

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA PORTFOLIO FOR FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Namibia is a young country which gained its independence in 1991. Before that date the educational system was based on an Apartheid regime imposing discriminative access to education among the population. After Reconciliation, Namibia had the hard task to create a new education system for all valorizing the former underprivileged children. The Ministry of Education fast considered the learner-centered approach as a good alternative to reach schools new objectives. Nevertheless, this pedagogy is still encountering difficulties to be fully operational in Namibian classrooms. The Namibian Portfolio for Languages (NPL) was conceived as a practical tool promoting this approach at secondary level. NPL findings proved that it was indeed well received by pupils, learner-centered and contextualised but they also revealed that teachers faced some challenges implementing self-assessment and individual counseling with their learners. Therefore, the present paper proposes a comparative approach between NPL results and another language portfolio implemented at the University of Namibia (UNAM) with beginner levels in 2016. Findings are cross-examined to assess the benefices gained from language portfolios in general and in particular to investigate the statu quo of self-

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assessment and learning strategies guidance at UNAM to hold out solutions supporting teachers in secondary schools.

KEYWORDS: Language Portfolio, French Foreign Language, Formative Assessment, Self-Assessment

INTRODUCTION

The first Namibian Portfolio for Languages (NPL) was conceived in 2012 and distributed to approximately 300 Grade 8 learners enrolled in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in Namibian secondary schools one year later. The NPL, inspired by the *European Portfolio for Languages* (2001), aimed at monitoring learners' individual language development in French and guiding them to self-assess their language progress. The NPL first chapter maps portraits of each pupil in his/her school environment and relationships to languages while the second proposes self-assessment activities based on the Namibian syllabus. The last chapter offers a platform to collect learners' individual productions in the language. This action research firstly focused on the implementation of the NPL in 6 secondary schools through teacher trainings and two group discussions. At a second stage, the study collected data from learners to assess their experiences with the NPL. Results of this still on-going study proved that the NPL was well received as a complementary teaching and learning material in French classrooms by learners and teachers. Both users considered the NPL activities as learner-centred and contextualised. However, the second focus-group discussion substantiated that teachers found Chapter 2 (on self-assessment) more challenging to use in class and admitted that they did not exploit it to its full capacity as compared to Chapter 1. Teacher participants invoked a lack of time to assist learners in self-assessment with their average class sizes of 40 pupils. They also conceded that the guidance they provided to learners in terms of learning strategies could be improved. Therefore, the researcher

wanted to investigate methodological and pragmatic solutions for teachers to better their use in self-assessment despite big size groups and to improve their advisory task with learners. In order to do so, she created another portfolio in FFL, having similar figures to the NPL, which she tested at the University of Namibia (UNAM) with 1st and 2nd year students enrolled in French between 2016 and 2017 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. This particular stream was selected based on the class size, comparable to the one found in secondary schools (between 20 to 50 pupils). The rationale behind the research was, on one hand, to confront the positive results gained from the NPL experience to UNAM Portfolio for French as Foreign Language (UPFFL) findings. On another hand, to test ways of improving the language portfolio management with huge class numbers especially as regards self-assessment practice and learning strategies counselling.

BACKGROUND

Formative Assessment

As explained in the foreword by former Minister of Education Honourable Mbumba, the National Curriculum for Basic Education document serves as the “official curriculum policy for Formal Basic Education in Namibia” (2010, p. 3). It guides “how to organise the teaching-learning process” (p. 31). Chapter 6 describes teaching, learning and assessment, and defines the national assessment strategy as follows: “In order to capture the full range and levels of competence, a variety of formal and informal continuous assessment situations is needed to give a complete picture of the learner’s progress and achievements in all subjects” (*Ibid.*). The policy advocates the use of both formative and summative assessments. The latest clearly refers to the end of the year exam and is promotion-based. The first one is outlined as follows (*Ibid.*):

Assessment has a formative role for learners if and when:

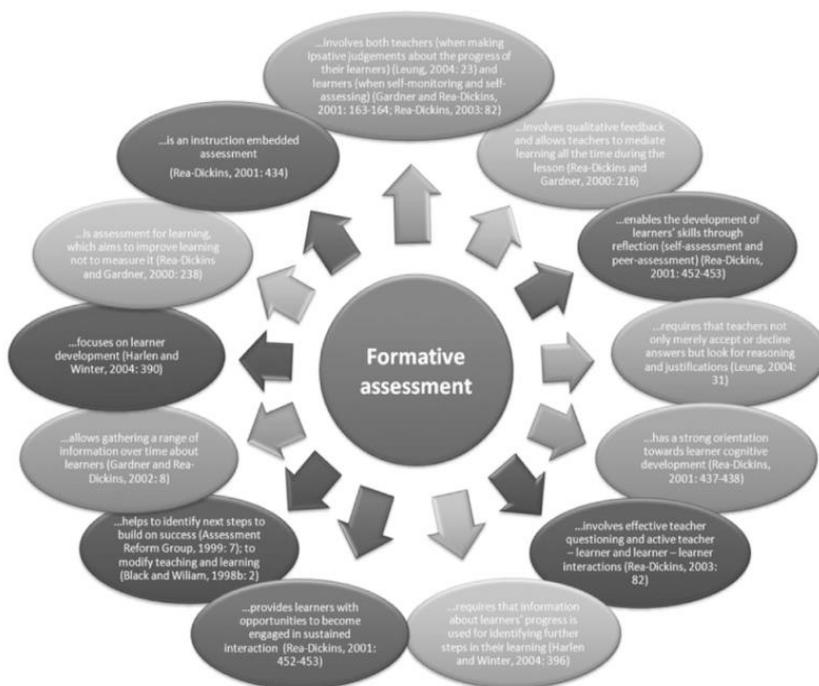
- - it is used to motivate them to extend their knowledge and skills, establish sound values, and to promote healthy habits of study
- - assessment tasks help learners to solve problems intelligently by using what they have learned
- - the teacher uses the information to improve teaching methods and learning materials

