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Linking Learners' Perspectives on Language Assessment Practices to Teachers' Assessment Literacy Enhancement (TALE): Insights from Four European Countries

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ABSTRACT

This article presents results from a needs analysis survey conducted in the first year of a European-funded project entitled 'Teachers' Assessment Literacy Enhancement (TALE)'. The survey questionnaire used asked 1788 learners of English in Cyprus, Germany, Greece and Hungary about their experiences of assessment; which of these they considered conducive to learning and the role feedback played as an instrument of formative assessment. Further questionnaire data from their 658 teachers were included in the data analysis. The results showed that practices differed across contexts. Overall, both learners and teachers reported a wide range of skills and areas to be assessed in the EFL classroom with writing, followed by speaking, being assessed the most. Based on the perceptions reported by the learners, the assessment types used revealed rather traditional approaches with frequent use of e.g. discrete-point tests with closed answers, extended writing and translation. The learners appeared to regard these types of assessment to be supportive of their learning. Feedback given was mostly restricted to marks and brief comments. The perceptions on feedback practices varied among teachers and their learners. Results of the needs analysis were taken as the basis of the online course design for enhancing teachers' language assessment literacy.

Language assessment literacy: definition and conceptualization

Assessment literacy (Stiggins, 1991) has been a focus of scholarly attention in education for over two decades now. It became a focus for language assessment in the early 2000s (Brindley, 2001) and it has been suggested that the specialized nature of our field justifies use of a more specific term: Language Assessment Literacy (henceforth LAL) (Inbar-Lourie, 2008, 2017). Although substantial research activity has been carried out (e.g. Brindley, 2001; Jin, 2010; Lam, 2014; O'Loughlin, 2013) and a plethora of definitions have been produced (e.g. Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2008), it remains impossible to refer to a consensus definition. In this discussion we draw on Inbar-Lourie's (2008, p. 389) perspective that considers someone

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language assessment literate when they have “the capacity to ask and answer critical questions about the purpose for assessment, about the fitness of the tool being used, about testing conditions, and about what is going to happen on the basis of the results”.

The theoretical conceptualization of LAL has evolved over time although there is no generally acknowledged framework of LAL to date (Harding & Kremmel, 2016). Inbar-Lourie (2017, p. 5) characterizes the current stage of LAL scholarship as one of theoretical transition “in the LAL discourse towards a more expanded conceptual and practical repertoire”. This transition seems to be reflected in the evolving frameworks of LAL. Some componential models initially consisted of knowledge and skill but some later efforts added principles (e.g. early models by Brindley, 2001; Davies, 2008; later Fulcher, 2012), some differentiating between “core” and “added” components (Brindley, 2001), some identifying layers of knowledge that are related to one another (Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Xu & Brown, 2016, 2017). Pill and Harding (2013) suggest a scaled model with levels of attainment based on LAL as a relative concept. Multidimensional models take into consideration the dynamic and complex character of the concept by considering different stakeholder needs and by expressing the extent to which they need expertise in the different areas (Taylor, 2013). More recently, Kremmel and Harding (2020) have further developed and empirically tested an adaptation of Taylor’s (2013) developmental and multidimensional model for a number of stakeholders. In terms of stakeholders in the field of LAL, scholars have recently identified stakeholders other than teachers.

The focus of the current article is on learners as one important stakeholder group that has not been at the centre of the LAL discourse. We discuss the results from a subset of data from a questionnaire survey in the European-funded project entitled “Teachers’ Assessment Literacy Enhancement” (TALE). The survey targeted 658 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and their 1788 learners at state schools in Cyprus, Germany, Greece and Hungary, in order to obtain a clear picture of their reported assessment practices and assessment needs, as part of a study in situated and context-sensitive LAL.

In the absence of a universal framework of LAL, the well-known Standards for Teacher Competence suggested by the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education and National Education Association (1990) and Joint Committee on Standards for Education (Klinger et al., 2015) were taken as a conceptual basis and were adapted for the context of EFL teaching. This conceptual framework of LAL formed the basis of the needs analysis questionnaires for teachers and learners in the current study, aiming at analyzing assessment practices and developmental needs pertaining to LAL from both perspectives.

Research on LAL considering different stakeholders

Research on Assessment Literacy in general and on LAL, in particular, has been abundant since the 1990s, with a stronger focus on LAL in the last decade (e.g. Bailey & Brown, 1996; Hasselgreen, Carlsen, & Helness, 2004; Jin, 2010; Malone, 2013; Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000; Taylor, 2009). As an important group of stakeholders, teachers have been given most attention in the scholarly literature (Fulcher, 2012; Gu, 2014; Hidri, 2015; Kim, Chapman, Kondo, & Wilmes, 2020; Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017; Xu & Brown, 2017). Teachers’ LAL continues to be one focus of scholarly attention, e.g. in Asian contexts (Koh, Burke, Luke, Gong, & Tan, 2018; Lam, 2019; Sultana, 2019; Xie & Tan, 2019) or in

South America (Giraldo, 2019; Villa Larenas, 2018). Their potential contribution to bridging learning and assessment in high-stakes contexts is being researched (Baker & Riches, 2018; Xerri & Vella Briffa, 2018).

Numerous studies into teachers' (self-reported) LAL levels, their perceived training needs or their perceptions of assessment have revealed that language teachers report to have received little training considering their multifaceted tasks that are related to assessment in the EFL classroom (e.g. Kvasova & Kavytska, 2014; Sahinkarakas, 2012; Shim, 2009; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). This results in low LAL levels perceived by teachers. Studies have also elicited data from initial teacher education providers (e.g. Jin, 2010; Lam, 2014). More recently, pre-service teachers have been recognized as an emerging group of stakeholders (Hildén & Fröjndendahl, 2018; Ukrayinska, 2018). Xie and Tan (2019), in their study set in Hong Kong, identified the LAL needs of both primary school teachers and pre-service teachers.

Although an increasing range of stakeholders are considered in LAL (e.g. Deygers & Malone, 2019; Malone, 2013; Pill & Harding, 2013; Taylor, 2013), learners have not represented a major group in research in the field yet (cf. Lee and Butler's (2020) meta-analysis). Djoub (2017) contends that LAL is relevant for learners or test takers as they need to understand assessment processes and their implementation, their objectives and the criteria on which they are based. Wanatabe (2011) identifies two benefits that LAL implies for learners, namely relieving fear or anxiety towards the test and allowing them to get actively involved in the process of assessment. He maintains that learners "are the most important stakeholders and the greatest recipients of the benefits derived from the process and the product of language assessment" (Wanatabe, 2011, p. 29). As an important and substantial group of stakeholders in assessment, learners are directly affected by instructional and educational decisions. The notion of assessment and learning being interdependent (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996) has been seen as the bedrock of classroom-based language assessment (Cheng, 2011; Cheng & Fox, 2017; Leung, 2014). Scholarship on peer-assessment (Hansen Edwards, 2014; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Topping, 1998), self-assessment (Oscarson, 2014) or feedback (Hattie & Clarke, 2019; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) are rooted in approaches to assessment that focus on aligning learning and assessment, e.g. learner-oriented language assessment (Hamp-Lyons, 2017; Turner & Purpura, 2016) and dynamic assessment (Poehner, 2008, 2020), pursuing the improvement of learning as a primary goal of assessment. This stance is also taken in the action-oriented approach that has been epitomized in the Companion Volume to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018; Piccardo & North, 2019). Learners play a central role in assessment, which requires their active involvement in the process.

