

CyTEA Conference Proceedings 2017

Language Teaching Challenges in a Globalized World

Edited by Stella Kourieos



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Language Teaching Challenges in a Globalized World

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*Edited by Stella Kourieos
Designed by Maria Diakou*

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Introduction

Chair, Maria Diakou

CyTEA (Cyprus Teachers of English Association) is an association which aims towards the professional development of its members. The association is open to all English language teachers, or other foreign language teachers, regardless of what educational level they work at or whether they work in the private or state sector. Our aim is to create a strong professional community which supports its members and assists them in remaining up-to-date in their careers.

In order to achieve its goals CyTEA runs a variety of events such as local and international conferences, open talks and workshops and two or three-day summer schools.

'Language Teaching Challenges in a Globalised World', CyTEA's Annual Conference organised in November 2017, is a great example of the high quality of professional development that we bring to our members. This was a conference with stimulating and timely talks and workshops, offering insights into the developments happening here in Cyprus and bringing international experts to contribute to the discussion on some of the most current topics internationally in the area of foreign language teaching and learning.

CyTEA's Annual Conference 2017 and Exhibition was held at the European University Cyprus. This conference welcomed teachers, administrators, researchers and other ELT professionals from Cyprus and abroad. Delegates enjoyed two days of talks, workshops and poster presentations. A well-attended exhibition gave us the chance to explore new materials and resources.

Through this volume of Conference Proceedings you will find eight reports of sessions presented at the Conference .

I would like to thank our sponsors who supported us organise this conference:

- American Embassy
- British Council
- European University Cyprus
- Deportivo Publishing
- ELT News
- International Publishers Exhibitions

Closing, I would also like to thank our editor Dr Stella Kourieos since this would not be possible without her dedication.

I hope you will enjoy reading this year's Conference Proceedings and I am looking forward to seeing you at CyTEA 2018 Annual Conference.

Dr Maria Diakou
Chair of CyTEA

Editor's Introduction

Stella Kourieos

Conferences present great opportunities for professionals to share their expertise, network with peers and familiarise themselves with new ideas and approaches which can make their teaching more effective and compatible with the on-going changes that take place in today's globalised world. This year's CyTEA conference, while relatively small, was no exception as the talks and workshops included, were presented by passionate ELT professionals from different parts of the world who showed enthusiasm about sharing their expertise and experience in a collegial environment.

The CyTEA committee wishes to thank the ELT community for supporting the conference through the submission of the conference proceedings papers which appear in this issue. These papers feature a range of topics related to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL), as it is explored and implemented in different educational contexts and levels.

The first three papers which appear here, point to the importance of integrating technology in today's EFL classrooms. Dimitris Primalis, who gave the closing plenary at the conference, emphasises the importance of facilitating the development of some of the 21st Century skills, namely critical and creative thinking as well as communication and collaboration skills in English language Teaching and Learning. He also offers a number of practical ideas and useful resources which enable teachers to integrate these skills seamlessly into the syllabus with the help of learning technology. In a similar vein, Christina Nicole Giannikas looks into the impact of blogging on the enhancement of students' writing skills as well as on the development of their collaborative and creative skills. The preliminary results of the present study indicate that the use of blogs in the EFL classroom, when tailored to students' literacy needs, promotes collaboration and enhanced writing skills. The third paper authored by Angela Kleanthous discusses interesting research on the benefits of blogs in the development of different language skills. In her paper, the researcher specifically explores how the use of blogs in an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course supports the development of undergraduate students' writing and speaking skills. The author concludes that while the use of blogs enable students to become more reflective and critical of their work and consequently to improve these skills, the extent of this improvement yields further analysis.

While school populations become more and more diverse, the cultivation of intercultural education and the enhancement of literacy standards in multicultural classrooms have become a challenge for today's teachers. In their paper, Panayiotis Panteli and Isaak Papadopoulos address the topic of intercultural education in multicultural primary schools in Cyprus and Greece. They propose an educational 6-month programme which aims at developing students' intercultural communication competence and at the

same time contributing to wider social empowerment of families from migratory contexts. The topic of multiculturalism is also addressed in another paper authored by Maria Diakou who reports on her experience using Interactive Groups (IGs) in a primary school mainly consisting of Roma pupils. The author concludes that the integration of interactive group activities in the EFL lesson can help teachers address the literacy needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students and contribute to the enhancement of their emotional well-being.

Another paper co-authored by Georgia Stylianidou and Sviatlana Karpava deals with vocabulary, a rather neglected aspect of language learning. The authors highlight the role of vocabulary in L2 instruction and investigate the views and attitudes of both EFL students and teachers in Cyprus in relation to vocabulary teaching methods and assessment practices. They conclude by making suggestions for effective teaching practices that can more successfully meet the needs of EFL students in that respect.

Emily Ioannou and Sviatlana Karpava investigate the levels of anxiety experienced by teachers and students inside and outside the EFL classroom in the context of Cyprus. Based on the findings of their study, the authors make recommendations for generating an anxiety-free educational environment, which will consequently lead to fruitful learning outcomes. The final paper in this issue is authored by Katherine Fincham-Louis who explains the concept of translanguaging and presents interesting research on the adoption of a translanguaging pedagogy in a mixed-ability University writing course in the context of Cyprus. The results support previous research and discuss the benefits identified through the use of such a pedagogical practice.

Conference proceedings allow both researchers and practitioners to present preliminary research findings, report on new concepts and effective classroom practices, and most importantly to form collaborations with colleagues who may share common interests. We hope that reading these proceedings you will find something to stimulate your thinking and, perhaps, inform your own practice in language research. We therefore encourage more presenters to send us their contributions for the next CyTEA annual conference!