In *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment In Schools: A Policy and Information Guide* (1999), another term is introduced: “formative continuous assessment” (p. 8). It determines “any assessment made during the school year that is meant to improve learning and to help shape and direct the teaching-learning process. In this sense all continuous assessments are formative.” If the Namibian policy documents successfully provide a definition of formative assessment, it still fails to give a clear line on how teachers should practically conduct it in class.

According to the National Institute for Educational Development conceptual framework document entitled *The Learner-centred Education in the Namibian Context* (NIED, 2003), the implementation of formative assessment in Namibian schools was critical due to the Namibian educational assessment culture. The report explains that school assessment system “has not freed itself entirely from the former concept of the encyclopedic curriculum and a narrower range of skills than the curriculum as a whole, because of the dependency of the written examination.”(p. 36) Twelve years later, according to Hamakali and Lumbu (2015), “Assessments in Namibian schools remain largely

traditional since most of the teaching is geared towards national examinations, the final product, with little focus on the learning process; assessment relies largely on traditional assessment, such as tests, essays and letters”.

The definition of formative assessment in language teaching and learning is constantly enriched. In an article published in 2014, Oskana Afidska -lecturer in Applied linguistics at the University of Sheffield-recorded 13 core characteristics illustrating formative assessment complexity (2014, p. 31):



The above figure shows the profusion of interactions between teachers

and learners. It also stresses that formative assessment does not necessarily target a mark or a grading but rather aims at helping and improving the teaching-learning process. In the same article, Afidska (2004) defines teachers' feedback as a "supportive bridge which allows learners to move from where they are at the particular moment of their learning to where they are expected to be by their teacher or programme" (p. 30). In that sense, she agrees with Boston (2002) for whom feedback in formative assessment "helps learners become aware of any gaps between their desired goal and their current knowledge, understanding, or skill and guides them through actions necessary to obtain the goal" (p. 2). In a recent article reviewing researches on the implementation of formative assessment with various methods in eight different countries, Black (2015) reasserts that the most common obstacle in implementing formative assessment is "the tension between the investment in formative teaching and the pressures of the testing instruments used to satisfy demands for accountability" (p. 163). In other words, some educational systems might not be yet ready to share assessment accountability with learners and/or might not dispose of tools to integrate formative assessment in general school evaluation criteria. In that perspective, one might question the positioning of Namibia towards formative assessment. How is the formative aspect implemented in the classroom and how does it contribute to the general continuous assessment (CA) mark?

The Namibian Portfolio for Languages

In the NPL pilot study, Lumbu and Zannier (2012, 2016) showed that language portfolios could indeed help language teachers to implement formative assessment in their classroom.

Hence, the NPL goes belong the portfolio definition proposed in the Namibian document policy *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment In Schools: A Policy And Information Guide* (1999) which describes a

portfolio as a repository of a learner's best productions (i.e. tests, essays, etc.):

Portfolio: a product continuous assessment which requires a learner to collect a limited selection of the learner's work that is used to either present the learner's best work(s) or to demonstrate the learner's educational growth over a given time span. (p. 44)

In this definition, there is neither reference to self-assessment nor any activities: the portfolio is a "file".

The NPL was conceived to create an interaction platform and is, therefore, not restricted to a repository of learners' best productions. The NPL is a booklet meant to reflect learners' individual skills and progress in French language. The NPL belongs to the learner who finds activities that he needs to complete or achieve. Teachers are invited to give feedbacks and guidance on learner's language learning strategies by writing comments in each portfolio. The UPFFL follows the same structure but was adapted to the users' age by modifying its design and some sections less based on learners' private environment and more focused on students' professional experiences (i.e. internships and future carrier).

Self-assessment

According to the *Dictionnaire de Didactique du Français Langue Etrangère* (2003), self-assessment is :

[a] type of evaluation conducted by the learner [...]. It is an internal assessment, therefore not promotional, which allows learners to value their language acquisition, their efforts and to be able to take a critical look on their learning.

