

# TYPES OF EVALUATION IN ENGLISH CLASSES WITHIN THE ROMANIAN MODULAR SYSTEM



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## Types of Evaluation in English Classes Within the Romanian Modular System

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### Abstract

Evaluation is a vast and complex field that requires special attention to ensure a fair, valid, and relevant process. It is essential to student learning and development, providing vital information for improving the educational process. Evaluation plays a crucial role in monitoring students' progress and providing appropriate feedback to guide students toward continuous improvement. Through evaluation, educators can determine students' level of understanding on various subjects, identify knowledge gaps, and adapt teaching strategies to meet individual needs. Proper utilization of formative and summative assessment methods and tools can support students' development and success in the learning process. However, teachers need to receive adequate preparation to adapt to a modular organizational school system. This preparation includes familiarizing themselves with teaching and evaluation methodologies specific to modules and developing skills for planning and implementing lessons within a modular context. In addition to synthesizing basic information about evaluation, the current study presents several modular evaluation tools used in high school English classes. It analyzes how process-oriented assessment can stimulate students' engagement and interest in learning, thereby contributing to developing a culture of continuous learning.

**Keywords:** *Evaluation, Modular Assessment, Evaluation Tools, Formative & Summative Evaluation, Digitized Evaluation, Virtual Notebooks, Subconscious Learning Methods, English, Romania*

## INTRODUCTION

Evaluation represents an essential component of the educational process, with a significant impact on learning capacity as well as the cognitive development and holistic progress of students. It entails measuring the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by students to provide essential information for guiding and improving the learning process. Evaluation should be process-oriented and promote deep understanding, critical thinking, and practical skills of students (Gardner, 2012). At the same time, evaluation should be fair and consider students' diversity and individual needs. Continuous formative assessment and constructive feedback are crucial in guiding students in the right direction and fostering engagement and motivation in learning. Teachers must be aware of biases and apply objective and transparent evaluation criteria to ensure fair and non-discriminatory assessment (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). With the advancement of technology, evaluation in preuniversity education has been influenced and enhanced by digital tools and online applications. These technologies can facilitate data collection and analysis, providing a detailed, even comprehensive, picture of student progress.

However, the subjectivity of evaluation, pressure to achieve expected outcomes, and over-specialization of the curriculum can pose obstacles to ensuring relevant and authentic assessment. It is essential to continue research and innovation in the field of evaluation to develop more efficient and equitable

practices and tools. Collaboration among educators, researchers, and educational policymakers can contribute to the continuous improvement of evaluation in preuniversity education and ensure a quality education for all students (Brown, 2004)

### Literature Review

#### Formative and Summative Assessment

Assessment in pre-university education can be approached from various perspectives and purposes, of which two fundamental approaches are formative assessment and summative assessment. These approaches evaluate student performance and progress but differ in purpose, timing, and methods (Stiggins et al., 2006). Formative assessment is an approach that focuses on monitoring and continuous improvement of student learning. The primary purpose of formative assessment is to provide real-time feedback and guidance, to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, and to help them develop their skills and knowledge (Heritage, 2007). Formative assessment is an ongoing process throughout the learning journey and may involve various tools and techniques such as oral tests, observations, portfolios, or individual discussions. This approach stimulates authentic learning and self-reflection among students, contributing to deeper understanding and reinforcing competencies (Shute, 2008; Black & Wiliam, 2009).

On the other hand, the summative assessment focuses on the final evaluation of the knowledge and performance accumulated by students at the end of a specific learning period or unit of study. The summative assessment aims to provide an overall assessment of acquired knowledge and competencies and assign a final grade. This approach is more formal and is often used for reporting and decision-making purposes, such as admission to higher education institutions or obtaining certificates or diplomas. Summative assessment may include standardized tests, final exams, project work, or external evaluations. It provides a synthetic perspective on student performance but does not provide detailed information about individual progress. It is important to note that formative and summative assessments are not exclusive approaches, meaning they can be integrated complementarily into the assessment process. While formative assessment offers real-time feedback and guidance, summative assessment provides an overall and final evaluation (Pellegrino et al., 2016). Both approaches have roles in improving student learning and development and can be adapted according to the specific needs and context of pre-university education.

### **Traditional and Innovative Assessment**

The traditional and innovative methods used in the assessment process in pre-university education have specific benefits and limitations. Traditional assessment methods include written tests, oral exams, and question-and-answer assignments. These methods have been widely used and have a well-defined structure, providing an objective framework for evaluating students' knowledge and skills (Leighton & Gierl, 2007). The advantages of these methods include ease of administration and evaluation, consistency and comparability of results, and familiarity for both students and teachers (Crooks, 1988). However, the limitations of traditional methods lie in the fact that they focus more on memorizing information, may not effectively assess practical skills and creativity, and can generate anxiety among students (Scriven, 1991).

