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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT IN L2

This article investigates the use of self-assessment as an alternative assessment method for multilingual students in Greek school classrooms. It explores teachers' perceptions of the advantages of self-assessment on a cognitive and metacognitive level, as well as its impact on various aspects of students' learning process and behavior. The study adopts both the quantitative and qualitative approach with emphasis on the first one and involves 244 teachers who teach Greek as a Second Language (L2) in state schools. Moreover, triangulation of the online questionnaire results was accomplished by conducting 12 teacher interviews. This affirmed the reliability of the study. Research findings reveal that teachers recognize the value of self-assessment in developing language skills, promoting metacognitive skills, enhancing motivation, and improving overall performance. Moreover, teachers perceive self-assessment as a means to uncover hidden abilities and gain a comprehensive understanding of students' language proficiency compared to traditional assessment methods. The article concludes that self-assessment has the potential to support learner autonomy, linguistic and cultural sensitivity, and contribute to the development of autonomous, lifelong learners. The study suggests further research to explore students' perspectives and individual characteristics in relation to self-assessment.

Keywords: self-assessment, second language, language skills, learning autonomy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ever-growing number of multilingual students in Greek classrooms necessitates the re-evaluation of both the national education system and educational practices (Ventouris et al. 2022). To evaluate the performance of these students, effective assessment methods are essential. Assessment plays a fundamental role in education, in the context of teaching and learning, with the goal of gathering reliable and valid information through a multidimensional process (Bachman 2000). The theoretical advantages of self-assessment have been noted in previous research in relation to fostering language skills and independent learning for L2 learners. Moreover, foreign education systems have long embraced alternative assessment approaches to evaluate both language proficiency and overall learning behavior (Boud & Falchikov 1989).

Our research focuses on teachers' perspectives on self-assessment for Grade 2 students in Greek-L2 classes. Specifically, it aims to explore the views of teachers regarding the cognitive and metacognitive benefits of self-assessment and their impact on students' learning processes and behavior. The study investigates the potential of self-assessment to facilitate cognitive growth, metacognitive development, and overall learning outcomes.

The motivation for this research stems from the need for effective, fair, and student-friendly assessment methods. Self-assessment can encourage learner autonomy, usefulness, self-improvement, and enhance linguistic and cultural sensitivity. The findings can contribute to improving assessment practices in diverse classrooms and meeting the language needs of students from different backgrounds.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of assessment in L2 classes is to evaluate the proficiency and progress of students, inform decision-making in instruction and provide feedback to facilitate further learning (Brown 2004). Various typologies of assessment can be adopted, with a distinction made between teacher-based assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment (Brown 2004).

In addition to the widespread teacher-based assessment, peer assessment is an alternative assessment process in which students evaluate the work, knowledge and skills of their peers based on common criteria and standards (Topping 1998). This approach can contribute to the development of collaboration, feedback, and critical thinking among students (Falchikov 2005). Additionally, peer assessment can help students gain a better understanding of quality standards and implement them in their own work (Topping 1998).

As students engage in self-assessment, they evaluate themselves based on established criteria and standards, which is of primary interest to this study

(Oscarson 1997). The use of the self-assessment method can help students develop metacognitive skills, enhance motivation for learning and promote self-regulated learning (Andrade & Valtcheva 2009).

Accordingly, the selection of the appropriate assessment method depends on the purpose of the assessment and the needs of the students (Brown & Abeywickrama 2010). In fact, the combination of the different approaches (external assessment, peer assessment and self-assessment) can lead to a more comprehensive and effective type of assessment (Boud 1995). In practice, educators can encourage the use of different assessment methods through differentiated activities and approaches, covering individual needs and the different learning styles of students (Tomlinson 2001).

The role of student self-assessment in the learning process and its impact on society is an important aspect of educational research. Studies suggest that self-assessment can lead to many positive outcomes in the learning process, such as increased metacognition, motivation, and self-regulated learning (Andrade & Valtcheva 2009). Metacognition, or awareness of one's own thinking processes, is a crucial aspect of effective learning (Flavell 1979). Through self-assessment, students develop metacognitive skills by reflecting on their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Butler & Winne 1995).