Studies in assessment involving learners are often concerned with learner perceptions of assessment in general (e.g. Van de Watering, Gijbels, Dochy, & van der Rijt, 2008) or in the EFL classroom (e.g. Ma, 2018; Tsagari, 2013; Vavla & Gokaj, 2013; Vlanti, 2012), while studies in LAL that highlight learners are scarce. Erickson and Gustafsson (2005), in their European study of ca. 150 learners at the end of compulsory secondary education, questioned learners about their general attitudes towards language testing. They were asked what constituted a good assessment for them, with teachers being asked similar questions. The authors reported that generally, learners deemed assessment that was firmly embedded in learning as positive, and among the most frequently mentioned characteristics of positive assessment were communicative usefulness and learning potential, demonstrating the

importance learners place on the connection of assessment and learning. Similarly, Burner (2016) studied Norwegian teachers' ($n = 4$) and school students' ($n = 100$) understanding of formative assessment in EFL writing classes, concluding that although learners appreciate explicit teacher feedback, important elements of formative assessment seemed to be unclear to learners (p. 13). This suggests that their LAL was not well-developed partly due to the teachers' understanding of formative assessment. Wanatabe (2011) actually designed a course on assessment literacy and taught it to university students in Japan. The author reported that the informants' views towards language testing became neutral to positive after the course. Before the course, their comments on language testing tended to be rather negative.

Little research to date has been conducted on LAL where both learners and teachers are studied, particularly in relation to secondary learners. Therefore, the present study targeted EFL learners at secondary schools and matched their data with teacher data related to the fields of assessment practices and needs.

Our research aim was to investigate LAL among the groups of EFL learners and teachers in four different European educational contexts, in order to acquire a clearer understanding of aspects of LAL through illustrating and triangulating the perspectives of these two groups of stakeholders, asking the following questions:

- (1) What assessment practices in the EFL classroom in four European contexts do learners and teachers report?
- (2) What assessment practices do learners perceive as conducive to learning EFL?
- (3) What differences can be discerned in teachers' and learners' perceptions of assessment practices?

Study design and research context

The opportunity to explore teacher and learner perspectives on LAL came through TALE, the ERAMUS+-funded project during which researchers from Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Norway and the UK collaborated to establish free and sustainable online training resources as a way to enhance professionalization of EFL teachers in the field of language testing and assessment (<http://taleproject.eu>). The study can be characterized as a quantitative cross-sectional study that targets EFL learners and their teachers. In order to maximize the scope of the study and to reach as many informants as possible, a questionnaire-based design was adopted. Following Dörnyei (2007, p. 9), our quantitative research “employs categories, viewpoints, and models that have been precisely defined by the researcher in advance”. Questionnaires are seen as versatile and effective instruments that survey a relatively large group of people. Furthermore, for Nunan and Bailey (2009, p. 125), the purpose of questionnaires is seen as “a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and/or events”. It is precisely that snapshot that we intended to obtain from the two different groups of informants. A questionnaire survey was chosen in order to achieve a differentiated picture of assessment practices of teachers and learners across educational sectors and contexts. Despite the single data collection method, the research design incorporates triangulation, namely the triangulation of perspectives (Elsner & Viebrock, 2015) of teachers and learners. The aim of the triangulation is to consider the different perspectives of stakeholders engaged in and affected by LAL, in this case, learners as an important but

often neglected stakeholder group. Their responses were complemented by data from their teachers. The educational contexts covered by this study were Cyprus, Germany, Greece and Hungary, all members of the project consortium. Questionnaires were targeted at 1788 learners at secondary schools (age bracket 11 to 17) and their teachers ($n = 658$). The main focus of the study was on learners. Primary school learners below 10 years of age were excluded because they could not be expected to answer questions on the metalevel required in the survey questionnaires. We adopted a convenience sampling approach (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017), with the researchers activating their respective networks of schools and teachers. In the contexts under study, it was difficult for researchers to get access to learners in classrooms, which made a convenience sample necessary despite its potential limitations on generalizability.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire data was obtained from 658 teachers and 1788 of their students who were asked about assessment practices in the EFL classroom, assessment-related feedback mechanisms as well as training needs (for teachers) and assessment practices that enhance their learning (for learners). The data for this study were mainly drawn from EFL contexts, with a very small number of participants involved in French and German as foreign languages.

Two sets of questionnaires were designed whose items were aligned so that the results of the two groups of stakeholders could be compared. The original teacher sample was 852 that included pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers were excluded from the sample for the purposes of the present study to make sure that the learner and teacher data were drawn from the same data collection sites.

The teacher and learner questionnaires ran parallel in their first two parts, namely biographical information and assessment practices. The first part elicited biographical information which included age, gender, years of learning the language for learners and age, gender, qualification, years of teaching experience, age range of learners and a question about prior training in language testing and assessment for teachers. The second part tapped into assessment practices which covered the linguistic skills that teachers typically assessed (in the learners' version the linguistic skills that were assessed), the concepts and contents of assessment, assessment methods and the frequency of their use. The third part was about learners' assessment needs and wants in the learner questionnaire ('Does it help you learn English when ...?'), and assessment profiles and training needs in the teacher questionnaire, respectively. This was done to enable us to gauge the perceived effectiveness of certain assessment methods by the learners, and to compare it to their teachers' confidence levels in the respective areas.

The teacher questionnaire was designed to yield information for the needs analysis that would feed into the design of online learning resources (Appendix 1). For this reason, the design of the teacher questionnaire will be discussed in more detail. Standards for teacher competence in educational assessment suggested by the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education and National Education Association (1990) were used as an underlying construct of LAL, which, according to Inbar-Lourie (2017), set a landmark in defining teachers' assessment literacy, despite criticism, e.g. by Brookhart (2011). The Joint Committee on Standards for Education has now updated the

AFT document (Klinger et al., 2015). The AFT Standards (see list below) were translated into questionnaire items in the teacher questionnaire in the section on teachers' confidence levels.

- (1) Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
- (2) Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
- (3) Teachers should be skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessment methods.
- (4) Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual learners, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement.
- (5) Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessment.
- (6) Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to learners, parents, other laymen and other educators.
- (7) Teachers should be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information.

Other aspects such as the link to the CEFR and more specific skills-related competences were added as follows:

- Teachers should be able to identify the relevance of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for the assessment of their learners.
- Teachers should be able to assess learners with special learning needs, e.g. dyslexia, learning impairment (cf. Klinger et al., 2015).
- Teachers should be able to prepare learners for external tests, e.g. school leaving exams, international exams.

The link to the CEFR is essential for European language teachers as curricula are based on it more or less explicitly (Tsagari, 2010; Vogt, 2016), depending on the educational context. The reference to special learning needs follows a necessity to direct attention to increasingly diverse learner groups whose learning needs have to be catered for, as is reflected in the Classroom Assessment Standards (Klinger et al., 2015).

