

Article

Second Language Assessment Issues in Refugee and Migrant Children's Integration and Education: Assessment Tools and Practices for Young Students with Refugee and Migrant Background in Greece

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Abstract: European countries—Greece included—recognize the fact that the language of schooling in the host country constitutes the first step for the newcomer children's reception and integration. Greece, as a dominant receiving country, has adopted a top-level policy for its educational system. Considering the above, this research paper presents and analyzes the assessment tests and practices that educators have access to for evaluating refugee and migrant students' L2 Greek competence in Greece. A detailed presentation of the Assessment Tools for Refugee and Migrant children in Greece is provided, with a focus on teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward these materials and tools. The appropriateness of the available assessment tools and practices regarding the linguistic and social needs of refugee and migrant children in the Greek context will also be discussed. Findings show that teachers' perceptions regarding both tests and practices for refugee and migrant students during an initial and formative language assessment vary. It is important to state, though, that the vast majority of the educators feel very sure and comfortable when assessing the linguistic skills of their students.

Keywords: assessment; integration; language education; refugee and migrant children; tools and practices



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1. Introduction

The globalization of migration is a phenomenon that has affected communities all over the world, and Czaika and de Haas (2014) have tested the general/common assumption “that the volume, diversity, geographical scope, and overall complexity of international migration have increased as part of globalization processes”. They conclude that the global migration map has become more skewed but “rather than refuting the globalization of migration hypothesis, this seems to reflect the asymmetric nature of globalization processes in general”. In this context, the term “super-diversity” was coined by Vertovec (2007) to indicate the migrant diversity in receiving societies. As a result, the majority of European countries have transformed from monocultural to multicultural societies, in which the notion of diversity is dominant. As far as Greece is concerned, 1990 constituted a turning point since it was transformed into a dominant receiving country for refugees and migrants. Thenceforth, and due to the continuing Syrian conflict, waves of refugees and migrants who are seeking a better life have been arriving in the country (Saiti and Chletsos 2020). Androusou and Askouni (2007) point out that “diversity” is, now, detected in each and every social structure, and Beacco et al. (2017, p. 4) point out that “there is no such a thing as a typical migrant”. Consequently, the field of education and its institutions—as socially constructed instruments—could not stay unchanged when the whole Greek society was changing. Moreover, according to Theirworld¹ global children's charity, the majority of the

refugee population in Greece are children and youth, while in 2019–2020 there were 27,000 school-aged refugee children spread throughout the country.

Given these circumstances, there was an imperative need for the newcomers' education, which is considered to be the dominant instrument for their gradual integration into the new society. In order to address this need, the Greek government has established a number of laws and decisions offering this learner population an appropriate education that fits their special needs. In particular, the institutions of Zones of Priority Education (ZEP) and of Reception School Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP) have been established, in which refugee and migrant young students receive Greek language courses². Apart from these accommodations in formal education, a number of non-governmental organizations, local municipalities, and universities contribute to this process by providing Greek language courses to refugees and migrants in non-formal educational settings.

The establishment of these receiving classes constituted the first step for an all-inclusive educational system that supports refugee and migrant students' learning, but it was not enough. The mazes of refugees and migrants arriving in the country required the teaching/learning of Greek as a second/foreign language. For this reason, several language learning materials for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language have been produced by both governmental and non-governmental institutions since the early 90s. Since that time, a number of educational materials for Greeks in diaspora, repatriated immigrants, foreigners, Roma who live in Greece, and for the Muslim minority of Thrace have been developed. This process is continued to this today since the issue of teaching Greek as a second/foreign language is one of the country's focal concerns, because of the arrival and hospitality of a huge refugee population.

Furthermore, Greece has to face another imperative need regarding the newcomers' education, meaning the need for the development of language assessment tests and practices for the identification of refugees' and migrants' competence level in the Greek language, and evaluation in general. In other words, except for the development of appropriate language learning materials, the Greek government and educational institutions must assess the refugee and migrant students' competence level in the Greek language in order to place them in specific classes and, also, to design a suitable instruction. For this purpose, several assessment tests have been designed and they are all based on the official scale of CEFR either completely or with a number of accommodations.

In spite of the high amount of refugee and migrant school-age children who attend DYEP and ZEP classes, limited research regarding the appropriateness and the validity of the specific assessment tests and other practices have been implemented. Considering the above, this research paper presents and analyzes the assessment tests and practices that educators have access to for evaluating refugee and migrant students' competence in the Greek language. To sum up, a mixed-method approach regarding the Assessment Tools for Refugee and Migrant children in Greece is presented, with a focus on teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward these materials and tools.

2. Education to Refugee and Migrant Children in Greece: Issues of Language, Access to Education, and School Enrollment

According to UNHCR's statistics, 36.5% of the total refugee population arriving in Greece from 2014 to 2019 consists of school-age children. In Table 1, the total number of refugee students in Greek schools in the academic year 2018–2019 is presented. According to Wallis (2019), only half of the school age refugee population were officially enrolled in the Greek school that year, meaning that even more refugee children were living and growing in the country.

Table 1. Total Number of Refugee Students in Greek School in the Academic Year 2018–2019. (<https://www.minedu.gov.gr/tothema-prosfigiko-m>, accessed on 2 March 2022).

