

Case study from Louiza Loizou

- A. *Please write briefly about a memorable language assessment experience, either particularly challenging or especially successful, as an example of your practice during the pandemic:*

*What is the national context? What kind of institution? Who were the language learners?*

State school – upper secondary level (16-year-old students). Online lesson/assessment during the pandemic/lockdown

*What was the status of the assessment?*

Project/presentation (guidelines, deadline and marking criteria provided and clarified beforehand)

*Please write a brief description – the ‘story’ - of what you did/what happened that made this an especially memorable experience:*

On the basis of a specific thematic unit on the environment, students had to design and present an Environmental Awareness poster, illustrating and discussing a current environmental issue affecting our planet. Overall, it was a positive and rewarding experience. Students were also encouraged to assess the work of their peers. However, there were students who did not have access to a laptop or PC, and it was difficult for them to present their projects via their mobile phones. Surprisingly, most students were not reluctant to participate, in contrast to having to present their projects in class.

*What lessons might there be in your experience for language teaching in general beyond the pandemic?*

- a) flexibility/training is necessary especially in assessment practices
- b) difficulty in identifying or helping individual learning difficulties (distance learning)
- c) disadvantaged students should be supported (i.e. learning difficulties, economic issues, many siblings/no electronic equipment available etc.)
- d) students need to be better trained and prepared to work remotely – develop digital literacy skills
- e) develop autonomy in learning
- f) teachers need to be supported and trained to work remotely (computer literacy)

- B. *In your context, how have teachers and other colleagues coped with modified assessment practices during the pandemic?*

I believe that in language education it is easier to adapt and make lessons even more interactive. Some teachers used learning platforms such as Kahoot! creating quizzes and games. Others used project-based assessment, yet could not check if cheating took place (e.g. parents helped complete work). Without a doubt, assessment is an on-going process, inside or outside the classroom environment. Therefore, emphasis was placed on formative assessment, without depending so much on the summative aspect. The difficulty some teachers faced was the inability to use cameras because of personal data privacy restrictions which are applicable here in Cyprus. This created an additional barrier between teacher and learners in language acquisition.

C. *The pandemic has now lasted almost two years and is not over yet. How is it affecting your professional practice at present?*

The most negative aspect I would say is the difficulty in arranging any sort of groupwork with my students. Activities or tasks have to be adapted in such a way that there is no physical contact or at least some distance is created (social distancing). Materials and resources have to be adapted and modified. In addition, students continue to miss lessons due to positive Covid cases or due to restrictive measures for close contacts. Lack of motivation is also an issue affecting students. Teachers seem to be under pressure to cover the curriculum and carry out assessment types in case there is another lockdown in the near future, thus overloading students with school work and tests.