Stella Kourieos, EdD

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Integrating 21st Century Skills into the Syllabus

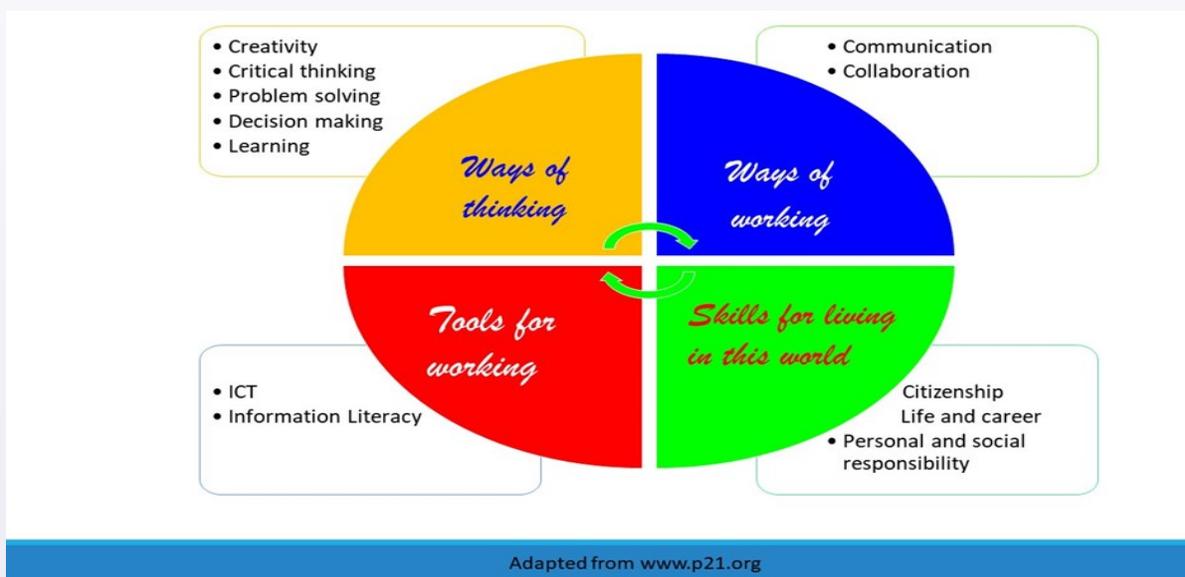
Dimitris Primalis

Doukas primary school, Athens

This paper focuses on how some of the 21st century skills, namely critical and creative thinking, collaboration, communication and digital citizenship skills can be integrated seamlessly into the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) syllabus without adding further strain on the syllabus.

Introduction

“21st century skills” is an umbrella term for a range of skills that are considered important for students who aspire to achieve progress in a global environment. Below you can read a rough categorisation in four areas. Although they are often thought as new and completely innovative, on closer look, one could easily understand that most of them have existed for centuries. Critical and creative thinking, communication and collaboration skills have been integral parts of various syllabi. It is the use of information and computer technology that has had a critical impact by facilitating communication, collaboration, creativity and opening the floodgates of data to the average user.



Why facilitate the development of 21st century skills?

I would advocate it for a number of reasons. First of all, critical thinking has been part of the local and global culture. Zenon of Citium through Stoicism, urged people to use their minds to understand the world around them. Moving from the local to the global-business culture and practice, according to Brooks (2017), the majority of employers use the social media to screen applicants. Given that English is used very frequently by non-native speakers on the social media, helping learners to develop digital

literacy skills along with the traditional language skills might make a difference in their life.

In terms of teaching culture, CLIL which has been introduced into the syllabus in Cyprus and many other parts of the world relies on communication and cognition -in other words, in thinking skills like creative thinking, reasoning and evaluating. Therefore, 21st century skills are not alien to the stakeholders. Last but not least, the majority of EFL exams focus on collaboration as candidates are asked to work in pairs or groups; communication and critical thinking as they have to evaluate different options, select the best/worst one and justify their choice or express their views supporting them with arguments and examples; creative thinking as they can write a story based on cues.

I would add another reason based on my personal experience. English language teachers are often seen as trailblazers who spearhead change and innovation in the educational world while few other teachers are willing to adopt approaches other than the traditional ones. Therefore, I believe that it is the English teachers who should explore the integration of these skills into the syllabus.

How can these skills be integrated into the syllabus?

The biggest challenge is to view them not as a disruption to the current syllabus but as an opportunity to supplement it and make it more motivating and relevant to the learners' reality. This can be achieved in three ways:

- ◆ By modifying existing activities.
- ◆ By adding short activities and modifying homework to cater for these learning aims.
- ◆ By engaging students in projects that develop 21st skills and prevent plagiarism habits from an early stage in learning.

On a practical level, this may involve “tweaking” traditional activities or adding a part or feature that would facilitate the development of the aforementioned skills. For example, when deciding on class rules, student can justify their choice. Traditional mechanistic grammar past tense exercises can be used to narrate the story of an inanimate object or an animal with students using their imagination to weave the plot. Summarising a text can be modified to asking students to create a short video with the main points of the text. Reading a story on the news and checking that this is not fake news can help learners develop digital literacy .

Project work

Below there is a task, commonly assigned by teachers as a project. From my experience, students are highly likely to browse the internet, find information, usually on Wikipedia and then copy and paste large chunks of language on Powerpoint slides without even reading them.

- ◆ **Find information about a popular electronic device and present it in class.**

Has there been any kind of learning? For the vast majority of students, the answer is negative. However, if the task is modified as shown below, it can accommodate the development of several 21st century skills.

- ⇒ Electronic devices are very popular among young people. Create a questionnaire and carry out a survey to find out which one is the most popular.
- ⇒ Present the survey data in class and explain why these devices are the most popular based on your research.
- ⇒ The questionnaire can be in electronic form or on paper. You may also use interviews.

Creating a questionnaire, analysing the data and presenting the outcome are challenging tasks and will help learners develop their language, communication, collaboration, critical and creative thinking skills. In this example, adding inquiry based learning elements has ensured student engagement and the development of skills.