(p. 30)

The definition further explains that both teachers and learners need to be trained to self-assessment practice to implement and use it successfully. Klenowski's definition (as cited by Brown, 2015) adds that self-assessment requires students "to evaluate and monitor their own performance in relation to identified criteria or standards". Cited by Singh, Samad, Hussin and Sulaiman (2015), Barnhardt recommends, on another hand, a strong implication from teachers to guide learners on how to interpret their results.

Sasan Baleghhizadeh and Atieh Masoun (2013) who conducted a research into the influence of self-assessment on 57 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Iran, proved that "applying regular self-assessment as a formative assessment technique heightens the learners' level of self-efficacy in a EFL context". (p.12)

The position of the Namibian education policy on self-assessment finds some major restrictions in the use of self-assessment in schools. The document *Towards Improving Continuous Assessment In Schools: A Policy and Information Guide* (1999) stipulates that:

Learners should not become involved in the marking of selected, graded assessments, i.e. those assessments that contribute to the final summative continuous assessment mark. However, when it is possible, it is a good idea to allow learners to become involved in marking assessments. For example, during a lesson it communicates to the learners your learning expectations and may motivate and focus learner attention and effort. You should, of course, check the marks given by your learners. (p. 13)

This extract makes it clear that self-assessment cannot contribute to the CA mark. The expression “when it is possible” can raise some doubts about the systematization of self-assessment activities in the classroom. The last assumption “You should, of course, check the marks given by your learners” is also quite limiting teachers’ role and more importantly omitting their counselling task.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Population and sample

The population of this study comprised students of FFL registered at UNAM in the branch French as Applied and Business Language (meaning students registered in French as a minor subject during a period of three years). There are approximately 50 new FFL learners registering at beginner level every year, an initial pool from which generally 20 to 30 remain in 2nd and 3rd years. The UPFFL was distributed in 2016 and 2017 to two beginner groups and one group of 2nd year students in 2017. The completed research targets to observe 2016 and 2017 student promotions during their three years minor subject in FFL, which represents a total of 150 students over a period of four years.

Data collection Instrument and procedure

Two different questionnaires were used to collect data in this study. The “Initial questionnaire” and “Questionnaire 2” were both comprised of open-ended and closed/structured questions. Open-ended questions give a person options to write his/her opinions on a specific topic. Open-ended questions also gave a lot of information needed in a study. Close/structured questions mainly consisted of grading questions.

The initial questionnaire was distributed to 2016 and 2017 first year students in FLE. 69 questionnaires of 1st year students were collected and analysed. The questionnaire 2 was distributed to ten 2nd year students in 2017.

Ethical Statement

Participants were allowed to refuse or withdraw their participation in the study at any time. All information from participants was treated confidentially. Where necessary, pseudonyms were used instead of real names to further protect the identities of participants. Consent forms were submitted to each participant prior to the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

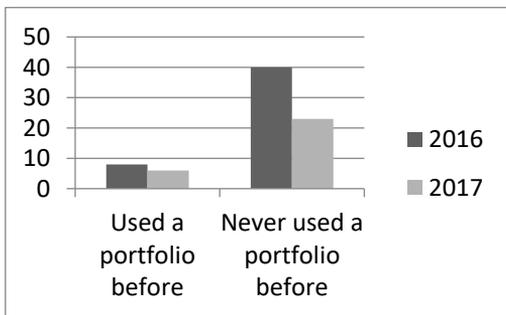
Students' initial representation of a language 'portfolio'

The Namibian Education policy promotes the use of portfolio for some school subjects but its format is confined to: "a repository". In addition, official documents do mention different activities that they qualify as 'formative assessment' (especially peer assessment) but they provide very few information about teachers' role is in the process. Moreover, proposed formative assessment techniques are fairly restricted compared to what the practice currently is.

UNAM students enrolled in French are mainly Namibian and were generally schooled in the country before reaching tertiary level. Therefore, the researcher's hypothesised that students would not necessary know what a language portfolio was. This initial questionnaire mainly aimed at finding out whether students experienced or could define what a language portfolio was.

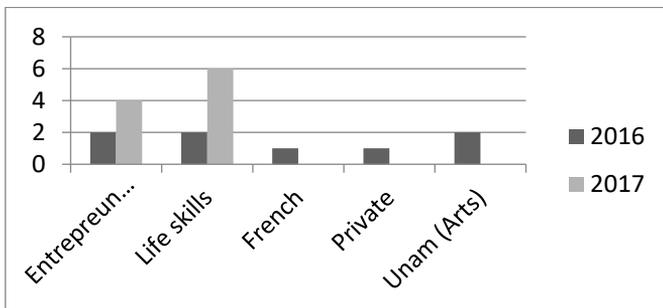
The initial questionnaire was distributed to 2016 and 2017 1st year students in FFL. 69 questionnaires of 1st year students were collected and analysed.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 enquired about participants' experience with portfolios during their schooling. Both 1st year students from 2016 and 2017 replied in a large majority that they had never used one before as illustrated by Graph 1.



Graph 1: Question 1: Did you ever use a portfolio in Education?

These graphs confirmed that portfolios are not well spread in schools at secondary level. Question 2 investigated in which subjects they used a portfolio at school (Graph 2).



