compared to the conventional methods of evaluation, rendering it a reliable and appropriate assessment approach. In tandem, the parents' involvement in the whole practice was definitely productive as it was demonstrated by their approving feedback-reactions towards the Portfolio and Alternative-Descriptive assessment method. Concerning the last question, the feedback in the form of descriptive assessment assists learners to perceive not only their strengths but also their weaknesses, proffering them the opportunity to ameliorate them focusing on the analytic written accounts.

Regarding the teacher-researcher's stance, the process rather than the product was of great importance for the educator to gauge the learners' writing skills and progress. The implementation of the writing Portfolio and descriptive assessment was proven to be advantageous for the teacher-researcher as well, given that she was offered the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Portfolio practice on the trainees' gradual advancement of their writing skills and performance, reconsider material and methods which had been engaged and incorporate supplementary or differentiated tools which would foster the process. Equally prominent, the teacher-researcher endeavored to be objective so that the reliability of results could be accentuated.

Barring the beneficial impact of the Portfolio method on the learners, the teacher-researcher was provided with advantages as well. More explicitly, she pragmatically examined the practicality of the Portfolio and the applicability of the instruction, tools and strategies she integrated with the intent of re-evaluating them for future implementation or modification. In tandem, the teacher-researcher was proffered the opportunity to investigate the functionality of the descriptive assessment and the both students' and parents' impressions concerning the descriptive feedback on learners' written products, advancement and writing performance.

The study endeavours to pave the way towards the amalgamation of the Portfolio method with the descriptive assessment in language teaching and learning concerning young EFL learners in a framework of case studies, proffering educators with

constructive enlightenment incorporating the Portfolio as a basis for descriptive assessment in their teaching and evaluation ventures.

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Developing the writing skill through culture-based portfolio and writing strategies

Garyfallia Mazioti

Introduction

Traditional testing and alternative assessment

Throughout the past decades, traditional language testing that usually takes the form of paper-and-pencil test and measures student's performance at a particular time has been dominated the educational programs all around the world. They have been disapproved of inability to provide analytic information about both the product and the process of the learning to all the stakeholders (Barootchi & Keshvarz, 2002) and of failure to mirror learners' attitude, motivation, interest or learning strategies (Genesee & Hamayan, 1994). In other words, standardized tests assess learning, allowing the teachers a dominating role in the whole procedure. They depict the student performance not as a whole but as a part of a unit, of a skill or as a part of the examinations, affecting their emotional state negatively. As a result, teachers in many cases direct their teaching and their methodology to the preparation of specific tests and examinations, pressed by the competitive atmosphere to improve the results achieved by students and forget meaningful production (Bailey, 1999).

The ever changing educational frame and the demanding social needs that both teachers and students face impose the seeking of alternative ways of teaching and assessment. Standardized tests, having received negative criticism for being insufficient tools that measure learners' knowledge on specific time and context (Nasab, 2015) tend to be abandoned and replaced by innovative forms of assessments. The latter would better describe what students learn and can do with the acquired knowledge in situations that replicate real life (Caner, 2010). Alternative methods of assessment focus on the process of the learning, align assessment with outcomes, make students active participants, provide ongoing qualitative information on students' progress as well as integrate assessment with instruction (Lynch, 2003). Students learner to communicate by performing, solving problems, creating or producing something that has a meaning, a purpose and ideally a personal connotation

(Tzagari et al., 2017). Moreover, in alternative assessment authentic tasks are used, skills are integrated, both process and product are crucial and the assessment criteria are clear and transparent to all. Teachers assess their students according to the performance-based approach and evaluate how they can apply content knowledge to critical thinking, solving problems and doing analytical tasks, developing at the same time higher-order skills (Van Tassel-Baska, 2013). They learn, in other words, to *analyse* the information they get into pieces and realize the connections among them, then to *synthesize* these pieces in order to build the “bigger picture” and finally to *evaluate* the best strategies for the particular situation (Bloom, 1956).

Alternative methods of assessment

According to Hamayan (1995), the most commonly used methods of alternative assessment are portfolios, observations, peer-assessment, self-assessment, diaries/journals/logs, projects, conferences, debates, demonstrations, dramatizations, exhibitions, games, story-telling and think-aloud. The most frequent way of collecting alternative assessment information are in the form of checklists, questionnaires, rating scales, anecdotal records, progress cards and learner profiles.

These methods have positive effects on all students including those with special needs since they incorporate multiple intelligences, preferred learning styles and a variety of tasks, requiring learners to use higher-level thinking skills in real-life or authentic situations (Al Ruqeishi, 2015).

Despite the benefits that alternative methods of assessment may carry, there are some negative connotations that influence their acceptability by teachers and their implementation in the EFL classroom (Brown & Hudson, 1998). These are related to the cost and the time needed to administer and analyze as well as the special teacher skills and the training of learners. Alternative assessment should also satisfy the same criteria as the traditional testing and be applied in schools that have been previously prepared for changes and a different learning culture has already been established in their communities.

Portfolio assessment

According to Smith and Tillema (1998), a learning portfolio is a purposeful collection of students’ work that presents their effort, progress and achievements.

However, the portfolio is not just a collection of evidence, a kind of student logbook documenting learning experiences. It comprises learners' reflections regarding these experiences and the way they gain knowledge (Hedge, 2000). It should give a picture of students' participation in matters concerning content, selection and evaluation criteria as well as it should show the way learners self-reflect and provide the results of this procedure (Paulson, Paulson & Meyer, 1991). Through the portfolio students reflect on their learning experiences at three different cognitive levels; descriptive, analytical and evaluative (Bloom, 1956) and by training how to use their reflective abilities they are guided to learning autonomy. According to Valdez Pierce and O'Malley portfolio assessment is "the use of records of a student's work over time and in a variety of modes to show the depth, breadth and development of the student's abilities" (Valdez Pierce & O'Malley, 1992, p. 2). Moreover, achievement is presented in relation to certain goals or objectives and it is characterized by the elements of self-reflection and self-monitoring.

Several studies such as Paesani (2006) and Ok (2014) have shown that the portfolio is a method that promotes the writing skill of students in EFL classroom. It seems to be popular among students because it is a learner-friendly method and it approaches learners in a non-traditional way taking into consideration their needs and personal preferences. The portfolio changes the whole mentality of students towards writing since they do not face it as a single experience that happens once in a single setting, but as something that occurs over time and can be revised and improved until they feel they have given the maximum of their efforts.

Ok (2014), in his study, found that the portfolio developed his learners' level in writing with respect to language and vocabulary use. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) acknowledge that learners become more responsible using portfolios; they broaden their perception of what they are learning and set goals. Swain (1998) confirms that reflection helps learners to "evaluate experience, learn from mistakes, repeat successes, revise and plan" (p. 28). Chambers and Windham (2007), in their study, discovered that the portfolio helped students understand their own learning processes and develop transferrable skills. Paesani (2006) showed that the portfolio method facilitated learners to integrate skills, content language and grammatical competence. Arslan (2014) revealed that the portfolio improved students' writing in process, organization, content, language use, vocabulary and accuracy.

From the above reviewed literature, it appears that the portfolio is a beneficial method of teaching and learning writing in the EFL classroom. But which are the benefits of keeping a writing portfolio with cultural characteristics especially in remote Junior High schools? Does this method improve students' writing skill? Are their motivation and critical thinking enhanced?

What differentiates the writing portfolio that is going to be described below from others is that it is characterized exclusively by cultural elements. The idea to deal with texts of such topics was emerged after interpreting needs analysis data results according to which the majority of the students of Foustani Junior High School in Pella, where the research was conducted, were interested in culture and tradition of their place. Another reason for this choice was the fact that because the particular school is in a small village near the northern borders of the country, secluded and away from what the average teenagers usually do, the students are organized in local cultural clubs and actively participate in traditional events. Consequently, anything concerning local culture would be welcomed by learners and carefully planned by teacher would be considered as a basis for an interesting, alternative and interactive writing teaching and learning experience (Mazioti, 2020). Teacher has also observed signs of intolerance among students, unnecessary antagonism and sometimes mutual disrespect concerning different cultural roots. Thus, through portfolio a positive stance towards language and culture would be cultivated and students would learn to respect other cultures. The portfolio has also social consequences as it contributes to the students' socialization. Therefore, it would become the means for communication and collaboration, the way the learners can love both the target language and the skill of writing and the process to develop cultural awareness and competence (Mazioti, 2020).

Studies on motivation show that when learners are trying toward goals that are personally meaningful, they perform at their highest level (McCombs, 1991). According to Newmann (1985), five factors are related to student engagement; students' need of competence, extrinsic rewards, intrinsic interest, social support and sense of ownership. All these characteristics can be found in portfolio practices. Taking into consideration the importance of motivation and the fact that portfolio method helps students to shape themselves within the classroom, interpreting their past and their present experiences, it can be concluded that the use of material that is

related to particular learners' customs and traditions has positive consequences to their engagement and therefore to their writing performance.

Pedagogical significance of the culture-based portfolio

Language and culture are closely related to each other. According to Brown (1990), the two notions coexist and cannot be separated for they will lose the value they carry out of this correlation. He believes that learners should be trained to interpret discourse according to target language cultural background. Culture should also be approached both as a process and as a product. Moran (2001) stresses the significance of language dynamics through which culture can be described, interpreted and responded to. In the 1990s, an intercultural approach was proposed in EFL in order to develop students' intercultural sensitivity and awareness. English as an international language having global dimensions it can be the vehicle to introduce the global civilization to the students. It can build bridges among civilizations and become the means to students' intercultural communicative competence. Through the development of this competence students learn to be sensitive and respect another cultural background and realize its existence and importance (Mazioti, 2020). They learn to respect interculturalism and empathy, the notion of "I" is replaced by that of "we". They develop social skills, behaviors and intercultural awareness that help them to explore the world, to understand their own and other cultures and by interpreting the differences and the similarities and relating to their own situation, they discover the dynamics beneath the whole procedure and the notion of culture. It can be concluded then, that the intercultural approach of teaching completes the communicative one and becomes a major tool for effective learning.

The implementation of the cultural portfolio

The participants

Fourteen first year learners, who attend the state Junior High school in Foustani-Pella, formed the sample of the population of the research. The lessons took place twice a week with each session lasting forty-five minutes. The experimental group comprised of thirteen-year-old students (eight girls and six boys). The majority of them were Greek with the exception of three bilingual students, two boys of Albanian origin and a girl of a Republic of North Macedonian origin. Not all of them had been

taught English at Primary school but they had attended private language schools or lessons at home and their level of proficiency was identified as pre-intermediate (A2) according to the CEFR (2001). Consequently, the learners could produce texts to “describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need” (CEFR, 2001, p. 24).

According to Woodward (2001), the class could be characterized as mixed as far as their language skills, mother tongue, sex, personality, learning style, preferences or social background. Despite the composing difficulty, students showed willingness to improve their writing skill. In general, they appeared to be enthusiastic, well-disposed and co-operative, demonstrating effort and wish to improve themselves. Their true motivation though seemed to derive from their desire to get high marks and not to gain knowledge. Finally, the particular learners were unfamiliar to the alternative methods of assessment since the testing practices that they had experienced so far were the progress tests (Mazioti, 2020).

The cultural orientation of the portfolio

The decision to develop a culture-based portfolio was based on several factors. First, the particular students live near the borders and the majority of them help their families in farming or herding. Their everyday life differs from that of city teenagers. They are closer to customs and traditions of their place and they love to follow and keep them alive. There is also a distinctive peculiarity in the district around the school. The villages of the territory have residents with different cultural backgrounds. There are only natives living in some of them and Pontians in some others. There are also villages with only Armani people and villages with people from the Minor Asia. These cultural traits can be found in students as well. Apart from their special external characteristics, students can speak the local dialect of each area, know the customs of their grandparents and the songs and the dances of their ancestors. Therefore, the topics of the performance-based assessment should be relative to the reality of their lives in order to demonstrate what they know (Diez, Moon & Meyer, 1992). They also show signs of intolerance and antagonism that a differentiated L2 teaching with intercultural elements could smooth and even eliminate them (Mazioti, 2020). Second, student scores were the lowest in the district and an alternative method of teaching and assessing would be more adequate for their case. Third, according to

the needs analysis results (Table 1) the learners showed a preference for these topics and that was a parameter that affected portfolio's topic orientation.

Table 1. Findings of the needs analysis questionnaire

NEEDS ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE					
A. General Information					
2. Gender:	Female: 8		Male: 6		
3. Years I have been learning English at public schools:	58% 5 years 14% 4 years 14% 2 years 14% 0 years				
4. Years I have been learning English at a private language institute or with a teacher at home:	7% 6 years 29% 5 years 29% 4 years 21% 3 years 14% 0 years				
5. I would describe my knowledge of English as:	50% Very Good 36% Good 14% Bad				
B. Needs					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. I study English because my parents want me to.	29%	43%	21%	7%	
7. I study English only to get better marks at school.		29%	45%	19%	7%
8. I study English just to get a diploma.	7%	7%	14%	43%	29%
9. Studying English will help me find work easier.	7%	7%	14%	58%	14%
10. Studying English helps me get information about everything I want.	7%	14%	36%	29%	14%
11. I study English to communicate with others.	7%		29%	57%	7%

12. I study English because I want to travel abroad.	7%	7%	14%	58%	14%
13. Studying English is important because it broadens my mind.	7%	14%	14%	44%	21%
14. I study English because everybody does the same in Greece.	29%	57%	7%	7%	
15. I study English because I really enjoy it.	7%	21%	36%	7%	29%
C. Attitude towards English as a foreign language					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. English is difficult.		7%	79%	7%	7%
17. English is useful.		14%	36%	29%	21%
18. I like the English language.	7%		35%	29%	29%
D. Attitude towards English language learning					
<i>Learning English....</i>					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. helps me set higher goals.			29%	50%	21%
20. learns me how to learn, using different skills and strategies.		29%	35%	29%	7%
21. teaches me how to co-operate and take part in decision making.		21%	29%	50%	
22. is a boring and tiresome learning process with predictable outcomes.	42%	29%	29%		
<i>I face difficulties in...</i>					
23. Writing		43%	43%	7%	7%
24. Reading Comprehension	21%	36%	14%		29%

25. Speaking		29%	50%	7%	14%
26. Listening Comprehension		35%	44%	14%	7%
27. Grammar		14%	43%	36%	7%
28. Vocabulary		65%	21%	7%	7%
E. Learning Styles and Preferences					
29. I like to be asked about the topics, the activities or the pace of the lesson	No 14%	I don't know 72%	Yes 14%		
30. I prefer to work	in pairs 43%	in groups 36%	Individually 21%	as a class	Other:
31. I learn better when	I see something written. 14%	I discuss it and hear about it. 57%	I read or write something. 29%	I touch things and move around.	
32. I would like to be corrected by	my teacher 93%	my classmates 7%	myself	the whole class	all the above
33. During the lesson I would like my teacher to	give clear instructions and explanations when needed 29%	correct only my big errors	show me the way to find my mistakes on my own 42%	speak only in English	use both English and Greek. 29%
34. The teacher should be a	Leader	supporter 57%	instructor 43%	advisor	Other
35. The present evaluation system (tests) assesses my progress adequately.	No 14%	yes 86%			

Thus, for the needs of the specific study authentic texts (Table 2) related to students' customs and traditions were used. They were taken from the Greek and English versions of local e-newspaper, e-magazines, blogs and sites. The students recognizing the sources that were familiar to them reacted positively and their motivation and personal engagement were gained. Problems of partial comprehension of these authentic texts were faced by showing learners how to develop effective compensatory strategies, such as trying to guess from the context, using synonyms, “talking around” the missing word, for extracting only the information they need for their own purposes (Oxford, 2003).

Table 2. Samples of authentic texts related to students' customs and traditions



 **Cherries Festival**

The Cherry Festival is one of the most important manifestations for the promotion of this local product.

In June the people of the area organize many events having as main source traditional products such as the cherry.

Events with artistic, popular and traditional music, traditional dance groups in local costumes, exhibitions of a variety of cherries, exhibitions showing the villagers' life, many surprises and of course a lot of cherries offered free to the visitors.





Στην αρχαία Έδεσσα ένας από τους πρώτους καταγεγραμμένους πολιτιστικούς τουρίστες ήταν ο «Χοίρος ο Πραξιφύλος» ένα μικρό γουρουνάκι που ήρθε εδώ για να συμμετάσχει σε μια διονυσιακή γιορτή κάτι σαν τα σημερινά καρναβάλια και που εξηγεί αυτό που γίνεται σήμερα στην τοπική γαστρονομία. Για ποια λόγο δηλαδή στην Μακεδονία, και στην Έδεσσα ειδικότερα, έχουν αδυναμία στο χοιρινό. Κάθε Χριστούγεννα οι Έδεσσαίοι έσφαζαν από ένα γουρουνάκι στην γιορτή του Αγίου Ιηνατίου 19-20 Δεκεμβρίου. Αφού τακτοποιούσαν όλα τα κρέατα, τα μικρά κομματάκια μαζί με λίγο λίπος, τα έβραζαν στην φωτιά για να φτιάξουν ένα μοναδικό μεζέ, τις **Τζουμπουρικές** ή **Τζουμπουρλίγκες** ή **Τζάμπρες** (οι **τσιγαρίδες**) που ήταν ο πρώτος μεζές αμέσως μετά την νύχτα των Χριστουγέννων. Η λογική της ανακύκλωσης υπήρχε πάντα στην Μακεδονία και όλα ήταν χρήσιμα δεν πετιόταν τίποτα. Με το γουρουνάκι περνούσε όλη η οικογένεια τις γιορτές και το κρέας συντηρούνταν στο λιωμένο λίπος ως καθουρμάς μέχρι να βγει ο χειμώνας ενώ στα παιδιά δίδονταν η φούσκα του για ένα σύντομο παιχνίδι ως μάτσο. Λίγο πριν τα Χριστούγεννα άναβε η φωτιά για να ζεστάνει το θείο βρέφος στην μέση κάθε γειτονιάς της Έδεσσας και κάθε χωριού της περιοχής, κάτι που γίνεται έως σήμερα. Ο χορός ενώνει όλους, με ήχους από Μακεδονικά Χάλκινα και οι φωτιές οργανώνονται από τους πολλούς τοπικούς πολιτιστικούς συλλόγους. Το καζάνι δίπλα στην φωτιά έβραζε όπως και σήμερα με τον αδιαφιλονίκητο μεζέ, τις **τζουμπουρικές**, ενώ ομάδες νέων ντυμένοι αρκούδες με κουδούνια προκαλώντας θόρυβο προσαβούσαν να αποσπάσουν τους μεζέδες με την δικαιολογία ότι η αρκούδα πρέπει να φάει καλά για να κοιμηθεί. Η



Εκπαίδευση και Λαογραφία

Η Διεύθυνση Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Πέλλας, σε συνεργασία με την Περιφερειακή Ενότητα Πέλλας, τον Δήμο Αλμωπίας και τα Λουτρά **Πόζου**, διοργανώνει στις 24 και 25 Απριλίου 2018, στην **Αριδαία**, διημερίδα με θέμα: «Εκπαίδευση και Λαογραφία», με συμμετοχή σχολικών μονάδων από διάφορες περιοχές της χώρας. Σύμφωνα με τις δηλώσεις συμμετοχής περισσότεροι από 700 μαθητές αναμένεται να βρεθούν τις μέρες αυτές στην **Αριδαία**, προκειμένου να πάρουν μέρος στις εκδηλώσεις που θα πραγματοποιηθούν στο πλαίσιο της διημερίδας. Ο μεγάλος αριθμός ενεργών πολιτιστικών συλλόγων της Αλμωπίας, με

Μέσω της διημερίδας θα δοθεί έμφαση στην ανάληψη όσων του λαϊκού πολιτισμού (κοινωνική συγκρότηση, ήθη και έθιμα, χοροί, λαϊκή λογοτεχνία, υλικός πολιτισμός/λαϊκή τέχνη) που εμπεριέχονται σε πολλά αντικείμενα που διδάσκονται μέσα από μαθήματα του Αναλυτικού Προγράμματος (νεοελληνική γλώσσα και λογοτεχνία, ιστορία, περιβαλλοντική εκπαίδευση, μουσική, φυσική αγωγή, ευκαστικά, κοινωνική και πολιτική αγωγή, θεατρική αγωγή κ.λπ.).