When attempting to link the learner questionnaire to the competence areas put forward by the AFT Standards, two areas would be operationalized in the learner questionnaire. The question of how frequently a particular assessment method was used related to concepts and contents of assessment. It was supposed to yield indirect information on whether learners were aware of their teachers choosing and/or developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions. The question "Does it help you learn English when ...?" was designed to elicit learners' views of their needs and wants, which might give insights into whether learners recognized assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions and ultimately learning. In addition, it would give information on how they judge the effectiveness of these methods for their own EFL development.

Turner and Purpura (2016, p. 266) define feedback as “positive or negative evaluation moves accompanied by targeted assistance if needed”. Feedback is one decisive factor impacting considerably on individual learning as Hattie’s (2009) meta-study has shown for learning in general. For foreign language learning, in particular, effective and timely feedback supports the foreign language learning process in that it guides future steps to be taken for improvement. Used in the EFL classroom on a regular basis, it can be a powerful formative assessment tool. However, Turner and Purpura (2016) contend that feedback is under-researched in the field of language assessment, in particular regarding the question of how feedback might enhance processing of a foreign language with a view to successful language learning. Therefore, learners were asked what feedback they receive on assessment results in the EFL classroom. The question on feedback methods pertained to the effectiveness with which teachers communicated assessment results.

Additionally, the learner participants were asked to add anything they might wish to say in a general comment section; teachers were requested to give information on their prior experience and preferences regarding online learning courses. The teacher questionnaire was administered in English. For the learners, a translation into the language of schooling in the respective countries was provided. Both questionnaires were piloted with a small number of teachers and learners in the same research sites where the main survey was conducted. The outcomes of the pilot study led to some small changes in layout and wording to improve the clarity of questions.

The data yielded by the teacher and learner questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics comprised mainly percentages but also means as a measure of central tendency. In addition, an ordinal scale and logistic regression analysis for dichotomous dependent variables was conducted in order to explore the potential relationships between independent variables like educational context, age, etc., on dependent variables such as assessment practice in the classroom. For the comparison of the learner and teacher data, chi-square tests for independence were carried out with dichotomous variables, and the Mann–Whitney test was used for comparing ordinal variables.

Results

The results will be displayed primarily for learners along the categories “general information”, “assessment practices” and “assessment needs and wants”. The data from the learner questionnaires will be compared to the results of the teacher questionnaires in order to triangulate the perspectives of the two groups of stakeholders in the assessment process. In addition, some of the results from the teacher questionnaire related to teachers’ perceived confidence levels in LAL will be used to explore the relationship between teachers’ LAL and learners’ perceptions of assessment.

Demographic information

658 teachers and 1788 learners offered their information; a breakdown into the different countries of provenance is shown in [Table 1](#).

Learners’ responses were the main focus of the study. The gender of the 1788 learners was evenly distributed (50% female, 50% male). Their age varied from 10–12 years (21%) to

Table 1. Teacher and learner respondents across countries.

| Country | Participants in the study | |
|---------|---------------------------|----------|
| | Teachers | Learners |
| Cyprus | 396 | 909 |
| Germany | 33 | 285 |
| Greece | 91 | 294 |
| Hungary | 138 | 300 |
| Total | 658 | 1788 |

18–20 (4%), with the majority of respondents representing the 13–15 year (47%) and 16–17 (28%) age range. Most of the participant learners (55%) had been learning English for more than seven years and 34% for four to six years. About half of the learners (51%) came from Cyprus while the rest were distributed evenly between Germany, Greece and Hungary. Therefore, Cyprus was overrepresented in the sample and this ought to result in caution when trying to generalize statements based on the data.

As stated earlier, the learners and the teachers were from the same research sites. However, due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire data, it was not possible to link individual learner data to individual teacher data. The teacher data were drawn from 658 respondents of which 71% were female and 29% male. This reflects the reality of foreign language teaching in many European contexts. The bulk of the teacher participants was spread over the following age groups: 36–45 years (23%), 46–55 years (37%) and over 56 years (23%). Sixteen percent of teachers were aged 26–35 and only 1% under 25 years of age.

It should be noted that the German teacher sample was comparatively small ($n = 33$); this was a result of ‘cleaning’ the original dataset. In the original German sample, the majority of respondents (75%) were pre-service teachers. As they could not be linked to corresponding learner data, these respondents were excluded from the present sample. This exclusion has also reduced the original Hungarian sample, 44% of which were pre-service teachers. In the Cypriot sample, higher age groups (over 46) were more heavily represented (nearly 50%). The respondents’ teaching experience in this subset ranged from one to five years (16%) to 15 + years of experience (14%), with the majority of teachers (56%) having taught English for 10 to 15 years. The project targeted teachers of EFL and 91% of the teachers taught English with very low numbers teaching other languages such as French (4%) or German (2%). The age of the respondents’ learners ranged from 6 to 12 years (18%) to adults (over 18, 11%), with the age brackets from 13 to 15 (37%) and 16 to 18 (34%) most heavily represented. Teachers were also asked whether they had received any testing and assessment training, which was not further specified. Sixty-three percent responded positively to this question.

Assessment practices of teachers and learners

Skills assessed

The second part of the questionnaire concerns the assessment practices of learners, which are later compared to the information given by their teachers.

Figure 1 shows the learner perceptions of the type of language knowledge and skills being assessed in the foreign language classroom. Learners overall report that teachers assess their English writing (90%), speaking (89%), grammar (86%), vocabulary (78%), reading (71%) and listening (68%). Writing was the skill most often assessed with speaking following suit

Skills Assessed: Student Report

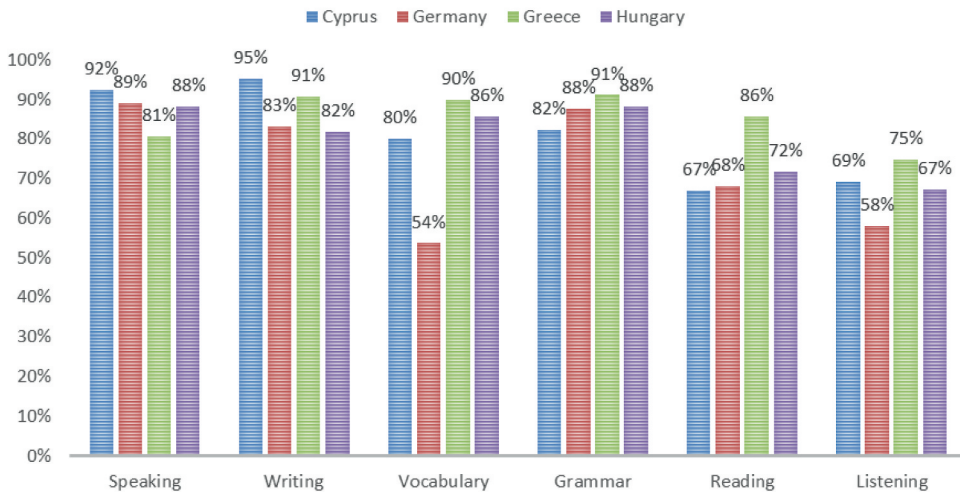


Figure 1. Student responses to Q9: 'Which of these skills/areas do your teachers assess?'.

while reading and listening had lower percentages. Assessing grammar (86%) seemed to have a more prominent role in the EFL classroom across Europe than vocabulary (78%). Looking at the descriptive statistics from individual countries, it becomes obvious that the perceptions of pupils seemed to differ across educational contexts. It is striking, for example, that German learners reported relatively little (54%) vocabulary assessment while Greek learners reported mostly the assessment of reading and listening. However, all student groups reported the assessment of grammar (82% to 92%) and of productive skills (around 90% for speaking, 82–95% for writing).