Graph 2: Question 2: If yes, for which subject(s) and in which institution?

Students' responses corroborate with the Ministry of Education prescription encouraging teachers of Life Skills and Entrepreneurship subjects to use portfolios. Students described their school portfolio as "a cardboard file" where "you keep all your notes and details [...] it was more of a storage of our tests and all activities" (i.e. Question 3). This depiction echoes the 'repository' definition stated by the Namibian education policy. Unfortunately, it also confirms that the portfolios used

in schools omit neither self-assessment activities nor show any evidences of teachers' guidance in learning strategies.

In total, only 26% answered Question 4 "What can you find in a language portfolio?" which shows that many students were not so much knowledgeable about portfolios. For the 14 students who declared having used a portfolio in secondary schools, they naturally described a depository of documents, tests and tasks. For the 55 remaining who never used a portfolio: most admitted that they had no idea and others left the question blank! Only 4 answered this question but quite accurately. Three imagined that a language portfolio would be a "progress evaluation exercise", showing "how one is doing in the language" "over a period of time". They guessed that it would also target "areas of improvement and progress". Another one explained that it would consist in "the recordings of learners of all ages' language learning and cultural experiences at school or outside the school". These answers, thus few, demonstrated that some students had a quite relevant idea of the language portfolio's objectives. Nevertheless, participants did not describe what could be found in a portfolio but instead explained what the portfolio could help them achieving. In that sense, only two really answered the question: an "exercise" and a "recording".

This could explain why more students answered Question 5 "According to you, how can a portfolio help you in your language learning?" (39% answered). Some underlined the notion of traceability of language progress:

- "To help you improve your language skills in the long run and to keep record of your improvement"

- "to compare your progress"

- "to track process"

-“It will highlight and allow one to see where one may be struggling, it will also help to keep all work learnt in an organized format and thus as you develop any new lecturers are able to assess what level of comprehension you have of the language.”

-“a progressive report”

One student referred to the portfolio as an assessment tool: “To assess how well an individual is doing in the language and improve language skills.”

A large proportion of answers disclosed the idea of a tool to identify one’s strengths and weaknesses: “To work towards one’s weaknesses to improve in the language.” “A portfolio can help one identify strengths and weaknesses.” “It makes you alert of your strengths and weaknesses on the particular language.”

Some other statements pointed the notion of reaching “your goals that you have set for yourself.” and to develop “autonomous learning”. A last participant evoked that the portfolio could “Help one to be committed.” By using these terms, participants highlighted their part to play in the portfolio experience; they showed their commitment to be involved and active. Finally, some imagined a direct operational use of the language: “It will help me to know how to write, read and speak with other people.” and “Guide you to pronounce the phrases accurately.”

Among the few participants who tried to define a language portfolio, none referred to the lecturer’s involvement. Most of them knew the final objective of the language portfolio as to improve one’s language results, to track progress, to see weaknesses and strengths and to try to work on them. But none could really explain how this process is achieved.

Students’ perspective on self-assessment

Questionnaire 2, assessing the self-assessment exercise, was distributed to ten 2nd year students in 2017. This population was

selected as students had a fair timeframe to get accustomed to the UPFFL and equipped enough to reflect on the portfolio.

Learning objectives visuals

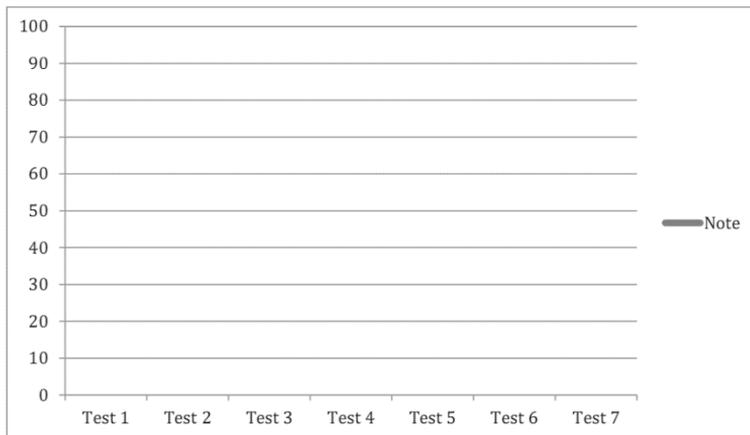
Question 3 cross-examined a NPL finding establishing that learners were not necessarily knowledgeable about the syllabus objectives. The NPL proved useful for learners to get access to language learning targets and improve their understanding of the FFL expectations. The UPFFL results contradict NPL ones. Unanimously, students revoked the fact that they learnt FFL objectives thanks to the portfolio. They all answered that they knew the expected detailed objectives despite the portfolio. The UNAM prospectus does not inform about “detailed objectives”, but lecturers are expected to provide learners with course outlines and generally explain the course objectives. A snowball conclusion would then be that teachers from secondary schools might not inform learners about these language goals, nor the school provides informative documents covering subject objectives.