Conclusion

Incorporating 21st century skills into the daily practice can be done seamlessly provided that tasks from the existing syllabus are modified to accommodate the aforementioned skills. Another key factor is the extent to which the teacher will incorporate elements of personalisation, inquiry based learning and student involvement when redesigning the tasks.

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[Accessed 19 Dec. 2017]

Other resources

www.p21.org

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism>

<http://linoit.com/users/dprimalis/canvases/cyprus>

Welcome to the Blogosphere: Improving Teenage Learners' Literacy and Collaborative Skills

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Introduction

Blogs are considered a virtual explosion in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), especially among teenage language learners. This phenomenon has now become the new norm in many language learning contexts across the globe, however, the majority of the Greek context is still showing some disbelief. The present talk focuses on the primary findings of an exploratory research study that took place in Southern Greece where practitioners attempted to integrate blogging in their teaching by encouraging their students to improve their writing skills and take their creativity to the next level (Ward, 2004).

The Use of Blogs

A blog is known to be a website that resembles an online journal where one can create an account, write and update its readership. It has been argued that this online tool can benefit language learners immensely by supporting multimodality, supporting learners' needs with social constructive approaches, encourage creativity and raise awareness to students of what having authorship, readership and ownership entails (Giannikas, 2017). In order for blogging to be integrated in the language lesson successfully, there needs to be a well thought-out strategy to support the process. The planning of such a pedagogical endeavour must start at an early stage, and there needs to be a clear purpose of the use of blogs. Giving blogging tasks meaning would help bring about students' utmost potential and stimulate the development of their literacy and collaborative skills.

Researching the Blogging Effect

Data was collected from two private language schools in southern Greece 52 teenage language learners participated. The chosen platform for the needs of the investigation was Edublogs. Students were provided with full guidance on how blogs function and how they were expected to deliver their assignments. The aim of the study was to investigate the progress students made in their writing with the integration of blogs in their curriculum by comparing their blog work to their previous in-class and homework writing assignments. Additionally, the development of the students' cooperative skills was investigated by evaluating the form and frequency of feedback students gave to their peers. Finally, in order to gain more in-depth information from the students' perspective, questionnaires were given to examine their impression of blogs and the effect it had on their learning.

The Findings

The outcomes of the study have shown that students were reluctant to share their written work with their peers, in the fear of being negatively criticised. According to the data, 60% of the students reported to feel exposed when they first published their work, whereas 40% did not attempt to share their first blog assignment. Out of the 60% of the students who posted their first assignment, only 10% gave their peers feedback and struck a discussion in the commentary. In order to encourage the students to step out of their comfort zone and become more open to new learning possibilities rewards were given to those who successfully completed a writing activity in a blog post. Students eventually started feeling more motivated to take the risk and blog, resulting to 100% participation within 4 weeks of when the project commenced. Within the first 5 weeks, the students were recorded to improve their writing by 20% in comparison to their previous on-paper work. According to the students, this occurred due to the fact that the new platform was more intriguing and prompted them to take notice of their writing. Within 7 months of the project, the students provided each other with feedback and had lengthy discussions online on what they could do to advance their writing skills. Through the data collection process the following was observed:

- ◆ Students' enthusiasm grew
- ◆ Students felt the need to discuss issues that came up in the commentary in the classroom
- ◆ Most of the discussions were carried out in English

Students became aware of how they were expected to communicate their thoughts to others when commenting on someone's blog. This ensured a cooperative and efficient form of learning and production of new creative writing opportunities. Students were also introduced to the meaning of cyber safety, with the use of age-appropriate YouTube clips.

Concluding Notes

The primary results of the present study gave the teachers the incentive to integrate new and creative ways to motivate their students to step out of their comfort zone and produce high quality writing assignments. The possibilities are endless when blogs are introduced in an effective manner. The key is to personalize the tool in order to meet students' literacy needs.

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Navigating through a Language-Learning Blog

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The employment of social media in education appears to be constantly increasing through the integration of different tools such as wikis, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc. (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Chum Chan, & Tiwari, 2012). Language learning educators have also been incorporating such tools in their courses and in particular blogs, and there is an abundance of literature supporting the effectiveness of the specific platform as a means of collaboration, peer feedback and communication between the instructor and the students as well as among students (Montero-Fleta & Perez-Sabater, 2010; Noytim, 2010). The present study aims at exploring the effectiveness of blogging in improving ESP (English for Specific Purposes) learners' writing and speaking skills through online collaboration and peer feedback.

Benefits of Blogs in the Development of Different Language Skills.

Online platforms such as blogs can facilitate and encourage collaboration and communication between learners as well as between learners and the instructor, which in effect helps learners become more active in their learning. Due to the commenting feature that is available below each post, students can interact with each other and exchange feedback on the written tasks they posted, which also makes learning more interactive (Wright, White, Hirst, & Cann, 2014). Additionally, blogs can offer motivation for learning, as it constitutes a novel, fun way for learners to practice their different language skills, and it encourages critical thinking, easier expression, and articulation of ideas (Amir, Kemboja, & Supyan, 2011).

With regards to how blogs can be beneficial for learners' improvement in their speaking skills, the literature cites numerous benefits; such benefits include collaborative knowledge building, ability to negotiate for meaning and share opinions, an increase in motivation, positive engagement in learning, as well as confidence building in speaking activities, as more shy students appear to be more comfortable sharing their spoken tasks online rather than speaking in front of an audience (Kim, 2010; Hsu, Wang, & Comac, 2008; Hung, 2011).