Σκοπός της διημερίδας είναι η γνωριμία με την πολιτιστική κληρονομιά της χώρας μας, ώστε να αποτελέσει ο λαϊκός πολιτισμός ένα πεδίο πρόσφορο για τη διαπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση, για την πραγματοποίηση της «πολιτισμικής συνάντησης» και της ανάδειξης των κοινών πολιτισμικών στοιχείων, χωρίς ταυτόχρονα να παραγνωρίζονται και οι ιδιαιτερότητες οι οποίες καθορίζονται από τη γενική και την τοπική ιστορία.

Οι εκδηλώσεις θα ξεκινήσουν την Τρίτη 24 Απριλίου 2018 στις 10 το πρωί στο Δημοτικό Αθλητικό Κέντρο **Αριδαίας**, και θα ολοκληρωθούν στον ίδιο χώρο το βράδυ της Τετάρτης 25 Απριλίου 2018.

Το πρόγραμμα και για τις δύο ημέρες (24 & 25/4) περιλαμβάνει παρουσίαση Μαθητικών Σχημάτων Παραδοσιακής Μουσικής και Χορού στο Δημοτικό Αθλητικό Κέντρο **Αριδαίας**, από τις 10πμ μέχρι τις 2μμ. Παράλληλα στο Ξενοδοχείο Πνευματικό Κέντρο **Αριδαίας** την Τετάρτη 25/4 από τις 10πμ μέχρι τις 2μμ θα παρουσιαστούν μαθητικές εργασίες εμπνευσμένες από την τοπική ιστορία.

Το βράδυ της Τρίτης 24/4 στις 8 η ώρα στο Ξενοδοχείο Πνευματικό Κέντρο **Αριδαίας** θα παρουσιαστεί το ποντιακό έργο «Η προέξια της ... Μυροδικίας» από τη θεατρική ομάδα του ΓΕΛ Σκόδρας.

Η λήξη της διημερίδας θα γίνει την Τετάρτη 25 Απριλίου 2018 στις 7 το βράδυ στο Δημοτικό Αθλητικό Κέντρο **Αριδαίας** με λαϊκό παραδοσιακό γλέντι όπου θα τιμηθούν τοπικοί καλλιτέχνες.

Επιπλέον σε ειδικά διαμορφωμένα περίπτερα αρκετά από τα συμμετέχοντα σχολεία θα παρουσιάσουν ενδιαφέροντα στοιχεία του λαϊκού πολιτισμού, όπως φορεσιές, είδη λαϊκής τέχνης κ.λπ.

Greek Wedding Traditions

The marital bed

Friends and family members come into the soon-to-be-wed couple's home to prepare their bed! Some families still go through the ritual of making up the marital bed, while others think this could be considered an outdated tradition. Prosperity and putting down roots are symbolized by throwing money and rice into the bed, and then a baby is rolled on the bed to bless it with fertility. The superstitious believe the newlywed's first baby will be a girl or boy, depending upon which they place on the bed!

Dressing the couple

The **koumbaro** or best man will shave the groom on the morning of the ceremony to signify trust. Then the close friends step in to help to dress him. The **koumbara** or maid of honor leads the bridal party to the bride to help her get dressed and ready for the ceremony. The names of all of the single ladies are written on the bottom of the bride's shoes, and tradition has it that the names that are worn off by the end of the reception will soon get married. The **koumbaro** and **koumbara** will go on to become the godparents of the couple's children.

Symbols of good luck

Placing a lump of sugar inside the bride's glove is said to ensure a sweet life, and adding a gold coin to the inside of her shoe will bring good financial fortune. Iron is said to ward off evil spirits throughout the day. So the groom should put a piece in his pocket! Couples invite an odd number of guests and invite an odd number of attendants to stand beside them as odd numbers are considered good luck. Odd numbers cannot be divided! The number three representing the holy trinity – the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is especially symbolic. A tradition dating back to ancient times is to spit after offering congratulations or compliments to the couple. Today guests mimic 'the act' of spitting – blowing a puff of breath through pursed lips. Due to the rule of threes, 'spitting' three times brings greater luck.

During the ceremony: Blessing the rings.

Continuing the tradition of three, at the start of the ceremony, the couple places the rings on the tips of their wedding fingers, and the best man and/or maid of honor (**koumbaros** and **koumbara**) will exchange them three times. The priest will then bless them three times. The couple holds candles throughout the ceremony to represent the light of Christ. The couple also shares what is known as a common cup, and take three sips of wine each from the cup representing a successful union.

The readings

There are two traditional readings that feature in Greek Orthodox weddings. The Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, which highlights the joining of two people, is the first and the Gospel According to St. John is the second. This is where the miracle of turning water into wine was recounted, and the reading ties in with the couple sipping from the common cup.

Wedding Crowns

One of the most recognizable traditions of a Greek wedding is the marital crowns or **Stefana**. These are two beautiful pieces made from flowers, foliage, or even precious metals and joined together by a strand of ribbon. They symbolize the union of two people into a single couple. The crowns are swapped back and forth by the **koumbaro** three times, and the couple wear them as they walk around the altar three times to represent their journey through life together. The priest will bless the couple before removing the crowns, and no vows are exchanged by the couple.

Bomboniera

After the ceremony, each guest receives a beautiful **bomboniera**, a decorated little bag with "koufeta" (sweet sugar almonds).

The **bomboniera** can also be given some days later, for example at your job or to friends that could not attend the wedding day.

The wedding party

The party usually takes place immediately after church in a tavern, restaurant, hotel, garden or fancy place.

Dinner is served and later the couple moves to the dance floor and starts an evening full of dances. In the old days, there was often a music group, playing traditional Greek music. Nowadays, in most weddings, there is a DJ, playing both traditional and modern music. The traditional music is often the music coming from the regions where the couple (or their parents) have their origin. As all Greeks, young and old, know most of the traditional songs, almost everybody is joining the circle dances.

Data collection methods

Both quantitative (closed-ended) types of data such as questionnaires and checklists as well as qualitative (open-ended) types of data such as classroom

observations were employed in the current study. This integration of methods allows a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than each method does separately. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), mixed methods clarify the contradictions between the quantitative and qualitative results. They give voice to the study participants and ensure that findings reflect their experiences. They foster scholarly interaction and show methodological flexibility. But above all, they provide rich comprehensive data that enable the researcher to achieve triangulation of resources and demonstrate validity.

The research tools

Various tools have been used to measure the effectiveness of culture-based writing portfolio as a teaching and assessing tool. Special designed self-assessment checklists related to how the student developed the task, made use of writing strategies and follow the process writing stages were used to enable learners reflect on their work and get feedback about the “quality of their learning” (Buyukduman & Sirin, 2010, p. 56). They have been created according to certain descriptors to help learners clarify their strengths and weaknesses, increasing at the same time their motivation and reflective practices (Langé, 2013). They made students realize their misunderstandings transforming them to self-reliant persons, seekers of solutions and higher learning goals (Pintrich, 1995; Pintrich & Zusho, 2007; Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989). Moreover, they gave them qualitative information about their progress that external evaluation could not provide them.

Likewise, peer-assessment checklists were used in order to give learners the opportunity to become assessors and by exchanging papers with peers to practice various skills useful to the further development of the language and of the writing skill. By having a picture of the quality of their classmates’ work, students understood the assessment criteria and gained experiences from observing others’ performance (Patri, 2002). Peer-assessment evaluation encourages learner-centered teaching, cooperation in a non-threatening environment where focusing on peers’ strengths and weaknesses and noticing the gap between one’s and other’s perception can enhance students’ learning, critical thinking and can lead students to their learning autonomy. Furthermore, peer-assessment creates a different learning culture inside the classroom, having an audience prepared to give truthful feedback and various perspectives on learning issues (Tinapple, Olson & Sadauskas, 2013). Assessing their peers’ work

drives students to seek solutions, strategies and insights, a process that could not be realized through traditional forms of assessment (Chinn, 2005; Tinapple, Olson & Sadauskas, 2013). Finally, performance seems to improve in parallel with peers since, through comparisons of works, students learn from the “contextual constraints, malleable variables and their interrelations” (Dow et al., 2010, p. 16).

A global rating scale for writing was developed and used to assess the students’ products. The teacher-researcher followed the holistic strategy, evaluating the quality of learners’ responses on a single global rating scale without scale level descriptions. She considered the text as a whole and quantified their general impression by integrating content as well as stylistic and language-related aspects in a single score (Cooper & Odell, 1977). The specific scoring approach was chosen by the teacher because it was considered an easy, quick and reliable way of assessment. As West (2004) explains, by using a limited number of bands (1-6 in this study), the scorers increase the inter-rater and intra-rater reliability of the results. Furthermore, each band is accompanied by descriptors that reflect real-world terms rather than meaningless numbers that add to reliability. Thus, they describe communication, grammar, syntax and vocabulary appropriateness, text organization, analysis of ideas, content relevance and information delivery. For reasons of consistency, each descriptor is assigned a numerical value on a six-point scale (1: inadequate to 6: excellent).

Apart from this numerical point scale, there was an impression marking scheme that ranges from 0 to 20 in accordance with the rating scale used to assess the written performance in Junior High schools. It includes brief descriptors that describe the overall quality of the text. Although it lacks the detail of the global rating scale, the researcher used both marking schemes in order to help students shift smoothly from the traditional way of assessment to a more alternative one and through the comparisons of the two schemes to draw safe conclusions on the effectiveness of the portfolio as an assessment tool.

Finally, portfolio evaluation rubrics reflect the philosophy on which the portfolio was based, developed and used by the teacher. It includes the criteria according to which students’ effort and work will be evaluated at the end of the whole process.

Needs analysis questionnaire

Needs analysis is an information gathering process implemented in the pre-planning phase of a program. It can serve as a guideline for teachers to set goals,

objectives and content for the language program, taking into consideration learners' general and specific needs (Richards, 1990). It also helps teachers to understand the local needs of the students and make crucial decisions in the way they teach and assess (Tarone and Yule, 1989). Needs analysis is linked to motivation which immediately affects learning. Consequently, experiences that are not related to learners' need can de-motivate them. Although needs analysis is administered at the very beginning, it contributes to all phases of the program since it is a tool for assessing students' needs and adopting teaching methods and strategies when necessary to meet these needs (West, 1994).

The particular needs analysis is based theoretically on Marsden and Wright (2010) recommendations. Thus, the questionnaire (Table 3) is short and succinct whereas, the instructions are clear and the language used is simple and comprehensible to all. Its format consists of closed-ended items that can be analyzed more easily. Leading questions, bias, double negatives or barreled, sensitive questions are avoided. An introductory note at the beginning aims at gaining students' attention and willingness to participate in something innovative and valuable for their progress.

The questionnaire is divided in five parts. In the first part the students provide general information about themselves. The second part concerns students' needs regarding the reasons they study English, whereas the third is related to their attitude towards English as a foreign language. As Gardner and Lambert (1972) admit, mastering of a foreign language is not just a matter of mental process or an acquisition of skills, but also a matter of learners' attitude and beliefs towards that language that can affect positively or negatively language learning. To this end, the design of the questions is focused on the three components of the concept of attitude; the cognitive, behavioral and emotional which are based on the three theoretical approaches of cognitivism, behaviorism and humanism respectively. Therefore, the students are asked whether they find English language difficult, useful and whether they like it. The fourth part explores both the students' attitude towards English language learning and areas of language difficulties. The last part of the questionnaire aims at discovering students' learning styles and preferences. It is inspired by Nunan's (1988) learner-centered approach that emphasizes the importance of subjective needs that reflect learners' ideas, priorities and goals as well as their preferences on tasks and activities.

Table 3. Needs analysis questionnaire

What do you think of English?

Hello, students and welcome to Foustani Junior High School!

This is a great opportunity for each of you to share your thoughts and feelings about English. Answering truthfully the following questions will help our sessions to become more interesting, creative and enjoyable during the year. Remember: There is no name in the paper. All answers are correct. Follow the instructions. It will take 10-15'.

Have Fun!

A. General Information

Fill in or tick (✓).

Age: _____

Gender: Female , Male

Years I have been learning English at public schools: _____

Years I have been learning English at a private language institute or with a teacher at home:

I would describe my knowledge of English as: Excellent , Very Good , Good , Bad

B. Needs

Do you agree with the following statements? Tick (✓) one item.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6	I study English because my parents want me to.					
7	I study English only to get better marks at school.					
8	I study English just to get a diploma.					
9	Studying English will help me find work easier.					

10	Studying English helps me get information about everything I want.					
11	I study English to communicate with others.					
12	I study English because I want to travel abroad.					
13	Studying English is important because it broadens my mind.					
14	I study English because everybody does the same in Greece.					
15	I study English because I really enjoy it.					

C. Attitude towards English as a foreign language

What do you think of English? Tick (✓) one item.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16	English is difficult.					
17	English is useful.					
18	I like the English language.					

D. Attitude towards English language learning

Tick one item (✓).

Learning English....

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	helps me set higher goals.					
20	learns me how to learn, using different skills and strategies.					
21	teaches me how to co-operate and take part in decision making.					
22	is a boring and tiresome learning process with predictable outcomes.					

I face difficulties in...

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23	Writing					
24	Reading Comprehension					
25	Speaking					
26	Listening Comprehension					
27	Grammar					
28	Vocabulary					

E. Learning Styles and Preferences

Tick (✓) the answer(s) that best describes your thoughts.

29. I like to be asked about the topics, the activities or the pace of the lesson

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

30. I prefer to work

- in pairs
- in groups
- individually
- as a class

Other: _____

31. I learn better when

- I see something written.
- I discuss it and hear about it.
- I read or write something.
- I touch things and move around.

32. I would like to be corrected by

- my teacher
- my classmates
- myself
- the whole class
- all the above

33. During the lesson I would like my teacher to

- give clear instructions and explanations when needed

- correct only my big errors
- show me the way to find my mistakes on my own
- speak only in English
- use both English and Greek.

34. The teacher should be a

- leader
- supporter
- instructor
- advisor

Other: _____

35. The present evaluation system (tests) assesses my progress adequately.

- no
- yes

Initial and final writing strategies questionnaire

An initial questionnaire with the aim of investigating the students' attitudes towards writing as well as their use of writing strategies while they produce a text was designed and employed as a tool for collecting quantitative data.

The initial writing strategies questionnaire (Table 4) was administered before the whole program was implemented so that the researcher would have a view on the students' perceptions before their experience with portfolio method and plan lessons accordingly. It is divided in two sections. The first one refers to students' attitude towards writing and the second one to whether they use writing strategies before, during and after writing a text. Responding to closed-ended questions about preferences, learning style, the difficulties they face during writing and the way they approach a text through writing strategies, students have the opportunity to voice their thoughts and feelings about writing, and affect teaching and learning.

Table 4. Initial writing strategies questionnaire

Attitude towards writing

Tick (✓) the answer(s) that best describes your thoughts.

1. I really enjoy writing

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

2. I am a good writer

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

3. I like writing for others

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

4. I like sharing my work of writing with others

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

5. Which of the following writing activities are most useful for you?

- e-mails
- articles
- essays
- reviews

6. What kind of topics are you most interested in writing about?(choose 3)

- Family Cinema War Travelling Mass Media
- Music Environment Friends Nature Bullying
- Sports Technology Health History Terrorism
- Arts Fashion Studies Studies Religion
- Culture Tradition Politics Immigrants Eating Habits
- Diversity Drugs Poverty Alcohol Driving safely

Other: _____

7. When I write I find it difficult.....: (you can choose more than one)

- to follow instructions and directions.
- to come up with ideas
- to organize the overall writing activity.
- to adopt appropriate tone and style.

- to structure sentences.
- to support and develop my points
- to exploit my knowledge
- to use the notes given
- to captivate the reader's attention in introduction and to leave him/her with a good impression in the conclusion

- to use linking words
- to produce a text without syntactical mistakes

Other: _____

8. Which of the following helps you deal with your writing difficulties?

- writing the whole essays in class
- analyzing genres more
- writing parts of the essay
- using writing strategies
- checking a word in a dictionary
- reviewing my course book or handouts
- using grammar notes
- asking my teacher for help
- working with classmates, helping each other discussing and solving problems together

Other: _____

Use of writing strategies

Do you agree with the following statements? Tick (✓) one item.

		Strongly Disagree	Disa gree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Ag ree	Stron gly Agree
	Before Writing					
9	I brainstorm and quickwrite ideas concerning the topic					
10	I compare my quickwriting with my classmates and decide on the best ideas to use					
11	I consider the task and the instructions carefully					
12	I fill in a table and a diagram that will help me have a plan of the writing					

While Writing						
13	Using my background knowledge I carefully create the outline of my writing					
14	I discuss my plan with my classmates. I add or remove things					
15	I write my first draft					
Post Writing						
16	I exchange papers with partners, answer a questionnaire concerning strategies and discuss with classmates ways of improving the draft					
17	I revise my first draft and write my second one taking into consideration my partners' comments					
18	I write my final draft paying attention now to grammar, syntax and vocabulary					

On the completion of the study, a final writing strategies questionnaire (Table 5), similar to the initial one described above was administered to the students. Its aim was to compare the results with the initial questionnaire after the participants of the survey had completed the program. It also served as a cross-validated tool. It ensures the reliability of the research and explores further the effectiveness of the use of the portfolio in the development of the writing skill.