In the UPFFL, learners were also asked to report their continuous assessment (CA) marks (Table 1) and they had a space to draw the evolution of their marks in the form of a graph (Graph 3). These two activities were conceived as a potential support for learners to visualise, yet reflect on, their marks evolution.

MES RESULTATS DE CONTROLE CONTINU ET A L'EXAMEN FINAL POUR LE MODULE 1:

<i>NUMERO DE TEST</i>	<i>NOTE</i>
<i>TEST 1</i>	
<i>TEST 2</i>	
<i>TEST 3</i>	
<i>TEST 4</i>	
<i>EXAMEN FINAL</i>	

Table 1: CA Marks report after module completion



Graph 3: Graph showing the CA marks evolution

To the assumption 4.1 “Copying my CA marks helped me visualize my progress”, 70% strongly agreed with the statement, 10% slightly agreed and 20% strongly disagreed which proved that the exercise of simply copying the marks have a positive impact in learners’ realisation of their performance in time. One point of concern was that some students did not remember their CA marks meaning that they did not invest a lot of attention to their CA evaluation and/or did not keep their tests. Both solutions are quite disappointing and reinforce the validity of the UPFFL for that matter. Sub-question 4.2 “Drawing the evolution line of my marks on the graph helped me visualize my progression” was much more divided. As illustrated by Figure 1, the majority strongly agreed with the statement and 20% agreed. Globally, one can conclude that the graph format was less convincing for students than ‘copying’ of CA marks.

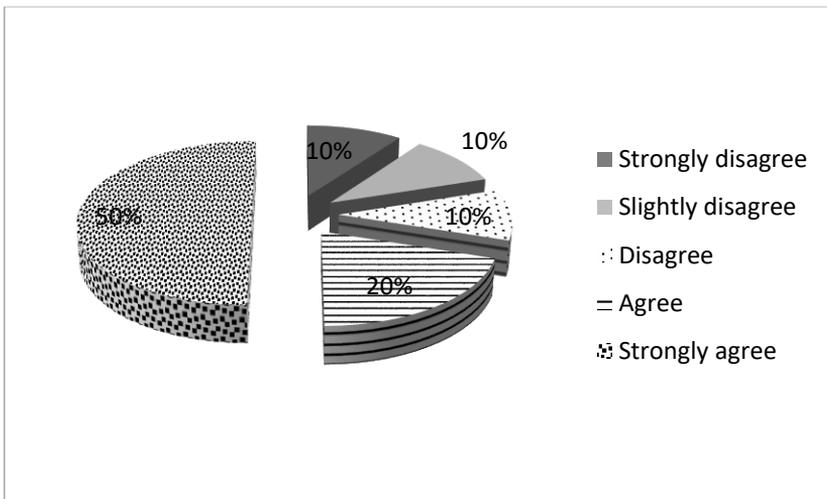


Figure 1: Question 4.2: Statement “Drawing the evolution line of my marks on the graph helped me visualize my progression”.

Self-assessment activities

UPFFL self-assessment parts were conceived as user-friendly. To self-assess themselves learners find sections listing the course objectives and need, after completion of the course, to assess where they situate themselves. Three smileys were used to exemplify these responses: negative, neutral and positive smileys (Table 2). Students also self-assessed themselves by competences at the end of the academic year (Table 3).

<i>Je suis capable de:</i>	
<i>Interagir de manière plus ou moins naturelle.</i>	
<i>Poser et répondre à des questions.</i>	
<i>Echanger des idées et des informations sur des sujets familiers dans des situations établies.</i>	
<i>Produire de simples descriptions et présentations de :</i> -personnes -conditions sociales -conditions professionnelles -routine quotidienne -de goûts	

Table 2: Self-assessment through smileys

MES POINTS FORTS ET MES FAIBLESSES A LA FIN DE L'ANNEE:

<i>Je m'auto-évalue par compétence.</i>	
<i>Compréhension orale</i>	
<i>Compréhension écrite</i>	
<i>Production orale</i>	
<i>Production écrite</i>	

Table 3: Self-assessment by competence

Self-assessment with smileys appeared popular among students. Figure 2 shows that students recognised that self-assessing

themselves did help them to situate themselves in terms of abilities towards FFL detailed objectives and general language competences. It is assumed that understanding strengths and weaknesses can indeed improve students' focus on priority goals. This result proved that theoretically students yet benefited from using self-assessment. This can only be confirmed with time from one module to another by analysing students' progression in each competence.

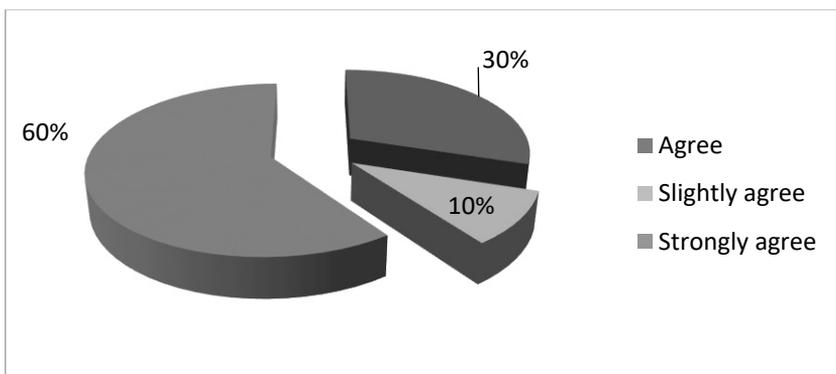


Figure 2: Question 4.3: Statement “Self-assessing myself in the section with the smileys helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses”.