The results of the regression analysis allow further insights into the relationship between various learner variables such as years of learning, age or educational context. Younger students reported less than older students, for example, that their teacher(s) assessed reading ($b = -0.333$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 28,527$, $p < .0005$), perhaps because reading was not a main concern of assessment for young learners, due to their emerging L2 literacy skills.

In terms of educational contexts, the analysis yielded a relationship between Cypriot learners and the assessment of listening as a skill in the sense that Cypriot learners tended to be assessed in listening to a greater extent than in other educational contexts represented in the study ($b = 0.368$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 9.108$, $p = .003$). An even stronger relationship existed between Cypriot learners and assessing vocabulary with Cypriot learners being 30.393 times more likely to have their vocabulary skills assessed than learners in the other countries ($b = 3.414$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 110,708$, $p < .0005$). The regression analysis further confirmed that Greek learners' reported assessment of speaking was lower than that of learners in other countries ($b = -1,196$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 12,004$, $p = .001$). The trends in the Cypriot and Greek sample can be linked to the impact of the University Entrance Exam system in both countries where listening is a separate component in the Cypriot exam while speaking is not assessed in the exam in Greece nor is it an official requirement of any classroom-based/end-of-year assessment.

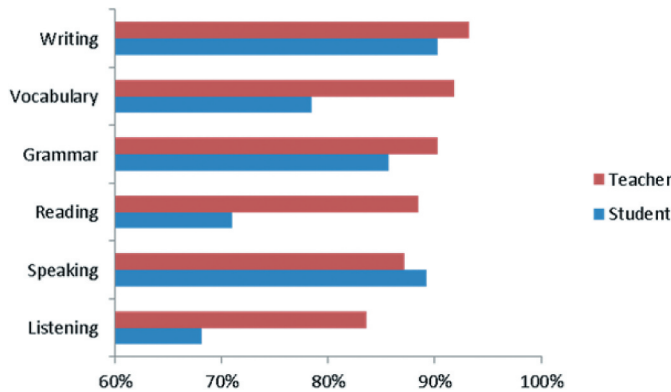


Figure 2. Skills/areas assessed (teachers and learners).

Comparing the learner perceptions on skills assessed in their EFL classrooms, it is clear that the perceptions of teachers and of pupils differed (see Figure 2). For example, while teachers perceived listening as a skill that is assessed (83%), learners did not share this view at all, with only 68% reporting that this skill was assessed. The same was true for the rest of the skills, e.g. reading, vocabulary and, to a lesser extent, for grammar. Interestingly, speaking was the opposite with 89% of learners reporting it as part of assessment practices compared with 87% of teachers.

The Chi-square tests revealed that learners reported at lower rates than that reported by teachers that writing ($\chi^2(1) = 7.442, p = .006$), vocabulary ($\chi^2(1) = 56.626, p < .0005$), grammar ($\chi^2(1) = 13.735, p < .0005$), reading ($\chi^2(1) = 76.567, p < .0005$) and listening ($\chi^2(1) = 50.308, p < .0005$) were assessed, with the findings being statistically significant in all cases. The Chi-square test for speaking, however, showed a different picture because in this case: Learners reported at higher rates that speaking was assessed as a skill, a finding that was statistically significant as well ($\chi^2(1) = 9.664, p = .002$). The questionnaire data only allows for speculation as to reasons for this discrepancy of perceptions. One reason could be that the learners did not notice assessment procedures, e.g. formative assessment. They might perceive an activity as a learning activity and not an assessment activity. This might in turn be due to a lack of awareness that could be related to a lack of LAL on the part of the teachers.

Frequency of assessment types

Both learners and teachers were asked about the frequency of assessment types in the foreign language classroom. Table 2 shows the answers learners and teachers gave as a mean.

The most frequent assessment types that learners reported were tests with closed answers (2.17), active class participation (1.99), extended writing (1.73) and translation (1.68, on a scale from 0 (=never) to 3 (=very frequently)), assessment types which mostly seem to be classified among more traditional paper and pencil oriented methods. By contrast, portfolio assessment (0.64), oral presentations (1.05), peer-assessment (1.07) and self-assessment (1.24) are partly labelled as alternatives in assessment (Green, 2014; Vogt, 2018) and were least frequently used according to the respondents in the study. It has to be noted, however,

Table 2. Mean ratings of learner and teacher responses (by country) in relation to frequency of assessment types.

| Frequency of Assessment Types by Learners (Q6) | Students | | | | |
|--|----------|---------|--------|---------|-------|
| Questions | Cyprus | Germany | Greece | Hungary | Total |
| 01. Oral presentations | 0.87 | 1.21 | 1.52 | 0.95 | 1.05 |
| 02. Tests with open-ended answers | 1.67 | 1.43 | 1.73 | 1.64 | 1.64 |
| 03. Portfolio assessment | 0.47 | 0.83 | 1.40 | 0.23 | 0.64 |
| 04. Peer assessment | 1.01 | 1.26 | 1.16 | 1.01 | 1.07 |
| 05. Tests with closed answers (e.g. gaps, multiple choice, matching exercises) | 2.23 | 2.17 | 2.38 | 1.82 | 2.17 |
| 06. Self-assessment | 1.26 | 1.12 | 1.68 | 0.86 | 1.24 |
| 07. Extended writing, e.g. letters, essays | 1.66 | 1.90 | 1.68 | 1.84 | 1.73 |
| 08. Active class participation | 2.20 | 1.55 | 2.31 | 1.48 | 1.99 |
| 09. Translation (L1/L2) | 1.61 | 1.58 | 1.72 | 1.96 | 1.68 |
| Frequency of Assessment Types by Teachers (Q11) | Teachers | | | | |
| Questions | Cyprus | Germany | Greece | Hungary | Total |
| 01. Oral presentations | 1.85 | 1.48 | 1.93 | 1.72 | 1.76 |
| 02. Tests with open-ended answers | 1.85 | 0.96 | 1.79 | 1.57 | 1.63 |
| 03. Portfolio assessment | 0.62 | 0.56 | 0.70 | 0.43 | 0.56 |
| 04. Peer assessment | 1.09 | 0.95 | 1.19 | 1.04 | 1.06 |
| 05. Tests with closed answers (e.g. gaps, multiple choice, matching exercises) | 2.24 | 1.67 | 2.32 | 2.29 | 2.18 |
| 06. Self-assessment | 1.23 | 0.93 | 1.53 | 1.29 | 1.23 |
| 07. Extended writing, e.g. letters, essays | 1.96 | 1.18 | 1.87 | 1.74 | 1.77 |
| 08. Active class participation | 2.45 | 2.12 | 2.43 | 2.16 | 2.32 |
| 09. Translation (L1/L2) | 0.64 | 0.70 | 1.48 | 1.12 | 0.85 |

that there were variations across educational contexts, e.g. from the learners' data the means for the frequency of oral presentations ranged from 0.87 in Cyprus to 1.52 in Greece.