In contrast, innovative assessment methods aim to measure multiple aspects of student learning and development. These include portfolios, projects, presentations, simulations, peer or group assessments, and digital technology and interactive tools (Brookhart, 2013). These innovative methods promote active and applied learning, develop critical thinking and creativity skills, and allow for holistic assessment of students' knowledge and competencies. They can also be more engaging and motivating for students. However, implementing these innovative methods may

require more time and resources, and assessment can become subjective and more challenging to standardize and compare.

### **Digitized Assessment**

Technology and digital tools have significantly impacted assessment in pre-university education, influencing and improving it in several ways. Firstly, the use of technology has facilitated the data collection and analysis process, allowing for a more efficient and accurate assessment of students' performance. Digital tools such as assessment management software and online evaluation systems have simplified test administration and grading, reducing human errors and saving precious time for teachers (Clarke-Midura & Dede, 2010; Liu et al., 2016). Secondly, technology has provided new ways of assessing students' competencies and skills. Digital applications and platforms have enabled the creation of virtual assessment environments where students can demonstrate practical skills, such as problem-solving, simulations, or multimedia project creation (Leach & Moon, 2019). These innovative assessment methods facilitated the measurement and evaluation of complex and applied skills that traditional methods cannot quickly assess (Kuhlemeier et al., 2017).

Furthermore, technology has enhanced the accessibility and flexibility of assessment in preuniversity education. Online assessment allows students to participate in tests and evaluations remotely, eliminating geographical and time limitations. Additionally, technology has enabled the customization of assessments to meet better the needs and pace of each student's learning (Gulamhussein, 2013). However, it is vital to acknowledge the limitations of technology in assessment. Some tools and applications may be costly or inaccessible to all students or specific schools. There is also the risk of replacing human interaction and subjective evaluation with fully automated assessment, which may only sometimes be fair and comprehensive.

### **Assessment and Motivation**

The impact of assessment on students' learning is a topic of significant importance in education. When assessment is perceived as fair, relevant, and focused on personal development, it can stimulate students' intrinsic motivation. Constructive and encouraging feedback provided within the assessment process can contribute to developing self-confidence and perseverance in the face of challenges (Stiggins, 1994; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005).

On the other hand, incorrect, rigid, or excessive assessment can adversely affect students' motivation and learning. Students may develop extrinsic motivation based on avoiding punishment or seeking external rewards when the assessment is perceived as solely focused on obtaining a grade or external evaluation (Wiliam, 2011). This can affect their desire to learn authentically and develop their skills in the long run.

Another important aspect relates to the types of feedback provided within the assessment (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Formative feedback, which provides specific information and improvement suggestions, can positively impact students' learning. It can guide them in identifying strengths and weaknesses and help them develop effective learning strategies. On the other hand, negative or vague feedback can affect students' confidence and motivation.

### Challenges and Dilemmas

Assessment in pre-university education involves specific challenges and dilemmas, such as subjectivity, fairness, and assessment standards. Subjectivity in assessment is one of the major challenges in the teaching process. Assessments can be influenced by the evaluator's personal preferences or interpretations. This aspect can lead to discrepancies in evaluating students and subjectivity in assigning grades. Efforts should be made to ensure objectivity and consistency in assessment by establishing clear criteria and training teachers in the assessment process (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Earl, 2003).

Fairness in assessment is another critical dilemma. Students come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and these differences can influence their performance in assessment. Assessments need to be fair and consider students' diversity and individual needs. Additionally, careful attention must be given to balancing assessing knowledge and skills and evaluating socio-emotional and contextual factors that impact students' performance (Gardner, 2006; James et al., 2007). Assessment standards pose another challenge in the assessment process. Establishing clear and relevant assessment standards can be difficult as learning and students' development are complex and individualized processes. Moreover, the rapid evolution of knowledge and competencies requires constant adaptation of assessment standards (Harlen & Deakin, 2002). Continuous reflection and dialogue among teachers, students, and decision-makers are necessary to establish relevant and updated assessment standards.

### Perspectives and Recommendations

The perspectives of researchers and experts in the field of assessment in pre-university education highlight several recommendations for improving the assessment process to ensure fair and relevant evaluation. Researchers recommend diversifying the methods and tools of assessment to measure different aspects of learning (Popham, 2009). This can include using portfolios, projects, practical assignments, and ongoing assessments in combination with traditional assessments. A holistic and multidimensional approach to assessment can provide a broader picture of students' performance and progress (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam et al., 2004).

