

# Reflective practice: assessment of assignments in English for Specific Purposes

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## Abstract

The construct *alternative assessment* has been widely used in higher education. It is often defined as any type of assessment of learners who provide a response to an assignment. The key features of alternative assessment are active participation of learners in self-evaluation of their performance, and the development of reflective thinking through *reflective thinking* (Schön, 1983). The success of alternative assessment in language teaching is predetermined by student's performance and demonstrates learner's language proficiency in contemporary communicative classrooms. This paper aims at researching the influence of students' evaluations of various assignments for their linguistic development in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The study uses learners' assessment of different assignments and learners' in-course and post-course written reflections on benefits to language mastery. Learners' assignments included were contributions to portfolios (dossiers), such as essays and summaries, oral presentations, short impromptu talks, creative tasks, tests, and self-assessment notes (reflections) on activities in learning ESP. Findings were obtained for two streams of the project participants. Results showed that self-assessment was beneficial for learners' linguistic development. The context of learners' reflections reveals that the attitudes to various assignments are affected by success or failure in students' performance. Reflective practice might help teachers develop ways of dealing with previously identified difficulties and improve the quality of teaching.

**Key words:** self-assessment, assignments, portfolio, reflective practice, linguistic development.

## Resumen

### *La práctica reflexiva: opiniones sobre la realización de trabajos evaluables en la enseñanza del inglés con fines específicos*

La *evaluación alternativa* ha sido muy utilizada en la educación superior. Ésta suele definirse como cualquier tipo de evaluación docente realizada como respuesta a la realización de un trabajo. Las características fundamentales de la evaluación alternativa son la participación activa del alumno en la autoevaluación de su rendimiento y el desarrollo del pensamiento reflexivo a través de la *práctica reflexiva* (Schön, 1983). El éxito de la evaluación alternativa en la enseñanza de lenguas está predeterminado por el rendimiento del alumno que queda demostrado mediante la competencia comunicativa de los alumnos que se registra en las clases actuales. El presente trabajo investiga la influencia de las evaluaciones por parte de los alumnos de diversos trabajos en el desarrollo del inglés con fines específicos. En el estudio se ha empleado una encuesta para determinar la utilidad de las distintas tareas realizadas en clase. Además se han incluido las reflexiones planteadas por los alumnos durante el curso y después del mismo con relación a su percepción de los beneficios que acarrea el dominio de una lengua extranjera en general y del inglés con fines específicos en particular. Entre los trabajos se incluyen las contribuciones realizadas al portafolio así como redacciones y resúmenes de presentaciones orales, conversaciones improvisadas, ejercicios creativos, pruebas y también apuntes de autoevaluaciones sobre las actividades de aprendizaje. Las conclusiones se desglosan atendiendo a dos grupos de participantes en el proyecto. Los resultados obtenidos confirman que la autoevaluación beneficia el desarrollo lingüístico de los alumnos. El contexto en el que se formulan las reflexiones pone de manifiesto que la actitud del alumno ante cualquiera de las tareas programadas repercute en el éxito o el fracaso de su rendimiento. La práctica reflexiva puede servir de ayuda a los profesores de lenguas para desarrollar estrategias que les permitan afrontar dificultades concretas y mejorar la calidad de la enseñanza.

**Palabras clave:** autoevaluación, trabajos evaluables, portafolio, práctica reflexiva, desarrollo lingüístico.

## Introduction

Self-evaluation has lately become an important part of learning and teaching foreign languages (FL). Methods of assessment are based on learners' evaluation of their own learning which allows students to reflect on their linguistic development. The importance and relevance of self-assessment is demonstrated by a high number of publications in this area. Portfolio

(dossier) assessment, as one of the ways of self-assessment, has become widely used in educational settings. Its key features are: an alternative to traditional testing, ways to self-evaluate one's knowledge, skills and progress in learning, and active participation of learners in the evaluation and development of reflective and critical thinking through reflective practice (Schön, 1983). Success in learning often depends on learners' interest and subsequent motivation to study. However, the learners' perception of the usefulness of various class activities has not been sufficiently explored. There seems to be a discrepancy between teachers' and learners' views on benefits of the same activity (i.e., quite often unpopular activities among teachers, like grammar exercises or translation from L2 into L1, are perceived by learners as beneficial to their learning).