Table 5. Final writing strategies questionnaire

Attitude towards writing	
Tick (✓) the answer(s) that best describes your thoughts.	
1. I really enjoyed writing	
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes

2. I am a good writer

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

3. I liked writing for others

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

4. I liked sharing my work of writing with others

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

5. The main difficulties I faced were.....: (you can choose more than one)

- to follow instructions and directions.
- to come up with ideas
- to organize the overall writing activity.
- to adopt appropriate tone and style.
- to structure sentences.
- to support and develop my points
- to exploit my knowledge
- to use the notes given
- to captivate the reader's attention in introduction and to leave him/her with a good impression in the conclusion
- to use linking words
- to produce a text without syntactical mistakes

Other: _____

6. Which of the following helped you deal with your writing difficulties?

- writing the whole essays in class
- analyzing genres more
- writing parts of the essay
- using writing strategies
- checking a word in a dictionary
- reviewing my course book or handouts
- using grammar notes
- asking my teacher for help

working with classmates, helping each other discussing and solving problems together

Other: _____

Use of writing strategies

Do you agree with the following statements? Tick (✓) one item

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Before Writing					
7	I brainstormed and quickwrote ideas concerning the topic					
8	I compared my quickwriting with my classmates and decided on the best ideas to use					
9	I considered the task and the instructions carefully					
10	I filled in a table and a diagram that would help me have a plan of the writing					
	While Writing					
11	Using my background knowledge I carefully created the outline of my writing					
12	I discussed my plan with my classmates. I added or removed things					
13	I wrote my first draft					
	Post Writing					
14	I exchanged papers with partners, answered a questionnaire concerning strategies and discussed with classmates ways of improving the draft					
15	I revised my first draft and wrote my second one taking into consideration my partners' comments					
16	I wrote my final draft paying attention to grammar, syntax and					

	vocabulary					
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Overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire

At the end of the whole procedure an overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire (Table 6) was administered to the students. It consisted of closed-ended items concerning learners' feelings and beliefs about their whole experience with the portfolio, the use of cultural material, writing strategies, self/peer-assessment, cooperation and self-confidence. The participants were invited to respond in a "strongly disagree-strongly agree" scale. There were also open-ended items in which the learners had the opportunity to share their experience, likes and dislikes and add any comments and suggestions. Through this questionnaire the researcher hopes to gain a valuable insight of the respondents' development as writers and as autonomous learners and consequently to find answer to the question of the effectiveness of writing portfolio as a teaching, learning and self/peer assessing method.

Table 6. Overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire

Dear students,						
Our journey has come to an end. Here is an opportunity for you to share with me your experiences throughout this						
procedure. Your thoughts will help me understand whether the Portfolio was a successful alternative method of teaching						
and assessing the writing skill and whether it helped you improve in writing. The questionnaire is anonymous and all						
answers are correct. It will take 10-15'.						
Enjoy!						
Do you agree with the following statements? Tick (✓) one item.						
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I enjoyed working with the portfolio					
2	The cultural element of the portfolio motivated me and made me					

	involve actively in the whole procedure as it was related to my interests					
3	The portfolio is more demanding and difficult than the traditional assessment					
4	The portfolio is better and fairer assessment method than the test					
5	The portfolio was a chance to show what I know and can do					
6	The portfolio helped me discover my weaknesses on my own and find ways to deal with them					
7	The portfolio is an effective teaching method for writing					
8	The portfolio helped me improve my writing skill and the way I approach a text					
9	I would like the portfolio to be applied in English as an alternative way of assessment					
10	The drafts I wrote before the final text helped me produce better works					
11	The portfolio helped me use writing strategies that were crucial during the production of the text					
12	My teacher's and peers' comments as well as student-teacher conferences helped me understand the areas I needed to improve					
13	Self-assessment helped me to become responsible and set my learning goals					
14	Peer-assessment helped me see my picture as a student clearer and made me want to move forward					
15	The portfolio helped me become more responsible by making decision on my own while learning					

16	The portfolio made me become more autonomous as a writer					
17	Writing comments and assessing my classmates helped me learn from their strengths and weaknesses					
18	Through the portfolio project I learnt to cooperate and make decisions					
19	During the portfolio procedure I was encouraged to play an active role both in the teaching and learning process					
20	Now I am applying the strategies and the principles I have learnt during the portfolio project in writing					
21	I feel more confident in writing now					

What did you like most during the portfolio project?

What was difficult or annoying for you during the whole procedure?

In which way did the portfolio help you?

Add any comment and suggestion here. It will help us all!

Classroom observation

The qualitative method of collecting data used in this study was classroom observation. The researcher gathered data through close visual inspection of the student implementing the portfolio method in their natural setting, trying “to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 192).

A closed-form of record keeping (checklist) (Table 7) was designed and used in order for the researcher to collect information for each and every student on their reaction to the whole procedure, the use of writing strategies and their learning

development throughout the process. The observation was conducted at all phases of portfolio implementation, but mainly when the learners were engaged in writing tasks and the teacher was not actively involved with them.

Table 7. Classroom observation checklist

Student:														
Considers the task and the instructions														
Brainstorms ideas and discusses with peers														
Uses background knowledge to develop ideas														
Outlines or makes schematic organizer														
Makes the first draft to arrange information and structure														
Discusses with peers content and organization														
Makes the second draft taking into consideration peers' comments														
Constructs the final draft paying														

attention to grammar, syntax and vocabulary															
Identifies strategies used															
Asks teacher for help															
Asks peers for help															
Identifies strengths and weaknesses															
Suggests ways of improvement															
Sets future goals															

Planning and organizing the portfolio procedure

The whole program was implemented during the first semester of the school year 2019-2020, beginning in September 2019, when the students were informed about the portfolio method and asked whether they wanted to integrate it in teaching and learning. The procedure was completed in mid-January, with the evaluation of the students' portfolios first by the students themselves, and then by the teacher.

The first two sessions were devoted to the preparation of the learners for the upcoming procedure and the comprehension by both parties (teacher and students) of their new roles in assessment (Oscarson, 1997). The teacher, having ensured learners' consensus and willingness to participate to the project, analyzed to them the reason for this divergence from the traditional way of teaching and the potential advantages that are stemmed from it. She also explained to them that although the portfolio seems a new procedure, it is a common practice to lots of school around the world and at their school it was implemented in a different way in another class in the past and was accepted enthusiastically by both students and parents. She promised them that they

would experience something really worthy for their writing development, in a safe, co-operative learning environment that would lead them to their learning autonomy.

A needs analysis questionnaire concerning students' needs, learning styles and preferences as well as an initial writing strategies questionnaire focusing on their attitude towards writing skill and most favourite writing topics, were administered to the participants as already mentioned. According to the data obtained from these questionnaires, although the majority of students recorded music and family as their favourite topics, all of them included culture and tradition in their preferences as well. To that end, the teacher oriented the topics of the writing portfolio to culture and defined the genres as well as the areas of difficulties that the lessons should be built around.

Then, a discussion on the criteria of the evaluation of their progress and of the program was made. It was agreed that part of their total grade of the first semester was going to count from their participation in the portfolio project. Next, the learners, together with their teacher decided on the criteria, the marking scale and how texts were going to be assessed. Examples were given on the board so everyone to understand the rules. Opinions were expressed and through discussion they all agreed on the criteria according which the portfolio was going to be evaluated. Integrating students to shaping the rules of the procedure was an act of signing an informal contract between students and teacher, binding them to follow what they themselves had proposed. In this way, their responsibility was enhanced and by changing the roles and assigning them the one of co-operators, they felt part of the process (Coombe, Folsø & Hubley, 2007). Finally, clarifying the criteria of the evaluation and showing the learners the way to achieve the goals of learning, the teacher led them to understand these goals and kept them motivated (Kohonen, 2000).

Students were also informed that although they were going to have guidance and help anytime they needed, the selection of entries, the diligence in their work and the final presentation of their products were their own responsibility.

The preparatory stage ended with a letter to the students' parents written by the teacher, informing them about the alternation of the teaching and learning in the first semester as far as the writing skill is concerned, the use of the alternative method of the portfolio and its benefits as a teaching and assessing tool. Parents could not be excluded from the whole procedure since portfolio is a means of communication, making them not only recipients of knowledge about their children's progress but also

active members in their learning process through the feedback they get and the feedback they themselves provide (Kouzouli, 2012).

The portfolio format and content

The second step was to decide on the format of the portfolio. After a discussion on the choices they had, students and teacher concluded to a file folder as a container to hold all the written products, drafts and other documents that would be agreed. While discussing and deciding on matters concerning the file folder, the teacher gave a demonstration of a file folder to add to the comprehension of the procedure. The students encouraged to personalize their folders by using different colors and decorating the cover page. In this way, the notion of ownership is transformed into a motivating force (Iturain, 2007).

Following and enriching Kemp and Toperoff (1998) suggestions on the essential elements of a writing portfolio, the students' portfolio included the following items:

- Cover page: individualized according to students' personal taste but having the same details as to the kind of the portfolio, the name of student, the class and the school year.
- A teacher's letter to students: welcoming them to the joyful journey of learning and informing them what they are going to do in this semester and why.
- Portfolio Guidelines: short helpful FAQs for students to check them anytime they feel anxious.
- A cover letter: composed by the students to enlighten the reader about the purpose, the content, the process and the results of the portfolio procedure.
- Table of contents: list of the portfolio material.
- Optional entries: three optional entries.
- Required entries: five required entries.
- Drafts: the drafts and revised versions of the required entries.
- Self-assessment checklists: for each required entry.
- Peer-assessment of entries: for each required entry.
- Peer-assessment of the portfolio.
- Self-assessment of the portfolio.

Since, as Barrett (2005) considers, one of the purposes of the portfolio is to illustrate the owner's efforts, progress and achievement through time, the collection of works should be representative of these parameters. For this reason, both optional and required entries were selected as well as drafts and revised versions of the written products, self and peer-evaluation checklists to give evidence of development, reflection and level of learning autonomy.

Implementing the portfolio method

The implementation phase of the portfolio began with warming-up writing activities that students could include in their portfolio as optional entries. These involved “a paragraph introducing myself”, “a tourist brochure about my place” using information from a Greek text and “a presentation of a traditional instrument of my area” after searching the Net. There were also instructions on the use of linking words and the self/peer-assessment checklists. These sessions not only aimed at giving the learners an opportunity to understand the notion of evaluation, but also to exercise their metacognitive skills and learn to assess their own work as well as their peers' truthfully.

Both the optional and the required entries were based on the instructional goals and the objectives of the curriculum (Government Gazette, 2016), were parallel to the coursebook syllabus (Karagianni, Koui & Nikolaki, 2009) and complied with the A2 level writing descriptors as determined by the CEFR (CEFR, 2001). The required items involved two main genres; Email and article. The Emails were written to an e-friend from Italy who had the same cultural experiences and wanted to exchange opinions or to learn about the other country's culture and traditions. The articles were written to the cultural column of the students' English school newspaper. The sessions were enriched with photos, texts in Greek or English, short videos and surveys on these customs and traditions in order for the learners to be motivated, integrate skills and supplement their background knowledge.

The topics, that reflected students' local traditions and customs, led to a liberating and confidence-building effect (Lo & Hyland, 2007). Thus, “local carnival customs”, “the cherry festival”, “the student traditional dancing festival in Pella”, “local traditional wedding” and “local Christmas customs” were discussed and developed. Engaging students with a variety of meaningful and interesting cultural tasks offered opportunities for interaction and self-expression. The use of authentic material

prompted learners to search the Net, borrow books from the school library, interview the elderly, look for old photos, ask other teachers, think of feelings, tastes, smells, sounds or tricks, share experiences, tell old stories and finally compare the Greek customs with the Italian, the Albanian, the Republic of the North Macedonia or with the British ones. Throughout this intercultural learning process, students shaped their own view of the world and stood critical and sensitive both toward communication and interaction (Papademetre, 2003). As Kramsch (2002, p. 32) remarks, it was “a process of learners’ interpretation and making sense of their inner and outside world”.

Students learned how to work with the process writing approach and how to manage authentic texts using compensatory techniques. Each session followed the same instructional framework:

Pre-writing stage

- brainstorming of ideas by drawing on relevant schemata
- quickwriting of words related to the photos and the topic to be used in the text production
- reading activity that is actually the rubrics of the task
- filling in the table task that help them identify the audience, the purpose and the subtopics of the task
- creating the outline of their product
- discussing their plan with classmates

While-writing stage

- composing rough drafts
- exchanging papers with peers, discussing how to improve their task
- revising taking into account peers’ and teacher’s comments
- editing text

Post-writing stage

- Self-assessment
- Peer-assessment

These steps integrate all skills such as reading, writing, listening (short videos on customs) and speaking (students/class/teacher discussions) and focus on the developing of their reflective skills. Through self-assessment, students try to trace

their strengths and weaknesses and find ways to achieve better results. In the same way, through peer-assessment they exchange opinions on how to overcome writing difficulties and to express satisfaction for the progress they witness. Through peer-assessment and metacognition students enhanced autonomous language learning behavior and when they would be able to choose among the appropriate strategies for each writing situation, then they would be able to monitor their own writing (Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1983).

Evaluating students' development and the effectiveness of the portfolio

All required entries were written at school to ensure the authenticity of the products and the reliability of the results. Three sessions were usually devoted to each assignment. Learners' works were assessed first by the students themselves, then by their peers and finally by their teacher. The opinions from all these different sources were taken into consideration and had their own unique value to the process of learning and teaching. The entries were scored according to the global rating scale. In addition, students' development was recorded to profile-type observation forms. Their growth was also measured through the data gathered from the final writing strategies questionnaire in which their understanding and use of the writing strategies were impressed.

The effectiveness of the portfolio was judged by students, answering an overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire (Table 6) focused on the cultural orientation of the portfolio, the implementation stage, the assessment process and their general feelings and thoughts about the whole procedure as they had experienced it. The teacher evaluated each student's portfolio according to pre-set rubrics, focusing on certain criteria such as the portfolio's goals and organization, student's effort and commitment. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of elements such as creativity, imagination, personal reflection and whether the portfolio included all the pre-agreed items indicating learner's use of the writing strategies. Finally, she lays particular emphasis on aspects that showed improvement in the writing skill and personal growth through drafts, notes or assessment sheets.

Presentation of findings

Needs analysis questionnaire

The results of the needs analysis questionnaire (Table 1), which was administered by the teacher to decipher the “how” and “why” of the course (Hyland, 2006), showed that concerning their attitude towards English language learning, 71% of the students believed that learning English helped them set higher goals. However, only 31% stated that while learning English they also learned how to use different skills and strategies, whereas 50% expressed cooperation and taking part in decision making.

As far as their learning styles was concerned, the majority of learners (43%) preferred to work in pairs, some of them (36%) in groups while others (21%) expressed preference to work individually. What was of particular significance regarding students’ way of learning was that they learn better when they discuss and hear about something while almost all of them (93%) would like to be corrected by their teacher. Additionally, they would like to be shown the way to find the mistakes on their own. Furthermore, 57% believed that the teacher’s role should be the one of the supporter’s while 43% the one of the instructor’s. Finally, 86% believed that the present assessment system assesses their progress adequately.

The writing strategies questionnaires

According to the findings, students’ pleasure for writing was increased at the end of the portfolio implementation from 64% to 72%. The difficulty that the learners seemed to have developed at the end of the project was the organization of the overall writing activity from 29% to 14%. Based on students’ own answers after the completion of the program (fig. 1), resorting to teacher (71%), writing the whole essay in class (57%) and working with peers as well as solving issues together (43%) helped them deal with the writing problems they faced.

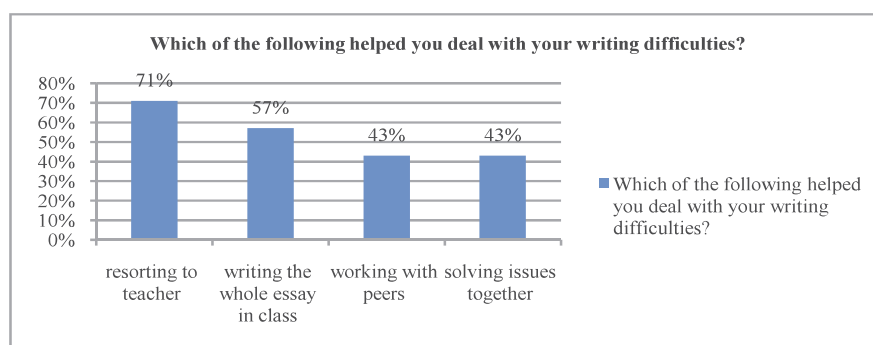


Figure 1. Facing writing problems after the portfolio implementation

As far as the writing strategies are concerned, the results revealed an increase of their use by the students after the employment of the process-writing approach (fig. 2). Thus, in the pre-writing stage, the learners showed a great development of strategies such as brainstorming and quickwriting to a percentage of almost 80%, while before the implementation of the portfolio these strategies were reported to almost 20%. Respectively, before they experienced the portfolio method they compared quickwriting with peers and used tables and diagrams to a percentage of almost 30% whereas, after the portfolio procedure these percentages increased to almost 70%. In the while-writing stage, the students increased the use of their background knowledge to create the outline of their writing to a percentage of almost 80%, while before the implementation of the portfolio they made use of it only to a percentage of almost 30%. Great increase was also observed in the discussion of learners' plans with peers, in using their background knowledge to create the outline of their writing and produce their first drafts to a percentage of almost 80% in comparison with the percentage reported before the portfolio method implementation which was almost 20%. In the post writing stage, the results indicated significant differentiation, regarding the practices such as exchanging papers with partners, answering questionnaires, discussing strategies and ways of improving the draft to a percentage of almost 70%, while before students' exposure to the portfolio method, learners' use of these practices were reported to almost 30%. Finally, growth was also observed in revising the first draft and writing the second one taking into consideration peers' comments to a percentage of almost 60% after the portfolio implementation whereas before it the percentage reported was almost to 30%.