Formative assessment, which focuses on providing feedback and guidance for improving learning, is essential. Experts recommend integrating regular formative assessment into the learning process so that students receive prompt and specific feedback to develop their knowledge and skills (Shepard, 2000; Gulamhussein, 2013). To ensure fair assessment, it is important to establish clear and relevant criteria for evaluation. Researchers recommend involving teachers, students, and decision-makers in setting criteria to ensure transparency and shared understanding, clarifying expectations, and providing specific examples to guide evaluation (Pellegrino et al., 2001; Rust et al., 2003). Experts also emphasize the importance of teacher training in the field of assessment. Teachers should be familiar with various methods and tools of assessment, understand the principles of assessment, and be able to provide constructive feedback and interpret assessment results objectively (Stiggins, 2005). Assessment in pairs or groups can also bring benefits by promoting cooperation, interaction, and the development of social skills. This approach can reduce the subjectivity of individual assessment and provide a more comprehensive perspective on students' performance.

To ensure relevant and practical assessment, it is crucial to adjust assessment practices continuously. Researchers recommend analyzing assessment results and feedback received and constantly improving the assessment process in light of new research and findings in the field (Wiliam, 2011). It is essential to have open and collaborative dialogue among teachers, students, parents, and decision-makers to identify issues in a timely manner and continuously improve assessment practices.

## Modular Assessment

In the academic year 2022-2023, the Romanian educational system implemented the modular formula for organizing the school year, thus marking a significant shift in educational and psychological paradigms. This new approach represented a transition from the traditional semester-based organization to a structure where the school year was divided into five continuous units, separated only by vacation periods, without the conclusion of the academic situation until the end of the entire school year (Bălătescu, 2018; Bărbulescu, 2020; Brîndescu & Brătucu, 2020). This change significantly impacted how students and teachers conduct their school activities. By dividing the semesters into modules, the aim is to create a more dynamic and flexible educational environment that provides more freedom in planning and organizing teaching activities (Chiriac, 2019). One of the primary motivations for implementing the modular formula was to adapt to the needs and requirements of students and teachers and to facilitate continuous assessment and feedback. This approach allows for a greater focus on learning objectives, enabling students and teachers to identify progress and monitor development more detailedly and clearly.

Furthermore, the modular formula offers increased opportunities for personalized learning, allowing flexibility in choosing and combining different modules based on students' interests and needs. As a result, students can be more actively engaged in the learning process and develop specific skills in a broader range of areas (Giosan, 2019; Lazăr & Brîndescu, 2021). However, the implementation of the modular formula also presented various challenges. Adapting to this new organizational system may require additional resources and appropriate teacher training (Mincu & Giosan, 2018). Moreover, there is a need to ensure fairness and consistency in assessment within the modules and to find efficient ways to monitor progress and integrate feedback continuously. Transitioning from a traditional semester-based organization to a modular structure involves significant changes in educational program planning, organization, and implementation. Teachers need to adapt to this new paradigm and reconfigure their teaching and assessment strategies to align with the smaller modules. This new reality may require time and additional effort for teachers to become familiar with the new requirements and develop the necessary skills in a timely manner. Continuous professional development and institutional support are essential for teachers to feel prepared and confident in approaching the new structure (Păun, 2021; Popescu, 2019). Implementing the modular formula

may require allocating additional resources, such as instructional materials, technology, time, and personnel. Schools may need to adjust their budgets and collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure the necessary resources to implement the modules efficiently. One crucial aspect of implementing the modular formula is ensuring fair and consistent assessment within the modules. This involves developing clear assessment criteria, ensuring assessment standardization, and addressing subjectivity in evaluation. Teachers must be well-prepared and collaborate regularly to ensure assessments are conducted consistently and objectively.

Monitoring students' progress and providing continuous feedback are essential in a modular system. Teachers must find efficient ways to collect and analyze student progress data in individual modules to provide specific and improved feedback for each student. This may involve using digital tools and technologies to collect and analyze data, such as learning management systems or online progress-tracking platforms. Integrating continuous feedback into the learning process can support students in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement, thus contributing to their continuous development (Vlăsceanu, 2016). A collaborative and supportive approach is necessary to overcome these challenges and ensure the effective implementation of the modular formula. Teachers, school leadership, parents, and decision-makers need to collaborate to identify and address obstacles, provide the necessary resources and training, and create a conducive environment for the successful implementation of the modular system.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher used observational and contextual analyses to explore the areas of study in terms of the types of evaluation in the Romanian modular system. The present study proposes tools for modular assessment in high school English classes, highlighting the difficulties and practical implications of implementing such a performance evaluation process in all high school grades. Immediately after the start of the school year, the English teacher can create a WhatsApp group for each class, from 9th grade to 12th grade. Compared to using communication through Google Classroom, WhatsApp groups also provide the efficiency of a psychotherapeutic nature of communication, which is extremely important for establishing and consolidating an empathic relationship between teacher-students, students-students, and students-teacher. Additionally, due to the accessibility of the WhatsApp platform, students demonstrate a

