Research Papers In Language Teaching and Learning

P A T R A S

Research Papers in *Language Teaching and Learning*

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EDITORIAL

The ninth issue of RPLTL explores a wide variety of concerns. There are five papers on issues involving different aspects of applying online technology in English language teaching, two papers on differentiated instruction, two papers on different aspects of specific-purpose teaching and learning, and individual papers on teacher research, reading performance strategies, and intercultural issues.

In particular, the online technology section kicks off with Tsourapa's paper, which looks at teachers' perceptions about 21st century teaching skills and the extent to which they integrate Internet-based social communication skills in their teaching. What this paper highlights is teachers' willingness to integrate tools such as blogs, wikis, WebQuests, and digital storytelling, but lack of time, proper training and essential equipment hinders them from achieving this goal. In the same vein, Tzotzou's paper gauges teachers' awareness of Web 2.0 tools and the extent of their digital literacy. While teachers' perspectives are positive, this paper also focuses on obstacles such as negative in-bred school-related attitudes toward these technologies and the need to make teachers aware of the pedagogical potential of these tools.

The next two papers discuss WebQuests as a valuable means of exploring and upgrading learners' information literacy skills, which, in turn, respond to the growing trend toward viewing foreign language learning as the hub of multiliteracies education. Doulgeri and Antoniou introduce an original curricular intervention in a 6th grade primary school and discuss its specifications and advantages through a comprehensive mixed methods research. Oulousidou's paper explores the ways in which WebQuests can support the teaching of reading and reports increased learner motivation and a more positive inclination towards reading. The paper by Tsiakyroudi investigates the effectiveness of the Edmodo educational social network on Greek Junior High School EFL learners' motivation to write. She concludes that the project positively impacted learners' motivation towards writing and upgraded their writing habits.

The two papers in the "English for specific purposes" section also raise interesting issues. In the study resented in Kiose's paper, the ESP approach, which prioritises responding to learners' short-term needs, is implemented to design a framework for preparing Greek Senior High School learners for the Written Expression Panhellenic exam. Kiose reports that learners were actively involved in the construction of a brief additional syllabus that informed them about the genre-based approach to writing and engaged them in activities that prompted the application of specific genre patterns needed for the particular final high-stakes exam. Katsara investigates learners' perspectives towards their involvement in

tutorials in an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) context. She concludes that learners favour a more active engagement in tutorials and seem to link the qualities of their tutors with the extent to which the latter promote learner reflection and self-assessment practices.

Two papers in this issue explore different aspects of differentiated instruction (DI). Tzanni offers an overall account of the perceptions and practices of Greek teachers working in different contexts about DI. It turns out that teachers are broadly aware of DI but are less confident in practising it, especially because of the extensive time that is required in preparing appropriate DI tasks. Then, the paper by Rigoutsou focuses on a popular approach in DI, the Flipped Classroom (FC) model, which uses classroom time to engage learners in clarifying and applying skills and knowledge that they had prepared in advance, from their home. The paper offers a promising perspective of Greek teachers' practices vis-à-vis FC.

Mogli and Papadopoulou investigate the socialization practices of immigrants from Afghanistan in Greece through their learning of the Greek language. Their research instrument, semi-structured interviews, offers an illuminating account of the factors influencing their learning, including their attitudes, worries and personal motives. The paper by Koukourikou, Manoli and Griva studies the role of multiple-strategies in boosting Greek EFL secondary school students' reading performance. The authors use interviews and their own journals to report on teachers' lack of familiarity with strategy usage. However, their research underlines the positive impact on learners' reading comprehension ability. Finally, but in no way of less importance, the paper by Kantaridou and Kaltsiou investigates Greek EFL teachers' perceptions about action research. They conclude that, despite their positive inclination, most of them are not actively involved in research projects, the reasons being lack of time and lack of training in understanding and using research methods.

Nicos C. Sifakis
Editor-in-Chief

Exploring teachers' attitudes
towards the development of 21st century skills in EFL teaching

Εξερευνώντας τη στάση των καθηγητών
απέναντι στην ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων του 21ου αιώνα στη διδασκαλία της Αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας

Anna TSOURAPA

The purpose of this paper is to explore teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills in EFL teaching. The research aims at indicating which skills teachers consider necessary to be developed and which tools they think are appropriate in order to develop certain skills. Another issue to be explored is whether teachers inform their students about the social conventions of Internet. The barriers that may restrict educators from integrating educational technology tools in teaching and possible solutions are investigated, too. For the purposes of this research, a questionnaire was designed and administered to 121 teachers in Greece. According to the research findings, the majority of teachers have positive attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills. The research showed that teachers would be willing to employ various educational technology tools in order to cater for the development of 21st century skills in the EFL class, such as blogs, wikis, social networks, Webquests, Digital Storytelling, Email, the Word processor and videos. However, lack of time, training or technological equipment hinders the use of some of these tools in everyday teaching. Moreover, the majority of teachers make their students aware of the social conventions of the Internet and guide them to comply with the digital ethics.

က

Ο σκοπός αυτής της εργασίας είναι να διερευνήσει τη στάση των καθηγητών απέναντι στην ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων του 21ου αιώνα στη διδασκαλία της αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας. Η έρευνα στοχεύει να υποδείξει ποιες ικανότητες θεωρούν οι καθηγητές απαραίτητες να αναπτυχθούν και ποια εργαλεία πιστεύουν ότι είναι απαραίτητα ώστε να αναπτυχθούν οι συγκεκριμένες δεξιότητες. Ένα άλλο ζήτημα προς διερεύνηση είναι αν οι καθηγητές ενημερώνουν τους μαθητές τους σχετικά με τις κοινωνικές συμβάσεις του Ίντερνετ. Εξετάζονται, επίσης, τα εμπόδια που μπορεί να εμποδίσουν τους εκπαιδευτικούς να ενσωματώσουν εκπαιδευτικά τεχνολογικά εργαλεία στη διδασκαλία, καθώς και πιθανές

λύσεις. Για τους σκοπούς αυτής της έρευνας σχεδιάστηκε και χορηγήθηκε ένα ερωτηματολόγιο σε 121 καθηγητές της Αγγλικής στην Ελλάδα. Σύμφωνα με τα ερευνητικά ευρήματα, η πλειοψηφία των καθηγητών έχουν θετική στάση απέναντι στην ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων του 21ου αιώνα στη διδασκαλία της Αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας. Η έρευνα έδειξε ότι οι καθηγητές θα ήταν πρόθυμοι να εφαρμόσουν διάφορα εκπαιδευτικά τεχνολογικά εργαλεία στην τάξη της διδασκαλίας της Αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας, όπως blogs, wikis, κοινωνικά δίκτυα, Webquests, Digital Storytelling, Email, Word και βίντεο, ώστε να φροντίσουν για την ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων του 21ου αιώνα. Ωστόσο, η έλλειψη χρόνου, εκπαίδευσης ή τεχνολογικού εξοπλισμού εμποδίζει τη χρήση κάποιων εργαλείων. Επίσης, η πλειοψηφία των καθηγητών ενημερώνουν τους μαθητές τους για τις κοινωνικές συμβάσεις του Ίντερνετ και τους καθοδηγούν ώστε να συμμορφώνονται με τις ψηφιακές ηθικές αξίες.

Keywords: teachers' attitudes, 21st century skills, new literacies, integration of ICTs, social conventions of Internet, Multiple Intelligences

1. Introduction

New technologies and the Internet have emerged and grown rapidly over the last years, affecting our life drastically. Computers, mobile phones, social media and many other digital tools have become a prominent and well-established part of our society. Inevitably, their increased prominence has influenced education as well, changing our traditional perception of it. The Internet, e-books and interactive whiteboards are gradually becoming a prerequisite in the EFL class. Learners are developing new skills and are acquiring New Literacies. They are born in this digital age and are known as 'Digital Natives' (Prensky 2001, p.1). However, teachers who are called to teach this generation belong to a more traditional generation that was familiarized with technology and Internet at some later point of their lives. Therefore, it is worth investigating these educators' beliefs and whether they are prepared to meet their students' needs.

Several studies have been conducted on New Literacies and the interest in their pedagogical value keeps increasing (Coiro, 2003; Delizisi, 2014; Labbo, 2007; Leu *et al.*, 2004; Papadopoulou & Vlachos, 2014). There is also a lot of research on educational technology tools (Avgerou & Vlachos, 2016; Kontogeorgi, 2014; Karkoulia, 2016; Popota, 2014) and on teachers' attitudes towards educational technology (Hadjirigas, 2012; Karavas, 2004). However, teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills have not been investigated in the Greek EFL context. The present research attempts to shed light on this interesting issue.

2. 21st century pedagogy

2.1. Collaboration and social constructivism

Social constructivists believe that we learn by social and communal activities, that the building of knowledge is done with others, with the focus being on the community rather than the individual itself (Parker & Chao, 2007). Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) tools and especially Web 2.0 tools are likely to develop this sense of community and provide learners with authentic communicative language input. They advocate collaborative learning since they give them the chance to collaborate with their partners for the completion of

learning activities, while practising all skills (Kontogeorgi, 2014). There is a real purpose for communication since their partners may be at the other side of the world. In this sense, the new media implement the socio-constructivist principle that language learning is the outcome of the interplay of language, communication and instruction (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2014).

In this vein, Warshauer (2010) argues, CMC tools can be a valuable tool for the social construction of meaning. Web 2.0 tools help students write for a social audience and 'hone' their words in response to others, while becoming sensitive to both benefits and risks of expressing themselves online (Warshauer, 2010, p.4). Wikis, for example, enhance asynchronous communication and cooperative learning among students and promote cooperation rather than competition (De Pedro *et al.*, 2006). As Vlachos (2006) states, CMC tools integration in the language classroom creates a less threatening environment in comparison to face-to-face interaction and facilitates collaborative reading and writing. Students do not hesitate to collaborate and share their knowledge with others. As D'Souza (2007, p. 27) puts it, even shy students 'come out of their shells online'. There is also a link between CMC tools and Johnson & Johnson's (1994) cooperative learning theory; positive interdependence, individual and group accountability and interpersonal and small group skills in learning that the cooperative learning theory advocates are qualities to be found in CMC tools (Dodge, 2001).

2.2. Higher-order thinking skills

Integrating CMC tools in language learning fosters the development of students' critical thinking skills (Koufadi, 2014), which are indispensable in their development not only as learners but also as future adults. Critical thinking skills are linked to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of the cognitive domain. Bloom classifies thinking skills in levels from lower order to higher ones. Knowledge, comprehension and application belong to the lower ones, whereas analysis, synthesis and evaluation stand in higher-level thinking. Harrington (1995) compares the taxonomy to a ladder and supports that the higher you climb the ladder the deeper level of thinking is required.

Higher Order Thinking (HOT) involves the transformation of information and ideas through synthesis, generalization and hypothesis to arrive at some conclusion or interpretation in an attempt to solve a problem, gain understanding or discover new meaning. In order to achieve this, students activate prior schemata of knowledge and combine newly gained information. Thus, learners are led to self-directed and autonomous learning developing critical literacy. Teaching students how to think both critically and creatively is a priceless gift since it will affect how they will live the rest of their lives and will render them lifelong learners (Conklin, 2012). HOT requires that students be active learners and this presupposes hard work on their part, but keeps the classroom 'alive' and the lesson engaging. Students act as active learners and co-constructors of meaning through reflection and decision-making (Landow, 1992; Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000). The first step teachers need to take towards HOT is to stop being providers of all the information and let learners make inferences and seek knowledge themselves. HOT can be used with all students regardless of age and beginning early is both possible and beneficial within developmentally appropriate activities (Conklin, 2012). When reading and searching on the web for educational purposes, students need to analyse, break into smaller pieces the new information they encounter, classify it, evaluate it according to their needs and then combine and integrate knowledge in order to form a new product (synthesis).

2.3. Multiple Intelligences

According to Howard Gardner and the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), developed in 1983, no two of us have the same blend or combination of intelligences, which adds more to the multiplicity of intelligences. This is a challenge for the educational system, which tends to offer a more standardized form of knowledge and assessment. Intelligences can be analogized to computers; belief in one and only intelligence implies that humans possess one general-purpose software, which can perform well, average or poorly in everything. Multiple Intelligences theory implies that we possess several independent computers and strength in one computer does not predict strength or weakness in another.