The aims of this piece of research are: (1) to investigate learners' perceptions of the usefulness of various class activities; (2) to introduce self-evaluation; and (3) to analyze learners' reflections on their learning. In order to achieve these aims the following techniques of research have been used: (i) a survey on the usefulness of class activities; (ii) learners' written reflections on learning outcomes; and (iii) statistical treatment of their responses. Class activities implemented were varied and included computer tasks, creative assignments, discussions, PowerPoint Presentations, listening practice, summary, and essay writing. Traditional testing of learner performance in class activities was replaced by self- and peer-assessment. Student self-evaluation and peer-evaluation was submitted either in anonymous or signed form aiming in order to clarify whether anonymity might influence the significance of the findings.

## Literature review

Alternative assessment has been widely used in assessing the effectiveness of education at tertiary level:

Portfolio assessment is one means of alternative assessment and refers to the purposeful, selective collection of learner work and reflective self-assessment that is used to document progress and achievement over time. (Douglas, 2000: 241)

The key features of alternative assessment are the active participation of learners in the evaluation of their own performance and the development of

reflective thinking. The success of alternative assessment depends on the performance that shows what learners can do with language in communicative classrooms. Self-evaluation is an important part of alternative assessment; it is usually presented in the form of reflections on one's performance. Alternative assessments may include self-evaluation of performance in listening practice, written essays, oral presentations, or various contributions to either paper or e-portfolios. Alternative assessment is often understood as the utilization of non-traditional approaches in judging students' performance. Differences between traditional and alternative assessment are highlighted by Douglas-Brown (2003) and compared in Table 1. It should be noted, however, that many forms of assessment fall in between the two, and some combine the best of both.

Traditional Assessment	Alternative Assessment
One-shot, standardized exams	Continuous long-term assessment
Timed, multiple-choice form	Untimed, free-response format
Decontextualized test item	Contextualized communicative tasks
Scores suffice for feedback	Individualized feedback and washback
Norm-referenced scores	Criterion-referenced scores
Focus on the <i>right</i> answer	Open-ended, creative answers
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented to process
Non-interactive performance	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation

Table 1. Traditional vs. alternative assessment (Douglas-Brown, 2003: 13).

Our Google search on February 14, 2007 produced 71,700,000 hits for *alternative assessment*. Portfolios have been known as a means of alternative assessment for evaluating the effectiveness of learning since the late 1980s. Another Google search produced 3,840,000 for *language portfolio* (14 February 2007). The amount of online references highlights the importance and relevance of these forms of assessment in the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

## Portfolio assessment

The portfolio, as an element of authentic assessment, has captured the interest of many instructors who want a more comprehensive way to assess their students' knowledge and skills, to have students actively participate in the evaluation process, and to simultaneously develop students' skills of

reflective thinking. Following Banta (2003), five key characteristics of portfolio are: an alternative to traditional testing; comprehensive ways to assess students' knowledge and skills; authenticity of assessment; students' active participation in the evaluation process; and simultaneous development of students' reflective thinking. A range of definitions of the term *portfolio* illustrates the growth and diversity of its use. For some teachers, the portfolio is a part of an alternative assessment program, and it can either include a record of students' achievements or simply document their best work. For others, the portfolio documents the students' learning process, and can be used as a means of promoting learner reflection. The definition of the portfolio can shift from product to process according to the context and design of its development (Nunes, 2004).