The results of the regression analysis seem to reveal a pattern of assessment types. Learners with four to six years of learning experience reported that they were asked to do oral presentations ($b = -0.477$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 7,302$, $p = .007$) less often. They also took tests with open-ended answers less frequently ($b = -0.396$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 5,446$, $p = .020$) and experienced less extended writing ($b = -1020$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 35,291$, $p < .0005$) than learners with more than seven years of learning experience. This could be linked to the proficiency development of learners since the assessment types mentioned are usually associated with more developed discourse skills in the foreign language (more fluency, greater range of vocabulary and structures, etc.).

Greek learners were asked to do oral presentations much more frequently ("very often") than other learners ($b = 1,614$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 54,065$, $p < .0005$). They also reported taking tests with open-ended answers ($b = 0.529$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 6,406$, $p = .001$) and tests with closed answers ($b = 1,006$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 21,780$, $p < .0005$) more often than their peers in the other educational contexts. In addition, their active class participation was assessed more often ("very often" in the questionnaire responses) than that of other learners ($b = 1,448$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 45,377$, $p < .005$). Given the lack of formal assessment of speaking, teachers seemed to resort to classroom-oriented practices, e.g. oral presentations, active class participation, as ways of assessing and monitoring students' oral performance. Also the test-oriented nature of the assessment system in the local context (Tsgari, 2009) requires students to take written tests quite frequently during the academic year, e.g. during and end of the term, following official requirements that mandate for both open and closed-answer items.

While learners in the Greek context seemed to report a comparatively highly frequent mix of assessment types, the data from German learners seemed to represent a different profile of assessment types. Compared to learners from other educational contexts, German learners were asked to do oral presentations in the EFL classroom very often ($b = 0.727$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 7,302$, $p = .007$). This finding could be explained by the assessment of speaking skills being prioritized in recent years as a result of top-down washback of a test that has had a mandatory speaking component in the German federal state the survey was undertaken in (Fröhlich, 2010). Moreover, this subgroup of learners stated that teachers asked them to take tests with closed answers very often ($b = 0.406$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4,558$, $p = .033$). In Germany, particularly in the lower secondary sector with learners aged 10 to 16, written tests (“classroom tests”) often consist at least partly of test items with closed answers, which might explain this finding. Learners from German contexts reported a higher frequency (“very often”) of portfolio assessment ($b = 1.026$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 20,648$, $p < .0005$) and self-assessment ($b = 0.396$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4,469$, $p = .35$) being used as part of formative types of assessment.

Although the data from learners and teachers overlap to a certain extent, there are some discrepancies in perceptions, e.g. with translation that has values of 0.85 for teachers and 1.68 for learners. Translation was included as an assessment method that is rather common, e.g. for vocabulary tests in some educational contexts. Teachers reported that they did not use this type of assessment very often while learners claimed it was used frequently. These results could be due to different perceptions of whether a translation-related activity is seen as an assessment activity or not. To explore how the specifications of learners and teachers compared, a Mann Whitney test was run. Learners reported that the following assessment types were used significantly less frequently than what teachers reported: oral presentations ($U = 312,828.500$, $p < .0005$), tests with open-ended answers ($U = 555,635.000$, $p = .002$), portfolio assessment ($U = 553,602.500$, $p < .0005$), extended writing ($U = 549,330.000$, $p < .0005$), active class participation ($U = 466,389.000$, $p < .0005$) and translation ($U = 357,033.000$, $p < .0005$). Thus, the perceptions of the frequency of an assessment type being used in class seemed to diverge between teachers and learners. The discrepancy in perceptions could be related to the way an activity is classified, whether more consciously as an assessment activity or as a language learning activity, or most generally speaking as an activity which is not further classified by the learner in a conscious effort.

Assessment needs and wants

The first item included in the third part of the learners’ questionnaire was designed to determine what methods are regarded useful when learning English (7. “Does it help you learn English when you ... ?”). It was hoped that this would give insights into whether learners recognize assessment methods appropriate for their learning. The same options as in the teacher questionnaire were given to students. Each option could be answered through a four-point Likert scale (3 = very often, 2 = often, 1 = sometimes, 0 = never). Learners found participating actively in class (2.10), taking tests with closed answers (1.98) and writing stories, letters or other texts (1.98) most helpful. Table 3 presents an overview of learner mean responses for each educational context, where items were rated on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (not useful) to 3 (very useful).

The results from the regression analysis are remarkable in the sense that learners with four to six years of learning experience found oral presentations ($b = -0.582$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 11,561$,

Table 3. Mean ratings of student responses (by country) to Q7: ‘Does it help you learn English when you ...?’ Based on a likert scale from 0 (=not useful) to 3 (=very useful).

| Usefulness of Assessment Types by Learners (Q7) | Learners | | | | |
|--|----------|---------|--------|---------|-------|
| | Cyprus | Germany | Greece | Hungary | Total |
| 1. Give oral presentations | 1.33 | 1.34 | 1.94 | 1.34 | 1.43 |
| 2. Take tests with open-ended answers, e.g. “Why did Sam’s sister get lost?” | 1.76 | 1.48 | 1.99 | 1.51 | 1.71 |
| 3. Keep a portfolio | 0.71 | 0.72 | 1.43 | 0.58 | 0.80 |
| 4. Assess your classmates’ work | 1.30 | 0.89 | 1.37 | 0.98 | 1.19 |
| 5. Take tests with closed answers (e.g. gaps, true/false, choose the correct answer) | 1.98 | 1.88 | 2.27 | 1.79 | 1.98 |
| 6. Assess your own work | 1.66 | 1.22 | 1.97 | 1.09 | 1.54 |
| 7. Write stories, letters or other texts | 1.91 | 1.90 | 2.07 | 2.19 | 1.98 |
| 8. Participate actively in class | 2.23 | 1.84 | 2.43 | 1.66 | 2.10 |
| 9. Translate sentences or texts | 1.88 | 1.86 | 2.11 | 2.10 | 1.95 |

$p = .001$), tests with open-ended answers ($b = -0.578$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 11,419$, $p = .001$) and extended writing ($b = -0.945$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 30,272$, $p < .0005$) less conducive to language learning than the learners with more than seven years of experience. The same subgroup of learners specified the same assessment types as being assessed “very often”, more often in comparison to other subgroups. One could interpret this finding in two ways. Either the assessment wants of this subgroup of learners were satisfied because there is an overlap between the frequency with which these assessment types are deployed and their conduciveness to learning the language as perceived by the learners asked. The second possible reading could be that the learners thought that these assessment types help them learn the language just because they are so frequently used in their respective EFL classrooms and not necessarily because they are really suitable. It is possible only to speculate about the reasons for this finding on the basis of the available questionnaire data.