The educational implications of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences are the principles of individuation and pluralization. Individuals should be taught in ways that they can learn and maximize their understanding and assessed in a way that they can show what they have understood. Moreover, they should be exposed to a plurality of materials, theories and ideas, such as multimodal texts, works of art and crafts. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer learners the chance to be exposed to such plurality of materials and to make best use of their unique strengths and weaknesses while learning. Educational technology brings the real world into the classroom and lets students resort to their favourite intelligences and follow their preferred ways and means in learning while developing the L2 (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2014). This allows for diversified and individualized instruction, which leaves room for more personalized content, process and assessment adding flexibility and creativity to the classroom with the aid of ICT tools.

Palmberg (2011) suggests that teachers identify the MI profile of their learners and categorize classroom activities according to their learners' intelligences. As a result, learners flourish at their own time, space and pace (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2014) and the learning potential is maximized. Bas (2008) adds that projects allow learners to apply their Multiple Intelligences since in completing a project they can be proud of instead of feeling frustrated or uncomfortable when forced to conform to a more traditional teaching strategy. 'Assisting learners in developing all of their intelligences will make learning a part of living, not just a preparation for it' (Bas, 2008, p. 4).

3. The integration of ICTs in EFL learning

3.1. Pedagogical and language learning benefits of Educational Technology tools

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) could prepare students for the digital world. According to Kern & Warschauer (2000), CALL has evolved through three different frameworks since the 1960s, which correspond to the structural, cognitive and sociocognitive perspective to language learning. The most modern approach to CALL, the sociocognitive, is defined as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and shifts from the learner-computer interaction (structural and cognitive approaches) to the interaction among learners via the computer (Vlachos, 2006). Educational technology tools are CALL applications that can serve as valuable pedagogical tools in the hands of 21st century educators. Some of them are the E-mail, the Webquest, Digital Storytelling and video.

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies, though, or 'social software' as it is called, marked a turning point for the web since it included the active participation of users in the growth of social networks, contrary to its predecessor Web 1.0 which included passive viewing of mostly text-based software. Web 2.0 tools offer all users the possibility to not only

collaborate and interact in a social dialogue, but also build a virtual community and turn from mere viewers to dynamic website designers sharing what they learn with their peers (Kontogeorgi, 2014). The Web has been transformed from a Web page publishing venue to a global network community where all users are invited to create content (Yuen & Yuen, 2008).

Web 2.0 tools are user-friendly and require reduced technical skills allowing users to focus on the information exchange and collaborative tasks and not to be distracted by a difficult technological environment. Learners are exposed to authentic material and become more motivated since they communicate and socialize with a real audience. They also enhance their creativity, develop their critical thinking skills and collaborate with each other to construct and share real knowledge. The language input/output is increased and collaborative reading and writing are facilitated rendering language learning meaningful since the purpose and the motive for communication are always present (Vlachos, 2006). The most popular web 2.0 tools are blogs, wikis, and social networking sites.

3.2. The Internet and social conventions

A major difference between real world and Internet communication is that with the Internet there is the possibility of non-physical and anonymous contacts. This anonymity may intrigue people to lower their inhibitions and create the potential for unregulated, abusive behavior (Reid, 1991). With the dawn of the new technological era, new values and norms for communication have emerged. A term that could best describe this new ethos in the new media world is 'netiquette', a hybrid word combining network and etiquette (Chiles, 2013; Richards, 2012; Sternberg, 2000). Netiquette is an umbrella term that covers issues such as the appropriate language and tone in a given situation, the guidelines that govern an online community, the fair citation of sources, the way online users portray themselves and how they approach the increasingly blurred line between private and public (Richards, 2012).

Web communities' social norms are interwoven with the communities' shared goals and their users' identity (Keeshin, 2010). There is a plea for respect, honesty and politeness, all three being the backbone of social site policies (*ibid*.). Those who undermine the community values or disrupt the community goals are considered cheaters and are prevented from doing so (*ibid*.). As Chiles (2013, p. 20) argues, the basis of the principles of netiquette is the Golden Rule: 'Treat others the way you want to be treated'. Effective Internet communication encompasses also the principles of brevity, clarity and ethics. Having agreed on these principles, users can acquire 'Digital Citizenship', that is commonly held beliefs about how to communicate on the Internet (*ibid*.).

In the 21st century EFL classroom, teachers who use Internet as a teaching tool/aid should first clarify their goals, provide necessary support and not underestimate its complexity (Warschauer & Whittaker (1997). Informing students about the social conventions of Internet and preparing them for entering safely the limitless electronic world is of utmost importance. Learners need to know that they must use respectful and inoffensive language, never hide their identity, be careful as not to reveal any sensitive personal information about them or others, avoid plagiarism, triangulate and make critical use of resources and use proper register depending on the situation. Attachment to their online identity and an accurate representation of their self is the basis for fair and honest interaction within a community.

3.3. New Literacies and 21st century skills

The Internet has revolutionized how people read, write and search for information. They do not only read or write texts in print, nor do they open books or encyclopedias to search for information. Reading and writing is done on the web and when in need for information people access the unlimited library of the worldwide web. Foundational literacies refer to skill sets that include phonemic awareness, word recognition, decoding knowledge, comprehension, inferential reasoning, spelling and responding to literature (Leu *et al*., 2004). The appearance of the Internet and new media has dictated the need for encouraging students to develop a number of new skills that will help them use the new media (*ibid*.). The traditional literacies have evolved to encompass more skills and abilities which are necessary for 21st century people in order to make the most of the potentials of new technologies (Coiro, 2003).

New Literacies refer to skills, strategies and knowledge students gradually build in order to adapt to the new learning contexts that are created and to use digital and non-digital sources to enhance comprehension (Coiro, 2003; Leu *et al*., 2004). These literacies allow us to interact with technology in a meaningful way (*ibid*.). In particular, people who acquire New Literacies can use search engines to locate, evaluate and synthesize information (Information Literacy), can access, read and interpret media materials (Media Literacy), can communicate with an ever-expanding community and discuss issues (Digital Literacy), can use computers and other technology to enhance the learning experience (Technology Literacy), can understand, produce and communicate through visual images (Visual Literacy) and can interpret messages from a global perspective (Global Literacy) (Robin, 2008). It has so far become quite clear that it is imperative that language instruction should aim at the development of learners' New Literacies and that they be integrated in the school curriculum. However, New Literacies cannot possibly be thought of as distinct from traditional literacies, since they are considered two sides of the same coin (Labbo, 2007); they need to be built on the foundation of the traditional literacies if they are to have any effect at all (Leu & Kinzer, 2000). Therefore, teachers need to orchestrate literacy-learning opportunities among learners who bring to the classroom knowledge of different literacies and enhance their potential for effective communication (Leu *et al*., 2004).

According to the framework of the Partnership for 21st century learning (P21) published in 2007, 21st century skills encompass more skills than New Literacies (Figure 1). The elements represented in the rainbow are the 21st century student outcomes. Apart from Information, Media and Technology Literacies, 21st century learners need to develop critical/Higher-Order Thinking and problem solving, creativity, collaboration and communication (the 4 Cs) as well as life and career skills. The latter include interpersonal skills, productivity, flexibility and self-direction (*ibid*.). While the graphic represents each element distinctly for descriptive purposes, the Partnership views all the components as fully interconnected in the process of 21st century teaching and learning. Trilling and Fadel (2009) add the use of Multiple Intelligences, effective oral, written or digital communication along with project management to the list of the 21st century skills.
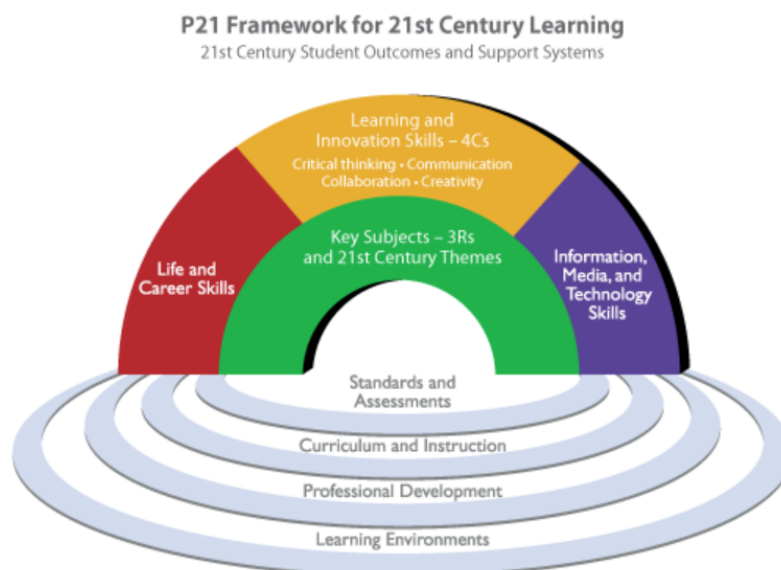
Figure 1: 21st Century Skills
(Framework of the Partnership for 21st century learning, 2007, p.1)

3.4. Teachers' attitudes and barriers

The development of 21st century skills and the integration of new technologies cannot be realized without considering teachers' attitudes. Teachers are important change agents and they are influential in facilitating or impeding changes. In this respect, teachers' positive or negative attitudes can be either an enabling or disabling factor that influences the successful integration of technology in EFL class (Bullock, 2004). If teachers' attitudes and beliefs are incompatible with the technological innovations, then teachers may tend to interpret these innovations in a way that they will conform to their existing teaching practices and beliefs (Karavas, 2004). Moreover, it has been shown that attitudes guide behaviors (Player-Koro, 2012). Therefore, teachers with positive attitudes are more likely to use technological tools and foster the development of 21st century skills, whereas negative attitudes may limit such potentials.

Prior research has shown that most teachers have positive attitudes towards educational technology (Hadjirigas, 2012; Spiris, 2014) and particularly Web 2.0 tools (Karkoulia, 2016). More specifically, Karkoulia (2016) found that 50.4% of the teachers strongly agree that Web 2.0 tools create a more interesting and fun learning environment and 42.2% agree that Web 2.0 tools promote sharing, collaboration, interaction, creativity, and socialization. According to a report based on research conducted on behalf of The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership in 2009, teachers who are frequent technology users also put more emphasis on the development of 21st century skills and veteran teachers are just as likely as newer teachers to use technology to support learning. Nevertheless, a survey completed by K-12 teachers in Northeastern USA showed that the teachers' reported use of technology did not reflect 21st century literacy practices (Lawrence, 2013). The results revealed that teachers are not keeping pace with students' outside-of-school practice by using digital tools and technologies to enhance classroom practice (Lawrence, 2013). Therefore, there appears to be a discrepancy between how teachers perceive literacy in today's context and what they are doing in the classroom to foster students' literacy development as 21st century citizens (*ibid*.). It seems, however, that education, training and

professional development that facilitates reflective practices can be a mechanism for supporting teachers' technology use as a pedagogical method and can make a difference in their emphasis on 21st century skills (Lawrence, 2013; The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership, 2009).

As it has already been highlighted, teachers' negative stance towards educational technology limits its use and potentials. Apart from teachers' negative attitudes another barrier impeding technology integration is the lack of school equipment (Hadjirigas, 2012; Jones, 2004; Karkoulia, 2016; Kuang- wu Lee, 2000; Spiris, 2014). More specifically, the lack of computers, the lack of or restricted Internet access, the lack of technical support and other technical problems are considered significant problems (*ibid*.). Moreover, teachers indicate time pressure due to coursebook overload and classroom management issues as restricting factors as well (Hadjirigas, 2012; Jones, 2004; Karkoulia, 2016). Two more significant barriers are the lack of theoretical and technical knowledge (Jones, 2004; Kuang- wu Lee, 2000) and the lack of confidence (Jones, 2004). The combination of these two increases the level of anxiety that teachers feel when using technological tools and acts as a discouraging factor.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Aims of the research

The purpose of the research is to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills. More specifically, the researcher attempts to give answers to the following questions:

1) What are teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills in the EFL class?
2) What literacies/skills do EFL teachers consider necessary to be developed in the 21st century?
3) Which tools would they employ towards the development of these skills and which ones do they actually use?
4) What are the barriers that may restrict teachers from the integration of educational technology tools and the possible solutions to overcome these barriers?
5) What are the social conventions of the Internet and how do teachers guide learners through constructive navigation?

4.2. The research instrument

For the purpose of this research a questionnaire was designed (see Appendix). The researcher designed the questionnaire after taking into account the research questions and the relevant literature review. In the questionnaire, there is a variety of close-ended questions, such as multiple-choice items, checklists and Likert scales, which allow the researcher to collect specific information and structured data, suitable for quantitative, statistical analysis (Cohen *et al*., 2007; Dornyei, 2003). The option of a different answer or clarification was provided, too. The questionnaire is divided into six sections and consists of factual, behavioral and attitudinal questions (Dornyei, 2003) and was pilot-tested on a small number of EFL teachers (5 teachers) before taking its final form. Piloting increases the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Dornyei, 2003; Cohen *et al*., 2007). In my case, piloting helped me change the wording of some questions and prevent some deficiencies.