2018–2019	Refugee Students in DYEP	Refugee Students in ZEP	Refugee Students in Mainstream School Classes	Total Number of Refugee Students
	4577	4050	4240	12,867

The early history of intercultural education in Greece comes into force in 1996 when the Greek governance established Law 2413/96 which refers to the education of linguistically and culturally different students and among others, the establishment of intercultural schools. Later on, under the Ministerial Decision F.10/20/Γ1/708/1999, the foundation and operation of Reception Classes (RC I and RC II), and Supplementary Teaching courses is prescribed. During their attendance in these classes, repatriated immigrant and alien students were supposed to receive intensive Greek language learning courses, in order to be better integrated into the Greek school and society. Moving on, under Law 3879/2010, the institution of Zones of Priority Education (ZEP) is admitted to the Greek educational system. However, in 2016 the Greek government established Law 4415/16 which continues to be in force to this today, and the issue of refugees' education is directly referenced in Article 38, which defines the operation of Reception School Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP), in which—according to the Ministerial Decision 131024/D1/8-8-2016—refugee students take Greek as second language learning courses. [Manoli et al. \(2021\)](#), [Papapostolou et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Gkaintartzi et al. \(2021\)](#) do present multiple case studies in formal educational settings after the 2015 refugee crisis.

Apart from the accommodations in formal education which are presented in the Introduction, a number of non-governmental organizations, local municipalities, and universities contribute to this process by providing Greek language courses to refugees and migrants in non-formal educational settings as well. According to [Mouti et al. \(2021\)](#), non-formal education has several positive outcomes in refugee and migrant students' learning and integration. Considering the benefits of non-formal education, several institutions and organizations have developed programs for teaching Greek as a second language in non-formal educational settings (information on these programs may be found in [Mouti et al. \(2021\)](#), [Gkaintartzi et al. \(2021\)](#), and [Kantzou et al. \(2017\)](#)). Refugee and migrant children can participate in these programs simultaneously with their attendance in the formal reception classes that are described above.

European countries—Greece included—recognize the fact that language of schooling in the host country constitutes the first step for the newcomer children's reception and integration and this is confirmed by the establishment of several laws and ministerial decisions (see above) regarding refugees and migrants' education. Despite all the above, refugee and migrant children all over the world are facing numerous obstacles and challenges in attempting to access education. Continuity in education is a concept of high importance and, while the majority of the receiving countries have accommodated newcomers with language learning classes and materials, only a few of them have established formal policies for their school placement ([Kirk and Cassity 2007](#)). Greece, as a dominant receiving country ([Saiti and Chletsos 2020](#)) for refugees and migrants, has adopted a top-level policy for its educational system ([European Commission 2019](#)). According to this policy, refugee school-age children, who either have acquired an official status or have submitted their request for protection, should be enrolled into a Greek school in a maximum time period of twelve (12) weeks. The particular timeframe has been established by several countries based on the time that is required for the consummation of the international obligations to enroll refugee and asylum seeker children in compulsory education.

The determination of a maximum time period for refugees' enrollment to school constitutes the first step for their school placement and it is a duty that pertains to the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The second step of this process is the

determination of the school and class in which newly arrived refugees will be enrolled. According to Eurydice's report (2019), the age of a child and its previous educational attainment, which can be proved only through formal school documentation, constitute the basic factors for their placement into a specific grade. In the case of native children, this is a typical process that does not require much time and knowledge or expertise. On the other hand, immigrant students' placement in specific grades in the school of the host society is a more complex and time-consuming procedure for which the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and educators are both responsible. This complexity could be attributed to the different educational experiences of refugee and migrant children as [Platt et al. \(2010\)](#) highlight. In particular, some may have had a regular school attendance in their home country, others may have experienced disrupted schooling due to a number of factors, while others may have had no education at all. The fact that makes this process even more difficult is that, in several cases, people who have engaged in forced migration have in their possession no formal documentation or certificate related to their prior educational experiences ([European Commission 2019](#)).

The majority of European countries, including Greece, have defined as main criteria for refugees' enrollment in specific grades their age and the available school documentation. This means that the newcomers' enrollment grade does not correspond to their actual learning needs and follows the native students' enrollment. Greece has adopted or developed (as a host country) no specific top-level requirement regarding the assessment criteria for newcomers' linguistic competence in the host country language or prior knowledge ([European Commission 2019](#)). In this way, refugee and migrant students are placed in the mainstream classroom according to their age, regardless of their competence level in the Greek language or any other acquired learning. However, a large amount of this population has inadequate host country language skills, something which makes their attendance in the mainstream classroom inexpedient and provides limited learning outcomes.

For the newcomers' enrollment in the preparatory classes (ZEP and DYEP, as mentioned earlier) offered as accommodations in formal education by the Greek Government, a registration form from the parents is required, and then language assessment tests are implemented so as to determine each student's competence level in Greek (Ministerial Decision 131024/D1/8-8-2016). The main aim of these separate/preparatory classes is the intensive learning of the school language, so educators should be focused on teaching Greek as a second/foreign language. In this context, refugee and migrant students attend a number of courses, which require no high level of language competence, in the mainstream classroom and some language courses in DYEP or ZEP classes. According to Article 73 of the Government Gazette 4547/2018, refugee students can attend DYEP courses for a school year, being extended for one more year, while their mainstream class tuition is fully completed when the Greek language acquisition reaches an acceptable level in DYEP educators' opinion. As far as ZEP classes are concerned, the refugee students' placement is related to their Greek language competence. Based on the Ministerial Decision 102635/ΓΔ4/31-07-2020, newcomers with limited or no language competence attend courses in ZEP TY I, and those who have acquired Greek to a better level, but still face difficulties in attending courses in the mainstream classroom, are placed in ZEP TY II. The time period for refugees' attendance in these reception classes is defined as one year plus a one-year extension at TY I and up to three school years at TY II.

