

## THE CHALLENGES FOR ESP LEARNERS: ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND USEFULNESS OF CLASS ACTIVITIES

**Assoc.Prof. Dr. Galina Kavaliauskienė**  
**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lilija Anusienė**

Mykolas Romeris University, Ateities St. 20, LT-08303 Vilnius  
E-mail: gkaval@mruni.lt

**Assoc.Prof. Dr. Ligija Kaminskienė**

Vilnius University, Universiteto St. 3, Vilnius  
E-mail: ligija@bmi.lt

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*The most important knowledge teachers need to do good work is knowledge how students are experiencing learning and perceiving their teachers' actions.*

*Steven Brookfield*

### Abstract

Alternative assessment has been widely used in education at tertiary level. The key features of alternative assessment are active participation of learners in evaluation of their own performance and the development of reflective thinking. Success of alternative assessment depends on performance that demonstrates what learners can do with language in communicative classrooms. Active participation of learners in evaluating themselves and one another is part of alternative assessment which is normally presented in the form of reflections on one's performance. A recent Google search produced 60,300,000 hits for 'alternative assessment' (March 2007). It demonstrates the importance and relevance of this issue in teaching and learning a foreign language.

The research aimed at investigating the challenges of alternative assessment in linguistic development of learners in English for Specific Purposes. The study employed a students' questionnaire on utility of various activities, and in-course and post-course written reflections on learners' performance and linguistic development. Portfolios were used for alternative assessment of students' work throughout the academic year. The portfolio items included written materials like summaries, tests, definitions of vocabulary items, essays, Power Point Presentations, etc. Impact of either creative activities or contributions to portfolio on learning was analyzed. Data obtained from three streams of respondents are compared. The findings were processed using software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The findings demonstrated that alternative assessment is a helpful means for learner linguistic development. Learners' likes or dislikes to various creative or routine activities are affected by success or failure in their performance. Learners' reflections on usefulness of various tasks and quality of their performance in different activities help teachers develop ways of dealing with difficulties and promote linguistic development.

**Keywords:** alternative assessment, linguistic development, reflections on performance, portfolio, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

### Introduction

Lately alternative assessment has become important part of learning and teaching foreign languages. Methods of alternative assessment are based on learners' evaluation of their own learning

and allow students to reflect on their linguistic development. The importance and relevance of alternative assessment is demonstrated by a multitude of publications in this area. Portfolio assessment as one of the ways of alternative assessment has become widely used in educational settings. The key features of portfolio are: an alternative to traditional testing, ways to self-assess one's knowledge and skills, active participation of learners in the evaluation and development of reflective thinking.

Learners' perception of usefulness of various class activities has not been sufficiently explored so far. There seems to be a discrepancy between teachers' and learners' views on usefulness – often currently unpopular activities among teachers perceived by learners as beneficial to learning.

**The aim of the research:** to investigate learners' perceptions of the usefulness of various class activities, to introduce alternative assessment of performance, and analyze learners' reflections on their learning.

**The methods used:** a questionnaire on usefulness of class activities, statistical treatment of the responses, and learners' written reflections on learning. Class activities included computer tasks, creative assignments, discussions, Power Point Presentations, summary writing, etc. Traditional testing of learner performance in class activities was replaced by alternative assessment. Student self-evaluation and peer-evaluation of performance was submitted either in anonymous or signed form.

There has not been extensive research into the usefulness of class activities at tertiary level although this issue is important in view of learners' success in learning.

## 1. Literature review

Alternative assessment has been widely used in assessing the effectiveness of education at tertiary level. The key features of alternative assessment are active participation of learners in evaluation of their own performance and the development of reflective thinking. Success of alternative assessment depends on performance tasks that demonstrate what learners can do with language in communicative classrooms. Evaluating oneself is important part of alternative assessment which is normally presented in the form of reflections on one's performance. Alternative assessments can include essays, performance assessment, oral presentations, demonstrations, and portfolios. Alternative assessment is often understood as the utilization of non-traditional approaches in judging students' performance.

Differences between the traditional and alternative assessment are highlighted in (Douglas Brown, 2003) and cited below:

“Traditional Assessment	Alternative Assessment
One-shot, standardized exams	Continuous long-term assessment
Timed, multiple-choice format	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 ‘right’ answer	Open-ended, creative answers
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented to process
Non-interactive performance	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation“.