4.3. Sample selection, questionnaire administration and statistical analysis

As regards the sample selection, the researcher opted for a non-probability sample, which deliberately avoids representing the wider population (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The questionnaire link along with a cover letter was posted on various groups on Facebook concerning EFL teachers in Greece. Totally 121 EFL teachers (115 females and 6 males) from different working environments participated in the research. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It was important to estimate the reliability of each Likert scale question concerning teachers' attitudes. Internal consistency reliability was measured by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient (Dornyei, 2003, p. 112). The degree of contribution of each question to the coefficient was estimated, too. The value of the coefficient ranges between 0 and 1 and the reliability level is accepted if it is above 0.70 (*ibid*.). The items of question 10 had high internal consistency since the Cronbach Alpha was 0.883. The results are summarized and presented in the following section.

5. Presentation and discussion of research findings

5.1. What are teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills in the EFL class?

According to the findings, the majority of teachers have positive attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills. This finding supports prior research, too (Hadjirigas, 2012; Karkoulia, 2016; Spiris, 2014). The vast majority of teachers believe that it is important for students of the 21st century to know how to use search engines to locate information (71.9%), to select information according to their needs and purposes (77%) and know how to evaluate critically the information accessed and gathered (75.2%). The interpretation of multimodal texts, such as images, graphemes and presentations, is considered essential (46.2%), too, as well as the selection of graphics and photos that illustrate the meaning they want to convey (45.5%). They also view that effective use of the Word processor is needed in order to produce grammatically and syntactically well-formed texts (31.4%). It is also supported that multi-platforms or e-learning systems should be used for synchronous and asynchronous communication with other students (39.7%) and that computer-mediated communication should be applied effectively (33%). Moreover, teachers agree that 21st century students must know how to access online learning resources such as dictionaries and thesauri (56.2%) and participate in online discussions and bulletin boards (38%). Furthermore, they firmly believe that students should collaborate during the learning process and completion of a project (66.9%) and must respect the social conventions of the Internet while using it (60.3%).

Undoubtedly, it is a positive sign that teachers have favorable attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills. Attitudes guide behaviors (Player- Koro, 2012) and as Bullock (2004) argues, teachers' positive attitudes can act as an enabling factor that influences the successful integration of technology in the EFL class. Therefore, teachers with positive attitudes are more likely to use technological tools and foster the development of 21st century skills, as already discussed.

5.2. What literacies/skills do EFL teachers consider necessary to be developed in the 21st century?

The teachers who participated in the research agreed that a plethora of skills is necessary to be acquired and developed by students in order to cope with the demands of the 21st century education (see Figure 2). The vast majority of teachers argue that it is essential for students to communicate effectively, to collaborate with their peers and learn through teamwork, to be creative, to develop their critical thinking, as well as lifelong learning skills. Moreover, according to the findings, teachers firmly believe that students need to develop New Literacies as well. It is vital that they know how to use computers and other technology to enhance learning (Technology Literacy) and that they can find, evaluate and synthesize information (Information Literacy). Teachers also believe that students must be able to communicate with an ever-expanding community to discuss issues, gather information or seek help (Digital Literacy) and know how to read, interpret and contextualize messages from a global perspective (Global Literacy).
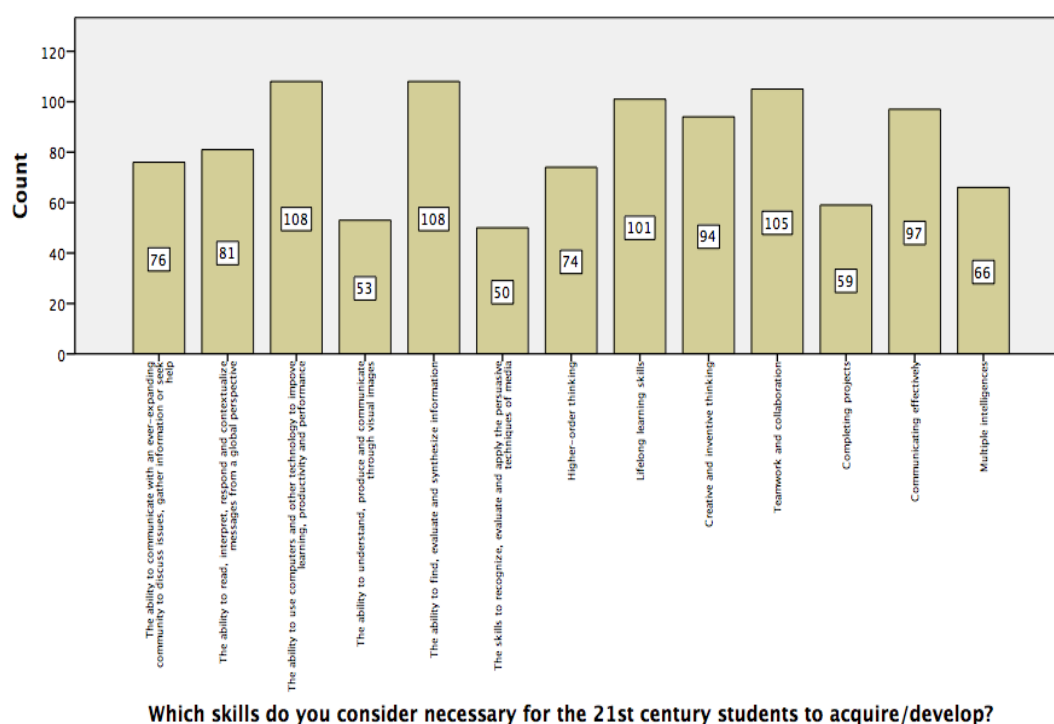
Figure 2: 21st century skills considered necessary to be developed

However, the ability to understand, produce and communicate though visual images (Visual Literacy) and the ability to recognize, evaluate and apply the persuasive techniques of media (Media Literacy) do not seem to be of utmost importance for teachers, since less than half agreed to it (44% and 41% respectively). The development of Multiple Intelligences is viewed as important, whereas the ability to complete projects does not seem to be a priority. The completion of projects requires collaboration, communication and career skills. The fact that teachers do not consider the completion of projects as a very significant skill shows that maybe they rarely do projects in class or if they do, they may see it as something superficial and do not deal with it in depth. However, they should promote the development of this skill, because it is something that will prove to be necessary for future employees.

5.3. Which tools would teachers employ towards the development of these skills and which ones do they actually use?

The research showed that teachers would employ various educational technology tools in order to cater for the development of 21st century skills in the EFL class (see Figure 3). Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, wikis and social networks rank high among teachers' preferences. As it has been discussed, Web 2.0 tools are user-friendly and allow learners to interact in a less threatening environment and build a virtual community (D' Souza, 2007; Kontogeorgi, 2014). As recent research has shown, Web 2.0 tools enhance motivation and collaboration, provide a purpose for authentic communication, develop creativity and higher-order thinking and pave the way to the autonomy of learners, while fostering the development of 21st century skills (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Karkoulia, 2016; Kontogeorgi, 2014; Koufadi, 2014; Parker & Chao, 2007; Yang, 2009). Apart from Web 2.0 tools, many teachers believe that videos, Webquests and the Email promote the development of 21st century skills, too, whereas the Word processor and Digital Storytelling are less popular.
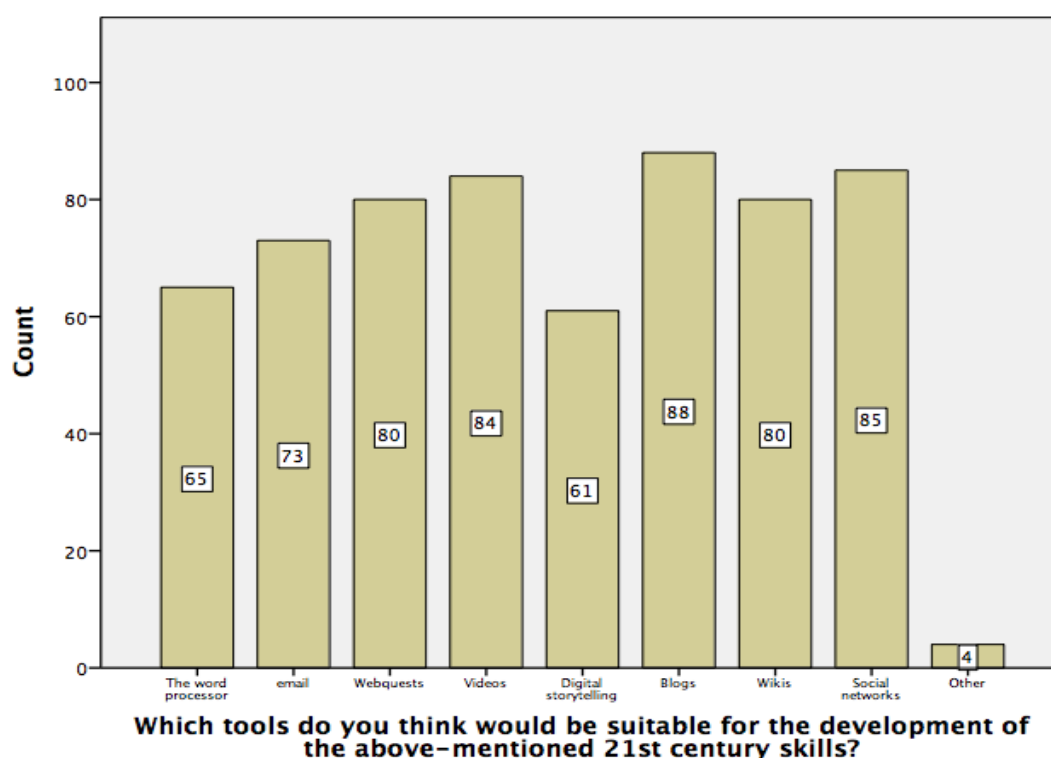
Figure 3: Suitable tools for the development of 21st century skills

However, teachers' everyday practice is incompatible with their beliefs and attitudes since the majority of them use mainly videos (Youtube) (see Figure 4). This finding supports prior research (Karkoulia, 2016; Spiris, 2014). Possible reasons for this preference might be that videos on Youtube are easy to find, are free and are very popular among students. The second most used tool is the Word processor and third comes the Email, which provides a context for real- world communication. Considerably fewer are the teachers who use blogs, wikis, social networks, Digital Storytelling and Webquests. Previous research has shown that a significant number of teachers use blogs and wikis and that they are aware of their pedagogical benefits (Karkoulia, 2016).

The conclusions that can be drawn are that either teachers who participated in the present study may not have been persuaded for the benefits of these tools in language learning or they need further training, which is one of the barriers impeding integration of educational technology tools (see 5.4 below). The training they may have received might have been on learning how to use these tools, which is something they may already know, since the 'Digital Natives' of the previous decade are becoming the teachers of today, so they are familiar with a lot of tools and applications. For example, the fact that most teachers use videos, even those who have not received any training shows that they have become familiar with the use of video, simply by experimenting and using it every day for many years already. However, what teachers need to be trained on is how to exploit tools like wikis, blogs, Digital Storytelling and Webquests in the classroom and make the most of them.