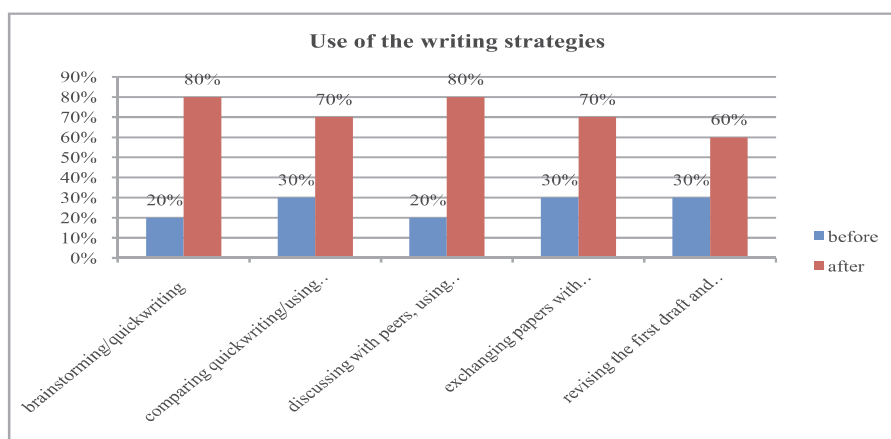


Figure 2. Use of the writing strategies before and after the employment of the process writing approach

Self-assessment checklists, peer-assessment checklists and writing scores

Self-assessment checklists, peer-assessment checklists as well as global rating scale were used to evaluate the students' writing pieces and simultaneously triangulate their work marking. The researcher, focusing on the most important elements such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar/syntax, spelling/punctuation and the use of strategies, analyzed and compared the results of the above different methods. She found both differences and similarities in the way the writing products were approached and finally assessed.

The findings of the comparison between students' self-assessment and teacher's score showed agreement concerning content, organization and vocabulary whereas the divergences related to grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation. As far as peer-assessment was concerned, the majority of learners evaluated their peers strictly enough. Thus, most of the time they judged that the text lacked detailed information and argumentation to support the subject, the introduction and the conclusion were not given special attention, not proper language, style and tone used for the specific type of text or audience and finally almost always they found difficulties in tracing a personal touch in the writing that would intrigue the reader. At the same time though, they tried to give solutions to peers' problems and congratulate them on strong points, transforming the assessment process into learning paradigms that not just check mistakes but enhancing students' motivation and willingness for learning (Stiggins,

2008). The following are some examples of students' comments from their peer assessment sheets that prove the above conclusion:

-I like that you write neatly and I can understand the meaning of your text. You could use the key words from the quickwriting activity though.

-I like your ideas, but you should be more careful with your handwriting.

-I like that your text is well-organized, neatly written and that you used the "correct" vocabulary. You should write more about your local carnival customs.

-I like your handwriting and the vocabulary you use. You could use linking words and add your personal voice in the text though.

-You write beautiful sentences using a great range of vocabulary, but you should divide the text in paragraphs.

Classroom observation

Classroom observation was used in this study as a tool for gathering information to evaluate the effectiveness of the portfolio and the writing strategies. At the same time, it allowed the teacher to reflect on the pedagogical practices and evaluate her own strengths and weaknesses (Farrell, 2011). The aim of the analysis of the qualitative data collected was to observe any signs of progress in the way students approach a writing piece, comparing their reactions at the early, mid and final stages of the project.

As shown in the Table 8 and in the figure 3 below, there was an increase in all the fields that the researcher observed. Students identified and used writing strategies in all stages. They cooperated successfully, reflected on learning and set future goals. The results were indicative of the students' maturity and experience with the procedure of the portfolio and the writing strategies as lessons were evolving. They started considering the task and the instructions more carefully and became more responsible, self-confident and learning autonomous towards the end of the program.

Table 8. Findings of the classroom observation checklist

Students	Early stage	Mid-stage	Final stage
Considers the task and the instructions	64%	78%	78%
Brainstorms ideas and discusses with peers	50%	78%	78%

Uses background knowledge to develop ideas	50%	64%	64%
Outlines or makes schematic organizer	71%	100%	100%
Makes the first draft to arrange information and structure	78%	86%	86%
Discusses with peers content and organization	57%	86%	86%
Makes the second draft taking into consideration peers' comments	43%	78%	78%
Constructs the final draft paying attention to grammar, syntax and vocabulary	57%	86%	86%
Identifies strategies used	43%	78%	78%
Asks teacher for help	78%	86%	86%
Asks peers for help	78%	86%	86%
Identifies strengths and weaknesses	50%	78%	78%
Suggests ways of improvement	43%	78%	78%
Sets future goals	57%	78%	78%

Overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire

The aim of the overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire was to reflect participants' feelings and perceptions about the portfolio method after the completion of the whole program. The results were analyzed in Table 9 and the most important of them are depicted in the figures discussed below.

Table 9. Findings of the Overall portfolio evaluation questionnaire

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I enjoyed working with the portfolio	21%		36%	29%	14%
2	The cultural element of the portfolio motivated me and made me involve actively in the whole procedure as it was related to my interests	7%	21%	36%	36%	
3	The portfolio is more	21%	14%	44%	21%	

	demanding and difficult than the traditional assessment					
4	The portfolio is better and fairer assessment method than the test			43%	43%	14%
5	The portfolio was a chance to show what I know and can do		7%	36%	43%	14%
6	The portfolio helped me discover my weaknesses on my own and find ways to deal with them		7%	50%	36%	7%
7	The portfolio is an effective teaching method for writing		7%	21%	58%	14%
8	The portfolio helped me improve my writing skill and the way I approach a text		14%	36%	50%	
9	I would like the portfolio to be applied in English as an alternative way of assessment	7%	21%	36%	22%	14%
10	The drafts I wrote before the final text helped me produce better works			13%	58%	29%
11	The portfolio helped me use writing strategies that were crucial during the production of the text			43%	50%	7%
12	My teacher's and peers' comments as well as student-teacher conferences helped me understand the areas I			43%	43%	14%

	needed to improve					
13	Self-assessment helped me to become responsible and set my learning goals	7%	14%	29%	36%	14%
14	Peer-assessment helped me see my picture as a student clearer and made me want to move forward		29%	21%	36%	14%
15	The portfolio helped me become more responsible by making decision on my own while learning			28%	58%	14%
16	The portfolio made me become more autonomous as a writer			57%	29%	14%
17	Writing comments and assessing my classmates helped me learn from their strengths and weaknesses			50%	43%	7%
18	Through the portfolio project I learnt to cooperate and make decisions		7%	43%	29%	21%
19	During the portfolio procedure I was encouraged to play an active role both in the teaching and learning process			57%	36%	7%
20	Now I am applying the strategies and the principles I have learnt during the portfolio project in writing		7%	43%	43%	7%
21	I feel more confident in writing now	7%		29%	43%	21%

22	What did you like most during the portfolio project?	<input type="checkbox"/> The material used helped me organize my text and provide me with guidelines, strategies, ideas and vocabulary useful for the production of the task <input type="checkbox"/> It was something new, alternative, not traditional, not like a test <input type="checkbox"/> I like the whole procedure <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't like it <input type="checkbox"/> The last draft <input type="checkbox"/> The final product <input type="checkbox"/> The outlines and how the teacher used the board to explain us things <input type="checkbox"/> The outlines <input type="checkbox"/> The writing products, the topics <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing <input type="checkbox"/> The topics <input type="checkbox"/> The culture and tradition <input type="checkbox"/> The outlines and the use of the board by the teacher
23	What was difficult or annoying for you during the whole procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/> The noise my classmates was making <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I was stressed while writing <input type="checkbox"/> The first draft <input type="checkbox"/> Writing in general <input type="checkbox"/> To argument <input type="checkbox"/> My effort not to make mistakes <input type="checkbox"/> No cooperation with classmates <input type="checkbox"/> The noise and the unknown vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> The noise <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes it was boring <input type="checkbox"/> Almost everything <input type="checkbox"/> Students' noise
24	In which way did the portfolio help you?	<input type="checkbox"/> It helped me improve my writing <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me become better in writing <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me with its steps and methodology <input type="checkbox"/> It didn't help me <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me write better <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me through strategies, outlines and drafts <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me write better <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me through the two drafts and the final product <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me become a better writer <input type="checkbox"/> It didn't help me <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me become better in writing <input type="checkbox"/> It helped me become a better writer
25	Add any comment and suggestion here. It will help us all!	<input type="checkbox"/> I have never had English classes at school before so, I faced difficulties at the beginning but I get familiarized with it soon enough <input type="checkbox"/> I would prefer a more quiet environment <input type="checkbox"/> I would like my peers to be more cooperative <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to have less writing tasks (obligatory entries)

Regarding the influence, the cultural element of the portfolio had on the learners' motivation (fig. 4), 36% of the respondents believed that it affected them positively, while 21% expressed opposing views and 36% doubted on its positive impact.

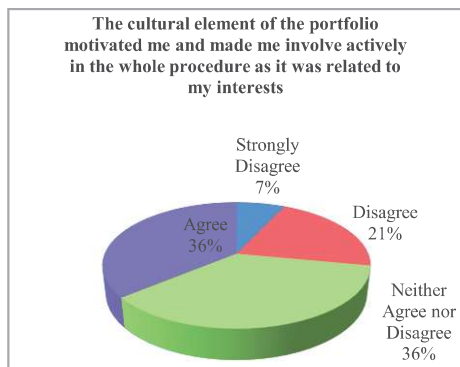


Figure 4. The cultural impact of the portfolio

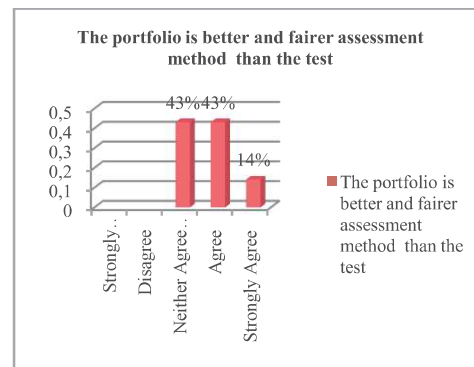


Figure 5. Comparing the portfolio with testing

The majority of students (57%) seemed to prefer the alternative method of portfolio as an assessment method rather than the traditional testing, believing that it is a fairer as well as an effective teaching method of writing (fig. 5).

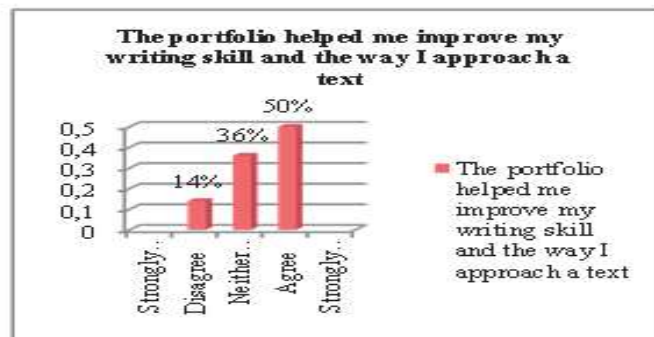


Figure 6. The portfolio and the writing skill

Half of the students (50%) observed improvement in their writing skill and a change in the way they approach a text (fig. 6). Moreover, the overwhelming majority of learners (87%) claimed that the process writing facilitates the production of better writing pieces (fig. 7).

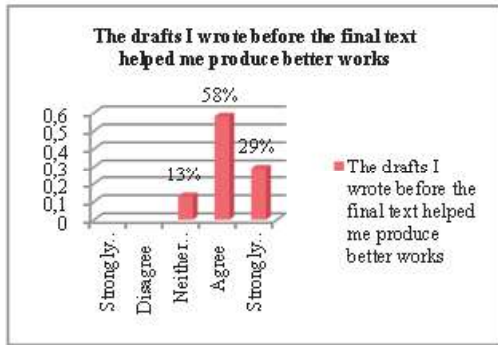


Figure 7. The drafts and their impact

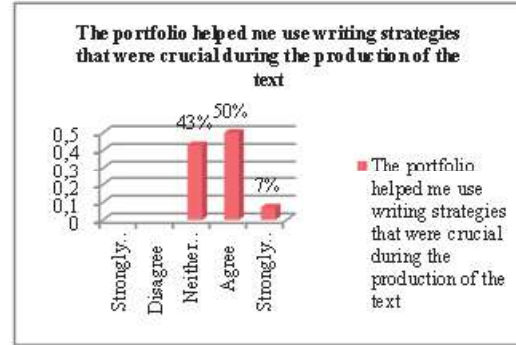


Figure 8. The portfolio and the writing strategies

With regard to the writing strategies, most of the students (57%) answered that the portfolio helped them use writing strategies that were crucial during the production of a text (fig. 8) and that half of them (50%) are now using them while writing (fig. 9).

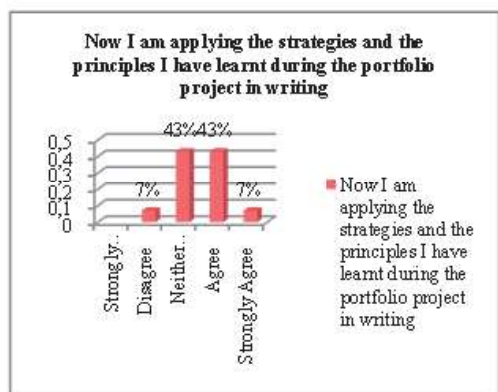


Figure 9. Using the writing strategies

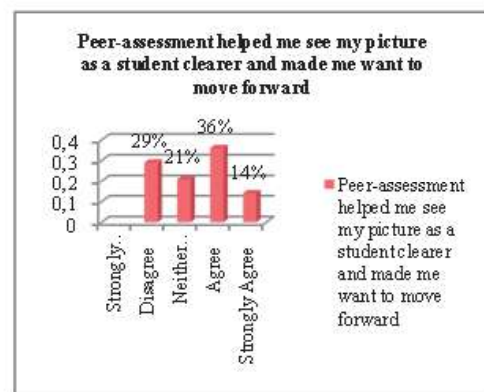


Figure 10. Peer-assessment

As far as the importance of both self- and peer-assessment in learners' responsibility and goals setting (fig. 10 & 11), the results obtained were homogeneous. Half of the students (50%) agreed that both the assessments had a positive impact on them.



Figure 11. Self-assessment

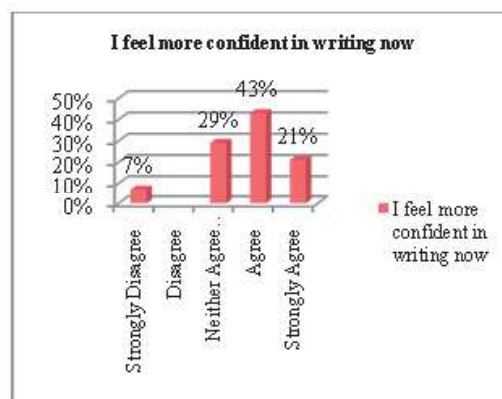


Figure 12. Feeling confidence in writing

Finally, as shown in the last figure (fig. 12) the overall procedure of creating and using the writing portfolio made the students (64%) more competent in writing as it is also described in the relevant literature (Burner, 2014; Gopferich & Neumann, 2016; Nicolaidou, 2012).

Portfolio evaluation rubrics, self and peer assessment

After the portfolio program had finished and the participants had already self-assessed their work, the teacher gathered their dossiers, carefully reviewed their content and evaluated each student's effort according to pre-agreed assessment rubrics.

The most important results derived from the analysis of the data as presented in Table 10, demonstrated that the majority of students (72%) met the learning goal of the program, revealing effort and commitment throughout it. It became clear that most of the participants (79%) showed evidence of the use of the writing strategies while 65% indicated how the improvement in writing was made during the implementation of the portfolio method displaying not only samples of their work but also drafts, self- and peer-assessment sheets and personal notes in which there were signs of the effort the students had made. Finally, as shown from the findings in the Table 10 (9 & 10), and represented in the figure 13 below, two thirds of the learners (72%) showed reflection and provided information of personal growth.

Table 10. Findings of the Portfolio evaluation rubrics

	Portfolio:	1 Needs improvement	2 Average	3 Good	4 Excellent
1	meets the learning goal	14%		14 %	72%
2	includes all the required work	21%		28 %	51%
3	is well-organized	21%		21 %	58%
4	clearly and attractively presents the pieces including the accompanying comment papers	21%		28 %	51%
5	reveals effort and commitment	14%	7%	7%	72%
6	illustrates creativity, imagination and originality in the written tasks	14%	7%	7%	72%
7	contains evidence of the use of writing strategies	14%	7%		79%
8	indicates how the improvement in writing was made	21%		14 %	65%
9	shows personal reflection	21%		7%	72%
10	provides information of personal growth	21%		7%	72%

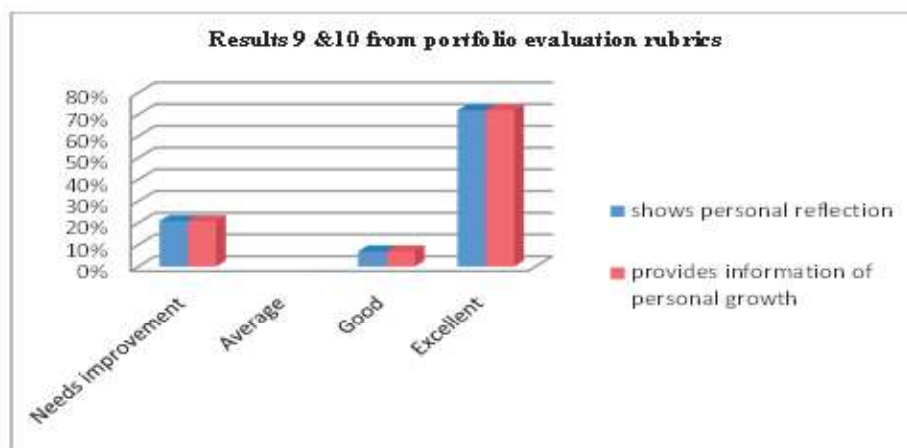


Figure 13. Showing reflection & personal growth

Discussion

The present study explored the impact the culture-based material portfolio and the use of the writing strategies had on the development of the writing skill of a particular group of students in the context of a remote Junior High school. With an exception of two students that were negatively disposed to the whole idea of the portfolio from the very beginning, the rest embraced the project and answered to its requirement eagerly, realizing that something innovative and valuable for them was happening.

According to students' positive responses to the questionnaires provided to them at different points of the five-month period as well as their constant interest and active engagement in working on the program, the portfolio proved to be an effective alternative way of teaching, learning and assessing writing in accordance with previous studies both in Greece and worldwide (Dafnoudi, 2016; Mak & Wong, 2018; Theodoridou, 2018). It helped students comprehend the very nature of the writing as a skill from a different perspective than the traditional approach had offered them so far. Moreover, by receiving immediate feedback from both teacher and peers while they were still working on paper, students managed to control their own writing (Johnson, 1996). Finally, they seemed to change their opinion on the present assessment system and started to doubt its effectiveness.