greater willingness to accept virtual educational materials, such as assignments transmitted via WhatsApp, compared to Google Classroom. Immediately after forming the WhatsApp workgroup, the English teacher must ensure they have established a written and audio communication environment that aligns with face-to-face communication in the classroom. If the teacher is new, they can openly inform the students that their teaching methods are based on respecting all students' age and individual characteristics. This pedagogical principle implies, as an explicit priority, sincere communication among the parties involved in the learning, consolidation, and assessment process, as well as proactive correction of any errors instead of punishing them with low grades or other demotivating measures. Initially, students may show reluctance towards this approach from a teacher precisely because it needs to explicitly focus on highlighting weaknesses in the subject matter. Therefore, the English teacher may observe, during the first English lessons, participation based on fear of making mistakes and overt lack of trust in creating a friendly working environment, especially in 9th-grade classes, where the dynamics of the group are still being formed at the beginning of the school year.

During the first two weeks of school, the verbal and behavioral consistency of the English teacher can help students open up to this approach, allowing the educational framework to initiate effective collaboration in line with the curriculum and materials used throughout the modular school year. The teacher can frequently use the metaphor of "making bread together": just as a baker needs to get their hands dirty with flour and knead the dough for an extended period to help it rise, the final result being a delicious and appetizing bread, so too students need to learn by trial and error. Adolescents can resonate with this visualization and will gradually relax during English classes, both individually and as a group. When students are ready to learn how they will be evaluated in the new school year, the teacher will explain the grading criteria for (1) projects, (2) portfolios, (3) review tests, (4) in-class activities, and (5) physical notebooks, which should contain exercises and written activities done in class, as well as assignments given throughout the school year. All information discussed in class regarding this topic will subsequently be shared in writing on the students' WhatsApp groups, using a semi-formal language that is easily understandable by all. Instructions will preferably be provided in both English and Romanian to avoid any language barriers that could hinder the achievement of a top grade. Students will carefully study the general instructions in a friendly and pressure-free working environment and

can ask questions during class or on WhatsApp if anything needs clarification. Depending on the number of hours allocated to each class, at the end of the school year, the English teacher will need to assign a minimum of 5-6 grades and a maximum of 7-8 grades, following the formula of the number of hours per class plus 3. Moreover, to ensure a complete clarification of evaluative expectations throughout the modular school year, students and parents will receive two photographs of the grading calendar in English and Romanian (Annex 1).

Collaboration with parents can play a significant role in learning (Cariaga et al., 2023). In terms of implementing this modular grading system, it can effectively replace the real-time communication function offered by electronic grade books in schools that rely solely on physical grade books. Therefore, at the beginning of the modular school year, all students will receive the calendar outlining the entire evaluation process and the specific methods through which they will be assessed until the following summer. The challenge for the English teacher will thus lie in finding the best methods and strategies to maintain this evaluation program consistently; this will foster students' complete trust in the teacher and their desire to surpass their limits as they feel free to work with pleasure and without fear of toxic and unfair penalties for mistakes made during the learning process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Types of Modular Assessment in English Classes

In the educational process, the manner of interaction with students can primarily rely on what Paisie Aghioritul describes with such clarity of soul in one of his books: "Reprimanding evil often yields no useful results. But by presenting goodness, evil is reproached on its own" (2017 p. 10). The teacher should never advocate for fear-based learning, as they should be aware of the traumatic implications that this type of learning can have throughout one's life. Highlighting mistakes is a counterproductive process that leads to chronic emotional imbalance and creates a vicious cycle, ultimately inhibiting the natural process of information assimilation through consciously acknowledged or cultivated interest based on individual preferences. The neuroscientific theory of the Triune brain divides the human brain into three central regions: the reptilian, emotional, and rational. This model suggests that these three brain regions interact and influence human behavior and reactions in different situations (MacLean, 1990).

On the other hand, the fight or flight response is a physiological and behavioral reaction to potential danger or stress. This process activates the sympathetic nervous system and triggers a series of adaptive responses, such as increased blood pressure, elevated heart rate, and the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. This reaction prepares the body to confront the threat by fighting or fleeing from it (Bremner & Vermetten, 2001).

The Triune brain and the fight or flight response are interconnected in that fight or flight is mediated by the interaction between the three brain regions. The reptilian brain, responsible for survival functions and instinctual behaviors, is crucial in triggering the fight or flight response. The emotional brain intervenes by processing emotions and evaluating the situation to determine the appropriate reaction (LeDoux, 1996). The rational brain also contributes by cognitively evaluating the situation and making rational decisions. Thus, the Triune brain and the fight or flight process are interdependent and mutually influence each other in situations of danger or stress. How these brain regions interact and coordinate can significantly impact how students respond and adapt to school situations that they perceive as threatening or stressful. Most often, students exhibit rebellious behavior as a form of revolt against the inconsistency in grading or the faulty behavior of some teachers.