Self-assessment is also a potent pedagogical tool that fosters the development of language and communication skills in second language learners. Empirical evidence suggests that self-assessment positively affects learners' motivation, self-confidence, and autonomy in their language learning process (Boud & Falchikov 1989). Moreover, previous studies have consistently demonstrated the positive impact of self-assessment on students' performance. For instance, Le Blanc and Painchaud (1985) found that self-assessment facilitated students in completing their activities more effectively and efficiently, enabling them to reach their set goals. By engaging themselves in self-assessment, students are motivated to actively participate in all language skills, with a particular emphasis on receptive abilities, and show increased motivation to succeed (Rousoulioti et al. 2024). Instead of merely reproducing declarative knowledge, students are encouraged to utilize diverse sources of knowledge in creative and effective ways during productive activities (Czura 2012).

Furthermore, Ross et al. (1998) report that self-assessment enhances student achievement. Their research highlighted that students who were engaged in self-assessment demonstrated a greater focus on the task and a clearer understanding of their role in achieving desired outcomes. Moreover, by involving themselves in setting the assessment criteria, students perceived the assessment process as fairer. Additionally, self-assessment allowed students to communicate valuable information about their efforts, including their goals and arguments,

which may not have been accessible to teachers with other assessment methods. Confirming these findings, a more recent study conducted by Mazloomi and Khabiri (2017), also revealed improvements in students' language ability resulting from self-assessment.

Focusing on the issue of self-regulated learning, research shows an improvement in autonomy because students retain decisional responsibility over every aspect of their learning course, including the selection of assessment techniques and their implementation. These students decide what they want to learn, when, and how they will learn it (Thomson 1996). Therefore, they can learn independently from the teacher without waiting for instructions on subsequent learning stages. At the same time, they receive personalized feedback based on specific goals and activities according to the context of differentiated instruction (Pierce 2003).

Regarding its impact on society, self-assessment contributes to the development of autonomous, lifelong learners who can adapt better to various challenges and changes in the workforce and society (Little 2005). As individuals, they become more self-aware and self-regulated. More importantly, these students have enhanced language tools to contribute to their communities, as they make use of their already developed critical ability, their linguistic flexibility, and their awareness of the communicational conditions in which they are likely to be involved on a social or professional level (Dweck 2006).

On a metacognitive level, students adopting self-assessment track their progress and understand what they need to do to improve their performance. In this way, they achieve conscious control of their cognitive skills, such as time management, prediction of the learning outcomes and selection of learning techniques (Paris & Paris 2001). They determine the help needed from the teacher and choose the appropriate combination of strategies. As a result, they have better understanding on how they learn, and they use the language holistically by transferring previous knowledge to build on the present (Schmidt & Wehmeyer 2016).

Self-assessment can therefore be a valuable pedagogical tool for developing language and communication skills in L2 learners, although there is no relevant research related to the Greek context. By promoting reflective practices, self-awareness, and self-directed learning, self-assessment enhances learners' motivation, self-confidence, and the overall willingness of students to improve their language proficiency (Winke et al. 2023).

3. THE FIELDWORK

3.1. Research questions

In recent years there has been a trend towards more alternative forms of assessment for the Second Language-L2 learners (Bachman & Palmer 1996). Considering that self-assessment is now recognized as a reliable and valid form of assessment for L2 students and can be linked to the improvement of their performance covering all areas of self-regulated learning (Butler & Lee 2010) this study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions about the effect of self-assessment on the development of students' language/communication skills?
2. Do teachers believe that self-assessment affects students' performance?

3.2. Research Framework

The research was conducted in two stages, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The first stage takes place from September 2020 to January 2021, and the second from February to May 2021. In the initiative part of the study, a sample of teachers was asked to express their opinions about various dimensions of self-assessment by using an ordinal scale (Gray 2021). The second part of the study involved interviews with teachers, focusing on the same topics as field research.