It should be noted, however, that many forms of assessment fall in between the two, and some combine the best of both.

A Google search produced 60,300,000 hits for ‘alternative assessment’ (March 2007). By the late 1980s portfolios were used as a means of alternative assessment for evaluating the effectiveness of learning. A Google search produced 12,300,000 hits for ‘portfolio assessment’ (March 2007). It demonstrates the importance and relevance of these issues in teaching and learning a foreign language.

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. 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, simultaneous development of students' reflective thinking (Banta, online). A range of definitions of the portfolio has been developed, illustrating the growth and diver-

sity of its use. For some teachers, the portfolio is part of an alternative assessment program, and it can either include a record of students' achievements or simply document their best work. For other teachers, 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 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 and contains three parts – Language Passport, Language Biography and Dossier' (<http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio>).

Portfolios can consist of a wide variety of materials: teacher notes, teacher-completed checklists, students' self-reflections, written summaries, reading logs, audiotapes of student talks, etc. 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 to motivate students and promote students self-assessment and self-understanding

(<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/assess6.html>). Portfolios display a variety of students' work produced under diverse conditions and collected during a specified period of time. Central to the purposes of portfolios are the reflections or commentaries on the entries. Through reflections, students 1) can develop metacognitive awareness of texts and situations, 2) can develop their strategies when approaching various texts or tasks, 3) may judge their own work and compare performance in different tasks (Johns, 1993).

Generally speaking, portfolios capitalize on students' natural tendency to save work and become an effective way to get them 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, online). 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.

Pros and cons of portfolios assessment are described in (Epstein, online). The key pros are: "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". The key cons are (Epstein, online): "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 – teacher measures what he taught. Portfolios reveal weaknesses in instructional processes. Student assessment portfolios promote positive student involvement. Portfolios offer the teacher an in-depth knowledge of the student as a learner. It allows to individualize instruction for the student (<http://www.nclrc.org/portfolio/modules.html>). 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 papers (Coombe & Barlow, 2004). The most common areas of student reflections: syllabus (7%), instruction (36%), learning (43%), and assessment (14%) (Nunes, 2004).

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

It has been claimed that the challenges of assessment portfolios to language learners include

lower comparability and reliability and difficulty ensuring standardized testing conditions. They also pose a scoring problem because criteria requires staff training and is more time consuming than scoring a single norm-referenced test (<http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-3/large.htm>).

Usefulness of various activities in English classes poses debates among interested parties. According to D. Nunan (1988), there is “the 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, a study (Spratt, 1999) was conducted to compare learners’ preferred activities with teachers’ perceptions of what those preferences were, and only a roughly 50% correlation was found. According to another researcher, “listening to tapes and course book dialogues was particularly disliked” (McDonough, 2002). Moreover, “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).

## 2. Respondents and research methods

The respondents were three streams of day-time students who study ESP at the Faculty of Social Policy, Mykolas Romeris University. There were 96 participants altogether. The subjects were predominantly females and at intermediate level. The first sample refers to the year 2005 (34 students), the second one – to 2004 (26 students), and the third one – to 2006 (36 students). The size of respondent classes in each stream varied from 10 to 18 students in a class. Students were aged between 19 and 25 years old. The amount of time spent in L2 environment was 4 hours a week for 3 semesters, which amounted to 192 hours of instruction.

Research employed a questionnaire on students’ assessment of usefulness of various activities in ESP classes (Appendix) and written learners’ reflections on their performance in various activities. Some excerpts from students’ reflections are reproduced in this paper below. The main content areas of a designed and previously piloted questionnaire cover the key activities in ESP classes and contain 6 items. The questionnaire was piloted at various stages of its development on a sample of learners who were similar to the target sample, i.e. students of the same faculty. Based on the feedback received from the pilot group we put together a final version of the questionnaire which is presented in the Appendix. The questionnaire was administered to three streams of respondents (9 students’ groups altogether) of the Faculty of Social Policy. Two streams submitted anonymous replies and one signed ones. It was of interest to find out if anonymity had any influence on a level of significance that was computed for each activity. After the administration of the questionnaire, item analysis was conducted. Fortunately there were no left out questions which simplified the analysis. According to Z. Dornyei (2003), this can serve as an indication that there was nothing wrong with the design of the questionnaire. The length of time to complete a questionnaire did not exceed 15 minutes. Questionnaire return rate was very good – all sheets were returned.