These accommodations in formal education for newcomers but also the need for formative and summative assessment in L2 classes are supported by a range of L2 Greek assessment tools for refugee and migrant students, designed for various purposes by different institutions and used both in formal and non-formal educational settings. We will make an attempt to present some of these assessment tools but also assessment practices in L2 Greek classes mainly in formal education settings. All the assessment tools will be presented in accordance with the global scale by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

3. L2 Greek Assessment Tools for Refugee and Migrant Students

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is the product of more than twenty years of research in the field of language, which is established by the Council of Europe (CEFR-Council of Europe 2001 and CEFR-Companion Volume-Council of Europe 2020) have been developed in order to constitute a common basis for the elaboration of language teaching programs, language learning materials, and language assessment procedures. As far as refugee and migrant young learners' language assessment is concerned, Kantzou and Stamouli (2014) point out that the CEFR's levels have been developed to address the needs of adult learners, and they allege that there is a need for accommodation in order to fit the needs of young learners. They did try to modify these levels and have provided some modified scale and descriptors' description to be adequate for young learners. In the same context, Tzevelekou et al. (2008) decided to use only the first four levels of the CEFR scale (A1, A2, B1, B2) and to exclude the levels of proficient users (C1, C2). Apart from that, they added an extra preliminary level, named A1.1., that addresses young learners at the age of 6 and 7 who cannot deliver all skills included in A1 level. This issue seems to have been addressed by the newly introduced Pre-A1 level in the CEFR-Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020). Moreover, Theodoropoulou (2019) suggests the use of only the two first levels (A1 and A2) for the refugee students between 6 and 12 years old that are enrolled in DYEP or ZEP classes of the Greek school.

Some descriptive information regarding the existing Greek as an L2 assessment tool for young learners will be provided below, starting with those assessment tools that are suggested for use in formal educational settings (to be implemented for the placement in the ZEP and DYEP classes) by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the IEP-Institute of Educational Policy or are included in IEP's official site on refugee education. Our focus is on refugee and migrant school children from 5 to 12 years old. For this reason, several materials that have been designed exclusively for adolescents and adults are not included in this study. At the end of this part, some reference to alternative assessment techniques and practices will also be made.

- *Diagnostic Tests (for Language Competence Levels A1 and A2)—Διαπιστωτικά Κριτήρια (για Αρχική Γλωσσική Αξιολόγηση Επιπέδων A1 and A2)*³

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs suggests the use of two diagnostic assessment tests that were developed under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, for the initial assessment of young learners' competence in the Greek language. Both tests follow the same structure, while their only difference is related to the activities' level of difficulty since the first test addresses A1-level learners and the second one was designed for A2-level learners. The tests are composed of four parts regarding each language skill. In the first part, learners' listening skills are evaluated since they listen to words, phrases, and short stories and they have to identify their meanings. The second part is about speaking, and learners have to comment upon a number of pictures by using a simple word or a phrase. In the third part, learners are tested on reading words, phrases, and short texts, while in the last part their writing skills are tested since they have to describe in written language the content of several pictures.

- *Let's Speak Greek (I, II, III)—Ας Μιλήσουμε Ελληνικά (I, II, III)*

The assessment tests Let's Speak Greek—Ας Μιλήσουμε Ελληνικά (I, II, III) were designed in 2002 for the assessment of the language competence level of Muslim children in the context of the Program "Education of Muslim Children 2002–2004" (Tzevelekou et al. 2008). In 2011, the tool was revised, in order to be used for the initial language assessment of refugee and migrant students which will lead to their placement into reception classes, or mainstream classrooms. The tests are based on the level scale of CEFR but a number of modifications were implemented in order to fit the needs of young learners at the ages of 6 to 13 years old, while a preliminary level was added.

Moving on, the CEFR levels are related to the level of the test and the students' age. So, the first test is implemented with learners of the Preliminary level as well as of levels

A1 and A2, the second one for levels A1, A2, and B1, and the third for levels A2, B1, and B2. (Table 2).

Table 2. Correspondence of tests, grades, and language level competence (as presented in Tzevelekou et al. 2008).

Test	Elementary School Grades	Level
Let's Speak Greek I	1st–2nd	A2
		A1
		Preliminary Level
Let's Speak Greek II	3rd–4th	B1
		A2
		A1
Let's Speak Greek III	5th–6th	B2
		B1
		A2

All tests are composed of two main parts, the written one and the interview. In the written part of the tests, learners are tested in reading and listening comprehension, in writing production, and grammar. Speaking is not included since it is tested during the interview. The topics of the tests—texts and images—are related to learners' everyday lives, meaning the school, their family and friends, their hobbies, etc. Different topics such as sports, health, or the environment are used for higher levels. While assessing students' interaction skills, the first test requires a description of images, the second one an introduction of themselves, and the third one an expression of feelings and thoughts. The whole assessment tests are available online. <http://www.diapolis.auth.gr/eclass/mod/folder/view.php?id=457> (accessed on 5 March 2022).

