

Case study from Antonis Themistocleous

- 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?*

The context was within the public secondary education system in Cyprus, more specifically in the Lyceum (upper secondary), with students of B1+ Level, in their majority L1 Greek speakers.

*What was the status of the assessment?*

The students were to give a presentation on the topic of the thematic unit which we were working on: water as a necessity for life.

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

Students were divided into groups through Teams, and each group was given the necessary guidelines as I shifted between groups to facilitate and oversee teamwork, before coming together and presenting via a spokesperson. This was memorable for the students because they all had their say either during the preparation phase or by being the spokesperson of the group, as well as through the experience of working in groups, albeit in an isolated environment.

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

The pandemic offered a challenge which brought to surface severe issues such as lack of education regarding the increasingly digitalized world on the teachers' side as we were all caught by surprise, and several found it especially hard to adapt – let alone adapt quickly – and continue their teaching using the digital platforms offered. This meant that the most important lesson of all is that a teacher, similar to a doctor, should never cease learning, always trying to keep up with the developments around them, embracing them as opportunities to learn, grow and adapt, keeping them at the top of their game for as long as they are in it.

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

Not very well, as it was not easy to shift from the traditional pen and paper style assessment, with the teacher invigilating the students in the classroom, to alternative methods of assessment. This was mainly because students were able to use parallel digital means to find answers, even complete essays, rather than writing or responding based on their own knowledge. So especially because there was no precedent from which to exemplify, it did take a while before teachers could safely say that their online assessment practices were adequate.

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

I believe that most teachers have now had the time to come up with ideas to help them adapt, as well as having the ability to research what other teachers have been practising via the internet, adopting and adapting ideas for their own context and conditions. The one thing that I still don't enjoy is the distance between my students and myself, as well as between them, as practices such as groupwork or tossing the ball as part of the lesson in, for example, an answering session, are no longer feasible, taking a bit of the enjoyment out of the learning process.