Methodology

A total of 103 first and second year undergraduate Computer Science and Accounting & Finance students enrolled in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses participated in the study. A class blog was set up and students contributed their written tasks (e.g. memos, summaries, process writing) on the blog and then they also had to visit their classmates' blogs and offer spoken and written feedback on their work. This is a qualitative study and the blog posts and student interviews mainly comprised

The data collection instruments. More specifically, two focus group interviews took place, one in the beginning and one at the end of the semester, as well as individual interviews at the end of the semester. The interviews sought to investigate the learners' perceptions and attitudes towards the integration of the blog in their ESP course as well as whether they found the exchange of peer feedback through the blog beneficial for their language learning. During the interviews, students were asked to share their feelings towards the use of a blog in their course, the extent to which they felt it affected their writing and speaking skills in any way as well as their feelings towards the exchange of online peer feedback on their posts.

Findings & Discussion

Students felt that the blog was an interesting, fun addition to the course since they had never had a similar experience in a language course before. They stated that they liked the commenting feature of the blog, which allowed them to exchange feedback, since that helped them improve both their writing and speaking skills. In particular, they said that even though they felt nervous posting at first, out of concern that their comments might cause misunderstandings with their friends, they felt more comfortable with the process eventually. In fact, they mentioned that they remembered the comments they had received from their peers more than the ones received by the instructor and avoided repeating them. They also recognised that by offering feedback, they became more aware of errors in their own writing and speaking, so they would go back and revise their posts, which helped make them more reflective and critical of their work.

In terms of any improvement recorded in relation to the learners' speaking and writing skills, a preliminary qualitative analysis has demonstrated that errors pointed out through student feedback were not repeated in the subsequent assignments, and there was caution to avoid making mistakes which students had identified in their classmates' tasks. Further analysis will demonstrate the extent to which significant improvement has taken place.

This study's findings aim to support the existing literature on the positive effects of blogging in English language learning, and add more support to how blogs can be effective in university undergraduate ESP courses, an area which is not extensively researched. Also, the exchange of online peer feedback and online collaboration through blogging lends support to the beneficial impact it has on language learners.

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Fostering intercultural communication within multicultural classes: introducing an educational programme in Cyprus and in Greece

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Introduction

As the modern multicultural and multilingual context in education intensifies, the need for intercultural communication, goals for cultural and intercultural learning should be a basic part of the educational programmes at all levels. According to Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002), there are three main components of intercultural competence: (a) attitudes, including curiosity and openness and the ability to “decentre”, that is, to distance oneself from one’s own set of values and beliefs, (b) skills, such as interpreting, relating, discovery, and interaction which aid in the process of acquiring new knowledge of a culture and subsequently (c) knowledge of social processes and the illustrations of those processes. This paper outlines a proposed educational 6-month programme based on folk-stories and game-based activities appropriately designed for students with migration profile.

Aims of the programme

The proposed educational 6-month programme aims at raising effective intercultural communication strategies of immigrant primary education students in Nicosia (Cyprus) and Larissa (Greece). This will be achieved through cultivating individual strategies derived from the three components of intercultural competence. As regards attitudes, the specific aims for students are to develop: (a) respect of other students’ interests and views, (b) curiosity to learn about different cultural settings and customs and, (c) empathy during communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Concerning skills, the students are expected to be able to (a) interpret a situation from different perspectives, (b) comprehend cultural norms through observing non-verbal cues in communication, and (c) be patient and listen carefully during communication. In this context, regarding the third component of Intercultural competence, students will familiarize themselves with knowledge of social processes from different countries and interact with their classmates within a multimodal learning environment with creative, game-based activities and stories that will promote their intercultural communication.

Method

The programme will be implemented following the basic principles of Action Research whereby teachers act as researchers with the aim of “effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes” (Mills, 2003, p.4). The participants will be primary school students of both Greek, as well as immigrant background, from grades 4-6 in schools of Nicosia, Cyprus and Larisa, Greece and the length of the programme will be 6 months, with one 90-minute lesson per week.

Structure of the programme

The programme will be implemented in five phases: field research, students’ needs assessment, planning of educational material, introduction to educational material and formative/summative assessment. During the first phase, meetings with school staff and participants’ parents will aid to exchange information about the programme and the students’ particular needs and obtain the necessary consent of all parties involved. In the second phase, participating students’ needs will be assessed using a research tool for intercultural communication strategies specially designed for this programme, its structure and content based on Models of Intercultural Communicative Competence of Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006). This multiple choice format tool will be used to measure the above-mentioned strategies. Considering the students’ needs assessment, the planning of educational material will take place during the third phase of the programme. This material shall be introduced in the fourth phase in three stages, pre-stage, while-stage and post-stage. During the pre-stage, tales from different countries, serving as the core of the whole phase, will be presented by the teacher-researcher in a multimodal, multisensory environment, initiating motivation and re-existing knowledge of students. In the while-stage, playful and collaborative activities based on the tales will offer participants opportunities for authentic interaction, simulating real-life situations, as well as opportunities to familiarise with elements from other cultures, stepping into the shoes of the tale’s heroes. During the post-stage, students will transfer the knowledge gained in while-stage in other settings, while the teacher-researcher will provide the necessary feedback. The fifth phase, the assessment of the programme will take place in two levels: (a) formative, which is part of the learning process during the programme, and (b) summative, at the end of the programme. The assessing tools that will be used include the researcher’s journal, students’ self-assessment sheets, and students’ portfolio. At the end of the programme, the above-mentioned research tool for intercultural communication strategies will serve to assess students’ outcomes, while interviews with students will offer researchers an insight into their degree of satisfaction.

Potential outcomes

Through the implementation of the programme, it is expected that students will empower their inter-

cultural communication competence by developing various communication strategies and by being prepared to interact with classmates of other cultures, as it is recommended by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Also, in this programme both formative and summative evaluation will be employed by the teachers/researchers and the students. In addition, parental involvement in various educational activities will be encouraged in the implementation of the programme, contributing to wider social empowerment of families from migratory contexts. Lastly, special emphasis will be placed on the dissemination actions of the practices throughout the programme through blogs entries with activities and material, and workshops/conference organised for teachers, thus contributing to the theoretical and applied scientific knowledge.