Feedback

Another question that pertains to assessment practices that both teachers and learners were asked was about feedback. Turner and Purpura (2016, p. 266) define feedback as “positive or negative evaluation moves accompanied by targeted assistance if needed”. Feedback has been identified as a powerful tool that can support individual learning in general according to Hattie’s (2009) meta-study. For foreign language learning in particular, effective and timely feedback supports the foreign language learning process in that it guides future steps to be taken for improvement. Used in the EFL classroom on a regular basis, it can be a powerful formative assessment tool. However, Turner and Purpura (2016, p. 266) contend that feedback is under-researched in the field of language assessment, in particular regarding the question of how feedback might enhance processing of a foreign language with a view to successful language learning. Therefore, learners were asked what feedback they receive on assessment results in the EFL classroom.

Table 4 indicates that the most widely used feedback mechanisms were marks (percentages, points, letter grades, etc., 89%) and brief comments (e.g. “well done”, 68%). Comments that were more detailed and indications directed at learners on how to improve their learning were less often made. This might reflect feedback practices that do not see feedback as part of assessment to support learning. The regression analysis results seem to confirm this assumption as younger learners tended to receive marks and did not receive (brief or detailed)

Table 4. Feedback mechanisms in the EFL classroom as reported by learners (Q8).

| | N | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|-----|
| Mark (percentage, points, letter grade, etc) | 1587 | 89% | 32% |
| Brief comments (e.g. 'well done!') | 1208 | 68% | 47% |
| Detailed comments on work (written/oral) | 751 | 42% | 49% |
| Comments/hints on how to improve learning | 1026 | 57% | 49% |

comments or hints for improvement that might feed into their learning processes ($b = 0.200$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 37,801$, $p < .005$). Both learners who had learned English for less than three years ($b = -0.688$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 13.366$, $p < .0005$) and those who had learned the language for four to six years ($b = -0.757$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 14,596$, $p < .0005$) tended not to receive detailed comments. In addition, learners based in Hungary reported to a lower extent than their peers in the other countries in terms of receiving detailed comments, which might be a cause for concern ($b = -0.953$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 29.857$, $p < .0005$). One reason for explanation is that giving detailed feedback to individual learners is likely to be time-consuming and requires specific analytic skills, which teachers in Hungary may lack due to their training. Furthermore, Hungarian teachers have a lot of administrative duties thanks to the ever more centralised educational system, and many of them already feel overburdened.

When comparing learner and teacher responses (Figure 3), learners reported at higher rates that feedback was provided in the form of marks. However, according to the results of the Chi square test, this finding was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = .120$, $p = .729$). Compared to teachers, learners also indicated at lower rates that they received feedback in the form of brief comments, detailed comments and hints or comments on how to improve their learning. All these findings were statistically significant, suggesting that formative feedback did not seem to be part of teachers' regular assessment practices in our sample. Again, the reasons are subject to speculation. The lower rates might be due to institutional constraints such as time pressure that impact negatively on their feedback practices.

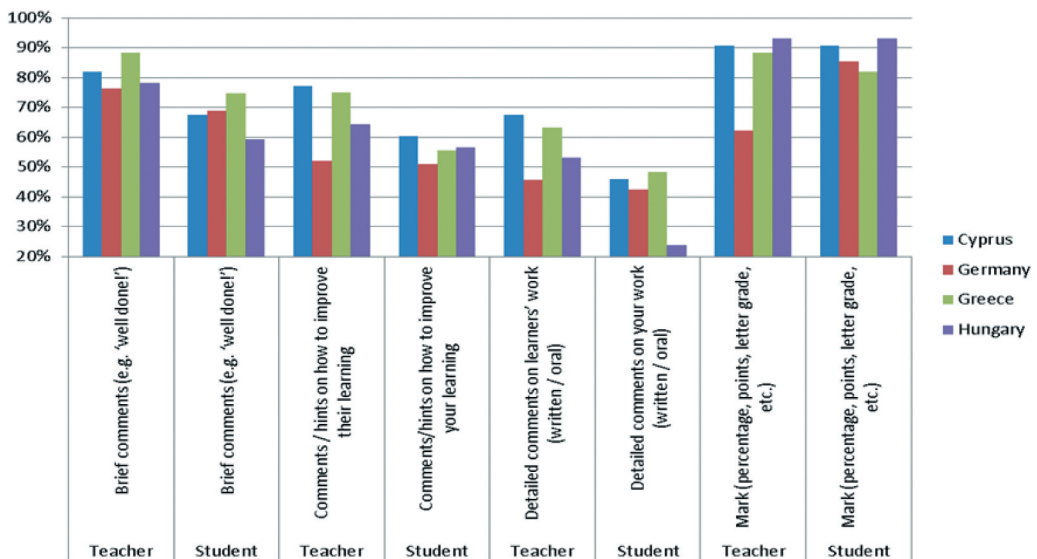
**Figure 3.** Feedback: teacher and learner perspectives.

Table 5. Teachers' confidence in areas of assessment (Q12).

| Teachers' Confidence in Areas of Assessment (Q12) [listed in ascending order] | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----|------|-------------------|
| 12. Assessing learners with special learning needs, e.g. dyslexia, learning impairment | 727 | .81 | .849 |
| 11. Using student portfolios to assess learners | 714 | 1.02 | .899 |
| 10. Using peer assessment to assess learners | 800 | 1.41 | .848 |
| 9. Using self-assessment to assess learners | 817 | 1.47 | .860 |
| 17. Identifying the relevance of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for the assessment of my learners | 809 | 1.48 | .895 |
| 20. Recognizing inappropriate (e.g. invalid, unreliable, biased) assessment methods | 834 | 1.69 | .871 |
| 16. Identifying how tests influence teaching | 835 | 1.79 | .851 |
| 8. Assessing learners' skills in an integrated way, e.g. reading a text and writing about it | 830 | 1.85 | .845 |
| 13. Preparing learners for external tests, e.g. school leaving exams, international exams | 840 | 1.87 | .955 |
| 14. Using assessment results to make decisions about individual students | 840 | 1.88 | .798 |
| 4. Assessing learners' listening skills | 832 | 1.90 | .797 |
| 1. Identifying different purposes of assessment | 843 | 1.95 | .796 |
| 15. Using assessment results to plan teaching | 837 | 2.02 | .733 |
| 2. Choosing assessment methods that are suitable for learners | 846 | 2.03 | .776 |
| 19. Explaining assessment results to parents and others | 841 | 2.05 | .785 |
| 5. Assessing learners' speaking skills | 844 | 2.06 | .752 |
| 3. Designing classroom-based tests | 835 | 2.07 | .818 |
| 18. Explaining assessment results to pupils | 838 | 2.09 | .749 |
| 7. Assessing learners' writing skills | 838 | 2.12 | .760 |
| 6. Assessing learners' reading skills | 844 | 2.19 | .726 |

Another possible interpretation could be a lack of awareness of the potential benefits of formative assessment. Although teachers considered themselves to be rather confident in explaining assessment results to learners, as answers to Q12 ("Please indicate how confident you feel about the following areas", Table 5) suggest, they might not be aware of the full potential of formative feedback in assessment, in particular with a view to feedforward as a bridge between assessment and learning.