3.3. The Participants' profile

This research focuses on teachers who are involved in teaching Greek as L2 at both levels of the secondary national educational system (corresponding to the so called Middle and High School respectively). In the first stage of the research, a sample of 244 teachers was selected using a random sampling method. These teachers were teaching Greek in Intercultural Schools and Integration Classes⁵ within the public educational system. Additionally, they met the minimum required experience in teaching Greek as L2 covering the research specifications and its purposes, with the following distribution: 0-5 years (27.5%), 6-11 years (19.4%), and 11-15 years (28.9%). In the second stage of the research, additional 12 teachers (named as Teacher 1-T1 etc.), who met the same requirements with the initial sample, were interviewed to provide further insightful feedback in addition to their answers to the online questionnaire. This research stage aimed to enrich the research findings and offer a deeper understanding of the topic.

⁵ "Intercultural education concerns the structuring of relations of different cultural groups with the aim to lift inequality and social exclusion. It sets the framework for harmonious and effective integration in the general education system of students with educational, social and cultural particularities" (Eurydice 2022).

3.4. The research tools

Two research tools were used in the two stages of the study respectively. The first was a structured questionnaire of 34 closed questions in e-format generated through Google Forms and designed by the researchers exclusively for the purposes of this study. The graded scale questions used an 1-5 Likert scale type or choice fields under the suggestion “very much/much/enough/a little/not at all”. The results of the first stage of the research were statistically processed with the SPSS statistics 29th edition. The second stage was a semi-structured type of interview based on the questions of the questionnaire to achieve research triangulation and to update the data.

3.5. The data analysis method

The research employed a questionnaire with closed-ended Likert scale questions to gather data from participants, which was then analyzed using the SPSS statistical software. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to validate the questionnaire data and provide additional insights. The interview questions were aligned with the research themes and allowed participants to elaborate on their perspectives. A type of descriptive analysis was used, and the findings were subsequently categorized into thematic axes that corresponded to the research questions about the students’ performance and language skills in relation to self-assessment and the stances of the teachers towards implementing self-assessment. The teachers’ answers collected in the interviews stage were analyzed using critical content analysis. In this paper though the focus has been given mainly on the qualitative data analysis.

4. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

4.1. First research question results

Research question 1 investigates teachers’ views on self-assessment and whether it enhances students’ skills and performance, especially in language learning. Thus, data were collected on teachers’ perceptions about the effectiveness of self-assessment. The results show that a significant proportion of teachers recognize the value of self-assessment in the development of students’ language skills with 55.6% of the sample choosing “a lot” and 24.2% choosing “quite a lot” (Figure 1).