However, students can relax when the teacher reveals their human side, demonstrating to the students that they too can make mistakes and take full responsibility for the inadvertencies in the teaching and evaluation process. In contrast, the teacher can work with them to achieve realistic and sustainable results through joint effort (Lang et al., 1997). Instead of expending creative energy on unproductively highlighting mistakes, the English teacher can strive to find the best methods to motivate each student individually to desire to learn through self-discovery and the guidance offered by the teacher.

### Linguistic and Cultural Projects

According to the grading schedule, students will receive separate PDF documents in Romanian and English containing instructions for each activity to be evaluated in the current school year. Additionally, the teacher will bring a physical copy of each set of instructions to each class and file it in the English class folder for students who prefer working with physical, paper materials to consult. The first set of materials will include instructions for preparing language or sociocultural projects (Annex 2). This activity is highly

successful in all classes. Students can practice their public speaking skills in a foreign language, significantly contributing to developing selfconfidence, self-esteem, and natural communication abilities. Furthermore, besides the actual evaluation, the English teacher can select students with remarkable speaking abilities to participate in public speaking and academic debate competitions outside the school (Annex 3).

Building on the principle of "the bright side of everything," the teacher can only give grades ranging from 8 to 10 for project presentations. In exceptional cases, several additional points can be added to a grade of 10 to highlight excellence compared to a ten given for a well-prepared and presented project. The teacher can observe how students develop their selfconfidence and abilities through such an approach. Many will want to improve their projects to achieve excellence, just as some classmates did on their first attempt.

Awarding extra pluses for excellence motivates students to strive for excellence by revising their projects. To avoid frustrations related to subjectivity in the evaluation process, the English teacher can award a smaller number of extra pluses to students who choose to revise their projects compared to those who achieved excellent results from the start. In addition to the actual grades, awards can be given for (1) the best project, (2) the best presentation, and (3) the best project and presentation: First, Second, and Third Place, as well as Honorable Mention (Annex 4).

### Portfolios

Another activity included in the modular assessment schedule for the English language is the compilation of portfolios. These portfolios can contain eight book reviews, with students using the theory and review model provided by the teacher and discussed in class at school (Annex 5). Similar to the projects, portfolio instructions will be sent to students via the WhatsApp application in PDF format, both in Romanian and English and will be discussed and explained to ensure understanding by all students. Like the projects, portfolios can be graded from 8 and above, and students can become increasingly motivated to achieve a grade of 10 through sustained effort. Grades of 9 can be improved, or a grade of 10 with extra pluses can be achieved by adding new reviews, which may involve reading or listening to additional books. These will undoubtedly be the most diligently earned top grades obtained passionately in a healthy and motivating long-term competition.

Of course, there will be students who need to meet the deadlines and be appropriately penalized not to affect the motivation of students who strictly follow the teacher's requirements. To hold these students accountable, they can be given a new deadline for a grade of 8 and another deadline for a grade of 7 in case of non-compliance. The few students who do not prepare their projects and portfolios will receive a low grade only after the teacher verifies that no family and personal issues prevent the students from fulfilling their assigned tasks (Annex 6). Suppose no student receives a low grade for fraud or plagiarism. In that case, the teacher can once again confirm that the students were genuinely motivated to work individually or in groups to enjoy the results of their efforts afterward. This is an excellent achievement in a highly technologized reality where almost all information is just a click away.

### Class Grading

For the rhythmic evaluation, the AilamA@PlusGrading system can also be successfully implemented in a university setting: *number of pluses (exercise)/number of students who responded*. In this way, students receive pluses for participation in English classes based on the types of activities and their requirements. Through the AilamA@DelegationPlus method, the teacher can assign or delegate the number of tasks in an exercise to an equal number of students, who will then create a chain solving of the respective exercise by respecting the order of the task delegation (Annex 7). The idea of receiving pluses for classroom participation is not new, but the personalized approach to the entire process brings a beneficial innovative element regarding sincere motivation for students to participate in classes and pay attention actively (Popham, 2011). Through the AilamA@PlusGrading system, pluses become a personal asset for the students, in line with the endowment and IKEA effects (Kahneman et al., 1991; Norton et al., 2012). After each lesson, students write their names and the number of pluses they earned in the WhatsApp group, which can further motivate them to accumulate as many pluses as possible, also considering their classmates' results. The teacher records all the pluses in a dedicated document for the respective class. The endowment and IKEA effects play a significant role in the personalized approach of the AilamA@PlusGrading system for classroom participation. The endowment effect refers to individuals valuing and being more motivated by possessions or assets they perceive as their own, such as the pluses earned through active participation. On the other hand, the IKEA effect suggests that individuals place a higher value on products or outcomes in which they have invested their personal