The European Language Portfolio (*language passport* together with *language biography* and *dossier*) was developed and piloted by the Modern Languages Division of the Council of Europe and was launched during the European Year of Languages 2001 as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. It is a document in which learners can record their language learning and cultural experiences. The portfolio has pedagogic and reporting functions (Bruen, 1999). Dossier portfolios can include a wide variety of materials: teacher notes, teacher-completed checklists, students' self-reflections, written summaries, reading logs, or audiotapes of student talks. An important dimension of portfolio assessment is active student involvement in the process of assessment. Portfolios provide teachers with a wealth of information upon which to base instructional decisions and to evaluate student progress. Portfolios can serve as a means of motivating students and promoting their self-evaluation and self-understanding. Dossier-portfolios display a variety of students' work produced under diverse conditions and collected during a specified period of time (Pikulski & Cooper, 1997). Central to the purposes of portfolios are the reflections or commentaries on the entries which are typically present in the American portfolios. According to Johns (1993), through reflections students can develop metacognitive awareness of texts and situations, can improve their strategies dealing with various tasks as well as may judge their own work and compare performance in different assignments.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) for Higher Education (Vosicki, 2003) conforms to the common Principles and Guidelines of the Council of Europe, and consists of three parts like its companion piece The European Language Portfolio within the Common European Framework of Reference

for Languages. According to Little (2005), there are three reasons for engaging learners in self-assessment and taking account of the results: first, there is a learner-centredness; secondly, self-assessment is an integral part of evaluation procedures which aim at encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning; thirdly, it is a tool for lifelong language learning. However, the ELP for Higher Education is somewhat different: it contains supplementary checklists that include specific descriptors for the linguistic skills required to study in the higher education environment (Vosicki, 2003). Moreover, the dossier consists of a Working Dossier (examples of records of progress in professional learning) and a Dossier for Presentation (composed of selected examples of work for specific purpose). The most important feature of the ELP is that it supports reflective learning in which self-assessment and goal setting play a central role (Little, 2005).

Generally speaking, both types of portfolios (dossiers) capitalize on students' natural tendency to save work and, hence, become an effective way of getting students to take a second look and think about how they could improve future work. Portfolios can provide structure for involving students in developing and understanding criteria for good efforts and in applying the criteria to their own work (McCabe, 2004). The key drawback of portfolios is that they place additional demands on teachers and students. Teachers need additional time for planning, developing strategies and materials, meeting with individual students and small groups, and reviewing and commenting on student work. Portfolios have been characterized by some teachers as a worthwhile burden with tangible results in instruction and student motivation.

## **Advantages and disadvantages of portfolio assessment**

Pros and cons of portfolios assessment are described in detail by Epstein (2007). This author highlights the key advantages of portfolio assessment as follows: they allow the teacher to see the student as an individual, each with his or her own unique set of characteristics, needs, and strengths; transform the role of the teacher away from generating comparative rankings of achievement and toward improving student achievement through evaluative feedback and self-reflection; help teachers standardize and evaluate the skills and knowledge students acquire without limiting creativity in the classroom; help students be more accountable for the work they do in class and the

skills and knowledge they acquire; involve students in the assessment process, thus giving them a more meaningful role in improving achievement; invite students to reflect upon their growth and performance as learners.

In the same way, the key disadvantages may be summarized, following Epstein (2007) again, as follows: portfolio assessments may be less reliable or fair than more quantitative or standardized evaluations such as test scores; can be time consuming for teachers and staff, especially if portfolios are done in addition to traditional testing and grading; teachers must develop their own individualized criteria, which can be initially difficult or unfamiliar; data from portfolio assessments can be difficult to analyze or aggregate, particularly over long periods of time.

Portfolio assessment is closely linked to instruction because they reveal weaknesses in instructional processes. Portfolios offer the teacher an in-depth knowledge of the student as a learner and allow the teacher to individualize instruction for the student (Barnhardt & Keatley, 1997). Researchers emphasize that one of the main benefits of portfolio assessment is the promotion of learner reflection. Without reflection, the portfolio remains a folder of the accumulated papers (Coombe & Barlow, 2004). The most common areas of student reflections noted by Nunes (2004) are: syllabus (7%), instruction (36%), learning (43%), and assessment (14%).