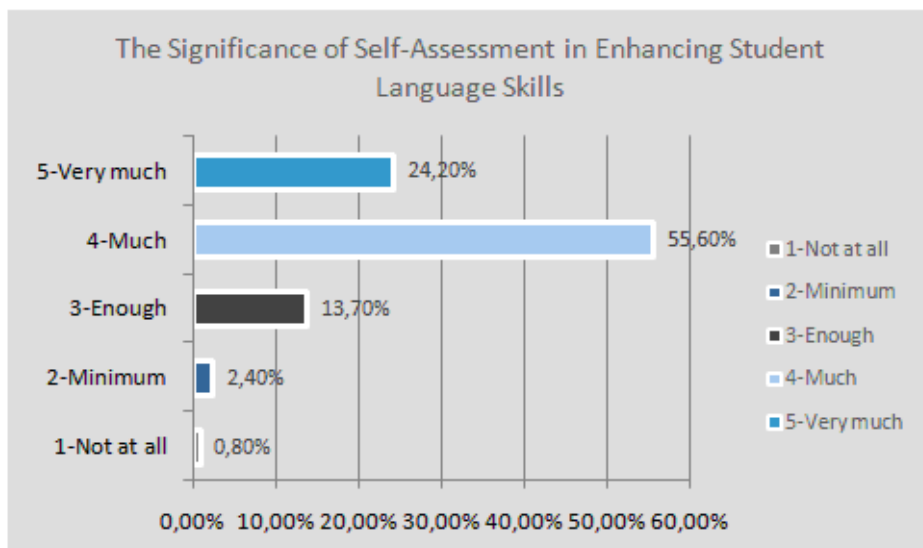


Figure 1. Improvement of language skills

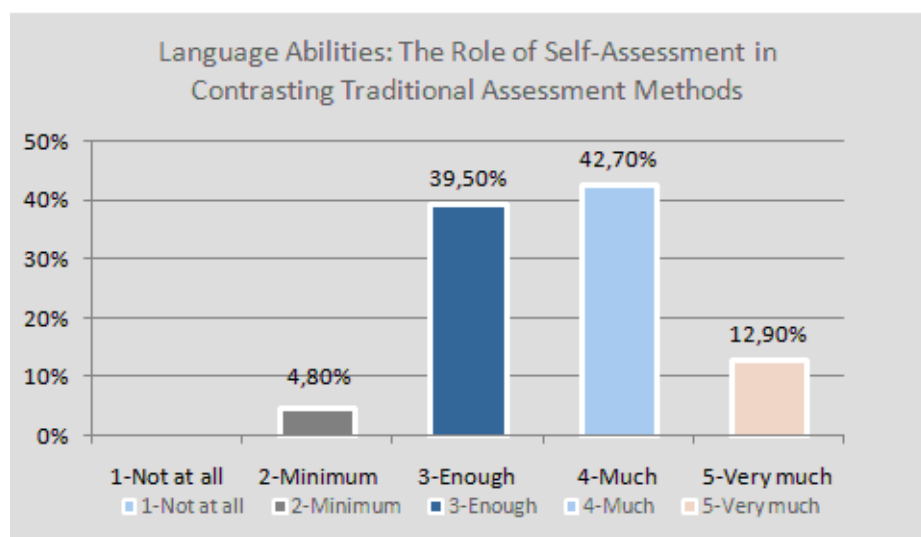


Figure 2. Aspects of students' language ability

Furthermore, the research findings show that teachers believe that self-assessment can reveal additional aspects of students' language ability which may not be apparent with traditional assessment methods and weighted tests. In this case, 42.7% of the teachers chose the field "much" and 12.9% the field "very

much” (Figure 2). The results show that teachers perceive self-assessment as a valuable skill tool in enhancing students’ language skills and identifying hidden abilities that conventional approaches may not have revealed, both in enhancing academic performance and increasing social inclusion.

The research results reveal that most of the sample believe self-assessment has a positive impact on various aspects of students’ learning and well-being. According to the findings, 60% of the participants consider that self-assessment promotes the development of metacognitive skills in students. Additionally, 71.8% believe it improves their emotional state, while 76.6% and 54% of the respondents think that self-assessment boosts students’ self-confidence and self-image, respectively.

Moreover, the participants emphasize that self-assessment enables students to become more aware of their course (63.7%), recognize their strengths and weaknesses, identify their goals (54.8%), manage their time more effectively (49.2%), consciously monitor their cognitive abilities (41.9%) and understand their learning processes by selecting appropriate strategies (35.5%). These results highlight the perceived benefits of self-assessment in fostering students’ metacognitive skills, emotional well-being, and overall learning experiences.

Additionally, the interview results for the research question regarding the impact of self-assessment on enhancing students’ skills and performance align with the previously discussed statistical findings. According to Teacher 6 (T6), self-assessment can help students improve the accuracy of their speech and consolidate their language skills more effectively. They emphasize that self-assessment has numerous benefits, as it motivates students to strive for self-improvement. Drawing from his four years of experience working in integration classes and intercultural schools, Teacher 2 (T2) has observed that students demonstrate rapid progress when they are motivated. Moreover, according to the interviews, teachers highlight the increased contribution of self-assessment to the general performance of the students of L2, the enhancement of their self-esteem, the ability for self-monitoring while facing new learning requirements. On the other hand, they are concerned about the limited collaboration from the family (Figure 3).