Finally, learners were requested to provide comments in an open comment section (cf. Appendix 1). Learner contributions can be classified into comments on the questionnaire survey – remarks about their teachers' quality of teaching, teaching methods in particular –, comments on the subject matter ("I very much like grammar") and assessment-related comments. As in Erickson and Gustafsson (2005) study, comments on aspects of learning, teaching (teachers included) and assessment were interwoven. Many learners in different educational contexts offered comments on the questionnaire itself and were grateful that they were given a voice ("This survey is super!", "I think it is great that we are allowed to do this"). The extent to which interest and gratitude were expressed sheds light on the necessity of including the voice of learners as a group of important stakeholders in the assessment process, particularly in light of approaches to assessment like Assessment as Learning.

Comments related to teaching often extended to the teacher, valuing his/her teaching style ("My teacher's teaching is super! One understands and learns a lot.") or criticized the educational system ("The system of Cyprus in schools doesn't help the learner at all, not only in English but in general. Because of this system the student has to go to private institutions for all their lessons."), which clearly demonstrates that they reflect on aspects of the educational system immediately impacting on them but also develop a critical awareness of the educational system as such.

Student comments on learning tended to be related to personal preference of the subject as such ("I personally like English") or of parts of the subject ("I like very much grammar [sic]"). When comments were explicitly assessment-related, they focused on classroom-

based assessment procedures established by the teachers, e.g. one German student who praised the activities devoted to revision in view of upcoming tests: “[Teacher’s name] revises often and prepares well for classroom tests”. Others commented on the assessment culture they experienced at their school, as the following example shows: “They give me grades based on my tests and they do not accept assignments”, underscoring and complaining about the weight of summative assessment as opposed to formative assessment procedures. On an individual level, learners broached the subject of scoring, which for them seems to have an immediate impact on the decisions that follow from test scores. Hungarian students’ comments regarding scoring were most frequent; they criticized the strictness of the rating that was applied by teachers (“strict scoring on tests”) or made suggestions for improvement relating, e.g. to the scoring of outstanding performance, as the following comment illustrates: “[We want] Extra points depending on our performance”. Thus some learners in the sample seemed to perceive the gate-keeping function of tests as restrictive and displayed an awareness of ethical considerations in language assessment (Lee & Butler, 2020). Closely related to this point was the frequent demand for fairness, e.g. in the comment by a student from Hungary: “[I want] fair assessment of our proficiency.” Learners gave their opinion on several aspects of feedback, signalling that they deemed feedback a vital part of both assessment and learning and thus confirmed theoretical insights into feedback in the EFL classroom (e.g. Bruno & Santos, 2010). Students in the sample highlighted the importance of feedback for all learners (“Not only the best students should get feedback”). The positive effects of formative feedback for their language learning process were highlighted by several learners across educational contexts, e.g. “It helps me when someone tells me what to improve”; “She [teacher] gives oral feedback on how we can improve our English”. Thus learners might be vaguely aware of the benefits of formative feedback but would need more LAL-based teacher guidance in order to systematically benefit from it.

Discussion of results

In the following section, the results of the present study will be discussed with reference to the research questions. Since both learner and teacher samples used for the study were dominated by Cypriot respondents who made up 51% of the total sample of learners and 60% of that of teachers, the findings will be interpreted with caution, particularly regarding the generalizability of the results (Dörnyei, 2007).

In terms of assessment practices of learners and teachers, the focus of research question 1, both learners and teachers named the complete range of skills and areas that they said were assessed in the EFL classroom. Writing was the skill that the majority of learners and teachers across the four European educational contexts said was assessed the most. From a practical point of view, writing is the most easily assessed skill in a paper and pencil test at school and this might explain the important role of this skill in language testing and assessment. Speaking was the second most frequently assessed skill after writing. As to the percentages, there were variations across educational contexts that might be explained by contextual factors relating to differences in assessment cultures, assessment policies at different levels, community expectations, pedagogical directions, and/or the role of assessment in the individual EFL classrooms as stipulated by the teacher (cf. Looney, Cumming, van der Kleij, & Harris, 2017), the latter of which might have been influenced by the

teachers' LAL. For example, Cypriot learners reported vocabulary being assessed to a much greater extent than learners from other educational contexts. This seems to be due to the practice of local teachers to place emphasis on vocabulary, grammar and reading more than the other areas of knowledge and skills (Tsayari, 2012, 2014).

It has to be stressed, though, that although other studies have found contextual factors (e.g. limited hours dedicated the teaching of English, testing orientation to learners' assessment, traditional ways of language teaching, etc.) to impact on teachers' assessment practices (Sheehan & Munro, 2017; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014), more qualitative data would be needed to look into this matter further, as the available data only allow for speculative interpretation. The exact nature of the relationship between teacher-reported and learner-reported results would be worth looking into, particularly in light of the question how learner-reported assessment practices are influenced by contextual factors.

Among the most frequent assessment types for teachers were active class participation, tests with closed answers and extended writing. Class participation relates to learner contributions in the EFL classroom that are usually in turn acknowledged by scores or brief comments like "well done". These forms of feedback were the ones most frequently reported in the data. Although class participation can be seen as a formative assessment method it is not really useful if efficient feedback mechanisms are not embedded, which would in turn help to advance the learners' L2 development. Tests with closed answers and extended writing can be considered more conventional types. The frequency of assessment types used in the EFL classroom seems to convey a picture of rather "traditional" assessment methods being deployed in the EFL classroom. It seems that well-known, discrete-point friendly tests with closed answers, essay tests, translation as a remnant of the grammar-translation method and active class participation dominate the assessment types in the EFL classroom from a learners' perspective. These do not seem to be too communicative and by themselves they do not assist learning in a direct way. When looking into the relationship between variables, however, assessment patterns were discernible which could be related to specific educational contexts. Greek learners reported a frequent mix of very diverse assessment types, possibly reflecting the previously strong testing culture in EFL teaching and learning but also showing first signs of a major curriculum reform following the introduction of outcome orientation (Cedefop, 2012). In a different context, Germany, learners reported more formative types of assessment being prominent, such as portfolio assessment, along with context-specific assessment types such as oral exams and classroom tests. It seems that relating the results to the respective contexts in which they were embedded is necessary for the discussion of results.