## 3. Results and discussion

Learners’ responses to a questionnaire on utility of various activities used in the ESP classroom throughout the academic year are presented in Charts 1 to 6. All charts display percentage of learners versus their expressed attitude to usefulness of each activity item in the survey. In the presented charts, for the sake of clarity, positive responses ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ were added up, and negative responses ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ were added up, too. This procedure does not distort the data. On the contrary, it allows to draw clear visual charts. Double bars in each chart refer to different streams. The first bars display the data obtained for the first stream of the investigated sample (34 learners), signed questionnaires, and the second bars – the data for the second stream (26 learners), anonymous replies.

A full questionnaire is presented in Appendix. For each question students were expected to rate the statements according to the scale by circling or writing the appropriate number: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – not sure, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree. In the questions below only numbers are written in brackets.

*1<sup>st</sup> Question. Writing definitions of ESP vocabulary terms is beneficial for my linguistic development. (Answers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).*

Chart 1 demonstrates respondents’ perceptions of whether learning definitions of ESP vocabulary benefits linguistic development. 70% of students feel that vocabulary definitions are useful to learning. This result is close to obtained for the second stream (73%). There were very few negative

responses (6% and 8%, respectively). About quarter of respondents are not sure about usefulness of this learning area (24% and 19%, respectively).

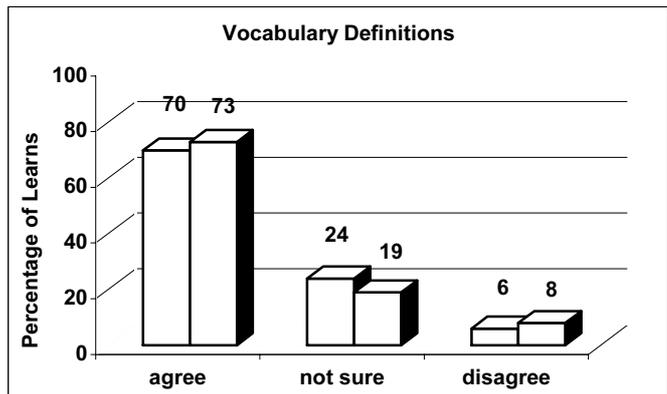


Chart 1. Usefulness of learning definitions of ESP vocabulary.

2<sup>nd</sup> Question. *Writing summaries of professional texts is useful for improving writing skills.* (Answers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

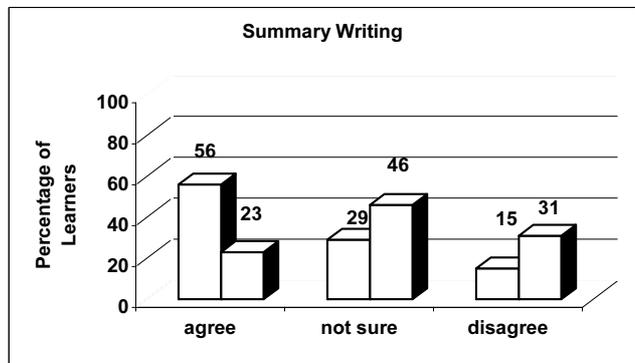


Chart 2. Usefulness of summary writing.

Chart 2 shows students' views on writing summaries of professional texts. There is no agreement between the first and the second stream. In the second stream, only 23% of students support this activity, while in the first stream 56% found it beneficial. Almost twice as many learners in the second stream (31%) rejected activity of summarizing as useful in comparison with 15% of the first investigated sample. The number of dubious students in the second stream is also noticeably higher.

3<sup>rd</sup> Question. *Preparing creative tasks is was useful for improving language skills.* (Answers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Positive attitudes to creative ESP tasks do not differ significantly in both samples – 62% and 61%, respectively (Chart 3). Negative attitudes differ substantially – 12% against 31%. Almost quarter of respondents (26%) are not sure about the benefits of creative tasks (in the second stream only 8%).