Increased contribution	Reduced contribution
Self-performance of multilingual students (8/12)	School-Family collaboration (8/12)
Self-confidence (8/12)	
Encouragement of weak students (11/10)	
Self-monitoring and possibilities (8/12)	
New learning requirements (10/12)	

Figure 3. Self-assessment and enhancing students’ skills according to the teachers’ interviews

The interview results corroborate the statistical findings, which indicate that teachers perceive self-assessment as a valuable tool for enhancing students' language skills, metacognitive abilities, emotional well-being, and overall learning experiences. Both the qualitative and quantitative data provide evidence supporting the positive impact of self-assessment on student achievement and skills in the context of language learning.

Specifically, one of the interviewed teachers of L2 noted:

"Multilingual students can improve the accuracy of their speech and help to better consolidate the language. It has only benefits. When we are called upon to self-assessment, we desire to promote ourselves". (T6)

4.2. Second research question results

Research participants were asked about their stances related to the advantages of self-assessment and the way it may positively affect students' autonomy and emotional state. It is worth stating that most of the respondents show a positive attitude towards using self-assessment in the classroom. The number/percentage of those who responded *probably yes* and *definitely yes* indicate that teachers consider self-assessment a useful assessment method (80.5%) and have the intention of using it more frequently in the future (>80%), as it can improve performance.

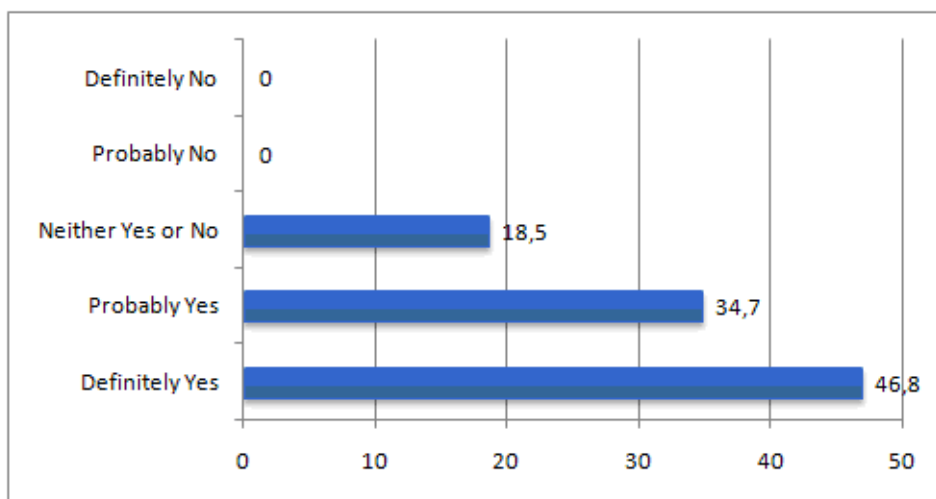


Chart 1. Participants' attitude towards more frequent use of self-assessment

As far as the advantages of self-assessment are concerned, the respondents place emphasis on learning autonomy connecting self-assessment to self-

regulated learning. The teachers interviewed also acknowledge that the method reflects the modern evaluative trends of fairness, personalization in evaluation and limitation of grade hunting combined with the need for motivation (Brown & Abeywickrama 2010).

According to the chart (Chart 2), most of the sample recognizes the effect of self-assessment on the emotional state of students as a result because of which they are urged to perform better and learn their L2 more effectively. Their answers focus on the potential that self-assessment has for stimulating student interest (92%), for improving learning autonomy (88%) and for enhancing students' motivation (83.5%). Additionally, remarkable percentages of 54.2% and 41.1% are attributed to recognizing the importance and role of students, as well as improving their sense of self-worth and security. A smaller, but countable, percentage (37.2%) is attributed to reducing the feeling of stress and competition caused to the students because of the assessment process.