efforts, such as accumulating pluses through active engagement in class. These effects enhance students' sincere motivation to participate actively and attentively in classes (Ariely et al., 2008). Thus, by working with their pluses, calculating and recording them in the WhatsApp group at the end of each lesson, students develop attachments to them and consider their achievements. Moreover, healthy competition is established, correcting the tendency of some students to *free ride* – that is, to benefit freely from the work of others (Isaac & Walker, 1988). In other words, students are careful to accurately calculate their pluses at the end of each lesson. However, they also pay attention to the number of pluses accumulated by their peers, which prevents those who would like to assign themselves more pluses from acting against the spirit of fairness and social justice promoted by their classmates. To help students accurately calculate their pluses, the teacher can dedicate space on the whiteboard for a detailed recording. In contrast, students themselves note the number of pluses accumulated in their notebooks in the first two or three lines dedicated to the current lesson:  $5p(ex.1)/7s + 10p(ex.2)/8s + 7p(ex.3)/7s$ . Additionally, at the end of each lesson, pluses can be awarded for increased attention to the conducted activities, for writing down all the exercises from the board in their physical notebooks, as well as for any intervention that corrected or assisted another classmate, without depriving the students who initially volunteered to respond of the pluses awarded for their answers, incomplete or incorrect though they may be. Over time, the teacher will notice that this gratification will help students respond without fear. Once fear is eliminated, the answers provided will become increasingly accurate, and the spirit of collaboration will become more and more genuine. The teacher can also award pluses for completing homework assignments without penalizing students who did not complete or partially complete their homework; however, they will be warned that they must have all the handwritten homework tasks recorded in their physical notebooks for final verification. During the in-class correction of homework, the teacher can give active pluses to those who responded directly and passive pluses to those who did not have the opportunity to respond but had correct answers during the exercise check.

There can also be special occasions such as Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, March 1st and 8th, and Easter, where the English teacher can award a more significant number of pluses than usual for festive activities conducted in the classroom; this will help students appreciate the earning of pluses even more, depending on the appropriate school context. In short, the teacher will allocate the pluses fairly. Considering



the type of activity, it avoids any frustration arising from unhealthy comparisons between highly dedicated students and those who only sometimes meet the teacher's requirements. During English classes, students can use their phones and tablets for various activities to supplement using the smart board, overhead projector, and Bluetooth speaker. It is recommended that during almost every English class, students spend 10-15 minutes watching holistic English-language videos, such as motivational, psychotherapeutic, personal development, cognitivebehavioral, neurolinguistic, native English teacher-led learning, literature, grammar-related topics, quantum physics, sociology, behavioral economics, game theory, mathematics, as well as TED-Ed lessons, TED talks, audiobooks, and many other types. Additionally, at the end of each lesson, the teacher can post photos of everything written on the board during the lesson on the WhatsApp group. This way, absent and present students have unlimited access to what was covered in class to supplement their missed lessons or deepen their understanding. According to the grading calendar, there can be three modular moments in the academic year when the teacher can declare "STOP PLUSES ."Following the pluses grading procedure, the teacher will send the PDF document with the class's plus situation to the WhatsApp group so that each student can calculate their total of pluses, as well as the pluses of the next student in the grade book, in alphabetical order, with the last student calculating the pluses of the first student in the grade book. Finally, the teacher will review the final situations sent by the students on the WhatsApp group sends and select a sample of pluses for assigning grades from 10 to the lowest grade, according to grade banding (Annex 8).

Grade banding is used in assessment and evaluation to categorize performance levels within a specific range of scores or marks. It is commonly employed in standardized tests, educational assessments, and certification exams. Grade banding allows for a more nuanced evaluation of an individual's performance by providing broader categories or bands that reflect a range of achievements within a particular score range (Eignor, 2007). In language proficiency exams like those conducted by Cambridge Assessment English, grade banding is used to determine a candidate's level of language proficiency based on their test scores. Each proficiency level, such as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, or C2, is associated with a specific score range. For example, B2 level proficiency may correspond to a score range of 100-200 points in the Cambridge English exams. Grade banding helps provide a clear and concise understanding of an individual's proficiency level, allowing for more accessible communication of their

language skills to employers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders. It simplifies the reporting and interpretation of test results while accounting for the performance variability within each proficiency level (Marion & Pan, 2015). Using grade banding makes it possible to differentiate between individuals with similar overall scores but different strengths and weaknesses within the language skills being assessed. It also allows for more flexibility in setting pass/fail criteria and enables a more comprehensive evaluation of candidates' language abilities (O'Sullivan & Yuditseva, 2020). Overall, grade banding enhances the accuracy and reliability of assessments by providing a standardized framework for categorizing and interpreting test scores based on predetermined score ranges associated with specific proficiency levels (Wagner & Wolf, 2019). Immediately after announcing the grades for the pluses, according to grade banding, the teacher will propose a remedial plan for earning additional pluses so that low grades can be improved. The additional activities may involve listening to English books, reading and recording them to the students, and submitting the recordings by a specified date in the remedial program. (Annex 9) The teacher will ensure that the remedial plan is manageable for students with the maximum grade for pluses.