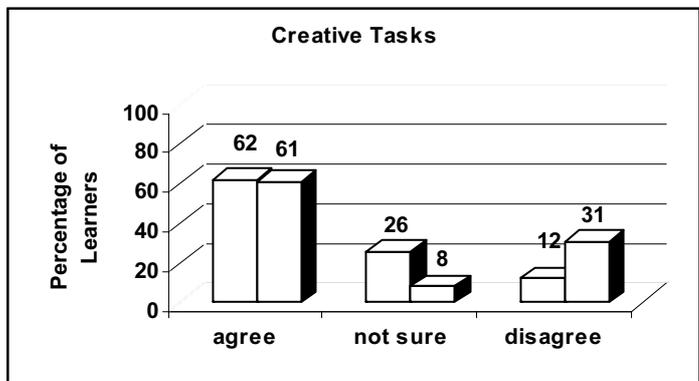


Chart 3. Usefulness of creative tasks.

4<sup>th</sup> Question. Classroom discussions on various topics were useful for linguistic development. (Answers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

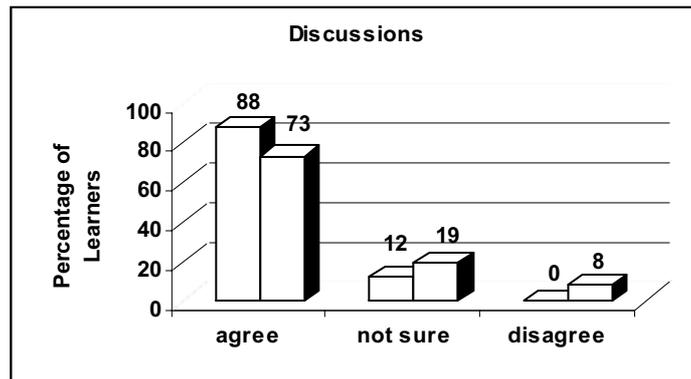


Chart 4. Usefulness of class discussions on various topics.

Discussions are the most popular activities (Chart 4). 88% of respondents against 73% support discussions, and only 12% (in the second stream 19%) are not sure. There are some respondents (8%) who disagree.

5<sup>th</sup> Question. Preparing PowerPoint presentations and delivering them in front of the audience was beneficial for developing speaking skills. (Answers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

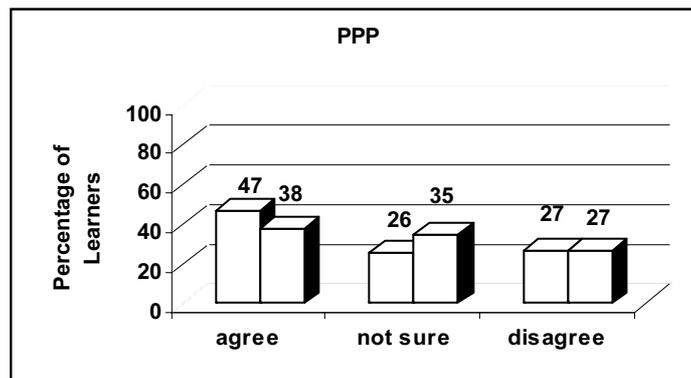


Chart 5. Usefulness of Power Point Presentations.

Power Point Presentations seem to be the most difficult tasks for majority of students. Slightly fewer than half of respondents (47%) feel presentations are useful (against 38%). About quarter are either unsure or do not support the idea of making presentations. The reason will be evident from students' reflections on various activities that are described below.

6<sup>th</sup> Question. Formal testing of ESP vocabulary is beneficial to learning. (Answers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

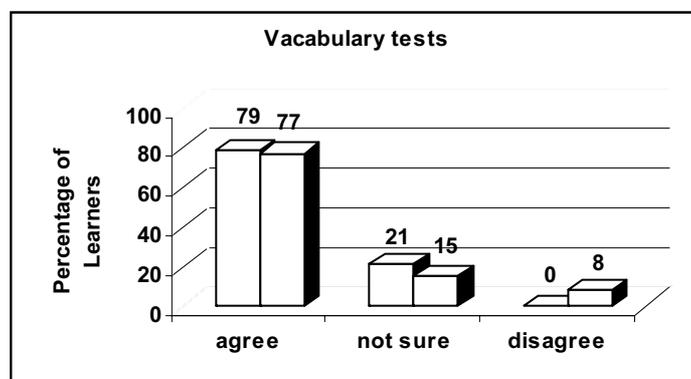


Chart 6. Usefulness of vocabulary tests.