The students' experiences using the portfolio framework have been investigated by examining learners' written reflections (Beckett & Slater, 2005). The data source for the study included various items such as learners' weekly entries on their research projects, end-of-term reflections, and interviews. It was found that only one fifth of the 73 participants enjoyed project work; one quarter had mixed feelings, and a 57% perceived it negatively. Moreover, a high course drop-out rate was registered because some students found the course too difficult or believed English classes should be limited to the study of language, and resented being asked to accomplish non-linguistic tasks. In short, learners did not see the value in such tasks.

It has been claimed that the challenges of portfolio assessment to language learners include lower comparability and reliability as well as difficulty to ensure standardized testing conditions. They also pose a scoring problem because criteria require staff training and this is more time consuming than scoring a single norm-referenced test (Gomer, 2001). Also, the usefulness of

various activities and assignments in English classes has been a cause for debate among parties concerned. According to Nunan (1988: 39), there is:

(...) a considerable extent of the mismatch between teacher and learner perceptions of the usefulness of different activities. Learners rated grammar exercises, pronunciation, and error correction more highly than their teachers did, who were more likely to feel comfortable with pair/group work and communication tasks.

Interestingly enough, Spratt (1999) conducted a study to compare learners' preferred activities with teachers' perceptions of what those preferences were, and only a roughly 50% correlation was found. Similarly, another researcher reported learners' dislikes in the following way:

The listening to tapes and course book dialogues was particularly disliked, and the data show that many activities that are currently unpopular in the broadly communicative ethos of ELT –grammar exercises, reading aloud, translation, and so on– are in fact perceived by learners to be conducive to learning. (McDonough, 2002: 407)

Therefore, it is important for language practitioners to clarify what learners' attitudes are towards various assignments, and analyze learners' feedback constantly.

## **Respondents and research method**

The respondents in this research were learners of social work at the Faculty of Social Policy, at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius, Lithuania. There were two samples (streams) of 60 participants aged 19 to 25. They were predominantly females at the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. The first stream refers to the year 2004 (34 students), and the second stream to the year 2005 (26 students). The amount of time spent in the FL environment was 4 hours a week during 3 semesters, which amounted to 192 hours of instruction in English. We delivered a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to assess the usefulness of various activities and assignments in English classes and learners' written reflections on their performance and achievements in these activities. Some excerpts from students' reflections are provided in Appendix 2.

The main content areas of a designed and previously piloted questionnaire



cover the key activities in English classes summarized in 6 items. The questionnaire was piloted at various stages of its development for the pilot group of the students of the same faculty.<sup>1</sup> Based on the feedback received from the pilot group we put together the final version of the questionnaire. The first stream of students submitted anonymous replies and the second stream submitted signed replies. It was interesting to find out if anonymity had exerted any influence on a level of significance that was computed for each activity. The length of time to complete questionnaires did not exceed 15 minutes, and the return rate of questionnaires was excellent (all sheets were returned). After the completion of the questionnaire, learners' responses were carefully analyzed. There were no unanswered questions which simplified the analysis. According to Dornyei (2003), this may also serve as an indication that the design of the questionnaire was adequate.

## Results

The learners' responses to the questionnaire on the usefulness of various activities and assignments used in the English classroom throughout the academic year are presented in charts 1 to 6. These charts display percentage of learners versus their expressed attitudes to usefulness of each activity item. For the sake of clarity, positive responses ("strongly agree" and "agree") and negative responses ("strongly disagree" and "disagree") were added up on an equal basis. This summation does not distort the data. On the contrary, it shows the trend of responses, i.e. the number of positive and negative replies. Double bars in each chart refer to different streams. The first bars display the data submitted by the students in the first stream (34 respondents and signed questionnaires), and the second bars the data submitted by the second stream (26 learners and anonymous replies). The students were asked to rate each statement by circling or writing the appropriate number: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=not sure; 4=agree; and 5=strongly agree.