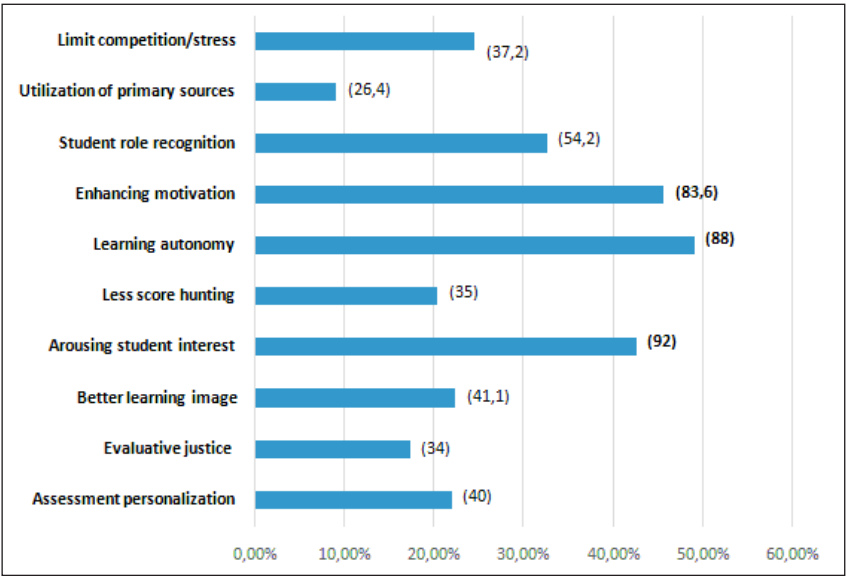


Chart 2. Self-assessment factors that lead students to better performance

The findings of the 12 interviews confirm the results of the first stage of the research. Most teachers focus on the ability of students to obtain a clear picture of their learning path (8/12). Another important aspect of the results is linked to the fact that teachers connect self-assessment to self-regulating learning, as 11 out of 12 teachers recognize its contribution to the improvement of students' performance, since the autonomy of the students is considerably raised leading them to learn and work more efficiently.

Specifically, two of the teachers mention:

"I have been working in integration classes and intercultural schools for the last four years and have noticed a huge improvement in children who are motivated/given motivation". (T2)

"Definitely, when you have an overall picture of a pupil, it's easier to determine their level of language than it is through a test. You can get information through a test as well, but only for a specific moment in time and for specific material. A test doesn't take a child's mental state into consideration at that time". (T4)

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study on the benefits of self-assessment in enhancing students' language skills and performance can be discussed in relation to the existing literature. The findings align with the work of Ross et al. (1998) and Czura (2012), who emphasize the importance of revealing the hidden language abilities of multilingual learners.

Regarding the first research question, the e-questionnaire revealed that teachers acknowledged that self-assessment could uncover hidden aspects of students' language abilities, which may not be evident through traditional assessment methods (Pirtsiou & Rousoulioti 2022), suggesting that self-assessment can play a crucial role in providing a more holistic understanding of students' communicative language skills and proficiency.

Furthermore, according to the interviews data the use of self-assessment can empower students to play an active role in evaluating their own progress and identifying areas for improvement. Teachers who participated in this research believe that self-assessment not only fosters metacognitive and reflective skills but also enhances students' emotional engagement with the learning process. Through self-assessment, students are encouraged to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and monitor their own growth over time (Ross et al. 1998).

The results to second research question revealed that the perceived significance of self-assessment in language learning extends beyond the measurement of language proficiency, as it promotes a learner-centered approach, where students become active participants in their own education. The responses to the e-questionnaire highlight the factors of promoting students' autonomy, interest, and motivation leading them to better performance and reducing stress levels or guilt feeling. By engaging in self-assessment, students develop a deeper understanding of their language abilities, gain confidence in their language use, and take ownership of their learning journey (Czura 2012).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature on self-assessment in language learning by providing empirical evidence of its positive impact on students' skills and performance. The findings highlight the role of self-assessment in uncovering hidden language abilities, promoting metacognitive and emotional skills, and fostering a learner-centered approach. Further research and implementation of self-assessment strategies can enhance language education practices and empower students to become more autonomous and proficient language learners.