Surprisingly, the majority of learners are positive about formal testing – 79% in the first stream and 77% in the second stream support it. About the fifth of respondents are not sure (21% and 15%, respectively). In the second stream, 8% disagree, but there are no opponents in the first sample. Respondents claim that formal testing mobilizes and stimulates learning and consolidation, while experienced teachers consider testing as an evil burden.

#### 4. Statistical processing of the data

The results that are shown in the charts were processed statistically in order to determine how significant the obtained data are.

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. Usually 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 internal consistency reliability.

Formal experiments are analyzed using inferential statistics in order to be able to make inferences on research data. For this purpose, we computed the Means and Standard Deviations for three streams of participants and applied the *t*-test in data analysis. The *t*-test is the most frequently used measure in the L2 research when comparing mean scores for two groups. The adjustment for group size was made by using the Table 7.5 Critical values for the *t*-test statistic (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Group size was adjusted for by using 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 two Tables below.

Table 1. Mean values, standard deviations and *t*-test coefficients for the first stream (34 participants, 2005) and the second stream of learners (26 participants, 2004).

Type of activity	Means and SDs (1 <sup>st</sup> stream)	Means and SDs (2 <sup>nd</sup> stream)	Calculated <i>t</i> -coefficient	Tabled <i>t</i> -coefficient (Brown & Rodgers, 2002)	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	$p < 0.01$
Power Point 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	$p < 0.02$

The investigation was conducted into the usefulness of various activities in ESP classes. Data for two streams of learners are shown in Table 1. 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) demonstrated more favorable views on the usefulness of classroom activities than the second stream (anonymous replies) – mean values are greater for all activities. The values of Standard Deviations 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. 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. Here, the degree of freedom is equal to 58. The closest value in the theoretical Table 7.5 (Brown & Rodgers, 2002) is 60, which was used for the determination of the level of significance. 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 Power Point 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 favorable perception to all class activities.

Table 2. Mean values, standard deviations and *t*-test coefficients for the first stream (34 participants, 2005) and the third stream of learners (36 participants, 2006).

Type of activity	Means and SDs (1 <sup>st</sup> stream)	Means and SDs (2 <sup>nd</sup> stream)	Calculated <i>t</i> -coefficient	Tabled <i>t</i> -coefficient (Brown & Rodgers, 2002)	Two-tailed significance level
Vocabulary definitions	4.10 0.75	4.14 0.60	0.14	1.671	$p < 0.10$
Summary writing	3.60 1.00	3.89 0.88	1.283	1.671	$p < 0.10$
Creative tasks	4.15 1.11	3.72 0.84	1.82	1.671	$p < 0.10$
Discussions	4.23 0.65	3.61 0.82	3.52	2.660	$p < 0.01$
Power Point Presentations	3.26 0.96	4.11 0.69	4.19	2.660	$p < 0.01$
Vocabulary tests	4.23 0.68	4.08 0.59	1.0	1.671	$p < 0.10$

The research into the differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> streams of participants (signed and unsigned replies, respectively) produced the results shown in Table 2. Here, the degree of freedom is equal to 68. The closest value in the theoretical Table 7.5 (Brown & Rodgers, 2002) is 60, which was used for the determination of the level of significance. A *t*-test analysis between the Means of both samples for discussions and Power Point Presentations yielded *t*-coefficients 3.52 and 4.19, respectively (3<sup>rd</sup> column in the table 2). These values exceed the critical tabled values 2.660 (4<sup>th</sup> column), and the two-tailed level of significance for these activities is  $p < 0.01$ . However, for other activities – vocabulary definitions, summary writing, creative tasks and vocabulary tests – the computed values of *t*-coefficients are below the critical tabled values. This means that level of significance  $p < 0.10$ , and there is no significant difference between the responses here.

## 6. Alternative assessment: learners' reflections on activities

As it has already been mentioned, the reflection on one's performance during academic year makes important contribution into alternative assessment. Post-course reflections are unbiased due to being irrelevant to evaluation of one's performance (mark) and can have a positive context in the life-long learning. Here are some excerpts from learners' reflection pages. The language has not been corrected for the sake of authenticity, and the real names of students have been changed in order to preserve anonymity.