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Interactive groups – Integrating technologically advanced language learning activities

Maria Diakou, EdD

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Introduction

The Cypriot society is no longer homogeneous. People from different cultures are moving to Cyprus, creating a multilingual society where teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching children of different cultural, social and ethnic differences. In this educational system, teachers have to respond to the challenge of migration and multiculturalism, choosing appropriate teaching that will shape up a school environment of mutual understanding and respect of all cultures and ethnicities. Teachers can facilitate the smooth integration of those children, through a creative language learning environment, by implementing technology and more specifically by using interactive group activities which promote cooperation and mutual respect. Furthermore inviting parents to be part of those interactive group activities can successfully add to the language support.

Interactive groups – Increasing school success for vulnerable groups of pupils

Cyprus nowadays is characterised by classrooms consisting of immigrants and different cultural groups of students. Interactive Groups (IGs) aim towards reducing the level of social exclusion of immigrants and cultural groups, mainly Roma students. In order to do so, the objective is to increase school success for these vulnerable groups.

IG activities can form equitable classrooms for multicultural school populations which should be a fundamental educational goal. Students should not only appreciate the differing perspectives and cultures of their classmates but also feel that they are on an equal footing with each other intellectually and academically, enhancing in this way human relations and promoting respect for diversity.

Roma students, who were the greatest percentage of the students' population at the primary school where I was working, demonstrate transnational patterns of low attendance and elevated dropout rates that inevitably affect their performance and achievement. They also face several obstacles in schools such as low linguistic competence and low reading and writing skills, as compared to the average students at their age. Overall, hardly any child had an appropriate level of attainment as mentioned above and this led to their marginalization, creating conflicts among Roma and Cypriot pupils and between parents mainly due to cultural differences and lack of bonding. Through interactive groups I was able to

offer them the possibility to learn from peers through cooperative tasks and move to higher ability groups, raising their expectations and self-esteem.

Why Interactive groups, what are the benefits

Interactive Groups (IGs) is one of the Successful Educational Actions (SEAs) identified in the research project INCLUD-ED. Working with interactive groups has a positive impact on student's learning, expectations and self-esteem. Through interactive groups teachers can create the possibility of learning from peers, and help all students, especially vulnerable students, by multiplying and diversifying the interactions they are exposed to, in order to maximize their learning. They enhance learning (in all subjects) and also help students with their emotional development leading to better social skills and relationships. But what is more important, is the fact that they go beyond cooperative learning, and engage family members and the whole community in the entire learning process, through the integration of regular classroom activities.

Using IGs allows teachers to 'follow a child-centered approach to teaching and learning, allowing the child to use familiar notions and wordings to engage in learning' (Alexander, 2000 cited in Lillis & McKinney, 2003, p. 49) and making a more useful, dynamic assessment of these children's educational potential and needs (child's zone of proximal development ZPD) (Mercer, 2000, p. 140). These interactive group activities can help teachers address the literacy needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students who now populate our schools, always keeping in mind that the out-of-school lives of many children can provide much literacy experience. Hence, teachers need to 'unravel' the hidden cultures of their classrooms and students, 'creating a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance of diversity in terms of culture, leading to a higher standard learning level' (Wallace, 2002, p.97). They should emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive teaching justifying what is there to build upon, if the aim is to help children add dominant literacy practices to their linguistic repertoire.

How Interactive Groups work

Even though the classroom teacher is in charge of managing the classroom dynamics and providing extra support when necessary, IGs are supported by other adults, including teachers, relatives, friends, neighbours, members of associations as well as neighbourhood organisations and local volunteers. The volunteers' role is to produce dynamic supportive learning interactions in each group and guide the activity, not to replace the teacher, thereby, volunteers can even be illiterate persons or sometimes coming from very low educational levels, former students, volunteer university students and also other adults from community organisations.

IGs are implemented on an ongoing basis throughout the school year, and all students in the class,

without exception, participate. With the students grouped and an adult assigned to each group, the session is divided into short periods of 15-20 minutes. In each period, each group must undertake a specific instrumental activity. These activities are done on rotation, so that within one session each small group has experienced four sessions, each one run by a different adult. As a result of this dynamics, in about 1 hour and a half all the students in the classroom have worked on four different curricular activities and have interacted with four different adults apart from their group mates. Working in this manner accelerates learning through significantly boosting the number of interactions students engage in with people from both similar and completely different backgrounds. Teachers and volunteers maintain high expectations regarding the pupils' performance. They do not provide low-quality education and they do not have low expectations from those children watering down the curriculum, providing low academic level and non stimulating material but they offer equally the same high quality learning compared to any other school.

Introduction of IGs in schools is not always free of obstacles since there are many teachers who resist to welcome parents or other non-academic community members in their classrooms. Reluctances are overcome when teachers see the improvements achieved in the other classes, leading them to the adoption of these practices in their own classes. More to that, both teachers and volunteers are invited to participate in an initial intense training in which they are introduced to the scientific principles of IGs. They learn how to develop their role in order to promote and encourage supportive learning interactions between pupils. They learn to be committed to helping pupils to complete their tasks so that at the end of the session all pupils can manage to finish their tasks successfully. Everyone learns therefore to be accountable for the group's performance.

Conclusions and implications

According to Hicks (1995), 'if children's community-based discourse practices are consonant with those found in formal classroom settings, children typically learn academic discourses with ease, if not, the children may encounter difficulties' (p.12). It is very important for Cypriot educational policy not to face classrooms as 'divorced from the community-based language practices of children' (Hicks, 1995, p.14). It is of utmost importance for the Ministry of Education and more specifically curriculum designers and teachers to take account of the variation in meanings and uses that students bring from their home backgrounds to formal learning contexts, such as the school and the classroom (Street, 1997).