From the teacher's point of view, the portfolio method was a valuable teaching and assessing method. It offered the teacher numerous opportunities to unfold the skill of writing and, by showing students how to use various strategies, it helped them be more aware of their own learning.

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaires and the results presented in the previous sections, the implementation of the portfolio had significant positive effects on students' writing performance. Students were exposed to a different range of genres and through reflecting, monitoring and evaluating their products they gradually improve their writing. Process-writing approach gave chances of handling and controlling text (Brown, 2001) whereas writing strategies proved to help students in all the phases of the text production. Brainstorming, quickwriting techniques, tables, diagrams, drafts, exchanging papers with peers but above all the fact that the whole work was done at school in a safe, creative and cooperative environment seemed to help learners improve their writing performance. This can be also confirmed by the question 24 (Table 9): *In which way did the portfolio help you?* to which the majority

of students answered: *It helped me improve my writing, it helped me become a better writer or it helped me write better.* The writing scores as well as the teacher's overall portfolio assessment also indicated students' progress in producing better writing products.

An interesting conclusion drawn from the research findings is that self- and peer-assessment played an important role in the development of learners' revising and metacognitive strategies, enhancing students' engagement and maturity (Boud, 1995). Before the implementation of the portfolio the majority of learners expressed their preference in being corrected by the teacher and some of them in working alone. Their experience with self- and peer-assessment changed their perceptions on collaborative learning and made them abandon traditional practices, transforming them from passive recipients to active participants. Furthermore, as the portfolio project was evolving and the students were gradually gaining knowledge and experience on how to evaluate themselves and others, their assessment was becoming more and more accurate and wise. Thus, the reflection over the criteria included in self- and peer-assessment allowed learners to internalize strategies that helped them develop their metacognitive awareness (Kouzouli, 2012). Students learned to identify themselves with regards to learning objectives, to view things broadly and see learning as a process (O' Malley & Chamot, 1990). Moreover, not only did they discover problematic areas and suggested ways to improve themselves and peers, but they also learnt to emphasize their strengths, learning in this way how to learn. Consequently, they felt more responsible, set future goals and led themselves to learning autonomy.

The portfolio encouraged learners to approach a text through writing strategies and using their previous knowledge to build something new upon it. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) remark that strategy in learning can be considered any act the learners choose to follow in order to deal with each unique language situation. Writing strategies hence, helped students to overcome difficulties in all phases of the production of a text and developed their writing. What is noticeable is the wash forward effect the writing strategies had on students as they stated that after the implementation of the portfolio program they approached a text in a different perspective and used appropriate writing strategies to produce a writing piece, taking into consideration all the techniques used in the portfolio.

Although only one third of the students reported that the cultural element of the portfolio affected them positively in their involvement in the whole writing procedure,

the researcher observed that throughout the lessons the learners' attitude towards the topic orientation was more than welcomed. They were very enthusiastic, eager to participate, willing to share experience and to write about them. As it is indicated from the question 22 (Table 9): *What did you like most during the portfolio project?* some students answered: *The topics* or *The culture and tradition*.

In sum, it has not been clearly proved through the questionnaires that it was the particular orientation of the content of the portfolio that brought the development in students' writing skill or the method and the processes of the portfolio itself. Nevertheless, the study suggests that there is room for material based on culture in the portfolio assessment and that according to the researcher's overall evaluation on the students' progress, the integration of culture teaching in foreign language context not only could be inseparable (Nault, 2006), but can facilitate learning, give meaning to what the students are doing, enhance their motivation and having a better knowledge about the subjects to produce better constructed texts.

Educational implications

Although the current study was conducted in a remote school near the northern Macedonian border under particularly difficult situations, -working students with no previous experience in alternative teaching, learning or assessing methods, parents that could not afford for a dossier or could not travel some kilometers to the next town where a stationer's exists, missing classes, an old school with an even older headmaster who was not open to innovations and cooperation culture and finally the whole village locked down because of the COVID19-, it complies with previous surveys both in Greece (Dafnoudi, 2016; Kalogera, 2016; Koulentianou, 2014; Theodoridou, 2018) and worldwide (Al-Serhani, 2007; Jones, 2012; Mak& Wong, 2018), showing that portfolio method if rightly implemented can have beneficial effects on students' writing skill in any school context. It also produced some interesting findings that can constitute the basis for a discussion concerning the implications the study offers to Education in general.

Thus, concerning the portfolio as an effective alternative way of teaching, learning and assessing writing, the findings revealed that it is a promising method for it is characterized by its longitudinal nature, diversified content, collaboration, personal reflection and development as well as the ongoing feedback that informs both

teaching and learning (Dysthe, 2008). The results showed that portfolio assessment describes accurately the performance it was used to assess. The systematic procedure that was followed as well as the authentic material used proved to correspond to the Ministry of education directives, the EFL teaching practices and the particular audience's need. It is based on specific assessment criteria and marking schemes that ensures reliability. As admitted by the learners, it is a fairer method of assessment than the traditional testing, including samples of students' achievement over a period of time, allowing them to revise and reflect on their work. However, innovations and changes, deep knowledge of the new methods, careful and continuous training, cooperation and teacher support are needed in all phases of the program.

With regard to the implementation of the portfolio and its significant positive effects on students' writing performance, the results showed that the use of the method was valuable to all. Learners were encouraged to participate and even the weaker ones involved to the procedure and produced writing pieces. As it proved, towards the end of the project the writing products had a better quality in structure, vocabulary, grammar-syntax and the presentation of ideas. Therefore, the portfolio can be used for the development of students writing skill in the EFL class.

As far as the way self/peer assessment helps learners to develop and hone revising and metacognitive skills is concerned, findings proved that portfolio including procedures of self/peer assessing can be transformed to a personal tool of learning. Self-assessment forms and peer comments provided students with a chance to develop learning-to learn strategies. Training to identify both their own and their peer strengths and weaknesses, they expressed feelings and thoughts about their work. Thus, willing to share responsibility with the teacher, increasing their self-esteem and feeling valued as learners, they were assigned roles and led to their learning autonomy.

Relating to the contribution of the writing strategies to overcoming writing difficulties and becoming a better writer, the results confirmed that the use of the appropriate writing strategies play a crucial role in students' writing development. According to the answers the learners gave to relative questions, it can be concluded that the writing strategies such as brainstorming, collecting ideas, adding/subtracting information, planning, checking for mistakes and others helped students produce well-developed pieces of writing.

Finally, referring to the cultural element of the portfolio and its impact on the students' writing skill, the study suggests that the cultural topic orientation of the

writing portfolio not only enhanced learners' motivation (even the weaker ones') making them more actively involved in writing tasks, but also reading, searching, interviewing or watching a video on learners' local culture and traditions gave the students an incentive to write about something they already know and love with a result to produce a nice text. Moreover, enjoying what they were doing, filled them with positive emotions that ensured a secure learning environment. Consequently, free from stressful events, they strengthened their awareness of language input and performed the best of their language output.

Concluding remarks

The portfolio implementation needs on-going trained teachers that will prepare students and school community to accept the novelty. It is time-consuming and labour intensive for the teachers since they have to produce a great amount of material according to proper criteria. Teachers are assigned multiple roles such as portfolio material designers and assessors who have set the assessing criteria by themselves that should be reliable and valid. Thus, there is a need of modification of the curriculum, the teaching approaches, material and tasks in order to apply to each student's needs and to the alternative teaching and assessment theory and practice. Teachers, free from traditional books and methods, will be able to use special material designed by the ministry of education as well as flexible and alternative teaching approaches that would adjust to the diversity of class and the individual educational needs of each student. Constant cooperation and support between advisors and teachers and among teachers is necessary because only through cooperation new methods can be assimilated into the school routine and difficulties can be overcome easier. Teachers should also learn to reflect on their work and change things when needed. Moreover, to use the portfolio method successfully they should focus on the creation of positive psycho-emotional environment in class so that students would feel satisfied from their participation to the process and the achievement of the goals of learning. As far as the cultural element of the portfolio is concerned, teachers should keep in mind while planning lessons and preparing activities that the culture of students affects the way they learn and the content of what they want to learn. It can influence their preferences to work alone or in a group. It leaves its traits in the way they feel and

express themselves. Therefore, by including cultural elements in teaching they encourage learners to work in ways that are more effective for them.

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The Cultural Portfolio as a Vehicle to Raising Culture Sensitivity and Awareness in High School

Alexandra Pasi

Introduction

Portfolios have come a long way since they were first introduced into language classrooms in the 1990s with a shift in perspective from simply being a collection of the learners' work to being utilised as an evaluation tool, a means of improving a set of skills and strategies and proving very effective at raising and promoting intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Πάση & Κωφού, 2021).

Interculturalism and pluriculturalism have emerged from the term 'culture' to cover the diversity of contemporary societies within our rapidly growing 'global village'². According to UNESCO (2001), culture is defined as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society of a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”. In 2006, UNESCO issued its guidelines on intercultural education with the Council of Europe promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, too (CEFR, 2001 & 2018), by stressing that language learning should be learner-centred, cross-curricular and promote both plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Tomalin and Nicks (2007) define culture as 'the five Cs': cultural values and attitudes, cultural preferences, cultural adaptation, cultural knowledge, and cultural behaviour all of which can be cultivated in the education and especially in the foreign language classroom where culture and language are interwoven (Brown,

²“All the countries of the world when thought of as being closely connected by modern communication and trade”-Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/global-village>& “the world, esp. considered as the home of all nations and peoples living interdependently”-Collins Dictionary: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/global-village>

1994). With growing nationalism, prejudice, racism and xenophobia (CoE, 2020³), it is critical that youngsters are taught understanding and tolerance of cultural otherness. Therefore, since culture and language are intrinsically connected, foreign language education should enhance intercultural competencies too so that learners can communicate effectively in a variety of contexts whether academic, business or for personal reasons (Bryam & Guilherme, 2010; Hurn & Tomalin, 2013; Γρίβα & Κωφού, 2019).

The Cultural Reading Portfolio

Reading is undoubtedly one of the cornerstones of literacy. Consequently, developing effective reading strategies is paramount. Reading efficiently involves a combination of top-down and bottom-up skills with vocabulary playing a significant role since a lack of vocabulary can cause a breakdown in the reading process as the two are interdependent (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

The cultural portfolio is a tool both for promoting language learning, and in the present context, a means of developing learners' reading skills and strategies while developing their vocabulary, and to raise intercultural awareness by offering learners the unique opportunity to critically reflect on and compare their own culture with that of the foreign culture (Oranje, 2015). Griva and Kofou (2017) encourage designing “an intercultural portfolio to assess linguistic competence, intercultural skill and intercultural communication skills” (p.71). All things considered, the cultural portfolio is therefore a versatile tool to develop competencies that will help the learner to work and live in progressively diverse culture while teaching them to value cultural diversity and be open to “cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices” (CEFR, 2018, p.22).

Teaching materials

The specific teaching materials were prepared for senior high school students with a good level of English: B2 -C2 on the CEFR scale, adaptable to suit the learners'

³<https://www.coe.int/en/web/tirana/-/ultra-nationalism-anti-semitism-anti-muslim-hatred-anti-racism-commission-raises-alarm-over-situation-in-europe>

needs and appropriate level (Pasi, 2020). Learners had the opportunity to work in pairs and groups as well as individually. The concept of cultural diversity was introduced to the learners via the film ‘Dangerous Minds’⁴ (Simpson & Bruckheimer, 1995) starring Michelle Pfeifer and shown over the course of two weeks with discussions before and after each lesson with the aid of a worksheet (see below). LouAnne, the protagonist who is from a white middle-class background, has to deal with the more-often-than-not delinquent students who come from broken families or deprived backgrounds mainly of Latino or African-American descent. LouAnne has to face, understand and deal with cultural differences and prejudice within her notoriously difficult class. This film made learners aware of cultural diversity within our daily lives.

Dangerous Minds (Simpson & Bruckheimer, 1995)

Pre-Viewing

1. Why do you think the film is called “Dangerous Minds”?
2. What do you think the film is about based on the picture?
3. What type of film do you think it is?
4. Where does the story take place?



While-Viewing (LouAnne’s first day)

1. What was LouAnne Johnson’s job before becoming a teacher?
2. What nickname do the students give her and why?
3. Who is the class leader? How do you know this?

After-Viewing

1. In the opening scene the film goes from black & white to colour. What do you think this switch symbolizes?
2. How would you handle a class like the one LouAnne has to teach? Why do you think the students behave in this manner?

While and After-Viewing (Consequent days)

1. How does LouAnne capture the students’ attention? Why was this effective?
2. How does she get the students to participate in her lessons?
3. What challenges do they face while at school?
4. How does LouAnne help them overcome these challenges?

⁴*Dangerous Minds* is a 1995 American drama film directed by John N. Smith, and produced by Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer. It is based on the autobiography *My Posse Don't Do Homework* by retired U.S. Marine LouAnne Johnson, who in 1989 took up a teaching position at Carlmont High School in Belmont, California where most of her students were African-American and Latino teenagers from East Palo Alto, a poverty-stricken, racially segregated, economically deprived city.”(Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dangerous_Minds)

5. What challenges does LouAnne face?
6. What is the overall message of the film?
7. “She broke the rules...and changed their lives” -discuss.
8. Would you recommend this film? Why/ Why not?

Dangerous Minds’ Worksheet based on the film prepared by the author

When incorporating cultural portfolio work in class, it is important that learners comprehend the reason why they should assemble a reading portfolio, the format the cultural portfolio will take; whether pencil-and-paper or e-portfolios and how it will be utilised. According to Herman et al. (1992) the three main criteria for a successful portfolio are clear guidelines, a clearly-stated purpose and assessment criteria, all of which are clearly present in the cultural portfolio. With activities being carried out in class and due to a lack of internet connection at school, learners opted for a pencil-and-paper format. Four reading passages from a variety of sources which addressed various intercultural issues as pertinent to an intercultural portfolio (Oranje, 2016) were chosen.

The first reading passage is the lyrics to the theme song of the film ‘Dangerous Minds’, called ‘Gangsta’s Paradise’ by Coolio (Ivey, Sanders, Rasheed & Wonder, 1995, track 1). The lyrics contain many poetic features like irony, antithesis and metaphor. The song is representative of social class and gangster lifestyle which many disadvantaged people are born into (Gándara, 2020) with few opportunities to escape from their predetermined destiny as expressed both in the film and the song. Learners were given the respective worksheet (see below) and after discussing the pre-reading activities, they listened to the song before tackling the while- and post-reading activities (see below).

Gangsta’s Paradise

Pre Reading (Discussion first in pairs/groups then as a class)

- What do you understand by the song’s title “Gangsta’s Paradise”?
- Have a quick look at the song. What type of language is used?
- Is this the way we speak in our culture? Find a couple of examples of slang.
- The first 2 lines of the song are: “As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I take a look at my life and realize there's not much left”
- Based on the title and the first 2 lines, what do you think this song is/talks about?

Reading:

Gangsta’s Paradise sung by Coolio.

This song is written by a rapper from south LA. Like many other rappers, Coolio was part of a local gang in his tough neighbourhood, Compton.

Verse 1

As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I take a look at my life and realize there's nothin' left

'Cause I've been blastin' and laughin' so long that
Even my momma thinks that my mind is gone
But I ain't never crossed a man that didn't deserve it
Me be treated like a punk, you know that's unheard of
You better watch how you talkin' and where you walkin'
Or you and your homies might be lined in chalk
I really hate to trip, but I gotta loc
As they croak, I see myself in the pistol smoke
Fool, I'm the kinda G the little homies wanna be like
On my knees in the night, sayin' prayers in the streetlight
Been spendin' most their lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Been spendin' most their lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Keep spendin' most our lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Keep spendin' most our lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise

Verse 2

Look at the situation they got me facing
I can't live a normal life, I was raised by the street
So I gotta be down with the hood team
Too much television watchin', got me chasing dreams
I'm a educated fool with money on my mind
Got my ten in my hand and a gleam in my eye
I'm a loc'd out gangsta, set trippin' banger
And my homies is down, so don't arouse my anger
Fool, death ain't nothin' but a heart beat away
I'm livin' life do or die, what can I say?
I'm 23 now but will I live to see 24?
The way things is going I don't know
Tell me why are we so blind to see
That the ones we hurt are you and me?
Been spendin' most their lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Been spendin' most their lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Keep spendin' most our lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Keep spendin' most our lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Power and the money, money and the power
Minute after minute, hour after hour
Everybody's runnin', but half of them ain't lookin'
It's going on in the kitchen, but I don't know what's cookin'
They say I gotta learn, but nobody's here to teach me
If they can't understand it, how can they reach me?
I guess they can't, I guess they won't
I guess they front, that's why I know my life is out of luck,
fool
Been spendin' most their lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Been spendin' most their lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Keep spendin' most our lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Keep spendin' most our lives
Livin' in a gangsta's paradise
Tell me why are we so blind to see
That the ones we hurt are you and me?
Tell me why are we so blind to see
That the ones we hurt are you and me?

While Reading

Answer these questions based on the reading:

1. How do the first 2 lines of the song relate to the first 2 lines of Psalm 23:4 of the bible?
“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

What are the similarities and differences? _____

2. Rephrase lines 7-8 (Verse 1) into everyday English that someone from your own culture would understand. _____
3. What change do you notice in the chorus and what do you think this means? _____
4. In verse 2, lines 17-18, the narrator says that he “can’t live a normal life”. What would a “normal” life in your context be as compared to his life? _____
5. What’s the antithesis/paradox in verse 2 line 21? Why is this ironic? _____
6. In the last 4 lines of verse 3 (lines 35-38), the narrator feels that he is doomed to live the life of a gangster. Why? _____

Post Reading

Discuss the following questions in small groups before reporting back to the class.

- What is the recurring theme throughout the song? How does this differ from your own reality?
- How & why do adolescents, people your own age, end up in this type of situation?
- How can they “escape” from this type of life?
- What problems might arise if gang members were in your school?

Writing:

A new class is being formed at your school made up primarily of underprivileged teens from troubled social backgrounds. What advice would you give to your English teacher who has to teach literature to this class? Write a short paragraph with two to three pieces of advice.

The second passage (see below) was taken off the internet⁵ and deals with understanding socio-cultural cues while stressing the importance of understanding both verbal and non-verbal references when abroad, whether exploring a foreign country or on business. The passage relates to intercultural exchanges when travelling or working in a foreign country while offering advice on how to prepare for and deal with socio-cultural differences, something that the learners will no doubt experience in the real world.