- *Do you Speak Greek? (I and II)—Μιλάς Ελληνικά; (I and II)*

The diagnostic test “Do you Speak Greek? (I and II)—Μιλάς Ελληνικά; (I and II)” was designed for testing the competence level in the Greek language of young students who have a linguistic background other than Greek and attend TY I and TY II classes (Tzevelekou et al. 2013). The tool was developed in the framework of the Program “Education of foreigners and repatriated students” in order first to help the Reception Classes work, and second to explore the language needs of the students in the Reception Classes. The development of the specific assessment test was based on the previously analyzed diagnostic test “Let's Speak Greek—Ας Μιλήσουμε Ελληνικά”. In particular, the research team detected and reused the tasks that lead to the obvious identification of the participants' competence level in the Greek language, and they replaced or adjusted a number of activities. The structure remained the same, while—just like the assessment tests “Let's Speak Greek”—these tests assess students' competence level in listening, reading, writing, grammar, and speaking. The major difference between the two tests is related to the age group which they address since the assessment test “Do you Speak Greek?” has adjusted the ages and the competence levels, as presented in Table 3. The tests are available for usage on the IEP platform for Refugee Education (<http://iep.edu.gr/diapolitismiki/>, accessed on 5 March 2022).

Table 3. Correspondence of tests, ages, and language level competence (as presented in the Guidelines for Use: <http://iep.edu.gr/diapolitismiki/>, accessed on 5 march 2022).

Age	Test	ISSUE	Level
7–11	Do you Speak Greek I	1st Issue	A1
		2nd Issue	A2 B1
12–15	Do you Speak Greek II	1st Issue	A1 A2
		2nd Issue	B1 B2

- *Assessment Tests by the Center of Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.)*

The Center of Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.) is an institution that engages in issues related to refugees and migrants' education in Greece, since its establishment in 1996. So, apart from the development of the language learning materials for teaching Greek as a second language, EDIAMME has also designed assessment tests for the diagnosis of each learner's competence level in the Greek language. Before the design of the assessment tests, EDIAMME adopted a number of criteria for defining the learners' competence level in the Greek language, which were based on the authorized syllabus for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language (FEK 807/4 June 2006). These criteria are related to the listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills that learners have to acquire at each level, and they are connected to the CEFR's suggestions and divided into oral language skills (speaking and listening) and written language skills (writing and reading). The detailed report of specific criteria can be found on the official site of E.DIA.M.ME. These criteria constituted the basis of the assessment tests' structure. Considering the needs of the refugee and migrant student population in Greece, E.DIA.M.ME. uses in its tests only the first three levels of the CEFR scale, and it fits each one of these levels with two grades of elementary school, as described in Table 4.

Table 4. Correspondence of tests, ages and language level competence (E.DIA.M.ME.).

Test	Level	CEFR Level	Grade/Age
Test for Level I	Level I	A1	1st and 2nd Grade
Test for Level II	Level II	A2	3rd and 4th Grade
Test for Level III	Level III	B1	5th and 6th Grade

So, three different tests have been designed, which follow the same structure, but their content is different regarding the grade and the specific competence level. In particular, the speaking skills at all levels are evaluated through the use of images, which the participants have to comment upon. However, the reading and writing tasks are completely different, since the first test is about letters, words, and simple phrases, while in the third one the participants are engaged in more complex meanings and grammatical phenomena.

- *Centre for the Greek Language (CGL)*

The Centre for the Greek Language was established in 1994 in Thessaloniki and aims at the collection and sharing of any kind of information regarding the Greek language learning both in Greece and abroad. In 1998, under the Presidential Decree 363/98, the certificate of competence in the Greek language was established and it was structured in four levels but later—with the Presidential Decree 60/30-6-2010—the Centre for the Greek Language organized examinations for six levels of attainment in Greek, A1 (A1 for children 8–12 years old, and A1 for adolescents and adults), A2, B1, B2, Γ1, and Γ2. The levels are linked to the corresponding levels of the Common European Framework (CEFR).

Given the purpose of this paper, it is only the A1 Level for children 8–12 years old that we will refer to. It consists of four language skills, namely reading, listening, speaking, and writing; the total duration is 1 h and 35 min and sample test papers may be found online here: <https://www.greek-language.gr/certification/node/96.html> (accessed on 5 March 2022). Examinations at all levels are held once annually in mid-May, and their main purpose is not the placement or the diagnosis as it was for the previously mentioned tests, but the certification of L2 Greek knowledge and use.

- *Alternative Assessment Practices other than Language Tests*

The majority of the previously analyzed diagnostic assessment tests are included in initial diagnostic assessment techniques (and serve basically placement purposes as mentioned before) since they aim at identifying learners' profiles, in terms of literacy and language competence level, and also provide educators with a starting point for planning the appropriate instruction (Schuwirth and Van der Vleuten 2011). The formative assessment usually takes place during the language teaching/learning process measuring the progress or achievement in contrast with summative assessment which is implemented at the end of the learning process and is mainly connected to monitoring and grading based usually on a final exam. As Chapelle and Voss (2016, p. 121) state, "a central idea in the work on innovation in language assessment is that test takers should actually be given opportunities to learn from both the process and the results of test taking" In this framework, alternative assessment methods may also contribute not only to formative assessment but also to assessment for learning.