Concerning the frequency with which teachers use technology, the majority claimed that they use educational technology tools once or twice a week. Very few teachers responded to use them in everyday lesson indicating that still normalization is not reached (Bax, 2003; Spiris, 2014).
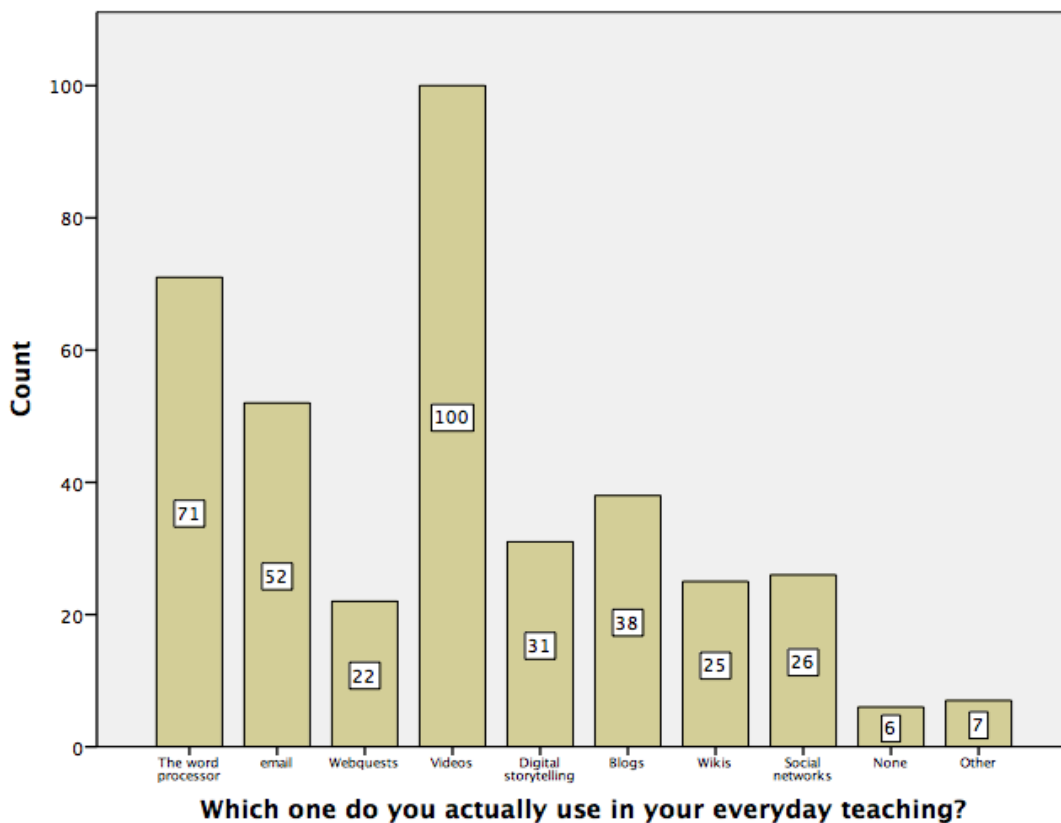
Figure 4: Tools used in everyday teaching

5.4.   What are the barriers that may restrict teachers from the integration of educational technology tools and the possible solutions to overcome these barriers?

The integration of educational technology tools is a complex process and does not depend only on teachers' attitudes. Various barriers may impede integration (see Figure 5). The respondents of this research identified time pressure as the most important factor that hinders integration of educational technology tools. Teachers may feel that coursebook

material overload overwhelms them and does not leave time for extra activities, such as working on a blog or a wiki. They may view all these tools as time-consuming and not aiding the syllabus. Lack of school equipment and no Internet access were also reported as major barriers. In addition, some teachers responded that they do not feel free to use educational technology tools due to the school's policy or due to several classroom management issues. Finally, a few teachers claimed that they hesitate to use such tools because they do not feel confident enough or they lack relevant knowledge. These impediments to integration of educational technology tools are similar to those revealed in previous studies concerning educational technology (Hadjirigas, 2012; Karkoulia, 2016; Spiris, 2014).

What are the constraints/problems that hinder the integration of educational technology tools in EFL teaching?
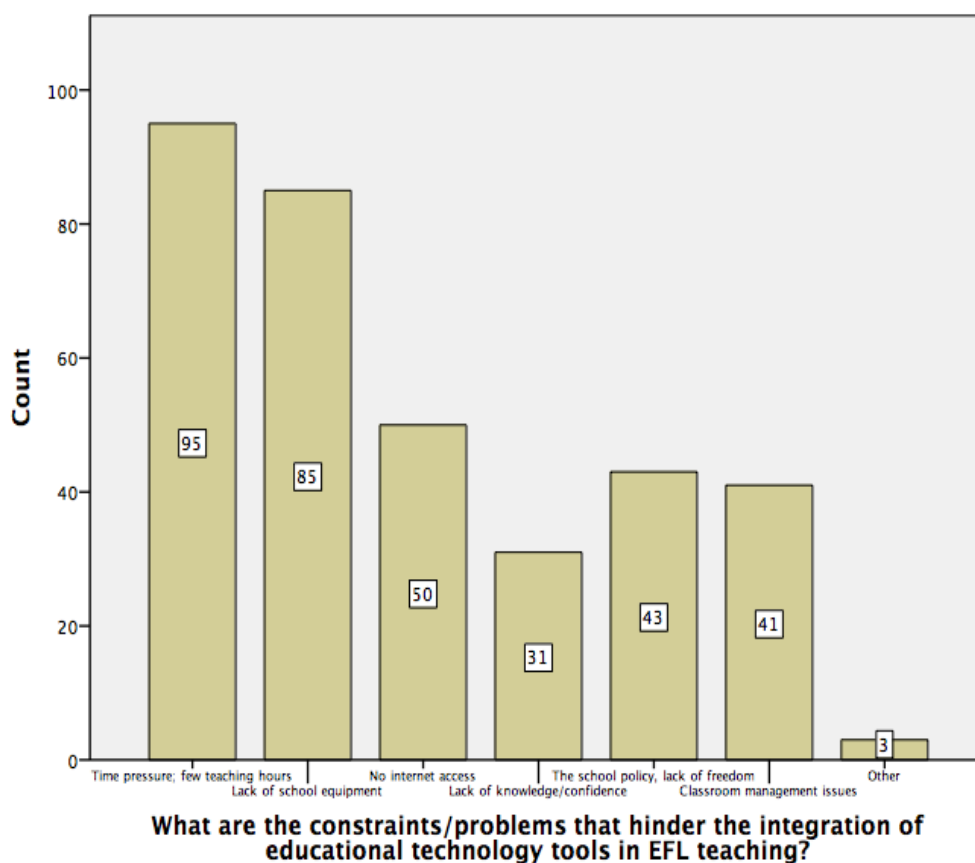
*Figure 5: Constraints/problems that hinder
the integration of educational technology tools in EFL class*

Considering the above-mentioned barriers, the participants suggested several possible solutions (see Figure 6). Most of these solutions have been identified in prior research too (Karkoulia, 2016; Spiris, 2014). First, teachers argue that the use of educational technology tools should be part of the syllabus and should not be viewed only as supplementary. So far, they have not been able to link their use to their everyday teaching practice as an integral part of the syllabus. In addition, teachers expressed the need to receive more training regarding these tools and are eager to attend related seminars. Although the vast majority responded that they have attended such seminars, it seems that more are required. Teachers also stated that it would be a good idea for students to be assigned homework, which would require them to use such tools at home, and should work on such tools in computer labs (if existent) at school at least once a week. Finally, teaching hours should be increased so that there is enough time to integrate such tools in the lesson.

What are your suggestions/possible solutions to overcome the barriers to the effective integration of educational technology tools in EFL teaching?
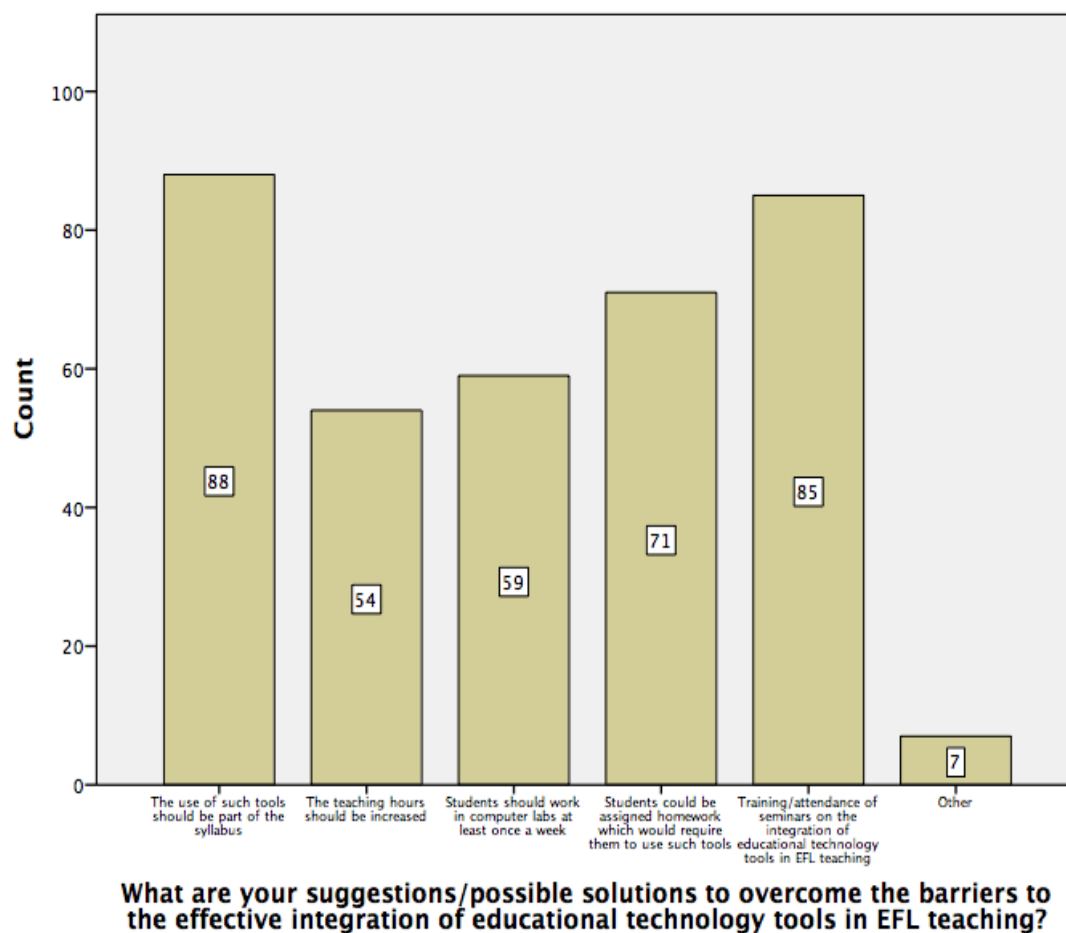
Figure 6: Suggestions/possible solutions

5.5. What are the social conventions of the Internet and how do teachers guide learners through constructive navigation?

The vast majority of teachers (82%) responded that they do make their students aware of the social conventions of the Internet. More specifically, as most teachers stated, they advise their students to be careful not to reveal any sensitive personal information (see Figure 7). They also argued that their students are guided to use respectful, inoffensive language and proper register depending on the person they are addressing. Moreover, teachers encourage their students to paraphrase and avoid plagiarism when using an online source. Triangulating the resources is viewed as less important, however. Finally, few teachers advise their students not to hide their identity by using fake profiles. Students should be strongly advised not to hide their identity, because honesty is one of the most basic social policies (Keeshin, 2010). Anonymity may intrigue people to lower their inhibitions and create the potential for unregulated, abusive behavior (Reid, 1991).
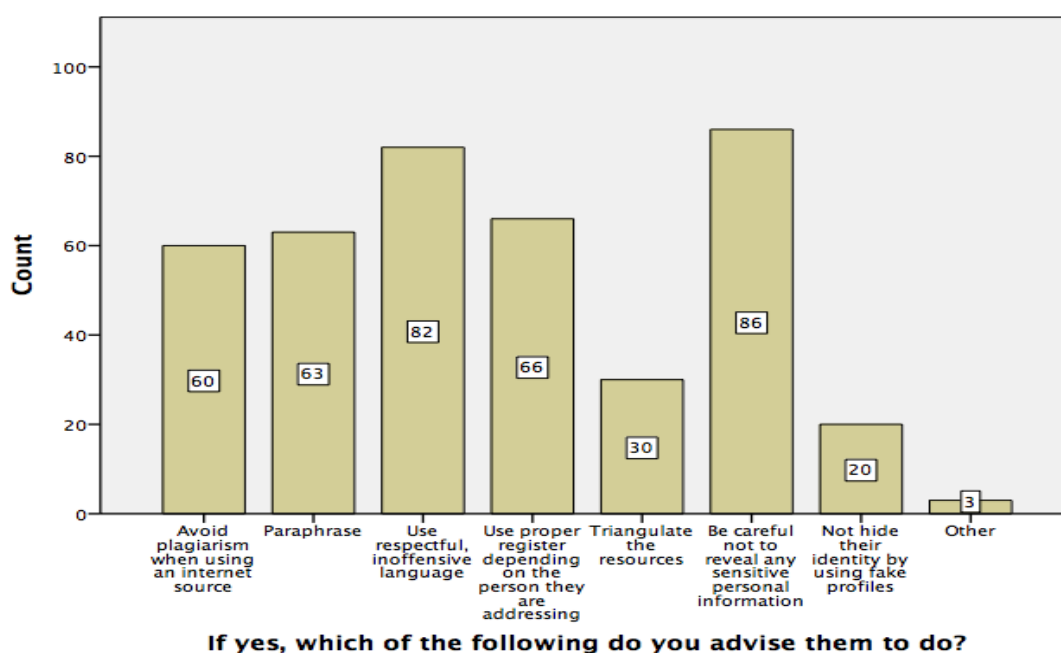
Figure 7: Ways to abide by the social conventions of the Internet