However, listening to and recording audiobooks in English can only easily earn the necessary pluses. The teacher will keep all received recordings in special folders, and the best ones can be posted on the dedicated YouTube channel for English classes. In the three moments of assigning grades for pluses, most students below ten will try to cover the missing pluses by listening to the required audiobooks. Besides overcoming their fear of hearing their recorded voices while reading in English, students will accumulate valuable experience working with audio-visual materials, significantly improving their Englishlanguage learning skills. This type of remedial plan will complement the types of audio assignments that students may frequently receive throughout the modular academic year.

### Revision Tests

During the modular academic year, students can take two comprehensive tests in English. (Annex 10) The correct answers can be recorded on special Answer Sheets, and grading can start from 10 points out of 100. (Annex 11) An innovative aspect is that both tests can first be self-corrected based on the scoring rubrics provided by the teacher to the students in the following class after the testing.

Subsequently, the teacher will review the tests, and any grading discrepancies will be discussed with the students in subsequent lessons so that they understand the reasons why they received a higher or lower number of points when applicable. Another benefit of self-evaluation within the tests is that students genuinely learn from the mistakes they can make during the tests, which can help improve their scores in Cambridge, IELTS, or TOEFL examinations (Annex 12).

### Physical Notebook Evaluation

Toward the end of the modular academic year, students will present their physical notebooks for evaluation, which should contain all the exercises solved in class and any homework involving exercises, compositions, or essays written by hand (Annex 13). Students who still need to complete certain parts of their physical notebooks in real time may be allowed to complete those sections after identifying the missing parts. They can achieve a maximum grade of 9, provided that they do not copy the answers from their classmates' notebooks but rather solve the exercises individually through their effort. Based on the situation, the teacher will decide how to assign grades for the evaluation of the physical notebooks, ensuring that students with impeccable notebooks from the beginning of the evaluation are not disadvantaged or unfairly treated.

### Virtual Notebooks

In order to facilitate a less subjective grading process, the English teacher can create two types of virtual notebooks: one for activities and one for homework assignments. These notebooks will be completed every week and timely submitted in PDF format through WhatsApp groups. Initially, students may need more clarification about this approach, associating it with mandatory online learning during the COVID pandemic. However, within a short period, students will realize that these virtual notebooks (Class Notebook and Homework Notebook) can help them keep track of the types of assignments and all the materials used in English classes much more quickly (Annexes 14–15). Furthermore, the teacher can create a weekly record of all the assignments given to students from all classes to manage their real-time checking more efficiently (Annex 16).

### Subconscious Learning Methods

Some methods of information assimilation may seem too childish or traditional when they are the

most effective when it comes to quickly assimilating vocabulary elements and structures. The AilamA® method of teaching and learning English includes the Rule of 5 (AilamA®5toGo) and the repetition in the chorus of specific structures until they become automated (AilamA®ChoirPractice). It is known that the subconscious mind absorbs information through repetition, mainly when it is expressed aloud. This method is frequently used in early school without being considered inappropriate or disruptive. Unfortunately, as people grow older, the subconscious learning mode does not change. However, individuals have somehow been conditioned to believe that repeating aloud at older ages is a sign of cognitive deficit. In the case of learning the English language, assimilating a large amount of vocabulary in a short time is almost impossible, which is why a large part of the studied material is quickly forgotten or, at best, becomes passive vocabulary, only used in passive contexts such as listening or reading. By applying the AilamA®5toGo method, the student will repeat a word, a structure, or even a shorter sentence in English five times, individually or at the same time as their classmates, thus ensuring a foundation for efficiently assimilating a large amount of information in a short period. Additionally, chorus reading facilitates a reading aloud known as slow reading. Due to the almost hypnotic rhythm created when multiple students read aloud together, slow reading is entirely different from mechanical and fast reading aloud because, in the former case, the mind experiences a so-called expansion of understanding of the read elements, making it easier to absorb by the subconscious. Slow reading does offer numerous benefits to individuals in today's fast-paced world. Several advantages emerge by deliberately slowing down one's reading pace and engaging in deep, focused reading, such as enhancing comprehension and understanding of complex texts (Jacobs, 2011). Slow reading can also allow readers to grasp complex ideas, critically analyze arguments, and make meaningful connections between concepts. Furthermore, it can improve focus and concentration. In a world filled with digital distractions, cultivating the ability to sustain attention on a single task is invaluable. By intentionally slowing down and eliminating external interruptions, students can thus enhance their ability to concentrate, leading to improved productivity and a deeper engagement with the material (Reynolds, 2017; Probst & Timpson, 2010). A remarkable result of this type of reading is the project entitled "The Power of One Voice: One Class, One Voice," which involves reciting and recording motivational poems in English with the entire class, accompanied by suitable background music, on occasions such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, Mărțișor, Easter, and High School