Some of the alternative assessment methods as cited by O'Malley and Pierce (1996) and Tsagari (2011) are the following: portfolio, diaries/ journals/ logs, projects, self-assessment, peer assessment, observations, games, dramatization, story-retelling, conference assessment, debates, and dynamic assessment. In the *Handbook of the TALE Project* (Tsagari et al. 2018), the correspondent Section 7 focuses on alternatives in the assessment of learning, closely related to assessment for learning, and further discusses the most important and most widely used forms of alternatives in assessment, namely teacher observation, peer assessment and self-assessment, and portfolio assessment. Apart from these alternative assessment methods, classroom-based small-scale language tests either with open-ended or close-ended questions constitute one of the traditional assessment methods that is used for formative and summative assessment in the majority of learning environments. Some indicative research work on alternative assessment methods and classroom-based assessment orientations in the Greek context, which one can find in Tsagari (2016) and in Iliopoulou and Rousoulioti (2019), showing that alternative assessment methods have always to add to the tests mentioned above.

4. Methodology

The rather limited research findings regarding the learning materials for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language and, especially, regarding the available assessment tools for refugee and migrant school-age children in Greece, especially after the 2015 refugee crisis, constituted the springboard for this research's design and implementation. In this paper, we will focus on the assessment tools and their use and implementation by teachers and educators. The scope of the particular research is the identification of the attitudes that teachers of primary education, who teach in DYEP and ZEP classes or in non-formal settings where refugee and migrant students attend, have toward the language assessment tools available and the assessment practices employed. The main research questions set and examined are: Which language assessment tools and assessment practices do the educators use in their classrooms? What are their perceptions and beliefs regarding these assessment tools and practices employed?

4.1. The Questionnaire

For the implementation of this study, a questionnaire was designed. Questionnaires are a quantitative research tool of high importance, given the fact that they enable the

researcher to abstract useful information from a great number of persons. Moreover, [Nunan and Bailey \(2009\)](#) describe them as the most appropriate tool for the identification of participants' beliefs and attitudes. The participants' anonymity constitutes another advantage of the specific method since they feel more comfortable speaking their minds than in face-to-face interviews ([Munn and Drever 1990](#)). Apart from these, a questionnaire can be used as an alternative method for data collection when the contextual conditions necessitate it, such as the COVID-19 pandemic that has made face-to-face interaction inaccessible.

The questionnaire of the specific research was designed during the spring semester of 2020/2021, based on the literature review in the field of refugee and migrant children's education and the study of the existing language learning material and assessment tools for the specific population of learners in Greece. The main aim of this questionnaire is the identification of the primary teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward the available language learning materials and assessment tools/practices for refugee and migrant students in Greece. The whole questionnaire is composed of thirty-six (36) questions, while its structure is based on three key areas: personal information; the language learning materials for refugees and migrants; and the assessment tools for refugees and migrants (used by the respondents). In this paper, we will examine the questions investigating the assessment tools and the background information of the participants. This part of the questionnaire related to the assessment tools was mainly influenced by the [Vogt et al. \(2020\)](#) questionnaire and TALE Needs Analysis [TALE Needs Analysis Report \(2018\)](#). The questionnaire includes both close-ended and open-ended questions, something which makes it a quantitative and qualitative research tool at the same time.

4.2. Participants

The target group of the particular research is the teachers of refugee and migrant children who attend Greek as a second language courses in DYEP and ZEP classes of primary schools in Greece or Greek as a second language courses in non-formal settings. The selection of a research sample is not an easy process, since the participants have to address the needs of the research's scope. The sample of the specific research was based on the convenience sampling procedure and more specifically the snowball sampling which was integrated into the initial design. Considering the content of the research, which is related to the assessment tools that are used for refugee and migrant students' education in Greek primary education, the research sample consists of 30 (male (1) and female (29)) teachers of primary formal and non-formal educational settings in Greece. The basic condition for their participation in the research is their experience in teaching Greek as a second language to refugee and migrant children from the age of 4 to 12. In particular, teachers who work or have worked in DYEP and ZEP classes of kindergartens and elementary schools in Greece, as well as teachers that have provided Greek as a second language courses during their employment or their voluntary action in non-governmental organizations and other institutions are included. The questionnaires were sent via online platforms and social media to the participants in order to gather the biggest number of answers, but it was always the most appropriate way due to the COVID-19 pandemic's limitations. The vast majority of the educators that participated in the research by answering the questionnaires are females, at a percentage of 97%, over males with a percentage of 3%. So, the research sample consisted of twenty-nine (29) women educators and only one (1) man. The participants' first language is Greek, while all of them have acquired the English language at a proficient level. Apart from these two languages, 14 of the participants have French as a third language either at B2 or C2 level, 6 have acquired German, and 3 Spanish at the competence level of C1. Moreover, Arabic, Italian, and Albanian were also reported by one case each.

In terms of education, 37% of the sample have a university degree, while the remaining 63% have acquired also a master's degree. None of the participants possess a doctoral degree. As it is pronounced, all the participants' degree titles are related to the field of

education. In particular, the majority of the participants are teachers of primary education, with a percentage of 76%. A total of 3% are English language teachers, while pre-school teachers, special education teachers, and Greek literature educators represent 21% of the research sample, meaning 7% each. As far as the master's degree is concerned, 17 participants possess one and the majority of them hold a master's degree in "Language Education for Refugees and Migrants", "Intercultural Education", and "Special Education". A total of 46% seem to have attended a seminar related to the field of Intercultural Education and Greek as an L2. The vast majority of the sample, 77%, works in primary schools, and only 3% in high school and another 3% in kindergarten. A total of 10% work in non-governmental organizations and a respected percentage of 7% offers voluntary action in several organizations.

In particular, 70% of the sample work in ZEP classes of elementary schools and 3% in DYEP. A percentage of 17% provide Greek as a second language course to young and adolescent refugees in non-formal environments or in the framework of NGO's actions, while 10% work in mainstream classrooms of primary schools in which the attendance of refugee and migrant students is especially high.