Understanding socio-cultural references

Pre-Reading: Discuss the following questions with your partner.

1. Look at the title.
 - a. What do you think the text is about?
 - b. Do you think the text will consist mainly of facts or opinions?

⁵ <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/activities-for-learners/c2r002-understanding-socio-cultural-reference>

2. What do you expect to read about in the text?
3. Skim through the text. Where might you find this text?

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/activities-for-learners/c2r002-understanding-socio-cultural-references>

Understanding socio-cultural references

Entering unfamiliar territory is not confined to the actual physical process of arriving in a new country, but can refer to any new cultural environment in which we find ourselves. This can be anything from starting a new job where company norms are significantly different to those we're accustomed to, to getting round a language barrier. Without doubt we have all fallen foul of misunderstanding cultural taboos and committing the occasional embarrassing faux pas.

A person from a country who believes it is 'rude to stare', might feel intensely uncomfortable in a 'long look' culture, where prolonged eye contact is the norm. Making what is, in one's own culture, a common and inoffensive hand gesture may lead to red faces all round when one is enlightened as to its opposite nature in the culture of one's conversation partner. Verbal communication and gift-giving can also be major stumbling blocks. A joke may be met with a blank stare or perplexed frown, and offering a certain kind or number of flowers may leave a recipient feeling none too pleased, owing to a particular cultural significance that has escaped the unwitting giver.

1. The inevitable question is how can awkward moments like these be avoided? Doing your homework in advance may not necessarily mean misunderstandings won't occur, but with some careful preparation, their occurrence can at least be minimised. Disabusing ourselves of cultural stereotypes, anticipating complications and consulting the initiated can help us get to grips with diversity and bring us one step closer to more harmonious cross-cultural relationships.

2. Why does the writer use examples of staring and gesturing in the text?
 - a. to point out the insensitive approach some people take to others
 - b. to emphasise the huge differences in behaviour between different cultures
 - c. to highlight the importance of explaining your beliefs to others
3. What does "disabusing" in line 4 of the 3rd paragraph mean?
 - a. to rid yourself of a mistaken idea
 - b. to conduct research into an idea
 - c. to clarify the reasons behind an idea
4. What is the main point of the article?
 - a. that even those who are culturally aware will make mistakes
 - b. that erring on the side of caution can eliminate difficult situations
 - c. that arming ourselves with knowledge can enhance communication

Questions based on <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/activities-for-learners/c2r002-understanding-socio-cultural-references>

Post Reading

Discuss the following in small groups before reporting back to the class.

1. Did anything in the text surprise you or make you reconsider cultural differences?
2. What have you learnt from the text? Will your behaviour/understanding of cultural differences change/evolve?
3. To what extent are you more willing to understand, accept and take cultural differences into consideration?

The third reading passage, written by an unaccompanied refugee youth Ahmet (2016), conveys a teen's experience of fleeing his beloved homeland Syria, because of war and seeking asylum in Greece. Ahmet (2016) hopes to procure a better future in Europe and like every teenager, has ambitions and dreams. This passage was deliberately chosen to show learners that all adolescents, irrelevant of background, religion, skin colour, financial standing etc., have aspirations for a future they feel worthy of. Hence, they all have something in common even if not immediately evident at the surface.

Ahmet

Pre reading

Discuss the following questions with your partner.

- Why do people **flee** their countries?
- What's the difference between a **refugee** and an **immigrant**?
- Do refugees/ immigrants **want to leave** their countries? Why?/ Why not?
- What is the **plight** of refugee children?



Monologues across the Aegean Sea: The journey and dreams of unaccompanied refugee children

While reading:

Answer the following questions:

1. Ahmet states that his pencil is inadequate to express the hardships of the Syrians. What does he mean?
2. According to Ahmet, war *ravages* people's hope? What does "ravage" mean?
 - a. leave in ruins
 - b. shatter
 - c. crush
 - d. all of the above
3. What are Ahmet's personal aspirations? Do they differ from those of adolescents of your own culture?
4. Based the text, do refugee youth and youth from your own culture share any common attributes? Provide some examples.

Post Reading

Discuss the following questions in small groups:

- Appoint a note taker and a speaker to represent your group.
 - Report your opinions back to class.
1. Although refugees have a different cultural background to yours, are you really so different? In what ways are you the same?
 2. Having read the text, do you feel differently towards refugee teens?
 3. Do these children deserve a better future? How can they procure it? What can we, as a nation, do to help?

The fourth and final passage is an extract from the book entitled 'The Culture Map' (Meyer, 2014). This text deals with intercultural business dealings and how subtle cultural cues can make or break important business deals. This passage is appropriate taking into consideration the global work market now widely available due to remote working possibilities (Pring, 2020).

Invisible boundaries that divide our world

Pre-Reading:

Look at the title.

- What do you think the text is about?
- Do you think the text will consist mainly of facts or opinions?
- Is the tone formal, neutral or informal?
- Write 1-2 questions you are hoping to be answered in the text.

Invisible boundaries that divide our world

The sad truth is that the vast majority (...) who conduct business internationally have little understanding about how culture is impacting their work. This is especially true as more and more of us communicate daily with people in other countries over virtual media like e-mail or telephone. When you live, work, or travel extensively in a foreign country, you pick up a lot of contextual cues that help you understand the culture of the people living there, and that helps you to better decode communication and adapt accordingly. By contrast, when you exchange e-mails with an international counterpart in a county you haven't spent time in, it is much easier to miss the cultural subtleties impacting the communication.

A simple example is a characteristic behavior unique to India - a half-shake, half-nod of the head. Travel to India on business and you'll soon learn that the half-shake, half-nod is not a sign of disagreement, uncertainty, or lack of support as it would be in most cultures. Instead it suggests interest, enthusiasm, or sometimes respectful listening.....

But over e-mail or telephone, you may interact daily with your Indian counterparts from your office (...) without ever seeing the environment they live and work in. So, when you are on videoconference with one of your top Indian managers, you may interpret his half-shake, half-nod as meaning that he is not in full agreement with your idea. You redouble your efforts to convince him, but the more you talk the more he (seemingly) indicates with his head that he is not on board. You get off the call puzzled, frustrated, and perhaps angry. Culture has impacted your communication, yet in the absence of the visual and contextual cues that physical presence provide, you didn't even recognize that something cultural was going on.

So, whether we are aware of it or not, subtle differences in communication patterns and the complex variations in what is considered good business or common sense from one country to another have a tremendous impact on how we understand one another, and ultimately on how we get the job done. Many of these cultural differences – varying attitudes concerning when best to speak or stay quiet, the role of the leader in the room, and what kind of negative feedback is the most constructive – may seem small. But if you are unaware of the differences and unarmed with strategies for managing them effectively, they can derail your team meetings, demotivate your employees, frustrate your foreign suppliers, and in dozens of other ways make it much more difficult to achieve your goals.

Today, whether we work in Dusseldorf or Dubai, Brasilia or Beijing, New York or New Delhi, we are all part of a global network (real or virtual, physical or electronic) where success requires navigating through wildly different cultural realities. Unless we know how to decode other cultures and avoid easy-to-fall-into cultural traps, we are easy prey to misunderstanding, needless conflict, and ultimate failure.

The Culture Map by Erin Meyer pp.10-12

While Reading

- Why does the author begin with “the sad truth” as opposed to “the truth”? What does this convey?
- What does the author mean by “contextual cues” in line 5 of the 1st paragraph?
- What does it mean if “you are not on board” in the context of the 3rd paragraph?
- How did cultural differences in the 3rd paragraph impact the business meeting? What point is the author making?

5. What does “subtle” in 4th paragraph mean? What point is the text emphasizing?
6. What do you understand by “derail your team meetings” in the 4th paragraph?
7. What, in your opinion, is the main aim of the passage?

Post Reading

Discuss the following in small groups before reporting back to the class.

1. Can you give an example of gestures from your own culture that might cause misunderstandings with a foreigner as in the example with India?
2. Having read the text, do you think that understanding cultural differences, whether spoken or unspoken, is important in conducting business/working with people from a different culture to your own? Why/ why not?
3. How do you think we could better equip ourselves to work in an international market?

Assessment

Checklist & Questionnaires

As previously mentioned, in addition to promoting reading and vocabulary skills and strategies and raising intercultural awareness, the cultural portfolio can also be used as a means of alternative assessment (Γρίβα & Κωφού, 2019). This can be done by means of a checklist with an assessment rating scale which students are given at the outset and which acts as guide for them to monitor and control their work offering them achievable goals (Griva & Kofou, 2017). According to the marking system in Greek schools, students receive a mark based on a scale of zero to twenty (0-20) but this can be adjusted to suit any marking scale the teacher wishes to utilise.

Checklist for evaluating your cultural portfolio

Your cultural portfolio will receive the grade EXCELLENT (18-20) if:

- it was handed in on time
- it contains all four readings
- it has covered all the activities dealing with the readings
- opinions are supported with evidence/ justification
- it shows considerable independence in expressing responses to the reading
- demonstrates concerted effort
- it is neat, tidy and clear

Your cultural portfolio will receive the grade GOOD (14-17) if:

- it was handed in on time
- it contains all three of the four readings
- it has covered all the activities dealing with the three readings
- opinions are supported with evidence/ justification
- it shows some independence in expressing responses to the reading
- demonstrates effort
- it is neat, tidy and clear

Your cultural portfolio will receive the grade PASS (10-13) if:

- it was handed in on time
- it contains all two of the four readings

- it has covered some the activities dealing with the two readings
- demonstrates some effort
- it is neat, tidy and clear

Your cultural portfolio will receive the grade FAIL (below 10) if:

- it was handed in very late
- it contains very little evidence of work done
- it shows a lack of effort

Adapted from Kemp & Topperoff, 1998 in Tsagari, 2004, p.229

Why incorporate questionnaires? For several reasons; namely, questionnaires are a fairly quick and efficient means of evaluating learners' progress and change in attitudes (Cohen et. al, 2007) over the course of implementing the cultural portfolio. Furthermore, they are also reasonably fast, stress-free and clear-cut for learners to fill out at the end of every reading worksheet and can easily be administered both online (Google forms) or in paper format. Nevertheless, it is essential that the same questionnaires be used both before work on the cultural portfolio is undertaken and then on the completion of each and every reading passages to monitor change over time. Such questionnaires can be effective for assessing whether learners' reading and vocabulary skills and strategies have improved (see Table 1 & 2) as well as for mapping their intercultural awareness, attitudes and flexibility and openness to new cultures and otherness (Tables 1-3) (Pasi, 2020).

Table 1. Vocabulary strategies and skills

	Vocabulary strategies and skills	Yes	No	Not Sure
1	I paid attention to the structure of the word.			
2	I analysed the words to identify the meaning of them.			
3	I associated the sound of new words with the sound of familiar words.			
4	I made a mental image of new words.			
5	I related new words to the topic.			
6	I wrote the new words in meaningful sentences.			
7	I reminded myself of a word meaning by first thinking of meaningful parts of the word (e.g., the prefix or the suffix).			
8	I related the new words to the situations where I heard or saw them.			

Table 2. Reading strategies and skills

		Yes	No	Not Sure
	Reading strategies and skills			
1	I planned my reading and checked to see how much of it I understood.			
2	I read the text several times until I could understand it.			
3	I looked for how the text was organized and paid attention to headings and subheadings.			
4	I paid attention to the general context of the text (source, format, etc.)			
5	I make ongoing summaries in the margins of the text.			
6	I made predictions as to what would appear next.			
7	I guessed the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context.			

Table 3. Intercultural Awareness

	Intercultural understanding	Yes	No	Not Sure
1.	I better understand/ know beliefs and values of other cultures			
2.	I better understand/know practices of other cultures			
3.	I will continue to make choices that are related to my cultural background			
4.	I show different behaviors that are based on cultural differences			
5.	I think that non- verbal behaviour varies across cultures			
6.	I now believe that the various cultural forms of non-verbal behaviour are worthy of respect			
7.	I compare important aspects of the host language-culture with my own culture			
8.	I reflect on my cultural stereotypes			
9.	I try to understand other cultural perspectives that are different to my own			
10.	I can interpret from the tone of the speaker the message s/he conveys			

Intercultural knowledge/use	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. I have a better knowledge of other cultures			
2. I have critical intercultural awareness			
3. Knowledge of the foreign language in itself is not enough, I need to understand its culture too.			
4. My knowledge of different cultures will help me in an international work market.			
5. I can mediate to promote communication/ interaction/ conflict			
6. I can turn cultural differences into opportunities.			
7. I am more willing to live and work in a culturally diverse society.			
Flexibility and openness to new cultural experiences	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. I am more open to unfamiliar cultural situations.			
2. I'd like to spend time with people from other countries			
3. I think that people from other cultures do not necessarily have the same values as people from my culture			
4. I think that people are intrinsically the same despite difference in appearance			

Conclusion

Using the cultural portfolio to raise and promote intercultural awareness provides the learners with a safe environment to explore and express their feelings towards and opinions about foreign cultures without fear of retribution while gaining a deeper insight into their own culture (Buttjes, 1991). Through the reading activities done in the cultural portfolio, the learners are able to better relate to foreign cultures while being provided with opportunities for critical thinking, reflection and greater openness to cultural diversity. Raising awareness of otherness and delving into the similarities and differences between local and foreign cultures helps to break the shackles of stereotypes and fixed perceptions so that the learners become more open minded.

Therefore, intercultural awareness is paramount in cultivating tolerance and respect for others (Bryam & Guilherme, 2010; Γρίβα & Κωφού, 2019q; Oranje, 2016).

By working on the cultural portfolio, participants will gain ownership of their learning (Griva & Kofou, 2017). Learners have the vehicle (the cultural portfolio) and the map (the portfolio assessment checklist and questionnaires), so they also have the responsibility of navigating it in the right direction to arrive at their final destination. This gives them the motivation to strive for higher achievements. During their journey, learners will adopt new reading and vocabulary strategies and skills (Carver, 1997; Coady, 1997; Nagy et al., 1987), thus, becoming more dexterous readers.

Evidence supports the value of the cultural reading portfolio in L2 teaching to enhance intercultural awareness while developing skills and strategies associated with reading (Πάση & Κωφού, 2021). It is also recommended that cultural portfolios be implemented in all the tiers of schooling: primary, middle and high school, by adjusting the reading material accordingly. Raising intercultural awareness is a serious responsibility that cannot be swept under the carpet. Both as educators and as citizens, we bear a responsibility to our students to educate them to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world where intercultural competences will help them procure a better job, communicate more effectively and confidently establish intercultural relations with citizen across the globe.

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Engaging Minds, Transforming Skills: The Power of Alternative Assessment in Wiki-Based Environments

Anastasia Geralexi

Introduction

In recent years, the emphasis on 21st-century skills and new literacies in education has brought about a significant transformation in how students are taught and assessed. The rapidly evolving demands of a globalized, technology-driven world have challenged traditional approaches to teaching and assessment, which tend to focus on rote learning and factual recall. These methods often fail to capture the critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills that students need to thrive in modern society (Black & William, 1998).

The rise of alternative assessment practices—such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), peer assessment, and self-assessment—represents a shift toward more authentic forms of learning that engage students in meaningful, real-world tasks. This shift toward alternative assessment in language learning aims to evaluate a broader set of skills, moving beyond traditional methods of assessment (Griva & Kofou, 2017). These novel forms of assessment not only evaluate the final product but also consider the learning process, thus promoting deep learning and the development of lifelong skills (Brown & Hudson, 1998). In contrast to traditional assessments, which typically measure content knowledge through standardized tests, alternative assessments aim to assess a broader range of skills, including those necessary for students to adapt to the rapidly changing world (Stiggins, 2001).

The Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (AT21S) project (2013) categorizes 21st-century skills into four key areas: ways of thinking (creativity, innovation, critical thinking), ways of working (communication and collaboration), tools for working (information and digital literacy), and living in the world (personal and social responsibility, adaptability). These skills are critical for success in both academic and professional settings, and educators must shift their focus to these competencies to prepare students for the future.

Literature Review

Project-Based Learning: Historical and Theoretical Background

The foundations of Project-Based Learning (PBL) lie in early educational theories that emphasize active, student-centered learning. John Dewey (1938), a pioneer of progressive education, advocated for experiential learning, where students engage directly with their environment and learn through practical activities. Dewey's work laid the groundwork for PBL by encouraging educators to move away from the passive transmission of knowledge and instead focus on fostering students' abilities to think critically, solve problems, and collaborate with others.

William Kilpatrick (1918) expanded on Dewey's ideas by formalizing the concept of "the project method." He argued that learning should be driven by students' own interests and goals, which increases motivation and engagement. Kilpatrick believed that projects allow students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, making learning more meaningful and relevant.

The theoretical underpinnings of PBL also draw heavily on constructivist theory, particularly the work of Jean Piaget (1967). According to Piaget, students construct their own understanding of the world through active engagement with their surroundings. In a PBL environment, students take control of their learning, engage in inquiry-based activities, and collaborate with peers to solve problems, all of which align with the core principles of constructivism (Bransford et al., 1999).

Blended Learning and Educational Technology

In the context of modern education, technology has become an indispensable tool for facilitating Blended Learning (BL) environments. Blended Learning combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning, allowing students to access a wide range of digital resources, collaborate virtually with peers, and work at their own pace (Graham, 2006). According to Graham, Blended Learning provides a flexible framework that accommodates diverse learning needs, making it particularly effective in promoting student engagement and autonomy.

The use of wikis in Blended Learning environments, as described by Chao (2007), allows students to collaborate on shared projects, edit content in real-time, and

contribute to the collective knowledge of the group. Wikis foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among students, as they are actively involved in creating and refining the content. Moreover, wikis support the development of digital literacy and collaborative skills, which are essential for success in the 21st-century workplace.

Research by Bransford et al. (1999) highlights the potential of technology to enhance learning by providing real-world contexts and enabling collaboration across geographic boundaries. Through the use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) tools, students can engage in meaningful dialogue with peers in a highly interactive environment, further enriching the learning experience while solving problems and negotiating meaning (Geralexi, 2018).

The Rise of Alternative Assessment

The limitations of traditional assessment methods have long been recognized by educators and researchers. Black and William (1998) argue that standardized tests often fail to capture the full range of student abilities, particularly in areas such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. These tests tend to focus on factual recall and rote memorization, which do not reflect the complex skills students need to navigate the challenges of the 21st century.

In contrast, alternative assessment methods, such as peer assessment, self-assessment, and portfolio-based assessment, provide a more holistic evaluation of student learning. Brown and Hudson (1998) identify several key features of alternative assessment, including the use of real-world tasks, the involvement of students in the assessment process, and the emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. These methods not only assess the final product but also take into account the learning process, allowing students to reflect on their progress and make improvements along the way.