Nevertheless, Figure 3 shows division among participants as regards the difficulty of self-assessing themselves.

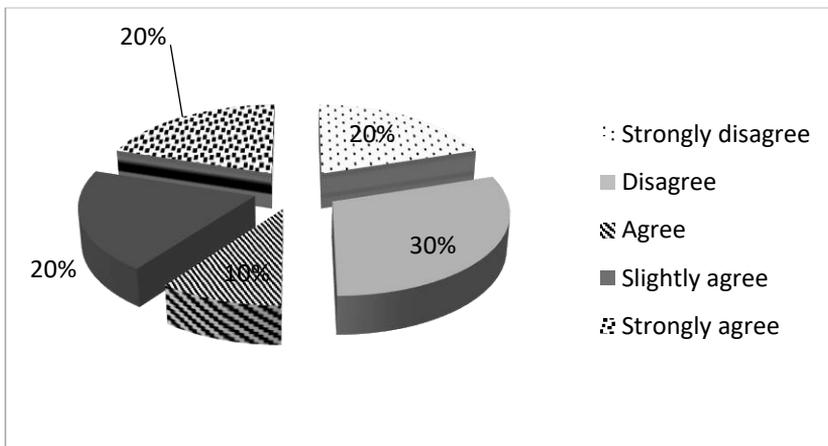


Figure 3: Question 4.4: Statement “I found difficult to assess myself in the smileys section”.

This finding is not surprising as the self-assessment exercise was the first for most students. Question 4.4 should be put into perspective with the lecturer’s check on these self-assessments. During the year, as the researcher had to write her comments on each learner’s progression in French, she had an opportunity to check the self-assessment part. On the pool of 10 students only two underestimated their abilities while others were on point with their self-assessment evaluation. It means that even though half of students were not confident in their capacity to self-assess themselves, they did succeed to achieve the exercise accurately.

Students’ perspective on the lecturer’s guidance on learning strategies

Lecturer’s guidance and counselling were formally operated at two levels in the UPFFL: written and oral comments. The first one was presented in the portfolio with a space at the end of each module activities entitled “Stratégies d’apprentissage suggérées par l’enseignant” / « Learning strategies suggested by the teacher ». In this

space, the lecturer had the task to give a written comment on each individual language performance and learning inputs (pertaining to general behaviours towards teaching-learning in class).

Lecturer's written comments

Sub questions 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 are related to the evaluation of the lecturer's written comments.

For the statement "I agreed with the lecturer's written comments at the end of the module", students all agreed at different degrees but a large majority "strongly agreed" (Figure 4).

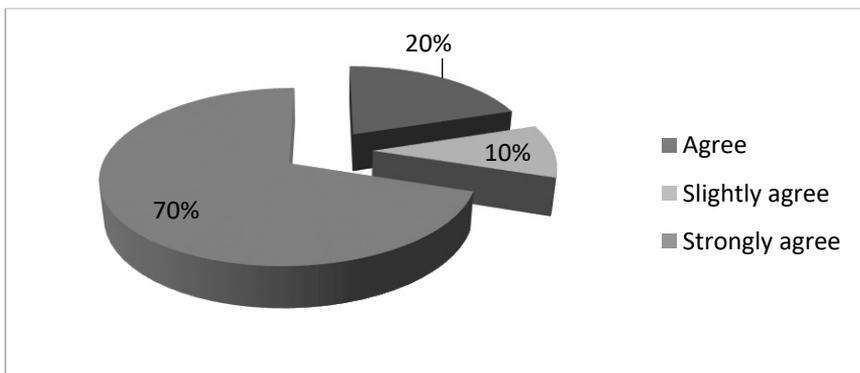


Figure 4: Question 5.1: Statement "I agreed with the lecturer's written comments at the end of the module".

This means that the lecturer's comments were accurate even though not perfect for 2 students.

For the next question "The lecturer's written comments were written in a way easy to understand", 20% agreed, 70% strongly agreed and only 10% strongly disagreed.

Question 5.3 asked participants to assess the usefulness of these comments.

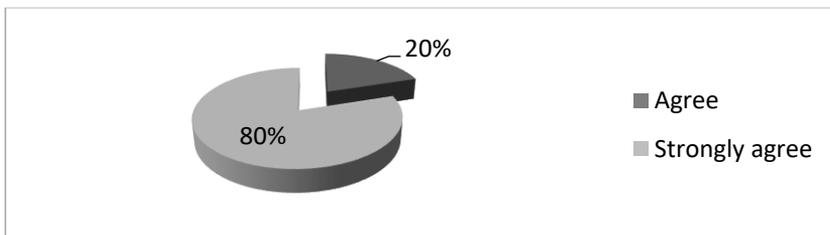


Figure 5: Question 5.3: Statement “I found the lecturer’s written comments helpful for me to know where to improve in French”.