*Question 1. Writing definitions of professional vocabulary terms is beneficial for my linguistic development.* Chart 1 shows the respondents' opinions of whether learning definitions of vocabulary benefits linguistic development. 70% of the students in the first stream feel that vocabulary definitions are useful to learning. This result is similar to responses of the students in the second stream (73%). There were very few negative responses (6% and 8%, respectively). However about a quarter of the respondents are not sure about

the usefulness of this activity in language classes (24% and 19%, respectively).

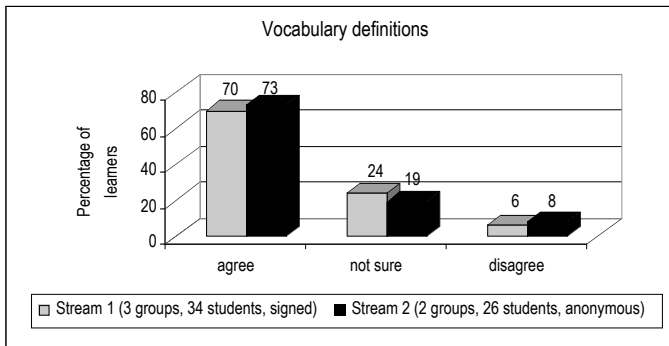


Chart 1. Usefulness of learning definitions of ESP vocabulary.

*Question 2. Writing summaries of professional texts is useful for improving writing skills.* Chart 2 shows the students' views on writing summaries of professional texts. There is an important discrepancy between the first and the second stream. In the second stream, only 23% of students supported this activity, while in the first stream 56% found it beneficial. Almost twice as many learners in the second stream (31%) rejected the activity of summarizing as useful in comparison with 15% of the first investigated sample. The number of undecided students in the second stream was also noticeably higher. As it has been mentioned, the responses of the students in the second stream were anonymous. It seems that anonymity allows learners to be more direct in their responses.

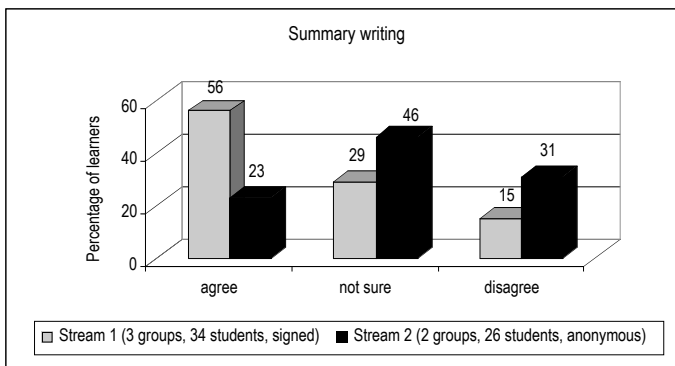


Chart 2. Usefulness of summary writing.

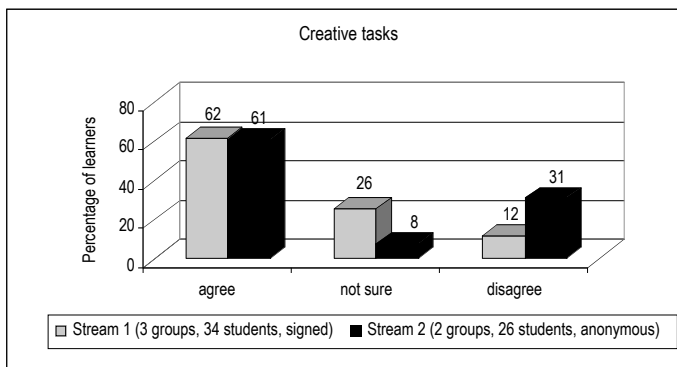


Chart 3. Usefulness of creative tasks.