Teaching in the twenty-first century and working within this multicultural teaching context, educators have to raise awareness of the notion of culturally responsive literacy education which is actually involved in the reality of everyday classroom life. Working with Interactive Groups can help educators face the cultural diversity of their classrooms nowadays, working towards 'the need to discover what

unites human beings, with a focus on commonalities and bonds, in an attempt to be as much at ease as possible with each other's language, culture, and individualities' (Porto, 2016, p.52).

Considering the benefits discussed in relation to the use of IGs in multicultural classrooms, it is very important for Cypriot educational policy to confirm that attending and succeeding at school does not mean giving up one's own identity and as Flecha and Soler state 'when schools and communities dream together the school they want for their children, stereotyped folk assumptions are broken down and educational possibilities then emerge' (Flecha & Soler, 2013, p. 464).

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Teaching and Assessment of Vocabulary Knowledge in Cyprus EFL Classes

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Introduction

A lot of research in the area of EFL vocabulary teaching and assessment has been recently conducted (e.g. Thornbury, 2002; Cárcamo, Cartes, Velásquez, & Larenas, 2016). Vocabulary is considered to be as important as the other aspects of a language that can influence the overall performance of the students in that language. It is important for the teacher to know how to develop good vocabulary learning strategies, methods and techniques since vocabulary knowledge and size influence their students' ability in the four language skills (Lopez, 2010; Yang and Wu, 2015). Therefore, it can also be very challenging for the teachers to decide about the teaching methods and assessment practices that can more successfully meet the needs of their students.

The present study attempts to identify issues that can influence the vocabulary learning/teaching by investigating the views and attitudes of both EFL students and teachers in Cyprus in relation to vocabulary teaching and assessment.

Methodology

Forty EFL teachers and eighty EFL students of public and private universities as well as private institutes in Cyprus took part in the research. The current study uses elements of both qualitative and quantitative research methods of data collection and analysis following the mixed method approach in order to triangulate the data. Specifically, the qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews (4 students and 4 teachers) based on specific topics related to vocabulary learning and teaching experiences that the investigators wanted to explore in depth.

The questionnaires were collected from both students and teachers of EFL in the context of Cyprus. Although distinct questionnaires were designed for students and teachers, the questions ('Likert scale', multiple-choice items and yes/no questions, as well as few open-ended questions) were similar in order to be compared in the analysis. The questionnaire elicited background information of the participants as well as their reflections on their experience as English language teachers/students, on the teaching methods, approaches and techniques adopted/experienced regarding their awareness of vocabulary depth and breadth, receptive and productive vocabulary teaching/learning and assessment, intentional and incidental vocabulary learning.

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were implemented. Content analysis as well as descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews data.

Results

a) Vocabulary depth and breadth

The results of this study revealed that both depth and breadth of vocabulary are considered to be important in the teaching and assessment practices of the teachers from the perspective of both students and teachers. According to Anderson's (1980) distinction, it is not only enough to 'know that', i.e. the declarative knowledge of facts, but one must also 'know how', i.e. procedural knowledge, which is the communicative use of L2 words (Oxford & Crookall, 1990, p. 9). Declarative knowledge and vocabulary depth proved to be more essential for the lower level students than for the advanced EFL learners, for whom both breadth and depth of vocabulary, declarative and procedural knowledge are important. The data analysis showed that students are not only required to know many English words for their tests, but they also have to know how to use them in depth and in context.

b) Receptive and productive vocabulary

Results indicated that both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge is of equal importance for the teachers in both teaching and assessment. While the students comprehend many English words, they are unable to use them in writing or for communicative purposes. They need more practice regarding both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge through all four skills inside the classroom; namely, reading, listening, speaking and writing.

c) Intentional and incidental vocabulary learning

The teachers stated that they encourage their students to learn and practice vocabulary items both intentionally and incidentally, inside and outside the classroom through a combination of listening and reading, or through songs and/or videos. However, the students claimed that no explicit instruction was provided to them inside the classroom for the intentional vocabulary learning.

d) Vocabulary teaching and assessment methods

The results of the study showed that most of the students criticized the traditional approaches that were used by their teachers in the past since they did not find them effective for their L2 English lexicon development. Although some of the EFL teachers in Cyprus claimed for the usefulness of the traditional de-contextualized methods, like memorization lists of words by students, since they promote the conscious attention of the students to words, all of the teachers acknowledged that new methods have emerged in recent years that might be more effective for the students than the traditional ones.

Conclusion

It is obvious that effective practices of EFL vocabulary teaching, learning and assessment require careful consideration of such factors as depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge, receptive and productive vocabulary, intentional and incidental vocabulary learning as well as relevant teaching and assessment methods. The results of the present study revealed that more revision and practice is required as repeated attention and involvement of a student with a vocabulary item results in better lexicon storage. Teachers' guidance can help their students to develop effective learning techniques. Lexicon teaching and assessment should be context-related as learning and teaching of words in context is more effective than in isolation. It is important to implement technology in vocabulary teaching and assessment as it can provide context to students and help them in their vocabulary learning. There should be a balance between incidental and intentional vocabulary teaching, which can lead to the development of word knowledge and inferencing skills. Students need to have more opportunities for vocabulary practice inside and outside classroom.

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Identifying students and teachers' anxiety levels in and outside EFL classrooms

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Introduction

Anxiety can have facilitative effects on the process of foreign language learning (FLL) (MacIntyre, Noels & Clément, 1997). Alternatively, anxiety can have detrimental effects on the process of FLL. For example, the literature suggests that students with low anxiety levels perform better than their peers who are highly anxious (Tóth, 2012). Additionally, high levels of anxiety seem to be associated with decreased levels of reading, listening comprehension and writing abilities (Zhao, Guo & Dynia, 2013). Furthermore, high levels of anxiety can negatively affect the teachers who deliver the lessons, which in turn, influence students' displeasure in reading in relation to their teachers' enthusiasm (Tum, 2015).