6. Study limitations and suggestions for further research

The research has revealed some interesting findings, which provide useful insights regarding the attitudes of teachers of English in Greece towards the development of 21st century skills and the use of educational technology tools. However, there are certain limitations that should be taken into account and may lead to ideas for future research. A small-scale research could not target the whole population. Therefore, a non-probability sample was selected that did not allow the researcher to make generalizations. Furthermore, questionnaires have many advantages but also some downsides that limit the depth and reliability of the investigation. For instance, some respondents may have completed the questionnaire hastily, giving superficial answers or misinterpreting some questions. Moreover, sometimes respondents deviate from the truth intentionally, reporting what they are supposed to believe, rather than what they actually believe (Dornyei, 2003). Others may tend to overgeneralize when their overall impression on the topic is positive ('Halo effect') or tend to agree with statements when they are not sure or ambivalent ('Acquiescence bias') (Dornyei, 2003, p. 13). The researcher could have counteracted these drawbacks by using observation as their research tool to establish whether their responses correspond with their actions in everyday practice. Instead, the researcher attempted to verify the consistency of the responses by wording questions to examine the same issue differently. The results revealed no inconsistency.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned limitations of the particular research, the need for a larger scale and a longer time-span research is undeniable. A much larger scale research covering all areas in Greece would certainly be more useful and enlightening. In addition, an issue that needs further investigation has to do with the reasons that deter teachers from the use of educational technology tools despite the fact that they have received relevant training. They hesitate to use blogs, wikis, Webquests, social networks and Digital Storytelling and tend to use "safer" and more "traditional" tools, such as videos, Word Processor and Email. Further research could employ alternative research instruments, such as interviews. Thus, the combined use of quantitative and qualitative research and

observation of teacher practice would facilitate triangulation, adding claims of reliability and validity to the results of the research (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

7. Concluding remarks: looking to the future

The research has indicated that the vast majority of teachers in Greece have positive attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills. Undoubtedly, it is a positive sign that teachers have favorable attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills, because teachers with positive attitudes are more likely to use technological tools and foster the development of 21st century skills. More specifically, teachers indicated collaboration, effective communication, creativity and critical thinking as indispensable skills to be developed in the 21st century EFL class. These are some of the principles that underpin 21st century pedagogy and are promoted when using several educational technology tools. The development of Multiple Intelligences and New Literacies is also viewed as important. Moreover, teachers would employ various educational technology tools in order to cater for the development of 21st century skills in the EFL class, such as blogs, wikis and social networks, which rank high among teachers' preferences. However, it was shown that they use mainly videos in their everyday teaching.

As far as the Internet and social conventions are concerned, the vast majority of teachers make their students aware of the social conventions of the Internet. They guide their students to use respectful, inoffensive language and proper register depending on the person they are addressing and they encourage their students to paraphrase and avoid plagiarism when using an online source.

In the near future, an increased number of digital tools will appear and a new generation of teachers will emerge. Both teachers and students will be 'Digital Natives' since they will have been born in the new digital era, and will share high technological competence. Teachers will have received more training and will have all the necessary technical skills to use a wide range of digital tools. Without a doubt, a state of 'normalization' will be reached in which ICTs will be successfully integrated in EFL teaching and viewed as a normal part of teaching practice. Aiming at this goal, teacher education events designed effectively for this purpose should be organised and teachers should cater for their continuous personal and professional development.

As far as the school equipment is concerned, the research indicated that many classrooms or schools in Greece lack the necessary technological equipment. Hopefully, in the next few years, the burden of the cost of such equipment will be lighter and it will be possible for schools to provide their students with all the required facilities. Besides, education is expected to expand beyond the limits of the classroom with the advance of ICTs. The teacher's role in such case will continue to be that of the facilitator and guide throughout the process.

Taking into account what has been discussed so far, the development of 21st century skills, which depends on the successful integration of educational technology tools in the EFL class, is a complex process. However, it is hoped that teachers' favourable attitudes combined with a series of measures that will facilitate the use of these tools will lead to their successful integration. In this way, 21st century educators will have all the potentials to equip their students with the necessary skills in order to cope with the demands of the constantly evolving digital world.

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Appendix
The Questionnaire

Cover letter

Dear colleague,

My name is Anna Tsourapa and I have been working as an EFL teacher since 2008. I am currently working on my dissertation for the Master's Degree in Education (TESOL) at the Hellenic Open University. The title of my dissertation is *Exploring teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills in EFL teaching.*

The purpose of my research is to explore teachers' attitudes towards the development of 21st century skills in the EFL context. In particular, I intend to explore what practices they consider good ones to follow in the field of new literacies and which skills they think should be developed. Another issue to be explored is which tools EFL teachers consider appropriate and useful in order to develop certain skills. The research also aims to show whether teachers actually follow the practices they argue for in their everyday teaching practice, or not. If not, they will be asked to mention the constraints of their teaching context that prevent them from doing so. Finally, teachers will be more than welcome to contribute their own suggestions to overcome such constraints.

For the purpose of this research a questionnaire has been designed that addresses all EFL teachers in Greece. I would be indebted to all of you if you could follow the link below and complete the questionnaire. It will not take you more than 10 minutes. I would like to emphasize that your responses are valuable to me. There are no right and wrong answers and the information provided is strictly confidential.

Please, do not hesitate to contact me for any questions or if you wish to be informed about the findings. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Best regards,

Anna Tsourapa
Email address: annatsour@yahoo.gr

Questionnaire link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ZGyVU87qC04TrrRp4tY4aH2jCojUAWsGZCq_6TYzLL4/viewform

Exploring teachers' attitudes towards development of 21st century skills in EFL teaching.

* Απαιτείται

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please click on the appropriate answer.

1. Gender *

○ Male

○ Female

2. Age *

○ 21-30

○ 31-40

○ 41-50

○ 50+

3. Academic qualifications *

○ Bachelor's degree

○ Master's degree

○ Master's degree in progress

○ Phd

○ Phd in progress

○ C2 certificate holder

○ Άλλο: [_____]

4. Teaching experience *

○ 1-5 years

○ 6-10 years

○ 11-15 years

○ 16-20 years

○ 20+ years

5. Current working environment *

○ State school

○ Private school

○ Foreign language institute

○ Vocational training institute (IEK)

○ Private tuition

○ Άλλο: [_____]

6. Attendance of seminars/courses related to the integration of technology in EFL teaching *

○ Yes

○ No

II. SCHOOL FACILITIES

7. Which of the following equipment is available at your school? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

- ☐ Interactive whiteboards
- ☐ Over-head projectors
- ☐ Internet access
- ☐ Computer lab
- ☐ One computer for each student in the classroom
- ☐ A few computers in the classroom
- ☐ One computer used by the teacher
- ☐ No computer in the classroom
- ☐ Άλλο: [   ]

III. EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY TOOLS IN EFL TEACHING

8. Which tools do you use in EFL teaching? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

- ☐ The word processor
- ☐ email
- ☐ Webquests
- ☐ Videos
- ☐ Digital storytelling
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Wikis
- ☐ Social networks
- ☐ None
- ☐ Άλλο: [   ]

9. How do you use these tools? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

- ☐ 1. As online portfolios of students' work
- ☐ 2. As presentation tools
- ☐ 3. To provide extra listening/speaking/writing/reading practice
- ☐ 4. To encourage process writing
- ☐ 5. To publish students' work
- ☐ 6. To expose students to different activities
- ☐ 7. To give students the chance to communicate with their peers
- ☐ 8. To provide authentic online resources
- ☐ 9. To create, edit and share documents
- ☐ 10. To work together on projects
- ☐ 11. I don't use them
- ☐ Άλλο: [   ]

IV. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please click on the appropriate answer (strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, neither agree nor disagree=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5).

It is important for students of the 21st century to know how to:

1. Use search engines to locate information *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

2. Select information according to their needs and purposes *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

3. Critically evaluate the information accessed and gathered *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

4. Interpet multimodal texts (images, graphemes, presentations etc.) *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

5. Use the word processor effectively to produce grammatically and syntactically well-formed texts *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

6. Select graphics and photos that illustrate the meanings they intend to convey *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

7. Use multi-platforms or e-learning systems to communicate synchronously and asynchronously with other students *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

8. Access online learning resources such as dictionaries and thesauri *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

9. Participate in online discussions and bulletin boards *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

10. Use Computer Mediated Communication to communicate effectively *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

11. Respect the social conventions/ethics of the internet while using it *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

12. Collaborate in order to learn and produce a product (i.e. a project) *

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ ◎ strongly agree

11. Do you make your students aware of the social conventions of the internet for safe and constructive navigation? *

If you answer NO, please proceed to question 13.

◎ Yes

◎ No

12. If yes, which of the following do you advise them to do?

Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

☐ 1. Avoid plagiarism when using an internet source

☐ 2. Paraphrase

☐ 3. Use respectful, inoffensive language

☐ 4. Use proper register depending on the person they are addressing

☐ 5. Triangulate the resources

☐ 6. Be careful not to reveal any sensitive personal information

☐ 7. Not hide their identity by using fake profiles

☐ Άλλο: _____

13. Which skills do you consider necessary for 21st century students to acquire/develop? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

☐ 1. The ability to communicate with an ever-expanding community to discuss issues, gather information or seek help

☐ 2. The ability to read, interpret, respond and contextualize messages from a global perspective

☐ 3. The ability to use computers and other technology to impove learning, productivity and performance

☐ 4. The ability to understand, produce and communicate through visual images

☐ 5. The ability to find, evaluate and synthesize information

☐ 6. The skills to recognize, evaluate and apply the persuasive techniques of media

☐ 7. Higher-order thinking

☐ 8. Lifelong learning skills

☐ 9. Creative and inventive thinking

☐ 10. Teamwork and collaboration

☐ 11.Completing projects

☐ 12.Communicating effectively

☐ 13. Multiple intelligences

☐ Άλλο:

14. Which tools do you think would be suitable for the development of the above-mentioned 21st century skills? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

☐ The word processor

☐ email

☐ Webquests

☐ Videos

☐ Digital storytelling

☐ Blogs

☐ Wikis

☐ Social networks

☐ None

☐ Άλλο:

15. Which ones do you actually use in your everyday teaching? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

☐ The word processor

☐ email

☐ Webquests

☐ Videos

☐ Digital storytelling

☐ Blogs

☐ Wikis

☐ Social networks

☐ None

☐ Άλλο:

16. How often do you use them? *
Please click on the appropriate answer.

○ 1. In every lesson

○ 2. Once a week

○ 3.Twice a week

○ 4.Twice a month

○ 5.Once a month

○ 6.Rarely

○ 7. Never

○ Άλλο:

V. CONSTRAINTS THAT MAY PREVENT TEACHERS FROM USING/USING OFTEN EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLS IN EFL TEACHING

17. What are the constraints/problems that hinder the integration of educational technology tools in EFL teaching? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

☐ 1. Time pressure; few teaching hours

☐ 2. Lack of school equipment

☐ 3. No internet access

☐ 4. Lack of knowledge/confidence

☐ 5. The school policy, lack of freedom

☐ 6. Classroom management issues

☐ Άλλο:

VI. SUGGESTIONS/POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

18. What are your suggestions/possible solutions to overcome the barriers to the effective integration of educational technology tools in EFL teaching? *
Please click on the appropriate box/boxes.

☐ 1. The use of such tools should be part of the syllabus

☐ 2. The teaching hours should be increased

☐ 3. Students should work in computer labs at least once a week

☐ 4. Students could be assigned homework which would require them to use such tools

☐ 5. Training/attendance of seminars on the integration of educational technology tools in EFL teaching

☐ Άλλο:

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Integrating Web 2.0 technologies into EFL learning in the Greek state-school context: A mixed-method study

Maria TZOTZOU

The purpose of this study is to survey the integration of Web 2.0 technologies into EFL learning in the Greek state-school context including both primary and secondary schools. It explores state EFL teachers' awareness of Web 2.0 technologies, the use of Web 2.0 tools on the basis of underlying pedagogical theories and teaching methods, teachers' digital literacy and training needs as well as state-school barriers and possible solutions. To this end, a mixed-method research was selected to gather and process data. The research tools were a questionnaire addressed to 149 in-service state EFL teachers regarding the quantitative analysis and an e-mail interview addressed to 7 in-service school advisors for the qualitative research. Merging of quantitative and qualitative findings yielded valuable implications and suggestions for Web 2.0 implementation in the Greek state school. The present study reveals state EFL teachers' positive attitude towards Web 2.0 technologies, the need for a pedagogical 'link' between technology and teaching methodology as well as the state-school barriers against Web 2.0 integration. It also provides suggestions for further research and for future action towards Web 2.0 pedagogy sustaining policies.