*Question 3. Doing creative tasks is useful for improving language skills.* As can be seen in Chart 3, positive attitudes to creative tasks do not differ significantly in both samples (62% and 61%, respectively). Negative attitudes differ substantially (12% against 31%). Almost a quarter of the first stream respondents (26%) were not sure about the benefits of creative tasks while in the second stream an 8% were uncertain.

*Question 4. Classroom discussions on various topics are useful for linguistic development.* Chart 4 shows that discussions were the most popular class activity. 88% against 73% supported discussions, and only 12% (in the second stream 19%) were not sure. 8% disliked discussions altogether. As students' reflections show, discussions were problematic for shy and weaker learners.

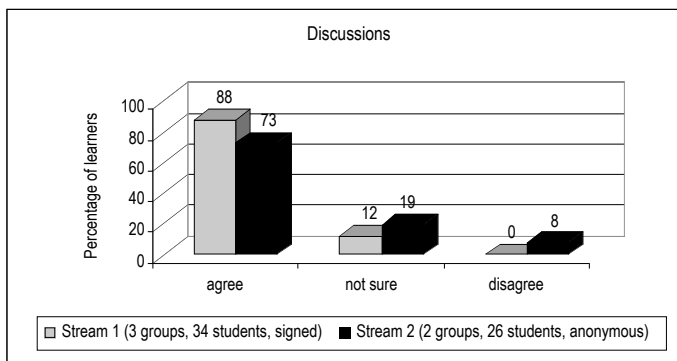


Chart 4. Usefulness of class discussions on various topics.

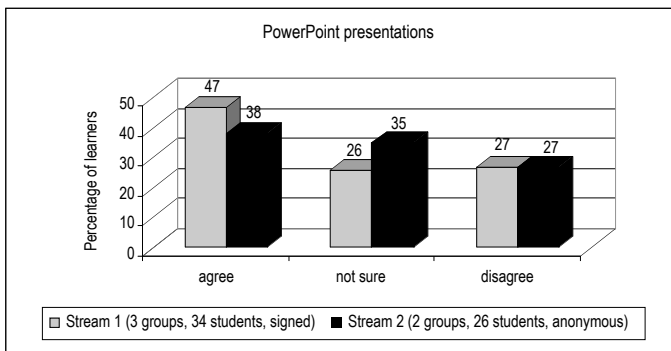


Chart 5. Usefulness of PowerPoint Presentations.

*Question 5. Preparing PowerPoint Presentations and delivering them in front of the audience is beneficial for developing speaking skills.* PowerPoint Presentations seemed to be the most difficult assignments for the majority of the learners (see Chart 5). Slightly fewer than half of the respondents (47%) felt presentations were useful (against 38%). About a quarter was either unsure or did not support the idea of making presentations. The reasons are evident from students' reflections on PowerPoint presentations (Appendix 2). Basically, presentations are disliked by learners who find this task difficult and time consuming to prepare. The most important reason is learners' anxiety and fear of speaking in front of the audience.

*Question 6. Formal testing of professional vocabulary is beneficial to learning.* Surprisingly, the majority of the learners were positive about formal testing (79% in the first stream and 77% in the second stream supported it). As shown in Chart 6, some respondents were uncertain (21% and 15%, respectively). In the second stream, 8% disagreed, but there were no opponents in the first stream. The respondents claimed that formal testing mobilized and stimulated learning and consolidation, while teachers, as a rule, and following Hughes (1999), consider testing as an unnecessary burden.

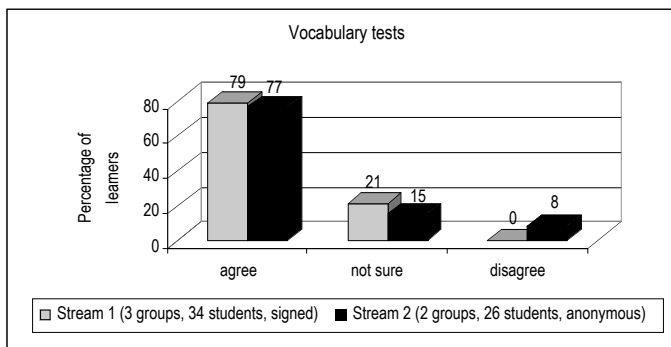


Chart 6. Usefulness of vocabulary tests.