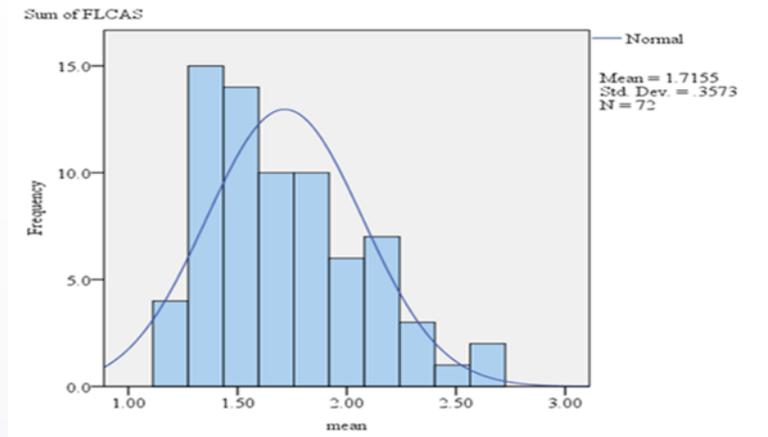
The focus of the present study is to: a) distinguish any difference in anxiety levels experienced by Cypriot students inside and outside the classroom regarding the four language skills, b) identify when and why teachers may experience anxiety, c) identify students and teachers' perceptions of anxiety, and d) find ways in which this anxiety can be alleviated.

Study

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used for data collection and analysis. The participants of the study were 51 teachers and 72 students, tertiary and secondary education. Students were asked to provide answers to the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), which was adjusted for the purposes of this study. The modified questionnaire included a five-point Likert scale which was designed to identify anxiety in and outside the foreign language classroom. Furthermore, two open-ended questions were added in order to allow the participants to add their own thoughts and ideas, as well as to gain insight into whether or not they believed their teacher experienced anxiety and if so, under which circumstances. The teachers who participated in this study were requested to provide answers to the adapted versions of the Teaching Anxiety Scale developed by Parsons (1973). The last section of the questionnaire included two open-ended questions. These questions were aimed at distinguishing whether teachers experienced anxiety and if so, when, and to share their thoughts on when they believed their students felt anxiety as well as to share any ideas as to how that anxiety could be dealt with. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five of these teachers with the intention of obtaining their personal perspectives on their teaching experience and anxiety related issues and to identify overlapping themes between the interviews and the students and teachers' questionnaires.

Results

Students' anxiety inside and outside the classroom regarding the four language skills. Overall, it was found that the students have a mild to low average level of anxiety (see Graph 1).



Graph 1: Mean scores of the FLCAS questionnaire.

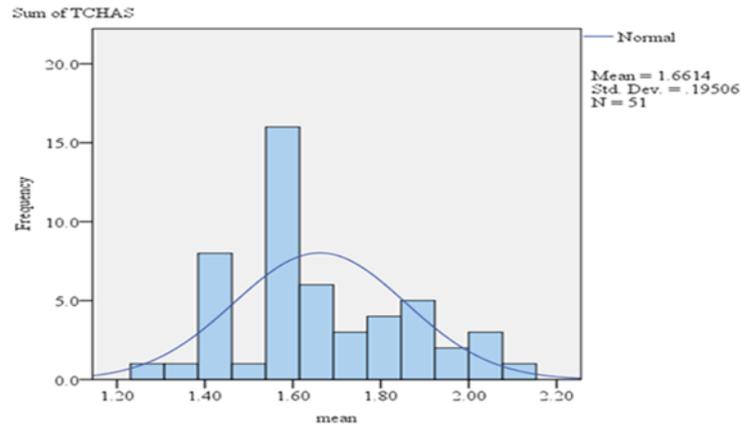
The results drawn from the FLCAS questionnaire showed that the older age group of students (19 – 27) displayed higher anxiety levels related to speaking, reading and writing in the classroom compared to the younger group (10 – 18). Productive skills such as speaking and writing seem to cause the most anxiety. An analysis of variance showed that the effect of anxiety on the four skills was statistically significant between groups in favour of speaking ($F(1, 70) = 7.567, p = .008$), reading ($F(1, 70) = 5.531, p = .022$) as well as writing ($F(1, 70) = 5.877, p = .018$). The younger group of students also appear more confident in using all four skills outside the classroom with native speakers compared to the older group of students. This could be possibly explained by the fact that older students have higher affective filters than the younger ones.

When and why teachers may experience anxiety

According to the data drawn from the students' questionnaire, the majority of students (68%) did not think that their English teacher experiences anxiety. A small number of students (32%), however, reported that their teachers seem to experience most anxiety at the beginning of a new academic year (24%) and during the period before the exams (22%).

Perceptions of anxiety among students and teachers

The results of the data analysis of teachers' questionnaires showed that teachers have a mild to low average level of teaching anxiety (see Graph 2).



Graph 2: Mean scores of the TCHAS questionnaire

It was found that younger teachers (19 – 40) are more anxious than the older ones (41+). Specifically, the younger group of teachers were significantly more cautious or less confident about their students’ language abilities with regard to reading, listening, writing and speaking in the classroom compared to the older group of teachers. It may be the case that they lack adequate experience or that they require more time before they can support their students appropriately. The teachers’ views regarding their students’ causes of anxiety consisted of exams (27%), speaking (18%) and reading (10%).

Ways in which anxiety can be alleviated

The findings drawn from the questionnaires and interviews showed that the teachers are aware of effective teaching activities and techniques in order to alleviate anxiety in the English language classroom. The ideas put forward included interesting activities and different methods, such as a more encouraging attitude on the part of the teachers, especially during the examination period as well as encompassing song and drama pedagogies. Teachers should endorse more practice, allow space for mistakes and create a more comfortable classroom environment.