Figure 5 demonstrates a high scored appreciation from students for this item. This asserts that lecturer’s written comments do guide students and is eventually still a good complement to self-assessment.

Face to face meeting

At the end of the module, students have an oral interview as part as their final exam. The UPFFL face-to-face meeting was organized after the oral. This timing was suggested during the last NPL teacher focus group discussion as a potential solution to avoid outside class slots dedicated to individual counselling (seen by teachers as ‘unmanageable’ with huge class numbers. Therefore, the researcher tested the oral session timing as a practical solution. Eventually, the researcher intended to determine whether or not the lecturer’s oral comments were highlighting teachers’ guidance to support the idea that teachers’ feedbacks are inherent to a successful language portfolio use and a necessary transition towards learners’ semi autonomy.

50% strongly agreed with statement 6.1: “The oral feedback of my lecturer helped me better understand her written comments”. 10% ‘slightly agreed’ and 30% ‘agreed’. The last 10% ‘disagreed’. Previously, students declared that written comments were accurate and clear. Still, 50% apparently needed an oral exchange with the lecturer to ‘better understand’ her written comments. This need could have many different interpretations but it validates that the physical contact with an open discussion gives value to the written comments. Truly, as

opposed to traditional written feedbacks, the discussion allows students to answer and ask questions. The accuracy of the lecturer’s oral comments was as highly scored as for the written comments as seen in Figure 6.

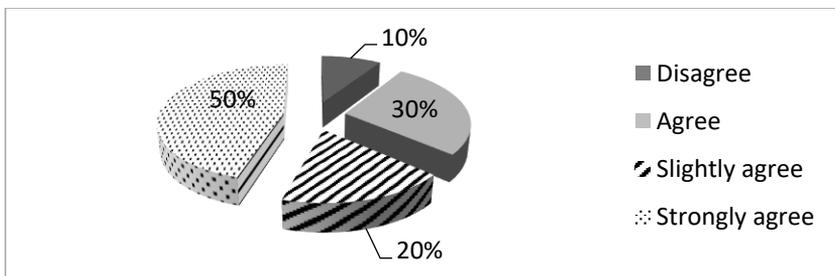


Figure 6: Question 6.2: Statement “The lecturer’s oral comments were accurate”.

The last question on the face-to-face meeting was investigating if the lecturer went enough into detailed to help student having a panoramic picture of their learning profile. Results are positive but could certainly be improved (Figure 7). 20% slightly disagreed with the statement and there were more participants ‘agreeing’ than ‘strongly agreeing’.

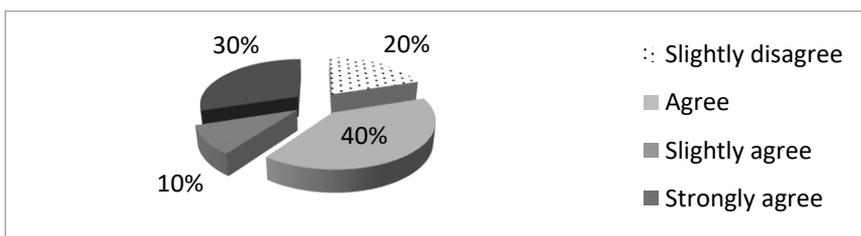


Figure 7: Question 6.3: Statement “The oral comments were detailed enough for me to have a good picture of my profile”.

Overall reception of the UPFFL

Last questions were dedicated to the students' general impression about the UPFFL. Their enjoyment about using the portfolio was rated as follows:

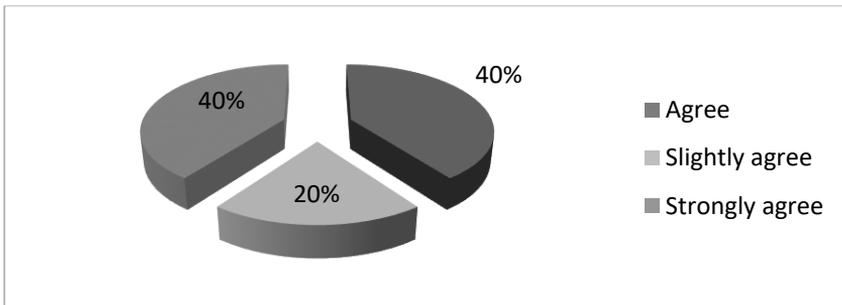


Figure 8: Question 7.1: Statement “I enjoy using the UPFFL”.

Figure 8 discloses that all participants enjoyed using the UPFFL; 20% slightly agreed, 40% strongly agreed and 40% agreed. This is a very satisfactory result that echoes the impression of learners in secondary schools towards the NPL. If 10% thought that the UPFFL was not a ‘motivational tool’, 50% agreed and 40% strongly agreed.