Graduation. The results of this project can be posted on the English class YouTube page. (Annex 17)

## CONCLUSION

Assessment is an essential component of the educational process and significantly improves students' performance and development. By using appropriate practices and tools, assessment can become a powerful means of guiding and stimulating learning in pre-university education, contributing to a generation of well-prepared and engaged students. Formative and summative assessment are two distinct approaches to assessment in pre-university education, each with specific purposes and methods. Formative assessment focuses on monitoring and continuously improving students' learning, providing real-time feedback and guidance to support their development (Wiliam, 2011). On the other hand, summative assessment aims to evaluate students' final knowledge and performance at the end of a learning interval or a unit of study. Thus, both approaches have their distinct value in the educational process. Formative assessment develops students' deeper understanding and self-reflection skills, fostering authentic learning and continuous progress. It provides detailed information about students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing timely interventions and adjustments (Bennett, 2011).

On the other hand, the summative assessment provides a final and synthesized evaluation of students' performance, offering vital information for decisionmaking and result reporting. It significantly impacts the selection and admission process to the next level of education and can provide an overall perspective on students' achievements. It is essential to find a balance between the two approaches and integrate them appropriately into the practice of assessment in preuniversity education (Klenowski, 2016). Formative assessment can guide the learning process and provide individualized feedback, while summative assessment can evaluate overall performance and assign a final grade.

Traditional assessment methods in pre-university education provide a well-defined structure and ease of evaluation, but they can be limited in assessing practical skills and creativity. Innovative assessment methods allow for a more holistic and applied evaluation of students, but they may require more time and resources, and assessment can become subjective. A balanced combination of these two methods can contribute to a relevant and appropriate assessment of student's knowledge and competencies in preuniversity education. Technology and digital tools

have brought numerous improvements in assessment in pre-university education. They have facilitated data collection and analysis, diversified assessment methods, and increased accessibility and flexibility in the assessment process. However, a balanced and conscious approach to technology use is necessary to ensure fair, valid, and relevant educational assessment (Lai & Bower, 2019). Assessment has a significant impact on student's motivation and learning. Fair, relevant, and development-oriented assessment can stimulate intrinsic motivation and the desire to learn. Formative and encouraging feedback can support students' progress and skill development. On the other hand, incorrect, rigid, or solely grade-oriented assessments can affect students' motivation and authentic learning. Evaluating students in pre-university education is associated with challenges and dilemmas such as the subjectivity of assessment, fairness, and assessment standards. Addressing these challenges requires constant efforts to ensure the objectivity of assessment, fairness, and relevance of standards and that assessment accurately reflects students' progress and development. Perspectives from researchers and experts in preuniversity assessment recommend diversifying assessment methods, integrating formative assessment, establishing clear and relevant criteria, providing teacher training in assessment, promoting collaboration and peer assessment, and constantly adjusting the assessment process. These recommendations aim to ensure fair and relevant assessment that optimally supports students' learning and development. Implementing the modular formula for organizing the school year in the 2022-2023 academic year represented a significant shift in the educational and psychological paradigm in the Romanian educational system. This new approach brought flexibility, personalization, and progress monitoring benefits. However, it also posed challenges regarding adaptation, ensuring fairness and coherence in assessment, providing adequate resources, teacher preparation, progress monitoring, and integrating continuous feedback. By addressing these challenges collaboratively and through an ongoing commitment to improvement, implementing the modular formula can bring significant benefits to the development of the educational system. Among the evaluation tools proposed by the current study, implementing the AilamA@PlusGrading system fosters a sense of healthy competition among students, addressing the issue of *free riding* and promoting fairness and social justice. This is connected to the endowment and the IKEA effect, as students value the pluses they earn as their possessions and feel a sense of ownership and pride in their accumulated pluses. By paying attention to the number of pluses earned by their peers, students are

motivated to accurately calculate them and prevent any unfairness or self-serving behavior undermining the spirit of fairness and social justice within the classroom.

Moreover, using the assessment techniques and methods proposed in the current study, at the end of the modular school year, the English teacher will be able to acknowledge that students have made considerable effort to achieve high grades or to earn them through remedial assignments, or excellence assignments in the case of exceptional students in English. Additionally, English classes can become much more engaging, and students can become much more motivated to pay attention and focus solely on the lesson to earn extra pluses. Suppose the teacher focuses on students' qualities rather than highlighting mistakes. In that case, they will have greater satisfaction in successfully teaching the English language and establishing appropriate emotional relationships with their students. Ultimately, nobody is perfect, and mistakes are life experiences.

*(Editor's note: If you are interested in the annexes, kindly contact the author through her email [amalia.calinescu@iis.unibuc.ro](mailto:amalia.calinescu@iis.unibuc.ro) to get a copy.)*

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