Conclusion

The results of this study, based on teachers and students’ questionnaires as well as teachers’ interviews showed that both students and teachers experience anxiety in the EFL classroom in Cyprus. The students experience most anxiety during productive skills (speaking) rather than receptive skills (listening). Anxiety could be reduced if the teachers spend more time preparing their students appropriately through scaffolding. Students’ age was significant in the case of the younger participants who had less affective filters and inhibitors than the older students. The younger students are considerably less anxious than the older students with regard to speaking, reading and writing in the English language

classroom. Students seem to be more confident and less affected by anxiety outside the classroom while teachers are more susceptible to teaching anxiety at the beginning of the academic year and during exams. Older, experienced teachers are less prone to anxiety than their younger, less experienced colleagues. Students are affected by anxiety mainly while reading or speaking or during exams.

Teachers' recommendations for dealing with anxiety issues can be used as a yardstick to better support the students and improve the teaching/learning experience in EFL classes in the context of Cyprus. Future research should investigate the causes of anxiety and the circumstances under which it appears. This can help to raise awareness, improve and reconsider current teaching practices.

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Translanguage, what is it? And is there a place for it in my practice?

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Translanguaging (Williams, 1994) emphasizes that bilinguals are not just two monolinguals in one, but that they hold a 'linguistic repertoire' where their languages interact and inform each other. As such bilinguals adapt their language practices to match the tasks they undertake. In the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, translanguaging draws the teacher's attention to the point that our learners do not enter the classroom as empty vessels to be 'filled up' with language, but that, even as elementary language learners, they enter with two (or more) languages which are in development and which interact and engage with each other during our lessons.

Translanguaging Pedagogy

A translanguaging pedagogy in the ESL classroom encourages students to alternate languages for receptive or productive use, so students might read in English and write in Greek or vice versa. The use of the L1 in the classroom can be beneficial for learners because as Garcia (2009) discusses, unless students gain ownership of the knowledge needed for academic work, it is not possible for them to develop the language needed to produce this type of work. Baker (2011) argues that translanguaging is appropriate for the classroom as "The teacher can allow a student to use both languages, but in a planned, developmental and strategic manner, to maximize a student's linguistic and cognitive capability" (Baker, 2011, p. 290).

However, it is imperative we view translanguaging as a pedagogy and not simply as random code-switching or teaching the lesson in Greek. In fact, when employing a translanguaging pedagogy the teacher most often sticks to code and models English. Instead, translanguaging is the process of allowing students to perform bilingually in our lessons by reading, speaking, writing, and listening through a fluid use of their languages. This type of 'languaging' most often takes place during tasks where the focus is on communication rather than form. As such, a translanguaging pedagogy distinguishes between the times we must focus on our learners' accuracy in English, so they can for example, prepare particular tasks needed to pass external exams such as writing a formal letter in English and other times when we work with our students to improve their understandings of concepts, help them develop their ideas and find their voices on issues by focusing on the communication aspects of language teaching as opposed to form. This distinction is essential because as Baker (2011, p. 289) explains there are times in monolingual teaching contexts where our students may answer questions or

write essays without fully understanding the work they produce. This is because the processing of meaning has not taken place. A translanguaging pedagogy advocates that if for example, students read and discuss a topic in one language and then write about it in another we can be sure they have understood the work they produce.

Adopting a translanguaging pedagogy

As we have seen adopting a translanguaging pedagogy can reduce the risk of a disjuncture between students' knowledge and their linguistic abilities. Additionally, translanguaging offers a variety of advantages for language learners such as allowing for more easily conveyed and comprehended messages, increased understanding of class content, increased engagement and participation, and a focus on esteem. It also empowers learners by acknowledging their complete linguistic profiles.

However, the question remains as to how to adopt a translanguaging pedagogy within our own teaching contexts. In my own context, I implemented a translanguaging pedagogy in a mixed ability university writing course with students of about B1/B2 level. I adopted a fluid approach to the production of a formal five-paragraph essay on the topic *"What can be done to solve the problems that technology has created for modern day romance and relationships?"* In our translanguaging pedagogy we 'languaged' in the planning of our essays and in the discussion by using bilingual dictionaries, L1 articles and videos, Google Translate and language group brainstorming to contextualize our ideas for the essays before producing the final product in English. To gather feedback on the experience a questionnaire was distributed to students at the end of the semester. The results of the questionnaire indicated that overall students were positive about the experience of using L1 and reported a greater engagement within the class and the writing process.

In conclusion this process verified much of what is within the literature on translanguaging as a pedagogy which advocates for the drawing out of the available languages within a classroom even when those languages are not shared between teacher and students. And the movement of the use of L1 in classrooms away from unplanned, random occurrences which are often 'disapproved of' to a purposeful, natural occurrence with clear learning goal, because as Garcia reminds us:

"Too often bilingual students who translanguage suffer linguistic shame because they have been burdened with monoglossic ideologies that value only monolingualism . . . And too often bilingual teachers hide their natural translanguaging practices from administrators and others because they have been taught to believe that only monolingual ways of speaking are "good" and valuable. Yet, they know that to teach effectively in bilingual classrooms, they must translanguage." (García, 2009, 308)

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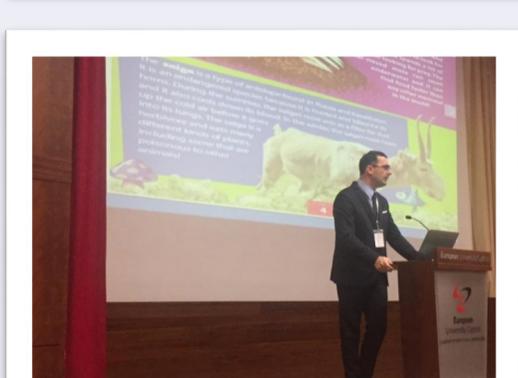
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