Regarding feedback, the most widely used type of feedback pertained to marks and brief comments such as "well done". Particularly younger learners indicated that they received marks, and learners with less teaching experience tended not to receive detailed comments. When comparing the information on feedback practices that learners and teachers provided, there seemed to be different perceptions of the stakeholders. While teachers reported giving detailed feedback and hints on how to improve learning as a part of their feedback procedures, learners did not confirm this picture. It seems that a mutual understanding of formative assessment in general and feedback mechanisms in particular needs to be developed with both stakeholder groups in order to make them transparent and meaningful (cf. Burner, 2016). The qualitative data of the open-ended questions in the study seem to confirm that learners appreciate feedback as comments on how to move forward, so that

they are enabled to act on the feedback received (William, 2018). Bruno and Santos (2010) contend that feedback in the EFL classroom has to be focused and concise to make sure that learners are still able to act on the suggestions made. In this way they would be in a position to take over responsibility for their own assessment and subsequent learning by involving them in the process (cf. Hattie & Clarke, 2019; Wanatabe, 2011). This would be a way for learners to develop their LAL. By contrast, feedback procedures restricted to marks or brief comments might represent an impediment to learner foreign language development and consequently learners' LAL as the potential of positively influencing foreign language learning processes could be minimized.

The reasons as to why formative feedback did not seem to be part of the informants' regular assessment practices in our sample remains open to interpretation. One avenue of explanation would be the contrast between teacher beliefs, which might be in favour of more Assessment for Learning (AfL)-related types of assessment including formative feedback, and external factors such as large classes, teaching loads, general time constraints, bureaucratic barriers (cf. also Shim, 2009). These would prevent teachers from putting their principles into practice in a consistent manner (Zheng, 2013).

The question what assessment practices learners perceived as conducive to learning EFL was addressed in the second research question. Learner views on what assessment types were helpful for EFL learning largely overlap with assessment types most frequently used in the EFL classroom. This pertains to classroom participation that can lend itself to formative assessment in class but also to more "conventional" types like tests with closed answers and extended writing. It would be interesting to see whether perceptions of learners change if teachers make use of a more varied repertoire of assessment methods in the classroom, based on greater understanding of LAL for their respective professional contexts. Higher levels of teacher LAL could engender heightened learners' awareness of assessment types appropriate for their personal foreign language development. This awareness could be regarded as a form of learner LAL.

The third research question was concerned with potential differences that can be discerned in learners' and teachers' perceptions of assessment practices. Learners' perceptions almost consistently differed from teachers' self-reported practices in terms of skills that were assessed, the frequency of assessment types and feedback practices, in many cases in a statistically significant way. This discrepancy corroborates findings from other studies, e.g. Burner (2016). Sheehan and Munro (2017), in their study designed to investigate UK-based language teachers' assessment literacy practices in the classroom as well as exploring their views on assessment and investigating LAL needs, found that teachers did not recognize that assessment practices such as AfL or learner-oriented assessment were part of assessment but rather categorized them as part of teaching (cf. also Berry, Sheehan & Munro, 2019). Similar to teachers, learners in our study might not have noticed assessment activities as such because they were not aware of the difference between learning and assessment activities. This might be the result of a lack of LAL on the part of the learners. A related problem could be that learners were not made aware of the purposes, procedures, etc., of formative assessment in particular. One possible reason might be that assessment procedures in the EFL classroom had not been made transparent enough for learners. If learners lacked this awareness, they were likely to lack LAL, possibly because their teachers did not raise their awareness of assessment as their teachers are not confident in LAL either. The teachers were asked in the same study how confident they were in the different areas of assessment, and it was striking that across the board, teachers did not display high levels of

confidence (means above 2.2 of 3.0). So there might be a relationship between low levels of confidence regarding LAL on the part of the teachers and a potential lack of awareness of appropriate assessment practices on the part of the learners. In order to explore this relationship, actual LAL levels and actual (self-reported) assessment procedures would have to be explored *in situ*, i.e. by way of classroom observations.

Conclusion

In our study, learners and teachers as two important groups of stakeholders were asked about their appreciation of practices related to assessment in the EFL classroom. The primary interest has been on the learner data, which was matched with the teacher data.

The overrepresentation of Cypriot learners and teachers in the sample was considered with caution, particularly when it comes to generalization of results. Nevertheless, the data certainly yielded some interesting insights, and the regression analysis did not confirm a foregrounding of this factor, indicating that the large sample size apparently has not skewed the data. The questionnaire study presented in this paper provided mainly quantitative data. The unequal amount of data from the open-ended questions from the different contexts, however, did not allow a systematic categorization of the comments offered and should thus be analysed with caution. Although two perspectives were taken that were then triangulated, a number of ensuing questions that the findings point to could not be addressed on the basis of the questionnaire data only. It certainly would have been helpful to have had supplemental qualitative data beyond the questionnaire, e.g. from interviews or classroom observations, and this might possibly represent a limitation of the study.

Despite potential limitations of the study, some conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the results. The participant learners voiced assessment needs and were vaguely cognizant of assessment as a tool for learning. It was only partly visible from the data how much intertwined they saw assessment and learning activities. As mentioned above, a qualitative element in the study would have yielded more insights here and this points towards a need for more qualitative research in order to explore learner perceptions of assessment and LAL of this particular group.

A tentative conclusion one can draw from the available data is that LAL for learners might be beneficial for fostering an awareness of the benefits of assessment for learning, for empowering learners by involving them in assessment procedures, assessment for learning in particular. This way the perceived ridge between learning and assessment could be addressed and assessment and learning could be bridged in a more efficient way. An advanced awareness would equally have potential for individualized learning.

A problem associated with the learners' under-developed awareness seems to be that teachers in the same study reported little confidence in LAL. This was particularly obvious in areas that are vital for assessment for learning (feedback, portfolios and, to a lesser extent, peer assessment and self-assessment) and in assessing individually, particularly learners with specific learning difficulties. Learners' empowerment as agents in classroom-based language assessment is thus dependent on teachers' LAL levels. The same is true for their motivation to learn as well (e.g. Amirian, Pourfarhad & Nafchi, 2016; Wanatabe, 2011).

Based on the insights from the study, there seems to be the need for a needs-based orientation towards improvement of LAL levels for learners and of teachers alike. As the results vary significantly in some aspects of assessment practices depending on the

educational context, the conditions and provisions that aim at developing learners' (and teachers') LAL will have to be designed to accommodate the diverse contextual factors. The development of learners' LAL might be engendered indirectly through advancing that of their teachers. As Djoub (2017) as well as Lee and Butler (2020) contend, learners need to understand why and how assessment processes are implemented, and this is only possible if teachers themselves are well grounded in LAL. Approaches to assessment like learning-oriented assessment or Assessment as Learning that highlight the involvement of the learner in the assessment process in order to improve learning, require the learners to be equipped with skills that would empower them to function competently in assessment, an important aspect of LAL in Inbar-Lourie's (2008) definition. While Wanatabe (2011) advocates explicit training of tertiary level language learners, a first step towards empowering learners in LAL could be to provide teachers with context-sensitive training measures focusing on fostering teachers' LAL, taking into account their "assessment life-worlds" (Scarino, 2013, p. 316), as well as considering their experience in assessment (Berry, Sheehan & Munro, 2019; Giraldo, 2019; Tsagari & Vogt, 2019). Empowering language teachers in this way would likely impact positively on learners' agency of assessment and their awareness of language assessment (Wanatabe, 2011). The findings from this study have been used to inform the design of the TALE materials (<http://taleproject.eu>). In this way, the professionalization of teachers could contribute to the development of LAL of both stakeholder groups.

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