Peer and self-assessment, in particular, have been shown to promote metacognition—the ability of students to monitor and regulate their own learning. Sadler (1989) argues that self-assessment encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Similarly, Falchikov (2005) notes that peer assessment fosters a collaborative learning

environment where students can give and receive constructive feedback, ultimately leading to improved performance.

Research Methodology

The Research Questions

The particular research was centered around clear and focused research questions after Dawson's (2002) suggestion, who emphasizes the appropriate articulation of research questions as a critical stage of any research. The following questions helped map the path of the present research.

- Can alternative assessment tools, such as observation, rubrics, self-, and peer- assessment, effectively assess students' project work in terms of new literacies and 21st century skills?
- Can the use of technological tools, such as wikis, facilitate the assessment process?
- Does the active involvement of students in the assessment process lead to boosted performance?

Overview of the Research Design

The present study adopted a mixed-methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of alternative assessment methods in evaluating 21st-century skills and new literacies. This approach combines quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research outcomes (Creswell, 2009). According to Creswell, mixed methods are particularly useful in educational research, where complex phenomena require a multifaceted analysis.

The research took the form of a case study, focusing on a single class of third-grade students at a Greek Junior High School. The case study approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the students' learning experiences and provided valuable insights into the practical application of alternative assessment methods in a real-world classroom setting (Cohen et al., 2011).

Participants

The participants in the study were nine students—eight girls and one boy—aged 15. All students were enrolled in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course and had varying levels of English proficiency, ranging from B1 to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The students had previous experience with project-based learning, making them well-suited for the research.

The study also involved the students' English language teacher, who played a critical role in facilitating the project work and guiding the assessment process. The teacher's observations and feedback were integral to the study's data collection, providing qualitative insights into the students' progress and the effectiveness of the assessment tools.

Research Tools

A variety of research tools were employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring a well-rounded evaluation of student performance. These tools included:

Peer Assessment: Students were given a structured peer-assessment form, which they used to evaluate their classmates' contributions to the project. The peer-assessment process encouraged students to develop critical thinking skills and fostered a sense of responsibility in evaluating their peers (Falchikov, 2005).

Table 1: Peer Evaluation Form for Group Work

Peer Evaluation Form for Group Project Work		
Your name: _____		
Write the name of each of your group members in a separate column. For each partner, indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement on the left, using a scale of 1-4 (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree). Total the numbers in each column.		
Evaluation Criteria	Partner 1:	Partner 2:
Contributed and communicated knowledge, new ideas and opinions to group discussions effectively by explaining his/her reasoning process clearly		
Consistently and actively took part in		

decision making often initiating the process		
Portrayed problem solving ability by meeting challenges successfully and thinking of alternative solutions		
Accepted his/her individual responsibilities within the group and completed his/her share of work so as to fulfill group goals		
Read the links and managed to retrieve and synthesize information valuable to the completion of the project		
Demonstrated a cooperative and supportive attitude showing sensitivity to the feelings of other group members and encouraging his/her partners.		
Could use the technologies involved appropriately and responsibly to serve the objectives of the project		
His/Her role in the presentation of the project really made a difference		
Overall his/her contribution was significant to the success of the project		
I would like to be in the same group with this person in the future		
TOTALS:		

Self-Assessment: Students were also required to complete a self-assessment form, reflecting on their own performance throughout the project. This tool encouraged students to engage in metacognitive reflection, allowing them to identify areas for improvement and set personal learning goals (Sadler, 1989).

Table 2. Self-Assessment Form

Self-Assessment Form	
Student's name:	Date:
Type of activity: Project entitled “ ”	

How true are the following sentences for you? Ring round the best number	
4=true, 3=more or less true, 2=partly true, 1=not true	
1. I showed interest in the project right from the beginning and resorted to past knowledge and experience in order to connect to its topic	1 2 3 4
2. I made wise use of the time available and met deadlines	1 2 3 4
3. I followed directions, put teacher suggestions and feedback to good use	1 2 3 4
4. I came up with new ideas which promoted the work of my group	1 2 3 4
5. I expressed my ideas and opinions effectively, contributed to discussion and got my message across	1 2 3 4
6. I cooperated successfully with the other group members	1 2 3 4
7. I helped my group overcome the difficulties that arose and resolve conflicts	
8. I managed to use the technologies required in order to complete the project and successfully dealt with technical matters	1 2 3 4
9. I read the links and retrieved the information needed to complete the tasks	1 2 3 4
10. I paid attention to accuracy mistakes and proofread my work	1 2 3 4
11. I actively and successfully participated in the formation and the presentation of the final product of the project	1 2 3 4
12. Overall, I did my share of work and my work and attitude had an overall positive effect on the completion of the project	1 2 3 4
Comments:	
Name one thing you learned during the project	

Name something you enjoyed during the project	

Name a challenge that you met during the project	

Name something you could have done better	

Name a skill that you think you improved during the project	

Name something that you learned about group work from working on this project that you will make use of in your next group project experience

Rubric: An analytic rubric was developed to evaluate the students' performance on key criteria, such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. The rubric provided a consistent framework for assessing both the process and the final product of the project (Mertler, 2001).

Table 3. Project Evaluation Rubric

Project Evaluation Rubric			
Student's name:		Date:	
Type of activity: Project entitled “ ”			
Evaluation criteria	Sophisticated	Competent	Weak
Creativity, inventive thinking & Originality	Generates new ideas, initiates and contributes to discussions all the time	Generates some new ideas and contributes to discussions most of the times	Rather passive, does not contribute to discussions
Communication skills	Effectively gets his/her message across, good listener	Manages to get his message across, pays attention most of the times	Communication is problematic, communication gaps
Collaboration and interpersonal skills	Cooperative and encouraging, supports team decisions, helps team reach a consensus, helps at resolving conflicts, helps to create a positive atmosphere within the team	Positive attitude, shows signs of cooperation, takes part in decision making, tries to help the team with problem-solving	Rarely takes part in decision making, sometimes creates conflicts
Leadership skills	Continually influences the behavior	Occasionally influences the behavior	Does not really influence the behavior of

	of the other group members towards the accomplishment of group goals Motivates and guides the group towards the visualized goals Takes initiative	of the other group members towards the accomplishment of group goals. Occasionally motivates and guides visualized goals. Occasionally takes initiative	the other group members towards the accomplishment of group goals. Does not really motivate and guide visualized goals. Does not really take initiative
Digital skills (digital literacy)	Uses technologies effectively, helps with technical problems	Positive attitude to technologies, willing to learn how to use them effectively	Unable to use technologies to serve the objectives of the project
Research skills (information literacy)	Demonstrates exemplary ability to plan and conduct in-depth research using digital sources effectively to gather information	Conducts sufficient planning and research using digital sources satisfactorily to gather information	Needs help to plan and conduct research and cannot explore and exploit digital sources appropriately
Problem solving skills and Higher Order Thinking (critical and reflective thinking)	Understands, infers, connects, categorizes, manipulates, puts together and finally, applies the facts to seek new solutions to problems successfully	Understands, infers, connects, categorizes, manipulates, puts together and finally, applies the facts to seek new solutions to problems satisfactorily	Mainly memorizes facts or just restates them
Correctness and accuracy	Information is correct, few to no errors	Information is correct to a satisfactory degree, Some accuracy errors	A lot of errors in information, syntax, grammar and punctuation
Organisation skills	Highly manages the scope of his/her work and the time needed to complete it	Manages the scope of his/her work and the time needed to complete it	Cannot really manage the scope of his/her work and the time needed to complete it
Presentation skills	Presents final product in a well-	Presents final product in a	Has difficulty presenting the final

	organized manner which reflects the quality of work preceded	satisfactory manner which shows the effort made throughout the process	product in an organized manner showing weakness to approach the topic appropriately and meet expectations
Completeness	Links have been read and the final product is complete	Most links have been read and the final product is almost complete	Most links have not been read and the final product is far from complete

Observation/Anecdotal Records: The teacher observed the students' behavior and interactions during the project and recorded anecdotal notes to capture qualitative data on group dynamics, problem-solving, and collaboration (MacFarland, 2006).

Table 4. Sample note card from Project 3

Project 3
Student Name:
Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Partly takes part in discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Responds rather passively <input type="checkbox"/> Gets distracted, doesn't pay much attention when partners talk <input type="checkbox"/> Uses wiki satisfactorily <input type="checkbox"/> Reads some of the links and spots some info <input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't take part in decision-making much <input type="checkbox"/> Needs a little more time to complete tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Posts some v. brief comments-makes few suggestions <input type="checkbox"/> Rereads article <input type="checkbox"/> Tries to correct mistakes but also relies on partners <input type="checkbox"/> Group part of the article not totally complete

Class Conference: Along the principles of the student-centered classroom the teacher opted for a class conference at the end of the projects. Instead of lecturing students, which has been a staple of classrooms for years, the teacher had the students talking and addressing their comments to each other. She also provided additional feedback concerning the student's weaknesses.

Table 5. Evaluation criteria for class conference

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation criteria discussed in the class conference
Creativity, inventive thinking & Originality	
Communication skills	
Collaboration and interpersonal skills	
Leadership skills	
Digital skills (digital literacy)	
Research skills (information literacy)	
Problem solving skills and Higher Order Thinking (critical and reflective thinking)	
Correctness and accuracy	
Organisation skills	
Presentation skills	
Completeness	

Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of three months, during which the students completed three collaborative projects in a wiki-based learning environment. The projects were designed to align with the students' curriculum and focused on real-world topics that required the application of 21st-century skills and new literacies. The teacher introduced the projects, explained the assessment criteria, and guided the students through the collaborative process.

The three projects: Presentation and justification

In all three projects the students worked in groups of three. Before the implementation of the projects, the learners were informed about the aims and objectives and they were familiarized with the use of the wiki. Each group received an invitation to the wiki via the email of a group member and a separate session was organized to make sure that all participants were adequately informed about the benefits of group work and the incorporation of technology into instruction. Special

emphasis was placed on the evaluation of the projects, the assessment tools were thoroughly discussed and the criteria set were clarified.

Project “Thank you, Dr Hawking”

In the planning stage the teacher informed the students about the topic and the end product, which involved writing a profile story of the scientist Stephen Hawking, including his life and accomplishments. She also presented the occasion for the project, which was the celebration of the World Science Day for Peace and Development and announced that the student’s profile story would be uploaded on the school website.

Then, in the implementation project the students did a brainstorming activity during which they had to discuss about four great scientists, comment on a quote by Stephen Hawking and reflect on the contribution of pioneering minds in the evolution of the human race. Afterwards, the students had to visit the resource links provided and fill in a table about the life of Stephen Hawking, write a presentation of one of his books or of a film about him and write a number of interview questions addressed to him. Within the wiki environment, groups post comments to each other as designated and present their work to the rest of the class. Finally, the groups produced a profile story of Stephen Hawking. Each group had to write a different part according to the guidelines given. Before joining the parts of the story together, groups use a checklist to review and edit each other’s work making any necessary modifications, additions or corrections.

Lastly, in the evaluation stage, the students filled in the peer-assessment and the self-assessment form and they were provided with some feedback based on the teacher’s anecdotal notes and the criteria illustrated in the evaluation rubric.

Project 1 task sheets

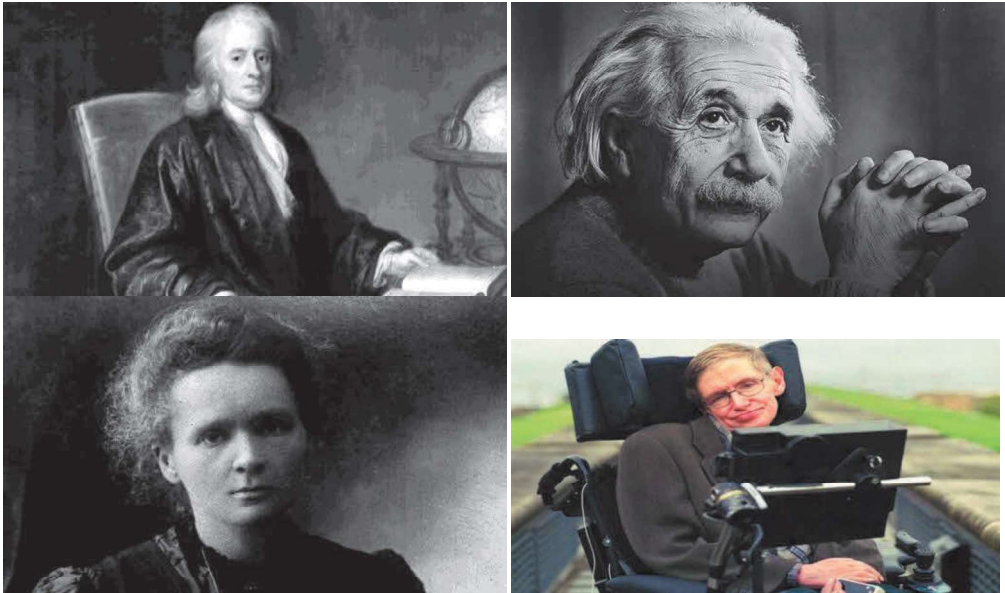
Thank you, Dr Hawking!

Planning

This project will provide you with the opportunity to probe into one of the greatest minds of our times. Research his life and accomplishments and prepare a profile story about him!!!

Implementation

1. Look at the pictures below and discuss the questions given within your group. Then, discuss your answers with the rest of the class.



QUESTIONS

- a) Do you recognize any of the people in the photos?
 - b) What do they have in common?
 - c) Discuss the following quote by Stephen Hawking “The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge”.
 - d) Why are pioneering minds so crucial to the evolution of the human race? Discuss.
2. Visit the resource links provided and fill in the table about the life of one of the above scientists, Stephen Hawking. Once finished, each group should check each other’s replies and post comments by adding/correcting information if deemed necessary as follows:
Group A→Group B, Group B→Group C, Group C→Group A



Birthdate & birthplace	
Primary and secondary schooling	

Undergraduate years	
Graduate years	
Family status-personal life	
Disability	
Known for (theories)	
Awards and Honors	
Personal views	
Impact	

- Now visit <http://www.hawking.org.uk/books.html> , browse the books Steven Hawking has written, discuss within your group and choose a book of his or a movie which you find appealing. Keep notes and write a short presentation of the book/movie for the rest of the class by giving reasons why you would like to read this book or watch this movie (~ 80-100 words). Groups read each other's presentation and post comments as above.



4. Now you have a pretty good idea of this brilliant scientist. How would it be if you could interview him for yourselves? Work within your group, study the advice in the relevant sites provided, write down your interview questions and present them to the rest of the class.



5. In groups, prepare a profile story about Stephen Hawking to be uploaded on the school website on the occasion of World Science Day for Peace and Development, which is celebrated on November 4 and highlights the important role of science in society.

Groups should write their part of the story as follows:

Group A: Introduction – Schooling/studies – Family/Personal life – Disability

Group B: Theories – Awards & Honors – Publications & Films

Group C: Personal views – Impact

- Jointly decide on an appropriate title for your profile story.
- Post comments on each other's part of the story.
- Use the following checklist to review, edit and evaluate each other's part of the story. You can also ask your teacher for feedback. Post comments to explain your interventions if needed. After you do so, join the parts together.
- Does the opening paragraph clearly state the topic and grab the attention of the reader?
- Is the text informative enough?
- Is all info fact-checked and confirmed?
- Have quotes been added?
- Have you captured the essence of the person you are profiling and shown why he is relevant and interesting?
- Is the style and the tone appropriate?
- Is there varied word choice?
- Is there a variety of sentence structures including conjunctions, linking words and relative clauses?
- Is spelling and punctuation correct?
- Is there an appropriate ending?
- Have you added a clear and catchy title?
- What else could you use to supplement your profile story?

$$S = \frac{\pi A k c^3}{2 h G}$$

Resource links

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Hawking
www.hawking.org.uk/
<https://www.biography.com/people/stephen-hawking-9331710>
<http://mentalfloss.com/article/32149/11-incredible-stephen-hawking-quotes>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6MyOXk98DI>
<https://mashable.com/2018/03/14/stephen-hawking-disability-advocates/#9av9.um30iqE>
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/mar/14/from-the-simpsons-to-pink-floyd-stephen-hawking-in-popular-culture>
http://cubreporters.org/sample_profiles
<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/students/writing/voices.html?mcubz=1>
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/mar/14/a-life-in-science-stephen-hawking>
<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/interviewquest.htm>
<http://www.fromthelabbench.com/from-the-lab-bench-science-blog/2015/9/11/help-im-interviewing-a-scientist-what-do-i-ask>
<https://www.wikihow.com/Conduct-an-In-Person-Interview>
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>
<http://www.thesaurus.com/>

Project “Eat your way to success”

The second project was related to food choices before exams. In the planning stage, the students were exposed to the topic and the expected outcome, namely a leaflet with guidelines and advice about students’ diet before exams. What followed was a number of brainstorming activities including a number of photos showing different foods and engaging students in conversation and a table where students had to categorize some foods given.

During the implementation stage, the students proceeded to their research through a number of tasks. Initially, they made a list of brain foods and another one with foods to avoid before exams. Next, they had to prepare an appropriate breakfast meal and explain the reasons for choosing each food included. Before the final product, they also had to fill in a food pyramid showing the frequency of consumption of various foods before an exam. Finally, the groups prepared the leaflet. Throughout the

process, they posted comments to each other to supplement information or make corrections if needed. The teacher had previously notified the students that their leaflet would be printed and distributed to the school population before their final exams.

In the evaluation stage, the evaluation routine of the first project was followed as described above.

Project 2 task sheets

Eat your way to success!

Planning

This project intends to help you ace your exams! Make the right food choices before the big day, fuel your brain and walk on the path of success by making the most of your mind!!!

Implementation

Look at the photos below and answer the questions that follow.



- Briefly describe the photos.
- How are the two photos related?
- What kind of food would you rather eat before an exam? Why?
- Put the following foods and drinks in the category you think they belong to. Try to justify your choices. You will have the chance to confirm your answers further down as you proceed with your research.

eggs – nuts – soda – cola – muffins – tea – yoghurt
– pizza – low-fat milk – coffee – bananas – cookies

Brain boosting	Brain blocking

2. Visit the sites provided and make a list of foods/beverages known as brain foods. Compare answers with the other groups and supplement your list.



3. Note down some kinds of food/beverages that should be avoided before exams. Present them to the rest of the class and explain why.