Moving on, the vast majority of the participants, with a percentage of 84%, have teaching experience from 0 to 5 years, and a total of 10% have 6 to 10 years of experience. Concerning the educators with 11 to 20 and 21 to 30 years of teaching experience, each one represents a sample of 3.3%. As far as the teaching with refugee and migrant students is concerned, all the participants stated that their experience is limited between 0 to 5 years.

5. Results

Regarding the different educational settings in which the participants work, a large heterogeneity and diversity in the language classrooms was expected. Indeed, the students' profiles (as presented by their teachers) vary in terms of origin, first language, age, and years of residence in Greece. Consequently, there are refugee and migrant students from Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, China, India, Syria, Palestine, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Moldavia, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, and Roma students. All students have acquired a basic competence level in their L1 while a minor percentage have English as a foreign language at a basic level. Their competence level in the Greek language varies but it does not overcome the intermediate level while the majority arrived in Greece 1 to 5 years ago.

The third and last part of the questionnaire focuses on the identification of educators' attitudes toward the available assessment tools and practices for refugee and migrant students' language assessment. Almost all participants (28/30) implement language assessment in order to identify their students' educational needs. A large number of them (19/30) define as the main reason behind the migrant and refugee students' assessment, the identification of the students' competence level in the Greek language, while seven educators assess their students in order to identify their L2 Greek competence level, and then place them in the appropriate class. Just a few educators (4/30) mention that students' assessment is connected with their grading.

In the same context, educators were asked to determine which language skills (Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing) they evaluate during students' assessment. The majority of the educators (29/30) refer that they evaluate students' listening comprehension. Moreover, 24 participants assess the students' reading comprehension and speaking skills, while 25 evaluate students' speaking skills. The language skill that is evaluated less (by 21 teachers) is written production.

Moving on to the next question, educators had to indicate how confident they feel about a number of areas that are tightly interwoven with the assessment procedure. None of the participants considered himself/herself completely unable for the following areas, while only one is facing difficulties in the selection of the appropriate assessment tools and three do not feel well prepared for designing their own assessment tests. The majority of the participants feel confident enough in identifying different purposes of assessment (21 of

them show some strong confidence) but also in choosing the assessment tools to be used. The majority of the participants feel quite or very comfortable in all the areas, especially in the analysis of students' language needs, since 5 educators feel comfortable enough, 19 feel very comfortable, and the other 7 feel comfortable to a greater extent.

Educators were also asked to evaluate the level in which they know the CEFR levels, based on a grading scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very well). A total of 36.7% of the participants, which is the higher percentage, report that they are very informed about the CEFR levels, 23.3% state that they know them well enough, and 30% feel completely sure about their knowledge of the subject. On the other hand, 3.3% have no knowledge regarding the CEFR levels, and 6.7% of the educators point out that they can rarely identify them.

Afterward, participants have to determine at which level they are prepared for using diagnostic or placement tools to identify the refugee and migrant learners' competence in the Greek language. A total of 48.3% define themselves as very well prepared for this process, and 30% state that feel quite familiar with the use of assessment tools. A smaller percentage (16.7%) feel completely familiar with the process, while an even smaller percentage (3.3%) state they are completely unprepared.

The next question is about the attitudes of educators toward the formal assessment tests available for use for ZEP, DYEP classes, and non-formal educational settings. In particular, 15 participants do not use the assessment of the Centre for the Greek Language at all, and another 5 use it rarely, while at the same time, 8 participants implement it often and another 2 very often. This could be considered as an expected finding as these exams/tests serve a different purpose, which is language certification. In the same way, 26 of the 30 participants stated that they use the assessment diagnostic tests suggested by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and IEP (to be implemented as an initial assessment tool for ZEP and DYEP classes), quite often, very often, and often, while four report that they use it rarely or not at all. Regarding the assessment test of EDIAMME, it is used quite often by 7 educators, often by 2, and very often by 1, while 20 educators do not use it or use it rarely. In addition, seven participants do not use the test "Let's speak Greek" and four rarely use it. Another 7 educators use it quite often, in accordance with another 12 who use it often or very often. To conclude, the assessment test "Do you Speak Greek?" is used often by five educators, but it is not used at all by another nine and is rarely used by another nine. Consequently, the educators' points of view regarding the following assessment tests differ, as all the tests seem to be used to a greater or lesser degree, probably according to the needs of the educational procedure, the educators, and the students' themselves.

Teachers were also asked to characterize the existing assessment tests for refugee and migrant students' assessment as "appropriate and valuable" or "inappropriate and valueless". The vast majority of the participants (87%) consider the specific tests appropriate for refugees and migrants' assessment and their outcomes valuable. On the other hand, the remaining 13% characterize them as inappropriate for their purpose and they have doubts about their usefulness.

Then, educators were asked if they design their own assessment tests for implementation in the classroom and if they use digital tools for the design of these tests. The majority of the participants, with a percentage of 70%, answered "No" to this question and only 30% of the participants seem to develop assessment tests for their students' evaluation. A total of 22% of the educators say that they mainly used the platform of Wordwall for the design of their tests, while a number of them use Word, Google forms, and liveworksheet.