Keywords: Web 2.0, EFL, pedagogy, mixed-method

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1. Introduction

Web 2.0 integration which refers to the effective pedagogical use of technology (that is, how effectively it is used to support teaching and learning) is not an easy process. Limited technology-related skills, teachers' negative or indifferent attitudes towards technology, lack of appropriate pedagogical guidance as well as inadequate technological equipment seem to be major barriers against the effective Web 2.0 integration according to previous research carried out in USA and Russia in the field of English language learning as well as in teaching and learning in general (Light & Polin, 2010; Shishkovskaya & Sokolova, 2015). As Dooly & Masats (2010) argue, it is crucial for teachers to be able to choose the most appropriate Web 2.0 material, methodology and activities in order to reinforce positive learning and reach one's teaching objectives.

In Greece, previous studies (Karkoulia, 2016; Katerini, 2013; Kontogeorgi, 2014; Paroussi, 2014; Spiris, 2014) have explored Web 2.0 implementation but without focusing on the state-school context and without investigating the Web 2.0 actual pedagogical integration. These studies were only quantitative and involved EFL teachers working both in pubic and private schools or institutions in Greece whereas the present study is mixed-method addressing not only the state-school teachers (quantitative research) but also the state-school advisors (qualitative research) in order to reach more 'holistic' research findings focusing on Web 2.0 pedagogy as well.

In particular, the present study aims to fill a research 'gap' by exploring Web 2.0 integration into the Greek state-school classroom. It is worth exploring to what extent state English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers are aware of Web 2.0 tools, if they know how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson on the basis of modern pedagogical theories and methods, what they consider to be the major barriers against Web 2.0 integration as well as their own suggestions to allow technology take its most effective place in the state-school classroom.
To this end, this study reviews the Greek state-school context to identify factors affecting Web 2.0 integration into EFL learning either positively or negatively. It examines the position of technology in the current curricula and the 'New School' setting as well as the educational material currently available in schools highlighting the attempts made by the Ministry of Education to provide technical support to state EFL teachers through digital platforms and networks. Pedagogical support is also discussed with specific reference to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training for state-school teachers as well as to the school advisors' role.

2. Theoretical and pedagogical background

2.1. Web 2.0 pedagogical benefits

In the Web 2.0 context, the web functions as a platform where users collaborate, exchange, process and construct data dynamically. In education, Web 2.0 technologies create online educational communities, which Shishkovskaya & Sokolova (2015) call educational 'webcieties', allowing two-way communication between the site and users, contributing to the authorship of the content and providing the possibility to update the content by multiple authors promoting interactivity, creativity and sociality in the learning process. In language education, the most commonly investigated Web 2.0 technologies are blogs, wikis, social networks (SNSs) and Google Docs which afford great interactive learning opportunities through genuine communication and social interaction in the target language (Campbell, 2003; Lund, 2008; Luo, 2013).

More specifically, regarding Web 2.0 pedagogical benefits, previous research (Al-Ali & Gunn, 2013; Crook et al., 2008; Stockwell, 2010) has revealed that Web 2.0 technologies can offer great flexibility and variety in EFL learning in terms of scheduling classes, pacing of individual learners, authenticity of tasks, selection of content and new learning opportunities. Other studies have also indicated that Web 2.0 technologies offer EFL learners the potential for a collaboration-oriented and community-based learning environment (Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Dippold, 2009; Sun, 2010; Yang, 2009). In the same vein, Wang and Vasquez (2012) argue that Web 2.0 tools help to create learning communities that are comfortable, individualized and collaboration-oriented enhancing engagement in the language learning process.

For instance, Illés (2012) and Noytim (2010) point out that blogs can create conditions for the development of learners' autonomy in terms of both learning and language use through a learner-centred approach by encouraging them to read and write for communicative purposes and reinforcing EFL learning in contexts where learners have limited exposure to the target language. In a similar way, wikis can transform a traditional class into a community of learners by which they communicate meaningfully in real contexts and publish their materials fostering their creativity, autonomy and responsibility in their own construction of knowledge (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Kessler, 2009).

In the light of the above, implementing Web 2.0 tools in language pedagogy results in higher levels of motivation, confidence and disposition which are crucial factors in communicative language learning (Pop, 2010). Web 2.0 tools engage learners in processes which make them more strategic and competent EFL users contributing effectively to their skills development (Kessler, 2009; Lee, 2010). However, to this end, the teacher has a key role to play and needs to acquire the so-called Web 2.0 strategy in order to use technology for learning purposes effectively (Zhao, Hueyshan & Mishra, 2001).

Therefore, it is worth exploring to what extent state EFL teachers in Greece are aware of Web 2.0 tools and their benefits as well as if they know how to plan a web-based lesson on the basis of modern pedagogical theories and methods towards maximizing the above-mentioned Web 2.0 pedagogical benefits.

2.2. Towards a Web 2.0 pedagogy

Web 2.0 technologies rely on learner-centered methods, such as the Project-Based Learning (PBL) which is a methodological approach based on contextualized cooperative learning (Sharan, 1999) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) which emphasizes the authentic, creative and spontaneous use of the target language through meaningful and problem solving tasks linking FL use to real-world activities (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004).

Both methods are related to 'situated learning', 'socio-cognitive' and 'constructivist' learning theories (Dooly & Masats, 2010; Ellis, 2003). *Constructivism* offers a new paradigm for this new Web 2.0 age as it is now not only possible for learners to "access tons of information almost instantly, but it is also possible for them to be in control of their own learning" (Oluwafisayo, 2010, p.19). Salmon (2011) suggests that *social cognitivism* can be updated and redefined as 'e-social constructivism' taking into account the electronic communication facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies developing a community of learning as, by their very nature, Web 2.0 tools encourage active participation in a shared endeavour with peers emphasizing the social context of learning (Linn, 1992; Rogoff, 1994). *Situated learning* is another theory that helps make sense out of the new Web 2.0 reality given that it views learning as a product of a meaning-making process that cannot be separated from the context of its use (Brown et al., 1989). *Connectivism*[1] is an alternative pedagogy with a direct link to Web 2.0 technologies fostering an individual's ability for social networking through a range of networks, connections and tools (Hall, 2010). Another theory that meets the needs of the new Web 2.0 landscape is the so-called *activity theory*[2] based on learner-centred

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[1] Connectivism provides insight into learning skills and tasks needed for learners to flourish in a digital era. This theory stresses the idea that knowledge creation is the aggregation of the activities of many individuals that creates knowledge and places knowledge within the network itself (Siemens, 2005).

[2] Activity theorists understand learning as phenomena generated in a complex, evolving activity system where actors (*subjects*), objectives, and tools interact iteratively (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Members (*learners*), objectives (*learning objectives*) and tools (*learning tools*) of that particular

learning environments which support individual efforts in order to negotiate meaning while engaging in authentic activities (Land & Hannafin, 2000).

2.3. Planning a Web 2.0-based lesson

Integrating effectively the Web 2.0 tools into the classroom is a challenging and core issue to every 21st century teacher. Given that these tools can be used in different ways and more than one tool can be appropriate for any given situation, it is important to consider how they can enhance EFL learning. Lian and Bonk (2009) suggest five practical steps while planning a web-based lesson: a. setting course objectives, b. formulating the techniques and strategies, c. selecting the tools, d. organizing the activities and technologies and e. providing feedback. When planning a Web 2.0-based lesson, it is also helpful to bear in mind Bloom's revised digital taxonomy[3] (Churches, 2009; see Figure 1) and to determine which level of this taxonomy the teacher is aiming for in order to a. define the specific learning goals and b. select the most appropriate Web 2.0 tool which fits specific learning needs.
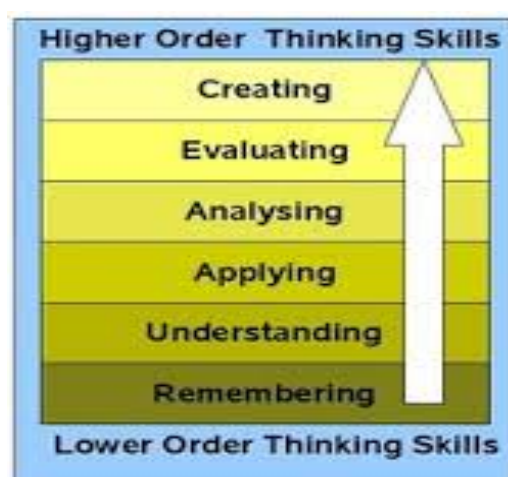
Figure 1: Bloom's Digital Taxonomy (Churches, 2009: 5)

From a pedagogical point of view, while planning a Web 2.0-based lesson, teachers should also take into account their learners' interests and levels of digital literacy. As Thomas (2009) argues, it is not wise to assume that all learners are digital natives who can automatically fit themselves into a digital learning environment and remain highly engaged. Furthermore, a well-designed Web 2.0-based lesson should ensure dynamics in collaboration breaking down the larger class into more defined and precise learning groups (Arnold et al., 2012). The extent to which state-school EFL teachers need to learn how to harness the Web 2.0 power following specific lesson planning strategies is one of the main research questions of the present study.

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system are co-dependent and reconstitute each other continuously engendering learning that is meaningful to learners (Heo & Lee, 2013).
[3] Due to the dramatic changes in technology and education over the last two decades, there is a revised model of Bloom's Taxonomy which provides an even more powerful tool to fit today's teachers' needs. The structure of the Revised Taxonomy Table matrix "provides a clear, concise visual representation" (Krathwohl, 2002) of the alignment between standards and educational goals, objectives, products, and activities.

3. The Greek state-school context

3.1. Curricula

The current EFL curricula, the *Cross-thematic Curriculum* (2003) and the *Unified Curriculum for Foreign Languages* (2011), seem to encourage the use of ICTs to achieve specific educational goals. They aim at a multimodal approach to EFL learning that Jewitt (2006) describes as a creative combination of text, audio and image in order to produce meaning as well as enhance interaction and learning in the classroom. They also encourage the use of technological aids which can increase motivation engaging learners in realistic communication contexts (Crabbe, 2007). In particular, the *cross-thematic* curriculum encourages teachers to develop learners' EFL literacy and multilingualism/multiculturalism around a cross-thematic framework where technology is exploited as a pedagogical tool. Similarly, according to the unified curriculum for foreign languages, the teacher is expected to utilize multimedia applications combining text, sound, graphics, pictures and animation thus adding motivation and interactivity to EFL teaching and learning.

3.2. The 'New School' Project

The 'New School' project[4] started in the school year 2011-2012 in order to form the basis of state-school education in the forthcoming years. 'New School' aims to improve the learning outcomes by promoting the digital, innovative and multilingual/multicultural education in order to cover the new educational needs and challenges of the 21st century. ICTs seem to be the cornerstone with the aim to incorporate new technologies fully into the new curriculum and the actual state-school practice. 'New School' suggests that ICTs have the potential to change the teachers' role regarding the methods of instruction and assessment. ICTs form the basis of modern pedagogical theories and methodologies creating a more flexible learning environment that promotes experiential and exploratory learning through learners' active participation in the learning process. To this end, high priority is given to the development of both teachers' and learners' digital literacies through ICTs which have been already integrated into primary and secondary schools as a separate course.

3.3. Educational material

The school textbooks that are taught in public primary and secondary schools in Greece are now interactive and can be found online. The interactive books program was developed by the Computer Technology Institute and Press 'Diophantus' that is a research and technology organization focusing on research and development in ICTs. In particular, there has been an attempt to 'digitalize' the school textbooks by offering all the textbook material on screen and /or supplementing it with extra audiovisual aids and software. The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs has developed educational software for all school subjects both in primary and secondary education since the beginning of the 2000s. Software and multimedia material for EFL purposes is available at the official Web Educational Gate of the Ministry of Education[5] with the aim of familiarizing learners with EFL forms and functions in several communicative contexts fostering at the same time learners' target-culture awareness. Extra digital educational content is also available in the National Aggregator of Educational Content[6] ('Photodentro') to supplement the textbook material.