*Inga P.* 'Summarizing helped me to improve accuracy in expressing ideas, use appropriate professional vocabulary, and think about style and sentence structures'.

*Vitalijus T.* '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'.

*Donata S.* 'Learning vocabulary has been very useful. I enjoy memorizing new words and using them. However it was sometimes difficult to find out the meanings of professional terms.'

*Edvinas S.* '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.'

*Roberta G.* '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'.

*Egle G.* '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'.

*Aiste D.* 'Finding definitions for portfolios was very useful. I also made definitions myself when I couldn't find the suitable ones. Sometimes it was a bit hard, but also fun at the same time. Moreover, I like computer activities because we can produce something unusual, different from what we've done

before and make our day special. Power Point Presentations help to present information in an interesting way and attract attention of other students, so I enjoy making PPPs and I have improved my skills of presenting, which will be of great benefit in my professional life'.

*Alina K.* 'Portfolios were very useful to me. I have improved my writing & reading skills, built up vocabulary; writing definitions and vocabulary tests helped me to remember new terminology. I learned to use different dictionaries, on paper and online. Computer tasks were the most interesting, entertaining and exciting. They helped me to improve my speaking & listening skills'.

*Inga G.* 'PowerPoint Presentation & creative computer tasks are the most interesting. Discussions helped to avoid boredom and made English classes exciting'.

*Juozas A.* 'The most boring and complicated was summary writing. I am not satisfied with my tests' results either, and I can only blame myself for this. I enjoyed learning something new – how to make a PowerPoint Presentation (PPP), search for information online effectively. I improved my listening skills by having listened to authentic recorded speech in English classes. Activities are interesting and useful'.

*Giedre S.* 'Discussions are one of the most important and interesting tasks in English classes. It is the only way I can improve my speaking skills, express my own opinion & ideas about the object of discussion, and find a solution. Creation of presentations has a lot of advantages. I can use visual aids to say what I want, and it is very exciting'.

*Donata S.* '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'.

*Rasa Z.* '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'.

*Rasa S.* 'I do not like making PPPs because it is not interesting. For me, it is a very difficult task. And I am afraid to talk in front of the audience. I did not like writing summaries, it was a new task, and I have never done it before. I improve my grammar and writing skills as a result of this training'.

*Fausta T.* 'Making PPPs was very beneficial to me. I learned not to have a fear of talking in front of the audience. I've just got rid of this feeling. I disliked writing all the summaries because I never knew what the main idea was. It is worth saying that there are lots of good points in writing summaries, e.g. improves one's vocabulary. My translation is getting better and better, I use more new words and interesting expressions, so my English doesn't sound poor. We also learned to work in a team or in pairs. Maybe we do not appreciate the importance of working together at the moment, but I believe it will be of great value in the future'.

*Jurgita Z.* 'PPP is a very pleasant task for those who are not delivering it. Preparation of PPP takes a lot of time. I have learned how to make a good presentation. It will be useful in the future. Learning definitions of vocabulary was the easiest task for me. I found them in the internet or dictionaries, and learning was enjoyable'.

*Milda G.* 'I am happy about English course because it 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'.

*Loreta B.* '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'.

*Lora B.* 'Computer tasks have been interesting. I like impromptu PPPs because they are creative, and it makes you concentrate and choose the right words. Testing gave the biggest benefit: I have expanded my knowledge of ESP vocabulary, and I will be able to use it in my job.'

## Conclusions

Learners' reflections on the usefulness of various activities in English classes offer significant insights into learning outcomes. Anonymity of responses does not play a significant role: for one stream anonymous replies on usefulness are less favorable, and for another stream – more favorable than for signed responses.

Given the disparity of usefulness scores, it is apparent that only statistical processing provides further clarification. The computation of *t*-coefficients and significance levels allows to elucidate the

uncertainty in usefulness scores that are displayed visually in charts. Usefulness is questionable for Power Point Presentations (Table 1,  $p < 0.10$ ) and for some other activities with  $p < 0.10$  (Table 2).

Another noteworthy finding is that learners' reflections on alternative assessment and usefulness of class activities are greatly affected by their performance in a particular activity.

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### Appendix

#### 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) Preparing 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 ESP vocabulary is beneficial to learning.