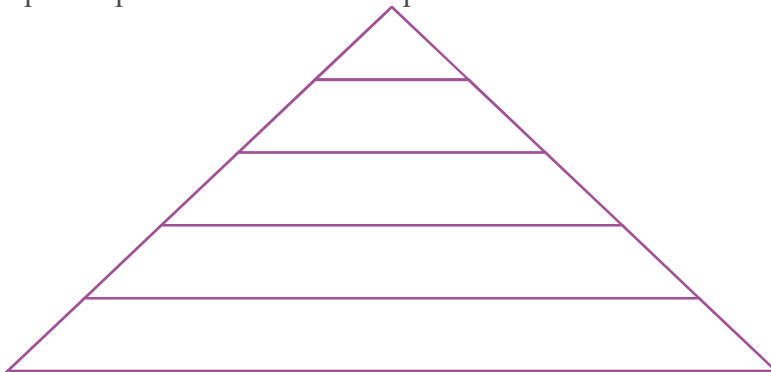


4. Plan a breakfast meal you would recommend your fellow students before an important exam. Justify your choices. Then groups should post comments about each other's meal.



Type of food	Reason for choosing it
	→
	→
	→
	→
	→

5. Create a food pyramid outlining the frequency of some kinds of food/beverages to be consumed before an exam. Compare your food pyramid to the ones of the other groups and post comments on the position of certain kinds of food in the pyramid.



5. Prepare a leaflet with guidelines and advice concerning food choices before exams. Your leaflet will be printed and distributed to the school population to help your fellow students with their diet before the final exams. Groups should work as follows.

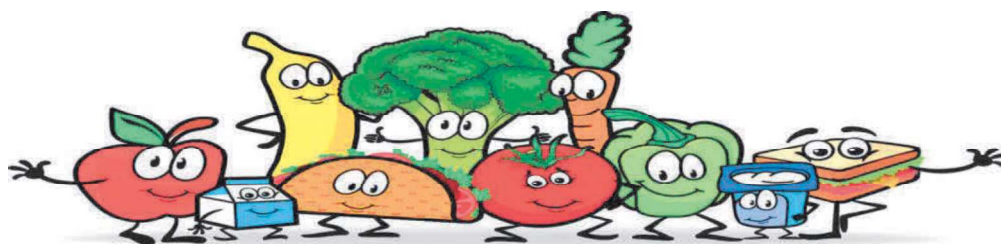
Group A: Introduction – brain boosting food (include examples and outline benefits)

Group B: Brain blocking food (include examples and outline drawbacks)

Group C: Beverages (to drink or not to drink examples with reasons) – Conclusion

- Jointly decide on an appropriate title to accompany the text on your leaflet.
- Post comments on each other's part of the text.
- Use the following checklist to review, edit and evaluate each other's part of the text. You can also ask your teacher for feedback. Post comments to explain your interventions if needed. After you do so, join the parts together.

- Does the opening paragraph clearly state the topic and grab the attention of the reader?
- Is the text informative enough?
- Is all info fact-checked and confirmed?
- Is the style and the tone appropriate?
- Have you used appropriate phrases to introduce your advice and examples?
- Is there varied word choice?
- Is there a variety of sentence structures including conjunctions, linking words and relative clauses?
- Is formatting, spelling and punctuation correct?
- Have you used appropriate headings to signal the different sections of your text?
- Is there an appropriate conclusion?
- Have you added a clear and catchy title?
- Have you taken care of graphics and/or photos?



Resource links

<https://www.developinghumanbrain.org/best-brain-foods-to-eat-before-taking-a-test/>

<https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/brain-food-what-eat-when-revising>

<https://bebrainfit.com/brain-foods-test-exam/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/feb/12/its-not-just-in-the-genes-the-foods-that-can-help-and-harm-your-brain>

<https://truweight.in/blog/food-and-nutrition/diet-during-exams-for-good-memory-and-concentration.html>

<http://www.thehealthsite.com/fitness/10-changes-in-your-kids-diet-to-help-them-top-their-exams/>

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>

<http://www.thesaurus.com/>

Project “Green School, Smart School!”

The third project was designed with a view to raising the students’ environmental awareness. After the teacher provided the students with all the necessary information during the planning stage, the students watched two videos about Earth Day and discussed a number of related questions which focused on the importance of the particular day, their feelings about what they watched and their attitude about taking action to protect the environment.

After browsing the recommended sites, the groups had to produce a short paragraph about the history of this special day and its significance. Then, they made a list of items that make waste accumulate in their school and looked for viable solutions in order to create a greener school in terms of waste reduction. During the process, groups consulted the relevant sites and posted comments to each other to supplement ideas. As a final product, the students had to write an article about green school practices to be uploaded on the school website. After each group had written the assigned part of the article, the parts were joined together and students made any necessary additions, alterations and corrections along the lines of a checklist provided.

Lastly, the students moved on to the evaluation stage. Once again, they were given enough time to fill in the two evaluation forms and they were offered feedback on the basis of the predetermined criteria.

Project 3 task sheets

Green School, Smart School!

Planning

This project is a great learning experience that will provide you with the opportunity to create a culture of conservation at your school. So, don't waste time! Take the initiative and go green!

Implementation

1. Watch the embedded videos and discuss the questions that follow.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV_t-wwiIA0

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6LUaGy1ChA>



Questions

- What is celebrated on Earth Day?
- Do you think it is important to celebrate this day? Why?
- How did the facts mentioned in the videos make you feel?
- Would you like to take action and celebrate Earth Day every day?
- Discuss the following quote: "It's not enough to prepare our children for the future. We must prepare the future for our children".

2. Earth Day is going to be celebrated pretty soon worldwide. Browse the relevant sites and write a short paragraph about the history and the importance of this day. Then each group should post comments on the other two groups' paragraphs.



3. Waste reduction is one of the objectives of Earth Day. Make a list of items that make waste accumulate in your school. Then groups should supplement each other's list by posting comments.



4. Browse the relevant sites and note down viable ideas that could easily be implemented in your school to make it greener as far as waste reduction is concerned. Then groups should post comments about each other's ideas as previously.



5. You have decided to make Earth Day a starting point for a greener school and you are determined to persuade the rest of the students in your school to join in. Write an article (about 250-300 words) for the school website about making your school more eco-friendly by suggesting some good practices that could be adopted by the school population. Groups should write as follows.

Group A: Introduction – Earth Day history and importance

Group B: Practices & reasons for adopting them

Group C: More practices & reasons for adopting them – Conclusion

Once finished, join the parts of your article together and consult the following checklist. Decide on an appropriate title for your article. Make any necessary changes by posting comments.

- Does the opening paragraph clearly state the topic and grab the attention of the reader?
- Is the text informative and persuasive enough?
- Is all info fact-checked and confirmed?
- Have you avoided repetition of ideas?
- Is the style and the tone appropriate?
- Have you used appropriate phrases to introduce your suggestions?
- Is there varied word choice?
- Is there a variety of sentence structures including conjunctions, linking words and relative clauses?
- Is formatting, spelling and punctuation correct?
- Is there an appropriate and compelling conclusion?
- Have you added a clear and catchy title?
- Have you taken care of supplementary material such as graphics and/or photos?



Resource links

<https://www.earthday.org/earthday/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/earth-day>

<http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/wa/WA1561.pdf>

http://www.hamiltoncountyrecycles.org/schools/reducing_waste_at_school

<http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/nationalgreenweeksub/waste-reduction-tips/tips-to-use-less-plastic.html>

http://www.nswai.com/pdf/tc_30mar15/top%20tips%20to%20reduce%20waste%20in%20school.pdf

<https://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/responsible-living/stories/16-simple-ways-reduce-plastic-waste>

<https://harmony1.com/recycling-waste-management-schools/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6LUaGy1ChA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV_t-wwiIA0

<https://gogreeninitiative.org/>

Justification for the design of the projects

All three projects constitute WebQuests, which, according to Dodge (1997) are “inquiry-oriented activities in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet”. Incorporating the Internet into the EFL classroom does not require expertise and WebQuests as group activities foster communication and collaboration. Learners did not only have to unearth information but they were expected to use their critical thinking skills to transform it in order to complete a task. The resources the students had to rely on were given because students did not merely have to look for information but to use it in a constructive way within certain time boundaries (Chandler, 2003).

Moreover, special attention was paid to the quality of the web-based resources, so that they were content and age appropriate for the particular target group. Throughout the process students were given clear step-by-step guidelines in order to reach task achievement. Each time great effort was made to provide the students with authentic tasks in order to raise motivation (March, 2000). Molebash and Dodge (2003) stress the importance of having students solve real-world problems which fall within their range of interests. The students’ work was meaningful to them because they had to use the knowledge acquired in the classroom to do something which was directly related to their lives and had an impact on the real world, their school. Not only were the materials and the resources authentic but also the output and the audience. According to Stoller (2006), the greatest benefit of PBL is the authenticity of experience and language. Larmer (2012) adds that equally important is the authenticity that is derived from the fact that students use tools, follow processes and complete tasks similar to the ones encountered by adults in the real world or by professionals in the workplace.

Furthermore, a decision was made for students to work in a wiki environment as wikis are user-friendly tools that allow learners to collaborate, share knowledge and peer-comment (Richardson, 2009) simply and easily as well as constantly edit and update their work. By allowing learners to build new knowledge based upon previous knowledge wikis enhance scaffolding and social interaction. Working in the wiki the students were no longer passive recipients of information but rather creators of content. As a consequence, their digital literacy skills were boosted (Sura, 2015) since they became authors, reviewers, evaluators and providers of feedback.

In addition, the projects paved the way for the implementation of innovative assessment modes. Dierick and Dotchy (2001) emphasize the importance of assessment in the learning process. This means that better learning outcomes can be achieved if assessment is planned strategically. Following Biggs' (2003) suggestion, the evaluation scheme implemented was designed so as to be congruent to the aims and objectives of the projects. Thus, self-assessment was aimed at heightening the students' responsibility and participation in the learning process (Boud,1995) and peer-assessment helped the students gain a deeper understanding of the criteria upon which their own work was also assessed.

Of course, the teacher retained her role as an assessor and also based her evaluation on the anecdotal records derived from observation and the evaluation rubric designed. Both the process and the tangible product were assessed each time. However, the emphasis was on formative assessment and on providing valuable feedback which would trigger opportunities for student reflection (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015a) rather than rating students in numerical format.

Research Findings

Peer-Assessment Form Results

The peer-assessment results demonstrated that students were largely capable of providing constructive feedback on their peers' contributions. Students utilized the assessment rubric effectively, offering balanced comments that highlighted both strengths and areas for improvement (Falchikov, 2005). For example, one student noted, "My partner was very organized, but we could have spent more time

brainstorming creative ideas." This aligns with findings from Finch (2004), who argues that peer assessment fosters a deeper understanding of evaluation criteria and encourages collaboration among students.

Nevertheless, some students initially felt uncomfortable evaluating their peers, particularly when providing critical feedback. Over time, as students became more familiar with the process, they developed confidence in their evaluations, suggesting that peer assessment can also enhance students' communication and critical thinking skills (Stiggins, 2001).

Self-Assessment Form Results

Self-assessment forms revealed that students were reflective about their own contributions to the project. The majority of students reported that the self-assessment process helped them identify their strengths and areas for improvement (Sadler, 1989). One student commented, "I realized that I was good at organizing the tasks, but I need to work on being more creative." This reflects the role of self-assessment in promoting metacognitive awareness, as described by Hattie (2009), who notes that self-assessment encourages students to take ownership of their learning.

Interestingly, some students underestimated their abilities, particularly in areas such as creativity and leadership. These findings suggest that providing students with clear guidance and examples during self-assessment can help them develop a more accurate self-concept (Huerta-Macías, 1995).

Teacher Assessment Rubric Findings

The teacher's evaluations, based on the analytic rubric, provided a structured and objective assessment of students' performance. The rubric results indicated that most students demonstrated proficiency in key 21st-century skills, particularly collaboration and problem-solving (Moursund, 1999). The use of the rubric ensured consistency in assessment and allowed the teacher to provide targeted feedback that helped students improve their performance over time (Stiggins, 2001).

However, the results also highlighted a gap in creativity. While students followed the project guidelines closely, there was less evidence of original or inventive ideas.

According to Pearlman (2010), fostering creativity in project-based learning environments requires explicit encouragement and support from educators.

Anecdotal Records

The teacher's anecdotal records provided qualitative insights into student behavior and group dynamics during the project. Observations highlighted moments where students demonstrated effective collaboration, such as when a group worked together to resolve technical issues with the wiki platform (Chao, 2007). These instances reflected the students' ability to apply digital literacy skills in real-world contexts, a critical component of 21st-century education (Bransford *et al.*, 1999).

However, the records also captured moments of tension, particularly around task delegation within groups. One observation noted, "Some students took on leadership roles, while others were more passive." These observations suggest that while collaborative learning fosters teamwork, additional support may be needed to ensure equitable participation among all group members (Moursund, 1999).

Class Conference Results

The class conference at the end of the project allowed students to reflect on their experiences and share feedback with their peers. Many students expressed satisfaction with the collaborative nature of the projects, noting that working in groups helped them learn from each other (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). One student remarked, "I learned a lot from my group members, especially how to solve problems when things didn't go as planned."

The teacher used the conference as an opportunity to provide feedback and encourage students to reflect on areas for improvement. This reflective process is key to fostering self-regulation and metacognition, as highlighted by Sadler (1989). Students who participated actively in the discussion demonstrated a greater awareness of their own learning processes and were more likely to set personal goals for future projects.

Discussion of the Assessment Scheme

The findings of this research support the hypothesis that alternative assessment tools - particularly peer and self-assessment - are effective in evaluating new literacies and 21st-century skills. The active involvement of students in the assessment process increased their motivation and helped them develop a deeper understanding of the criteria used to evaluate their work (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

The use of technology, particularly wikis, played a critical role in enhancing collaboration and digital literacy. As Chao (2007) explains, wikis provide a platform for students to co-create content and engage in real-time feedback, both of which are essential for developing new literacies in the digital age. However, the results also indicated a need for additional support in fostering creativity and ensuring equitable participation among all students (Pearlman, 2010).

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

This study illustrates the potential of alternative assessment methods, such as peer and self-assessment, in fostering the development of 21st-century skills and new literacies in a project-based, wiki-enriched learning environment. By involving students in the assessment process, educators can provide a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning while simultaneously promoting engagement, motivation, and autonomy (Falchikov, 2005).

The findings indicate that while students demonstrated significant progress in collaboration and problem-solving, there is room for improvement in cultivating creativity. According to Pearlman (2010), fostering creativity in the classroom requires not only well-designed tasks but also explicit encouragement from educators. As this study has shown, alternative assessment practices, particularly in technology-rich environments, can support the development of higher-order thinking skills, but additional strategies may be needed to nurture creative thinking.

Future studies should explore the long-term impacts of alternative assessment methods on student learning and skill development. Furthermore, research could investigate the effectiveness of these practices across different subjects and educational levels, particularly in diverse learning environments (Hattie, 2009).

Exploring how parents and other stakeholders can support alternative assessment practices may also provide further insights into improving student outcomes.

In terms of Teacher Professional Development, teachers should receive targeted training in alternative assessment methods and how to implement them effectively in the classroom (Stiggins, 2001). This training should also address the integration of technology to enhance collaboration and digital literacy (Chao, 2007).

Additionally, continuous, formative assessment should be prioritized to provide students with ongoing feedback and opportunities for reflection (Sadler, 1989). Schools should also consider integrating project-based learning and alternative assessment practices into their curricula to promote student engagement and develop key skills for the 21st century (Moursund, 1999).

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Short Bios

Eleni Griva is Vice-Rector for International Affairs, Life Long Learning and Student Affairs. She is a Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Western Macedonia (UOWM) – Greece and the Director of the Research Institute of Greek Language of the University Center for Innovation and Research.

Her research interests include: Teaching Greek as a Second/foreign language bilingualism/multilingualism, Education of immigrant children, Language learning strategies, Alternative Assessment in language learning, Intercultural Communication.

Ioannis Galantomos is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Department of Linguistic & Intercultural Studies at the University of Thessaly. His research interests are related to Applied (Cognitive) Linguistics, teaching of Greek as a L1 and as a L2/FL, teaching of the vocabulary of a L2/FL, Bi-/Multilingualism and Bilingual Special Education.

Ifigenia Kofou holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics. She is an English language teacher and the school principal at the 2nd Senior High School of Thermi ‘Giorgos Ioannou’. She is also a tutor at Post-graduate Programs at the Hellenic Open University and the Frederick University. She has published four books and numerous papers in international/national refereed journals, conference proceedings and special editions. Her research interests include language learning, teaching and assessment, CLIL, alternative assessment, adult education, research methodology, ICT in education, language learning and intercultural communication strategies.

Garyfallia Mazioti graduated from the School of English at AUTT and holds an M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign/International Language from HOU. With 23 years of teaching experience in both the private and public sectors, she currently works in junior high schools. She consistently attends seminars and workshops to stay updated on the latest teaching methods and learning strategies, which she ties to

implement in her work as she believes that there are no limits to knowledge and self-improvement.

Areti Anatolaki has graduated from the ‘‘School of English’’ AUTH. She has acquired her M.Ed in ‘‘Teaching English as a Foreign/International language’’ from HOU. She has also studied acting at the ‘‘Theatre of Changes’’ and has attended numerous seminars and drama workshops. She is interested in the implementation of innovative educational techniques, alternative assessment and drama in education. She has taught English in Primary and Secondary education, IVT and Centers for Education and Lifelong Learning. She is currently teaching in Primary Education in Sitia.

Marina Kollatou is an English Language Education Consultant. She has worked as an English teacher and as a Head teacher for several years. Her research interests are related to the teaching of English as a foreign/second language, assessment, intercultural education, multilingualism, ICT, organization and management of school units, pedagogical science, philosophy. She has published several articles on the above thematic areas.

Alexandra Pasi teaches English as a Foreign Language in secondary education. She has a degree in Literature & Linguistics from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and a Master's degree in Education from Hellenic Open University with a special focus on alternative assessment, inclusion and pluriculturalism.

Eleni Sofou graduated from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and Master's degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign/International Language and Organization & Management of Educational Institutes. She has experience as an English teacher in the private sector and participated as a presenter in the 4th and 5th International Conferences on Management of Educational Units.

Anastasia Geralexi has been working as an English Language teacher in Secondary Education since 2003. She studied English Language and Literature at National Kapodistrian University of Athens, holds a Master's Degree in English Language Teaching from the Hellenic Open University and is a certified adult educator. She has participated in conferences, seminars and educational meetings. Her research interests include alternative assessment and educational technology. She actively participates in learning communities that promote the sharing of knowledge and educational experiences and the design and implementation of collaborative projects.