Another question was about other assessment practices that are used in the classroom by the educators and aim, mainly, at learners' formative assessment. The assessment practice of observation, students' active participation, and the self-assessment through quizzes are the practices with the most frequent use, since 18, 21, and 16—respectively—out of the 30 educators report that they use them very often. In addition, 14 educators usually use portfolios, 10 use translation and open-ended questions, and 7 use close-ended questions and observation. The assessment practices that are used less by the participants

are past papers or samples of assessment tests, since 17 participants do not use them at all and only 2 use them frequently. In spite of the latter (that is sample or past papers of tests which could be basically attributed to the Centre for the Greek Language test), educators actually use—less or more—all of these assessment practices for the formative evaluation of their students.

Educators were also asked whether they use any other assessment practice to evaluate their students' acquired knowledge. There were seven (7) educators that reported different classroom assessment practices. Two, for example, use to assign teaching to students, while another two choose different kinds of board games and the implementation of knowledge questions to assess their students.

"I define students as the teacher of the classroom in order to be ensured about their confidence and knowledge." (T3)

Moreover, educators report that they try to consider the total school performance of each student, as well as the level of improvement and their effort.

"I try to have in mind the total effort of each student from the beginning until the end of the academic year, in order to set a benchmark." (T1)

"I try to take into account both the students' performance and effort." (T5)

As far as multilingual assessment techniques are concerned, 53% of the participants state that they do involve languages other than Greek in the assessment process (and translanguaging), while 47% report that this cannot be implemented given the variety of students' first languages and also because of not knowing most of the students' L1s. The languages which the educators involve in their students' assessment process are L1s—whenever it is possible—and English as a language bridge in the case of learners who have acquired the English language in an intermediate competence level.

The majority of educators have argued that their feedback to the students is not just grading, in terms of marks, percentages, etc., since only a minor percentage (3%) have stated that they give grades on their students' work. In particular, 34% of the participants provide students with detailed feedback, meaning analyzed comments based on each students' strong points and weaknesses. Another high percentage (50%) prefer to give learners short comments based on their work, while 13% support the provision of only positive feedback.

The last item of the specific questionnaire constitutes an open-ended question regarding the main challenges that educators face during the refugee and migrant students' language assessment. The main challenge, which is stated by the majority of educators, is the selection of the appropriate assessment test and practices since in most educational settings there are students with diverse first languages and language competence in the Greek language. This heterogeneity and linguistic diversity in combination with the limited knowledge of Greek and communication issues was pointed out as a challenge by the majority of them (19 teachers), describing it in various ways: e.g., *"The different language competence level into the same classroom"*, *"different first language and competence level in Greek"*, *"limited knowledge of Greek"*, *"The low and different language competence level"*, *"the heterogeneity of students' competence level in Greek"*, *"many students of different language competence level"*, *"the different language competence level"*, *"classrooms with students with different linguistic and cultural background"*, *"heterogeneous composition of the classroom"*, *"different language competence in Greek"*.

Consequently, the educators have to select or design different assessment tools for each student, which is a demanding and time-consuming process. They seem to identify the different educational needs of their students and then try to customize assessment to these needs. The issue of these "needs" and the use of "different tests" or "appropriate" ones was pointed out by 12 teachers in various ways. Some indicative cases of their words are as follows:

"Only one assessment test is not enough for all the students. They need different tests." (T25)

"The selection of practices that suit each student's profile." (T20)

"The students are many, they have different first languages and competence level in Greek. Not all practices fit all students. I have to choose different tests based on each student's needs." (T22)

"The language assessment of students is a quite demanding process by its nature and it has to be valuable, because it constitutes my basis for the design of the instruction." (T1)

"An assessment test is not enough for evaluating a student's total effort. So I try to take into consideration all the data that I have collected during the academic year with the different assessment practices that I use. Even the communication with my students during the time between periods and the interaction among them plays an important role for me in assessing them." (T5)

"The selection of the appropriate tool for each student and the effort to provide students comprehensible feedback." (T12)

Another issue regarding refugee and migrant young students' assessment is related to their language assessment literacy. In particular, educators (9 of them) believe that students, especially of A1 and A2 language competence level, cannot comprehend the assessment's purpose and in some cases even the tests' content, thus they cannot complete the activities.

"I have to include in my test specific kind of activities with which the students feel familiar, because they do not comprehend all the activities and they cannot answer with success in new forms/types of activities." (T23)

"The students' young age and low language competence level do not allow them to understand the content of the activities." (T28)

"The students do not comprehend the assessment's purpose. They do not concentrate in the tests, the interaction with each other during the assessment, and we lose time." (T29)

The last issue stated in the specific questionnaire has to do with the tests' marking since educators are not entirely sure about what parts they have to correct or not.

"I am not sure about the mistakes I have to correct even those those which I do not have to. This is a problem that I also faced into the mainstream classroom, because I don't want the correction of a lot of mistakes to affect learners' attitude and effort. For this reason, I don't correct all the mistakes of each tests, but I don't know whether it is a right practice or not." (T26)

6. Discussion

The purpose of the specific research was to identify the current attitudes of educators toward the assessment tools and practices implemented for refugee and migrant young students in Greece. In particular, the research aims to identify the use and perceptions about the available assessment tools and practices regarding the linguistic and social needs of refugee and migrant children in today's Greek society and basically in Greek formal education and initial language assessment. Teachers' perceptions regarding both tests and practices for refugee and migrant students' during an initial and formative language assessment seem to vary. At first, it is important to state that the vast majority of the educators feel very sure and comfortable when assessing the linguistic skills of their students. The majority of the educators characterized the available assessment tools as "appropriate" for the specific student population and reported that they provide valuable results.