### IŠŠŪKIAI BESIMOKANTIESIEMS: ALTERNATYVUSIS VERTINIMAS IR AUDITORINĖS VEIKLOS NAUDINGUMAS

**Galina Kavaliauskienė, Ligija Kaminskienė, Lilija Anusienė**

Mykolo Romerio universitetas

#### Santrauka

Alternatyvusis užsienio kalbos mokymosi vertinimas aukštojoje mokykloje pastaraisiais metais įgauna vis didesnę reikšmę. Jo taikymas siejamas su komunikacinių ir bendradarbiavimo metodų taikymu, taigi su besimokančiojo aktyvumu klasėje ir su refleksijos elemento įtraukimu į mokymo procesą. Aktyvus dalyvavi-

mas mokymosi procese leidžia daryti prielaidą, jog besimokantysis nuolat vertina save, lygindamas save su kitais proceso dalyviais, bei vertina kitus, svarstydamas, ką jis pasiekė per tam tikrą mokymosi laiką.

Alternatyvusis vertinimas pasiekė savo apogėjų kalbos studijose dar 1990-ųjų pradžioje pradėjus taikyti studento aplanko (*portfolio*) metodą. Aplanko metodas daugeliui mokytojų ir dėstytojų – tai dalis vertinimo programos, alternatyviojo vertinimo galimybė, atspindinti studento pasiekimus per ilgesnį laiką, o kartu ir refleksyvaus mąstymo ugdymo galimybė, leidžianti pačiam studentui aktyviai modeliuoti savo mokymosi procesą.

Šiuo metu *Google* portalas pateikia net 89 100 000 nuorodų į alternatyvųjį vertinimą. Alternatyviojo vertinimo pranašumai, palyginti su tradiciniu vertinimu, yra šie:

Alternatyvusis vertinimas atskleidžia kalbos mokymo trūkumus ir pranašumus visai netikėtais aspektais. Pavyzdžiui, studentai, refleksyviai analizuodami mokymo procesą savo kalbos aplanke, nurodo, jog užsisiiminėti kai kuriomis veiklos rūšimis jie nėra motyvuoti, dėl to jos nepriimtinos. Buvo pastebėta, jog studentų ir dėstytojų kalbinių veiklos rūšių vertinimas dažnai nesutampa.

Šio straipsnio autorės pritaikė studento aplanko metodą ir alternatyvųjį vertinimą veiklos rūšių efektyvumui mokantis anglų kalbos specialiesiems tikslams (ESP) patikrinti. Tikrinimo objektu buvo pasirinktos šešios veiklos rūšys, sudarančios ESP mokymo esmę. Trys Mykolo Romerio universiteto studentų srautai (9 grupės) apžvelgė savo pasiekimus ir juos įvertino semestro pabaigoje kalbos aplanuose. Išvadas jie apibendrino atsakydami į trumpą anketą, susidedančią iš šešių teiginių dėl profesinio žodyno, santraukų rašymo, kūrybinių užduočių, diskusijų, *Power Point* prezentacijų bei formalaus žodyno testavimo.

Gauti anketos atsakymai buvo apdoroti naudojant SPSS (*Statistical Package for Social Sciences*) programinį paketą. Trumpai apibūdinant gautus rezultatus galima pasakyti, jog nukrypimai tarp trijų vertintojų srautų buvo statistiškai reikšmingi. Lyginant pirmojo ir antrojo srauto duomenis galima pastebėti, jog pirmojo srauto (jo anketos buvo identifikuotos) nuomonė apie veiklos rūšis buvo apskritai geresnė nei antrojo srauto (jo anketos buvo anoniminio pobūdžio). Studentų nuomonės, pateikiamos citatomis iš jų aplankų, patvirtina skaičiavimais grįstus rezultatus. Taigi veiklos rūšys, kurių koeficientas pateiktose lentelėse  $p < 0,01$ , yra neabejotinai naudingiausios, o veiklos, kurių koeficientas  $p < 0,10$ , ateityje turi būti tyrinėjamas plačiau.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** iššūkių, anglų kalba specialiesiems tikslams, alternatyvusis vertinimas, auditorinė veikla, naudingumas, aplankas, studentų apmąstymai, programinė įranga SPSS.