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[4] http://1dim-aei-thess.thess.sch.gr/neo%20sxoleio.pdf
[5] http://e-yliko.minedu.gov.gr
[6] http://photodentro.edu.gr/

3.4. Technical support

The Greek School Network (GSN- http://www.sch.gr/) is the official network and services provider for all public primary and secondary schools since 2000. It is the largest public network in Greece regarding the number of users it serves by interconnecting and also connecting to the internet more than 15.000 schools, a community of 1.350.000 learners and about 160.000 teachers. It provides access to standard communication tools like e-mail and internet, as well as discussion forums and more advanced informatics services like web-casting, teleconferencing and Video on Demand covering the educational needs of the new Web 2.0 era by allowing users to benefit from e-learning systems. Moreover, the GSN provides teachers, learners and parents with useful information to ensure safe internet access following the guidelines of the Ministry of Education which promotes the 'Safer Internet' program (saferinternet.gr) in collaboration with the Greek Centre of Safe Internet and the European Commission.

3.5. Pedagogical support

Pedagogical guidance is typically provided by the school advisors who are teachers with high academic and professional qualifications officially selected and appointed by the Ministry of Education. School advisors are expected to be familiar with the target teaching situation and the EFL practice/routine of their trainees in the Greek school context in order to take action whenever and wherever needed. In particular, school advisors should help EFL teachers develop flexibility in selecting innovative teaching techniques, tools and materials, familiarize themselves with issues of educational technology, develop awareness and positive attitude towards new technologies as well as be able to design motivating courses with Web 2.0 tools in a pedagogically efficient way[7].

It is worth-noticing, however, that state EFL teachers have never been involved in ICT-Level B[8] training seminars (how to use ICTs in the educational process) although these seminars have been systematically organized by the Ministry of Education for other state-school teachers the last decade. In other words, there is a training 'gap' to be filled in order to cover state EFL teachers' professional need to become aware of new technologies and use them effectively in the classroom.

4. Research methodology

4.1. A mixed-method approach

The methodology selected is the 'mixed method' research combining both a quantitative and qualitative approach to data gathering in order to corroborate findings. The quantitative study included a questionnaire administered to in-service state EFL teachers via internet in order to investigate the main research questions. The quantitative data were analyzed via

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[7] School advisors' main responsibilities include teachers' in-service training, monitoring the educational process, schoolteachers' counselling and pedagogical guidance as well as remedial work on their possible deficiencies (Presidential Decree 1340/16-10-02).

[8] ICT-Level B training addresses to all in-service primary and secondary school teachers in Greece. It aims to train state-school teachers in the pedagogical use of ICTs in the field of their specialization focusing on planning technology-based didactic scenarios. There is also formal assessment of trainees' specialised ICT skills after receiving their training. It is worth-mentioning, however, that foreign language teachers have not been included in ICT-Level B training so far.

SPSS in order to achieve both descriptive statistics to measure frequencies (raw data, percentages and tables) as well as correlations between variables through cross-tabulations and the chi-square test. Internal consistency reliability was also measured by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient so as to ensure the reliability and validity of the data (for more details see the sub-section 5.1 and the Appendix). The quantitative survey was combined with the qualitative study which involved in-service school advisors as a 'focus group' and was conducted through e-mail interviews to collect open-ended data, that is data derived from open-ended questions, with the primary intent of developing themes related to the research purpose. Qualitative analysis of interview data included data reduction to make them manageable, and data coding based on the research questions by identifying, categorizing and synthesizing the emerging themes through conceptualization (Creswell, 2009). The researcher followed a 'concurrent' procedure by converging quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem by collecting both forms of data at the same time during the study and then integrating the information in the interpretation of the overall results (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

4.2. Aim and research questions

The main aim was to explore the extent to which Web 2.0 technologies are integrated into the EFL classroom of the Greek state school given that previous studies in Greece had not focused on the state-school context. By asking both state EFL teachers and school advisors it was aimed to find out whether Web 2.0 technologies are used as an integral and/or a smaller part of the lesson as well as whether state EFL teachers are adequately trained and confident to exploit pedagogically the Web 2.0 tools and the digital material provided by the Ministry of Education. The research questions were the following:

1) To what extent are state EFL teachers aware of Web 2.0 technologies and use them in their classroom?
2) To what extent are teachers aware of the pedagogical theories and teaching methods underlying Web 2.0 tools?
3) To what extent are teachers trained and/or do they feel confident to implement Web 2.0 tools?
4) To what extent does the Greek state-school context favor Web 2.0 implementation?
5) Which state-school factors are barriers against Web 2.0 integration?
6) What solutions are to be put forward towards the effective Web 2.0 integration?

4.3. Research tools

4.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed using Google Forms[9]; it was developed upon the main aim and the research questions and administered online. It was first piloted to three EFL teachers and then administered through the internet forwarding the questionnaire link along with a cover letter to in-service state-school EFL teachers by e-mail. The majority of questions were stated according to the Likert-type scaling mainly to measure levels of importance, frequency and awareness.

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[9] Questionnaire link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SDfcM2REqMRaUtqk9jsUe1hxttHVY8t5pI8afKM1Wi4/viewform?ts=56b058c4&edit_requested=true

4.3.2. E-mail interview

The qualitative data were collected through e-mail interviews. The aim was to gain a deeper insight into the main research questions and the items in the questionnaire. Six open-ended interview questions triggered an exploratory 'in-depth conversation' with the school advisors in alignment with the research questions of the present study. The school advisors were invited to express their own perceptions and views about the actual use of Web 2.0 technologies in the EFL classroom based on their personal experience from the Greek state-school context as well as their notable pedagogical and academic background.

4.4. Sampling

The researcher opted for a non-probability purposive sample using two sampling techniques: convenience sampling and snowballing. Concerning the quantitative survey, members of the target population (in-service state EFL teachers in Greece) were selected taking into account the geographical proximity, availability, easy accessibility as well as personal acquaintances. Subsequently, some of the participants forwarded the questionnaire to more EFL teachers and a 'chain' reaction followed (Cohen et al., 2007; Dornyei, 2003). Regarding the sample size, the researcher attempted to achieve a considerable sample size to allow for statistically significant results. Eventually 149 in-service state-school EFL teachers from different regions participated in the research. In a similar way, the researcher selected the sample for the qualitative survey which eventually engaged 7 school advisors.

5. Research findings: Discussion and implications

5.1. Statistically significant results - Cronbach's Alpha

Statistical analysis reveals a number of correlations with statistical significance after cross-tabulating the findings using the chi-square test[10].

To begin with, education analysis indicates that the majority of respondents who hold a Master's degree are moderately/extremely aware of Web 2.0 technologies, know how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson and feel confident to do so (see Appendix; Crosstabs 1, 2, 3)[11]. On the contrary, most teachers holding only a Bachelor's degree are not at all/slightly aware of Web 2.0 tools and, consequently, they do not know/feel confident how to plan a Web 2.0-

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[10] Cross-tabulation provides information about the relationship between the variables and the chi-square test is used for testing the statistical significance of the cross-tabulation table. In other words, chi-square tests whether or not two variables are independent. If the variables are related, then the results of the statistical test will be 'statistically significant' and we 'are able to reject the null hypothesis', which means that we can state that there is some relationship between the variables. If the variables are related (i.e. the observed table relationships would occur with very low probability, say only 5%) then we say that the results are 'statistically significant' at the '.05 or 5% level'. This means that the variables have a low chance of being independent. SPSS marks statistical significance at the 0,05 and 0,01 levels or smaller. If the p-value is less than the chosen significance level then the null hypothesis is rejected (Cohen et al., 2007). The Appendix includes crosstabulation tables of the present research in which the p-value was found less than 0,05. In these cases, therefore, the variables are associated and the null hypothesis is rejected.

[11] In particular, as Crosstab 2 indicates, 30 teachers who hold a Master's degree know how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson much/to a great extent whereas only 6 teachers who hold only a Bachelor's degree state that they know how to plan such a lesson. Similarly, 31 Master's holders state that they feel confident much/to a great extent how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson. On the contrary, only 2 teachers who hold a Bachelor's degree feel much confident to do so (Crosstab 3).

based lesson. This reveals that teachers' academic profile affects significantly Web 2.0 awareness and implementation probably because advanced studies in a Master level usually offer courses on new teaching methods and how to integrate ICTs into the learning process.

Teaching experience also seems to affect significantly teachers' confidence as those who have 11-15 years of teaching experience feel more confident to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson whereas teachers with 1-10 years of teaching experience lack confidence to do so (see Appendix; Crosstab 4).

Another significant correlation reveals that lack of Web 2.0 awareness affects Web 2.0 lesson planning negatively[12]. Specifically, those teachers who are not at all/slightly aware of Web 2.0 tools never/rarely plan a Web 2.0-based lesson (see Appendix; Crosstab 5). Moreover, low confidence influences the frequency of planning Web 2.0-based lessons negatively as those who are not at all/slightly confident never/rarely plan Web 2.0 lessons (see Appendix; Crosstab 6).

Another significant correlation is also revealed between teachers' in-service training on Web 2.0 technologies and their need to receive Web 2.0 training. Specifically, according to Crosstab 7 (see Appendix), those teachers who have not at all/slightly received in-service Web 2.0 training so far state that Web 2.0 training is extremely important for them.

Finally, after using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test to measure the internal consistency[13], the Alpha coefficient was found above 0.70 which means that research variables have high consistency and reliability to a great extent.

5.2. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings provide valuable insights in a complementary manner. Interview data not only confirm but also enhance and expand the questionnaire ones in the most comprehensive way. Below there is a discussion of the main research findings after integrating quantitative and qualitative data providing answers to the research questions of the present study.

- To what extent are state EFL teachers aware of Web 2.0 technologies and use them in their classroom?

Taking into consideration both EFL teachers' and school advisors' responses, the majority of teachers seem to be aware of Web 2.0 applications to a considerable extent but they hesitate to use them in the school classroom. According to the quantitative findings, the most popular technology is YouTube, as already found in prior research (Karkoulia, 2016; Spiris, 2014), as well as GoogleDrive, blogs and wikis whereas the vast majority of them never use Podcasting and Edmodo, probably due to lack of awareness and training.

In other words, quantitative findings reveal the low frequency of Web 2.0 implementation in accordance with the e-mail interview data which report that state-school EFL teachers avoid

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[12] For instance, 27 teachers who are aware of Web 2.0 technologies often/always plan a Web 2.0-based lesson whereas all those teachers (21) who are not at all/slightly aware of Web 2.0 tools never/rarely plan such a lesson (Crosstab 6).

[13] The internal consistency reliability which refers to 'the homogeneity of the items making up the various multi-item scales within the questionnaire' is measured by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient (Dornyei, 2003: 85). The reliability level is accepted if it is above 0.70 (Cohen et al., 2007).

Web 2.0 practice due to several reasons. The same has already been indicated by recent studies in the Greek EFL context (Katerini, 2013; Spiris, 2014). Moreover, interview data report that this small-scale Web 2.0 implementation is connected with the 'age factor'. Specifically, some interviewees pinpoint older teachers' unwillingness to be digitally literate implying that they are 'technophobes'. Dudeney and Hockly (2007) talk about the 'technophobes' referring to teachers who stand negatively towards technology and argue that teachers' inability to see the benefits of educational technology in their classrooms is due to the lack of confidence and training.

Regarding Web 2.0 pedagogical benefits, the quantitative data are in full agreement with the qualitative ones emphasizing the versatile Web 2.0 beneficial role in foreign language learning (FLL) thanks to Web 2.0 technical advantages which contextualize FLL and motivate learners activating collaboration, authentic language use, autonomy and critical thinking (Yang & Chen, 2007). This finding confirms prior research regarding Web 2.0 benefits in EFL teaching (Crook et al., 2008; Karkoulia, 2016; Katerini, 2013; Kontogeorgi, 2014). Additionally, qualitative data place emphasis on the valuable Web 2.0 contribution to differentiated learning especially in handling learning disabilities. Previous studies have shown that different Web 2.0 tools address diverse needs of EFL learners as each tool may be suitable for tasks of different complexity. These tools help organize the learning content and support learning activities addressing different learning styles (Kovacic et al., 2012). According to Huang et al. (2008), there is correlation between learning style, learners' preferences and attitudes towards using Web 2.0 technologies. Bryant (2006) maintains that Web 2.0 technologies address the needs of today's diverse learners, enhancing their learning experiences through customisation, personalisation, and rich opportunities for networking and collaboration. It is noteworthy, however, that quantitative findings also point to the high Web 2.0 potential for intercultural learning whereas this beneficial Web 2.0 aspect is not reported by the interviewees. Previous studies have already indicated the beneficial role of Web 2.0 tools for intercultural language learning (Belz 2003; Belz & Thorne 2006; O'Dowd, 2006).