Furthermore, the assessment tests that are suggested by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs for implementation into the ZEP and DYEP classes are used by a high percentage of educators, as it would be expected, following the official guidelines of

the Ministry regarding the diagnostic and placement procedure of the language support classes. On the other hand, the assessment tests of EDIAMME are not used frequently, which was an expected finding as they are not among the ones suggested by the Ministry of Education or the official site of IEP on refugee education. In addition, the assessment test “Do you Speak Greek?” is used less than the test “Let’s Speak Greek” in spite of the fact that the first one constitutes an improved version of the second. This could be attributed to the fact that it is the first one that is included on the IEP’s official website on refugee education. The questionnaire concludes with a focus on the assessment practices that are used by educators for refugee and migrant students’ initial, formative, and in some cases, summative assessment. The practices that are used by the majority of educators are those of observation, self-assessment through quizzes, and students’ active participation. The method of the portfolio, despite its popularity, comes fourth while educators use older assessment tests the least, even if they consider them appropriate and valuable, as cited before. We should point out that no similar study focusing on the assessment practices of this specific group of teachers was identified, and therefore, we will try to discuss our findings with studies examining language assessment literacy in the Greek context in general. Our findings seem to partially agree with [Vogt et al. \(2020\)](#) and more specifically the results regarding EFL teachers in Greece as active participation is most frequently used, while portfolio comes later in the teachers’ preferences. Our findings do also partially agree with [Iliopoulou and Rousoulioti \(2019\)](#) in the Greek context, as far as the self-assessment and observation use is concerned, but not the findings regarding the portfolio use. Quite a notable outcome of the specific questionnaire is that none of the participants use grades as feedback to their students or implement assessment for the students’ grading, as it is not expected to be implemented in DYEP and ZEP classes of formal education (and thus explaining different perspectives in [Vogt et al.’s \(2020\)](#) study where grading and use of grades in Greece was among the top answers). On the contrary, educators choose to provide students with either short or detailed comments as feedback which actually focuses on students’ strong points and improvements rather than on the weaknesses and mistakes.

The questionnaire’s data have proved which assessment tests and practices are mostly used by teachers, as well as the teachers’ attitudes toward these materials and tools. The last question is related to the further practices that are used by teachers during the second language learning courses, both for teaching/learning and assessment. The participants of the research have referred to a number of practices, but once again they seem to make similar choices. The majority of educators state that they use mainly the practices that are included in the questionnaire, something quite expected, since the research attempted to make a rather exhaustive recording of the materials, tools, and practices. However, a number of teachers seem to use another assessment practice, in which students play the role of teachers who have to assess the knowledge of the rest of the students, a practice that is closely related to peer assessment. Educators argue that in this way they can evaluate both the students’ acquired knowledge and their confidence in the field. Another assessment practice that is described is a knowledge board game that students play while the teacher actually evaluates them. The assessment techniques that are proposed by teachers are quite flexible and are not formal, standard, or strict. It seems that educators make these selections because they allow students to feel more comfortable and less anxious about their performance, something that actually leads to better learning outcomes, and thus assessment for learning seems to prevail.

The current research is of high importance not only because of the masses of refugee and migrant children that have attended Greek as a second language courses, but also due to the limited research that has been implemented in the field. In other words, there is limited research regarding the appropriateness and the validity of the specific assessment tests and assessment practices, even if the research regarding refugees and migrants’ education in Greece has been enriched over recent years. Among the limitations of this study is the small research sample, which could be attributed to the COVID limitations imposed on the research methodology. Further research on the prior learning achievements of

newcomers and on ensuring the continuity of their learning is of utmost importance, as well as of course the statistical analysis of real data of language test scores elicited through the aforementioned language tools (Tzevelekou et al. 2013). The SIRIUS WATCH (2019) report points out challenges existing in the process of a child's integration into mainstream schooling and provides an interesting mapping (across Europe) of existing policies and examples of understanding and assessing newly arriving migrant children's prior learning covering the first stages of reception of newly arrived migrant children. Following this mapping, it would be interesting to examine the various assessment tools and practices used in various contexts across Europe.

7. Conclusions

The initial language assessment of the newcomer refugee and migrant students, as well as the assessment of their prior knowledge, should be used for those students' first placement into the mainstream classroom (European Commission 2019). However, in Greece, this assessment takes place right before and sometimes during the DYEP or ZEP classes under the educator's invigilation and guidance with the use of language assessment tests that have been designed by relevant institutions. It is an undeniable fact that the linguistic assessment of the newly arrived students is a demanding process that requires the appropriate language assessment tools and the relevant additional educational policies to be implemented. The SIRIUS WATCH (2019) report demonstrated that assessment of the prior learning of migrant children in school education is not yet systematically implemented across member states of the EU, and does not provide necessary information to ensure the learning continuity of migrant children in Europe. Further research in the field and probably some more detailed theoretical and experimental work regarding the language and educational assessment of the newcomer refugee and migrant students is encouraged to be conducted in the Greek context.

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Notes

¹ The specific information is available online here: <https://theirworld.org/> (accessed on 5 March 2022).

² See Section 2 for more details.

³ The specific tests may be found online here: http://6dim-diap-elfth.thess.sch.gr/Greek/Diapolitismiki_Ekpaidefsi/DiagnwstikaGlwssikaTest/Diagnwstika/Diagnwstika.htm (accessed on 5 March 2022).

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