## Processing of data

The results shown in the charts above have been processed statistically in order to determine the significance of the data obtained. Internal consistency reliability was met by satisfying two conditions: multi-item scales were used, and items measured the same target area (Dornyei, 2003). Internal consistency reliability was evaluated by computing Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Normally Cronbach Alpha coefficient is ranged between zero and +1. For well-developed scales containing a few items it ought to approach 0.80 (Dornyei, 2003). In our study, it was 0.83, which ensures reliability of internal consistency.

Generally, formal experiments are analyzed using inferential statistics in order to make inferences on research data. For this purpose, we computed the means and standard deviations for two streams of participants and applied the *t*-test in data analysis. The adjustment for group size was made by using theoretical values and critical values for the *t*-test statistics. If the exact number of a degree of freedom *df* is not shown in the table, we have to take the closest value below it in order to be conservative. This procedure is known as “adjustment for the group size”. Here, group size was adjusted by calculating degrees of freedom, which are determined by subtracting one from the number of participants in each group and then adding the two resulting numbers together. The data of statistical processing of the obtained results are presented in Table 2.

Type of activity	Means and SDs (First stream)	Means and SDs (Second stream)	Calculated <i>t</i> -coefficient	Tabled <i>t</i> -coefficient	Two-tailed significance level
Vocabulary definitions	4.10 0.75	3.50 0.95	2.61	2.390	$p < 0.02$
Summary writing	3.60 1.00	2.90 1.05	2.33	2.000	$p < 0.05$
Creative tasks	4.15 1.11	3.50 1.33	2.03	2.000	$p < 0.05$
Discussions	4.23 0.65	3.67 0.91	2.67	2.660	$p < 0.01$
PowerPoint presentations	3.26 0.96	2.96 1.09	1.13	1.67	$p < 0.10$
Vocabulary tests	4.23 0.68	3.70 0.85	2.61	2.390	$p < 0.02$

Table 2. Mean values, standard deviations (SDs), *t*-test coefficients and two-tailed significance levels ( $df=58$ ).

The investigation was conducted to determine the usefulness of various activities in ESP classes. Data for the two streams of learners are shown in Table 2. The comparison of the mean values for various activities between both streams (columns 2 and 3) shows that the first stream of students (signed replies) had more favourable views on the usefulness of classroom activities than the second stream (anonymous replies), because the mean values are greater for all activities. The values of standard deviations (SDs), which show the scattering of data, are smaller for the first stream except for the activity of summary writing. A *t*-test analysis between means for each activity yielded *t*-values that are shown in the fourth column of Table 2. The comparison of calculated *t*-coefficients with the tabled *t*-values (fifth column) gives the two-tailed significance levels which are shown in the sixth column. It should be noted that significance levels differ for various activities. For vocabulary definitions and vocabulary tests the significance level  $p < 0.02$ , while for summary writing and creative tasks  $p < 0.05$ . Discussion tasks yield  $p < 0.01$ . Interestingly, for PowerPoint Presentations calculated *t*-coefficient is below the critical value 1.67, which implies the non-existence of significance. In this experiment, anonymous replies yield less favourable attitude to all class activities.

## Alternative assessment: learners' reflections on class activities

As it has already been mentioned, the reflection on the usefulness of class activities to learning during the academic year makes an important

contribution to alternative assessment. Post-course reflections are unbiased due to being irrelevant to evaluation (grade) of students' performance and might have a positive context in lifelong learning. The excerpts from the reflections of 19 students are shown in Appendix 2 as a way of example. The language has not been corrected for the sake of authenticity, and the names of students have been withheld in order to preserve anonymity. It is obvious that learners described their experiences sincerely because they realized the importance of self-evaluation in learning; critical thinking about one's achievements or failures encourages individuals to make more efforts in order to learn better.