Question 7.4 wanted participants to reflect on the UPFFL as a learning strategy tool. Opinions are in majority in agreement with the statement “I think that the UPFFL helps me focusing on learning strategies” (Figure 9).

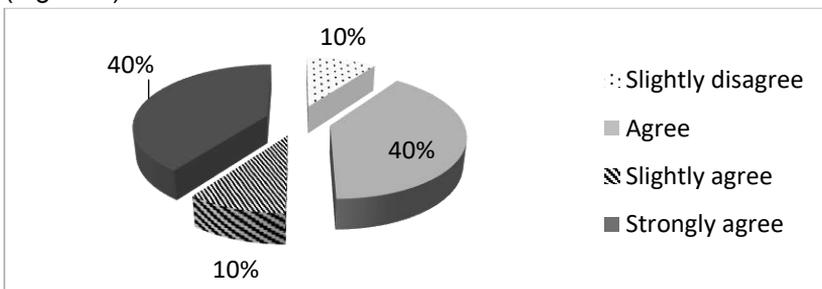


Figure 9: Question 7.4: Statement “I think that the UPFFL helps me focusing on learning strategies in French”.

A strong majority agreed with the statement, which proves that the UPFFL as a concept and a tool does help students to analyze their language acquisition and understand their profile. Participants do not recommend any modification in the format and content of the UPFFL and 80% of the population would like to have a portfolio in other subjects at UNAM.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As in the case of the NPL study, most of the students discovered a language portfolio for the first time. Unlike the learners from secondary schools, students could imagine what a portfolio could help them achieving but they had no clue about what a ‘booklet’ portfolio could include in terms of activities or procedures. Once again, participants positively received the language portfolio and enjoyed using it. They qualified the UPFFL as a motivational tool. The motivational aspect should build up with time; students will gradually evaluate the progress they have made by comparing how they used to perform at the initial stage with what they can produce at later stages.

Unlike the NPL, the UPFFL did not revealed the language objectives to their users. Students already knew the module objectives. This is explainable within the Namibian education system as syllabi are much more visible at tertiary level than in secondary schools. For instance, lecturers are compelled to distribute an outline course at the beginning of each semester. The Faculty prospectus also offers a glimpse at the general descriptor of each module. According to findings, students are also more eager to try a portfolio in their other subjects during their tertiary studies whereas pupils from schools not necessarily. These differences could showcase a higher level of learning autonomy among

student population as compared to pupils. This is a logic evolution in the learning process and the way UNAM tries to groom its learners.

This research principally aimed at finding solutions to use self-assessment effectively and more systematically and to help teachers' counselling. On the first research objective, it seems that students, even though they find it challenging, did succeed to self-assess themselves with a certain degree of accuracy. By the way, the NPL conclusions were not showing that learners could not self-assess themselves but rather that teachers were reluctant to use the technique. On that point, the UPFFL experience proves that teachers should give more confidence to learners for self-assessing themselves. Even with the difference of age, self-assessment is a matter of learning 'why' and 'how', and of being well prepared. According to Little (2009). p. 3., teachers' fear or mistrust in self-assessment arise for three miss conceptions: "(i) learners do not know how to assess themselves; (ii) there is a danger that they will overestimate their proficiency; and (iii) they may be tempted to cheat by including in their ELPs material that is not their own" These common fears are generally linked to educational contexts where formal examinations "determine learners' future options, which means that learners themselves should have no part in judging their own performance (*Ibid.*). Therefore, one could argue that in the secondary school context, teachers should just take more time to explain how to use the NPL and encourage learners; process that is maybe faster at the university because of the learners' age.

In terms of self-assessment input, the findings of the UPFFL proved that students felt more comfortable with the understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. They had a better vision of their FFL learning profile and could set up goals for improvement.

Teachers' guidance was another obstacle raised in the NPL study. The reason mentioned by colleagues was technical: the lack of time. As learners both from secondary schools and UNAM have orals during

their final exam, the researcher tried to organize the face-to-face meeting during this occasion. This solution was satisfactory. The lecturer could reflect on the learner's progress and could engage with the student about learning strategies without feeling overload by an adding task. This discussion was based on the lecturer's written comments done in the UPFFL and extended to exchanges between lecturer and student. Students found these exchanges very positive and declared to be more confident about how to improve in FFL. In the case of UNAM, students declared that the counselling was accurate and helpful. This raises another concern: the quality of teacher's guidance (in terms of accuracy and manner of transmission). This variable needs to be assessed in secondary schools so that eventually added trainings in teaching learning strategies could be put in place for teachers. Learning strategies guidance is a basic educational skill that teachers learnt at UNAM during their studies and through their practice in schools, but one could imagine that the specificity of FFL (not much practical exposure for learners outside the class and lack of resources in the language and culture studied) could indeed increase the difficulty of the counselling part for teachers and makes it even more determinant as compared to other subjects. It is though recommended to investigate further in this area. Finally, the follow up of these counselling should also be scrutinized. Ideally, the face-to-face should be an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice and adapt them according to what the language portfolio reveals about individuals. If this second phase is not happening, then the benefits of the portfolio are restricted to learners' actions and therefore not optimal.

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