6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Research limitations include teachers' reluctance to dedicate time to completing the questionnaire, restrictions on school visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic and teachers' apprehension towards participating in interviews via online platforms. The limitations of the research also include the relatively small number of the sample (244 teachers), which, however, was a conscious choice on the part of the researchers. In this way, it covers the condition that the sample concerns teachers working exclusively in Intercultural Schools and Integration Classes. These constraints highlight the importance of considering alternative data collection methods and strategies to engage educators more effectively in future research on this topic.

This study does not represent the end of the research effort regarding the implementation of the self-assessment method in favor of multilingual students of Greek as L2, but it was intended to provide a framework for highlighting this topic through the perspectives of the teachers themselves, since they are responsible for choosing or implementing alternative assessment methods. Since multilingual students constitute the second axis (considering teachers as the first one) which is crucial to self-assessment implementation, the research should explore their own views on assessment. A new study could focus on the effect of self-evaluative experience in each of the individual aspects of the student ability and behavior, as presented in the theoretical part of this research. Furthermore, the study of the role of subjectivity and the individual characteristics of the students during the implementation of the method would also be valuable.

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ΑΝΤΙΛΗΨΕΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΧΡΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΑΥΤΟΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗΣΗΣ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΜΑΘΗΤΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΩΣ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ

Περίληψη

Στο άρθρο εξετάζεται η χρήση της αυτοαξιολόγησης ως εναλλακτικής μεθόδου αξιολόγησης για πολύγλωσσους μαθητές στις τάξεις του ελληνικού σχολείου. Υπό αυτό το πρίσμα διερευνώνται οι αντιλήψεις των εκπαιδευτικών για τα πλεονεκτήματα της αυτοαξιολόγησης σε γνωστικό και μεταγνωστικό επίπεδο και τον αντίκτυπό της σε διάφορες πτυχές της μαθησιακής διαδικασίας και συμπεριφοράς των μαθητών. Στην παρούσα έρευνα υιοθετείται συνδυασμός ποσοτικής και ποιοτικής προσέγγισης, με έμφαση στην πρώτη, και διερευνώνται οι απόψεις 244 εκπαιδευτικών που διδάσκουν

την ελληνική ως δεύτερη γλώσσα (Γ2) σε δημόσια σχολεία. Επιπλέον, η τριγωνοποίηση των αποτελεσμάτων του διαδικτυακού ερωτηματολογίου πραγματοποιείται με τη διεξαγωγή 12 συνεντεύξεων καθηγητών. Αυτό επιβεβαιώνει την αξιοπιστία της έρευνας. Τα ευρήματα αποκαλύπτουν ότι οι διδάσκοντες την ελληνική ως Γ2 αναγνωρίζουν την αξία της αυτοαξιολόγησης για την ανάπτυξη γλωσσικών δεξιοτήτων, την προώθηση των μεταγνωστικών δεξιοτήτων, την ενίσχυση των κινήτρων και τη βελτίωση της συνολικής απόδοσης των μαθητών. Επιπλέον, οι διδάσκοντες αντιλαμβάνονται την αυτοαξιολόγηση ως ένα μέσο για να αναδείξουν λανθάνουσες δεξιότητες και να αποκτήσουν μια ολοκληρωμένη κατανόηση της γλωσσικής επάρκειας των μαθητών σε σύγκριση με τις παραδοσιακές μεθόδους αξιολόγησης. Το άρθρο κλείνει με το συμπέρασμα ότι η αυτοαξιολόγηση ως μέθοδος εναλλακτικής αξιολόγησης έχει τη δυνατότητα να υποστηρίξει την αυτονομία των μαθητών, τη γλωσσική και πολιτισμική ευαισθησία και να συμβάλει στην ανάπτυξη αυτόνομων μαθητών. Προτείνεται περαιτέρω έρευνα για τη διερεύνηση των προοπτικών και τον ρόλο των ατομικών χαρακτηριστικών των μαθητών σε σχέση με την αυτοαξιολόγηση.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: αυτοαξιολόγηση, δεύτερη γλώσσα, γλωσσικές δεξιότητες, μαθησιακή αυτονομία