## Conclusions and implications

Learners' reflections (feedback) on the usefulness of various assignments in English classes offer significant insights into the learners' progress. Anonymity of responses is important because students feel free to express their true opinions. The data showed that anonymous replies were less favourable while signed replies were more so. Given the disparity of usefulness scores, it is apparent that only statistical processing might provide further clarification. The computation of *t*-coefficients and significance levels allows us to clarify the uncertainty in usefulness scores that are displayed visually in charts for a small sample of 60 students/respondents. Usefulness is questionable for PowerPoint Presentations with higher value of significance level ( $p < 0.10$  shown in Table 2).

English teachers need to examine learners' ongoing feedback and self-evaluation which can help them adjust their teaching to students' needs. Learner's individual written reflections and self-assessment serve best to analyze student's individual difficulties and dislikes, such as grammar, writing essays or listening to long passages. An individualized approach allows teachers to gain each learner's trust and to think of ways for fostering their linguistic development.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A pilot group is a sample of students who are in every way similar to the target group the questionnaire was designed for. Piloting allows the researcher to collect feedback and make alterations in the questionnaire; the pilot test can highlight questions whether questionnaire wording may be ambiguous or too difficult for the students to reply to. Both initial and final piloting was carried out according to the guidelines described in (Dörnyei, 2003).

## Appendix 1. Questionnaire on students' perception of the usefulness of class activities.

Rate the following statements according to the scale by writing the appropriate number:

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

- 1) Writing definitions of professional vocabulary terms is beneficial for linguistic development.
- 2) Writing summaries of professional texts is useful for improving writing skills.
- 3) Doing creative tasks is useful for improving language skills.
- 4) Classroom discussions on various topics are useful for linguistic development.
- 5) Preparing PowerPoint Presentations and delivering them in front of the audience is beneficial for developing speaking skills.
- 6) Formal testing of professional vocabulary is useful for learning ESP.

## Appendix 2. Learners' reflections on some assignments.

Student 1. Listening activities are the hardest tasks for me. I want an absolute silence in class while listening, classmates' remarks distract me and I find it difficult to do my best. In speaking activities, I have some ideas, but need time to phrase them. Somebody else speaks out before me – it is frustrating.

Student 2. Creative tasks for me are unclear and sometimes strange. Even if I can find some information, it is hard to say what the key meaning is. Moreover, I want to say something interesting, but fail to do it.

- Student 3. Portfolios are very good ways of learning a language and being able to choose what to contribute gives me a feeling of satisfaction with my learning. Computer tasks and tests helped me to consolidate what I was learning.
- Student 4. Grammar and listening were my weak spots. Now I feel I've improved them. I succeeded because I liked what and how we were learning. I think that writing essays was good for me. I was able to express my own viewpoints on subjects of interest in my own way. That is why I succeeded in doing such tasks.
- Student 5. Vocabulary definitions were the most useful for improving my English skills. I don't like summaries – they are difficult to write, and it takes a lot of time. I enjoyed listening activities and computer tasks most.
- Student 6. All activities in our English classes were good and very useful. I have improved my speaking, listening and writing skills. I am very pleased with my performance. Now I know how I learn best.
- Student 7. English course was not boring. Different creative tasks helped to avoid routine and made our classes exciting. PPPs were the greatest tasks. It takes a lot of time to prepare, but it is a very nice feeling to see the outcome and get an excellent mark. Portfolio was a new thing for me. It was useful – I have improved my vocabulary by preparing various tasks. I think selecting items for portfolios was a demanding task, which sometimes took a lot of time, and I had to follow the criteria in order to do it properly.
- Student 8. Listening to authentic English is still the most difficult thing for me, but I've bettered my listening skills and learned the strategies of listening. The main reason for my difficulty is that I translate while listening and miss further information.