As regards disadvantages, both questionnaire and interview data agree on the time-wasting preparation of Web 2.0-based lessons. Similarly, the most common difficulty reported by teachers in previous studies was lack of time or time waste to prepare technology lessons and to explore internet sites (Al-Alwani, 2005; Becta, 2004; Beggs, 2000; Gomes, 2005; Schoepp, 2005; Sicilia, 2005). As Torres et al. (2009) argue, Web 2.0 activities can be time-consuming, distractive or even confusing to learners. Although some interviewees maintain that Web 2.0 overuse should be avoided, which can be associated with Brown's statement (2011) that Web 2.0 overload can make learners confused, findings illustrate that Web 2.0 benefits outweigh disadvantages disclosing teachers' positive attitudes towards Web 2.0 tools. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that internet safety matters are not considered to be a constraint in Web 2.0 implementation neither by the teachers nor the school advisors although in the literature internet dangers are closely associated with the social media (Rosenberg, 2010).

- Are teachers aware of the underlying pedagogical theories and teaching methods?

The quantitative data show that the majority of state-school EFL teachers are moderately aware of modern pedagogical theories underlying Web 2.0 technologies and need to develop further awareness which is in alignment with the school advisors' statements that there is lack of systematic and thematically focused in-service training in Web 2.0 pedagogy. Therefore, the necessity to develop and practice appropriate pedagogy along with the use of

Web 2.0 technologies is clearly demonstrated (Shishkovskaya & Sokolova, 2015). However, it is noteworthy that school advisors avoid talking directly about specific pedagogical theories and/or teaching methods associated with Web 2.0 integration. There is only a faint reference to the project method of learning as a suggestion for effective Web 2.0 implementation.

Concerning the teaching methods interrelated to Web 2.0 technologies, quantitative research shows that the majority of teachers use communicative, project and task-based learning in their classroom very often but they implement these methods in combination with Web 2.0 tools less often admitting that they need to develop further awareness. This is directly related to the fact that the vast majority of teachers rarely plan a Web 2.0-based lesson because, as quantitative data reveal, most respondents feel slightly or not at all confident to plan such a lesson. Lack of confidence is closely associated with teachers' fear of failure (Beggs, 2000).

It is remarkable, however, that some quantitative findings seem to be rather contradictory. Although the majority of respondents say that they know how to define pedagogical goals when planning a Web 2.0-based lesson, only a minority of them are aware of Bloom's revised digital taxonomy of educational objectives (Churches, 2009) which sounds oxymoron. Secondly, although only a small percentage of teachers plan a Web 2.0-based lesson frequently, most respondents state that they know how to select a Web 2.0 tool, how to prepare authentic/real-life tasks and how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson. A logical explanation could be that teachers do not feel confident enough to implement Web 2.0-based lessons due to lack of both training and technological infrastructure, as both school advisors and several scholars strongly affirm (Gomes, 2005; Korte & Hüsing, 2007; Pelgrum, 2001).

- To what extent are EFL teachers trained and feel confident to implement Web 2.0 technologies?

Both school advisors and teachers denounce the fact that EFL teachers have been constantly excluded from ICT-B Level training/certification so far. They have been trained unsystematically in Web 2.0 technologies so far taking part in Moodle seminars or workshops sporadically organized by some school advisors. Indeed, the vast majority, as both quantitative and qualitative data illustrate, have received Web 2.0 training only in an optional, non-typical and self-regulated way. Consequently, current paradigms of training seem to be inadequate or even counterproductive for meeting the emerging needs of the Web 2.0 education which requires a shift from teacher initiative, control and responsibility to shared initiative, control, and responsibility as well as from de-contextualized learning to authentic meaningful tasks (Reigeluth, 1999).

Furthermore, while quantitative findings reveal, in a rather implicit way EFL teachers' lack of confidence to implement Web 2.0 technologies, qualitative analysis discloses more explicitly this hesitation and/or weakness which essentially results from deficient training. Interestingly, lack of confidence is closely associated with low Web 2.0 competence due to lack of training (Pelgrum, 2001). In the literature, lack of training on digital literacies along with deficient training on how to use technology in the classroom are major hindrances to Web 2.0 integration (Gomes, 2005; Schoepp, 2005; Sicilia, 2005; Toprakci, 2006). In the same vein, research carried out by Cox et al. (1999) showed that even after teachers had received training courses in technology they still did not know how to use it because they were not trained on how to develop the pedagogical aspects of technology.

- To what extent does the Greek state-school context favor Web 2.0 integration?

According to both quantitative and qualitative data, 'New School' encompasses and promotes Web 2.0 integration but, at present, its purpose and philosophy are substantially theoretical far from actual practice. Although teachers believe that the 'New School' project encourages Web 2.0 pedagogy, they state that current textbooks and curricula as well as the digital materials provided by the Ministry of Education slightly enhance Web 2.0 integration into the EFL classroom. Similarly, but from a different perspective, school advisors maintain that although school curricula and textbooks encourage teachers to update the teaching procedure by exploiting the available digitized textbook materials and educational portals, in fact, this is hard to happen because both school digital facilities are outdated and teachers are not properly trained to do so. This is to be explicitly confirmed by the quantitative findings which indicate that the overwhelming majority of teachers rarely or never use the GSN services as well as the available digital platforms. As Goldsby & Fazal (2000) support technology is often met with reservations because teachers are unfamiliar with the possible pedagogical applications of ICTs. Only those teachers who learn to use technology during their pre-service studies are likely to incorporate technology in their future classes (Goldsby & Fazal, 2000).

Additionally, as both quantitative and qualitative research reveal, state-school teachers hesitate to use Web 2.0 tools because they are provided with deficient pedagogical support or no support in Web 2.0 integration. This finding agrees with Redecker et al. (2009) who maintain that there are inherent difficulties in implementing Web 2.0 tools and in changing teaching paradigms. Getting teachers to move away from more common teacher-centred interaction requires the acquisition of a powerful Web 2.0 strategy through systematic and well-organized digital training. That is why, the vast majority of respondents confess that they need school advisors' pedagogical guidance whose training role is considered to be extremely important.

Equally, quantitative data make evident that the technical support provided is defective mainly because of the poor technical equipment in classrooms which is also denounced by school advisors. Similar hindrances related to school-level barriers have also been reported by several scholars (Becta, 2004; Bingimlas, 2009; Sicilia, 2005). According to school advisors, the technically and pedagogically deprived state-school context justifies to a great extent teachers' lack of confidence and/or weakness to integrate Web 2.0 tools into EFL classes as well as to use the digital platforms and GSN services provided by the Ministry of Education.

- Which state-school factors are barriers against Web 2.0 integration?

This mixed-method research records barriers that are similar to those revealed in previous studies (Albirini, 2006; Crook, 2008; Hadjirigas, 2012, Jones, 2004; Karkoulia, 2016; Spiris, 2014). Specifically, once more quantitative data are consistent with the qualitative ones, reporting absence of computers from the classroom, lack of equipment, restricted access to the computer lab, internet access problems, inadequate technical support and large class-size/number of learners as major state-school barriers. The fact that teachers are not able to access computers as these are shared with other teachers as well as the evidence that school infrastructure is of poor quality discourages teachers to use Web 2.0 tools (Balanskat et al., 2006). Several studies indicate that lack of access to resources including home access discourage teachers from integrating technology into education (Sicilia, 2005).

Apart from the above infrastructure deficiencies, interview data report additional serious barriers such as teachers' lack of digital literacy/skills, the diversity of learner population, density of textbooks, time pressure, curricula constraints, lacking collaboration with colleagues and certain teachers' resistance to change (Cox, 1999). According to Denson's (2005) research, teachers with high-level skills tend to be favourably disposed towards technology integration. Previous research has also shown that this resistance to change may also be associated with teachers' fears which may include being replaced by technology and loss of their authority (Aust et al., 2005; Bullock, 2004; Machnaik, 2002; McGrail, 2005; Murray, 2000).

- What solutions are to be put forward towards the effective Web 2.0 integration?

It goes without saying that both teachers and school advisors urgently suggest official systematic training in the pedagogical use of Web 2.0 technologies. Both express EFL teachers' imperative need to participate in ICT-B Level training/certification. Furthermore, school advisors suggest teachers' Web 2.0 education on a compulsory and continuous basis, every school year starting from September. As similar research findings suggest, training policies should prioritize the systematic pedagogical training of teachers to help them use technology for EFL purposes in a pedagogically effective way (Albirini, 2006; Goldsby & Fazal, 2000; Redecker et al., 2009).

Quantitative findings are also compatible with the qualitative ones regarding suggestions for updating the current textbooks and curricula; regular pedagogical guidance; appropriate equipment as well as expanding the EFL timetable in state schools. Moreover, qualitative data recommend two additional solutions related to fostering collaborative spirit in the school staff and promoting the project method through digital material/sources and Web 2.0 tools. Most of these solutions have been identified in prior research as well (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Spiris, 2014) which reports that Web 2.0 tools should be a part of the syllabus in order to help teachers use them as a normal part of their everyday teaching practice (Chambers and Bax, 2006).

5.3. Research limitations

Despite the fact that the researcher combined two different methods of data collection to avoid drawbacks, the time was limited to eliminate them. Starting with the quantitative procedure, the non-probability convenience sampling does not allow making conclusions about a much broader population (Cohen et al., 2007). The validity of the present quantitative research could be higher if the number of the respondents was larger to depict more accurately the Greek state-school reality. Another constraint is that the quantitative data rely solely on teachers' self-reports which cannot be verified. Regarding the qualitative research, e-mail interviews have limitations as well because they do not provide body language and other contextual cues for the interviewer while the chance of spontaneous answers to questions is smaller because the interviewee has more time to reflect on them, thus, restricting the richness or soundness of data (Burns, 2010).

5.4. Suggestions for further research

Further research would definitely be useful if focusing more on the actual Web 2.0 implementation through triangulation. Combining more methods of data collection, such as classroom observation and/or direct observation programs and/or a case studies would strengthen further the validity of the research (Bell, 2005; Dornyei, 2003) providing a deeper

understanding of teachers' practices and conditions regarding Web 2.0 integration in the Greek state-school context. A large-scale study involving EFL teachers from different areas around Greece on the basis of a probability sample would also bring more representative results (Cohen et al., 2007).

Moreover, a larger-scale research project could engage learners attending state primary and secondary schools in order to achieve holistic and more meticulous research outcomes. In other words, a further broader-scale research study could investigate whether state-school learners have different attitudes from teachers, comparing their own experience and attitude with those of the teachers. In future studies, researchers might also include learners' voices by interviewing them to investigate if both learners and teachers have similar opinions about the Web 2.0 benefits in order to get a more comprehensive outcome for the pedagogical use of Web 2.0 tools in FLL. Additionally, given that few studies have actually examined learners' progress and specific learning outcomes, future empirical research could examine how or the extent to which learners' EFL and/or intercultural competence is enhanced or impacted using Web 2.0 tools.

Web 2.0 pedagogy issues need to be further investigated because, as several scholars claim, the application of Web 2.0 technologies in EFL contexts has a great impact on pedagogy, curriculum design and the conception of language learning (Sykes et al., 2008; Warschauer & Grimes, 2007). In order to achieve increased learners' performance and efficiency of their self-directed learning, it is necessary to develop and practice appropriate pedagogy and instructional strategy along with the use of Web 2.0 technologies (Shishkovskaya & Sokolova, 2015). This issue needs further and more focused research towards maximizing Web 2.0 benefits for the sake of EFL learners. Investigating what specific methods school advisors are in favour of to achieve effective Web 2.0 integration could be fruitful and helpful as in the present qualitative study the methodological issue remains vague or even obscure.

5.5. Suggestions for future action

The Greek state school should facilitate the integration of Web 2.0 technologies through a multimodal approach to FLL (Jewitt, 2006) to increase motivation and achievement of learning objectives (Cotterall, 2000; Crabbe, 2007; Stoller, 2004). To this end, evaluation policies regarding the current curriculum, textbooks and the overall state-school context are needed to overcome constraints and achieve the desired educational outcomes.

For instance, any textbook or curriculum changes should be accompanied by improvements and changes of the teaching context as a whole. There should be a more flexible classroom/desk organization facilitating collaboration, efficient technological equipment (computers, internet connection, overhead projector in each classroom) and facilities (computer labs) in order to optimize the whole learning process. School schedule and timetable should also be modified by increasing the teaching hours for EFL learning. Curriculum should engage learners in the active construction of knowledge addressing the 21st-century challenges and expectations.

Emphasis should also be placed on training policies by the Ministry of Education which are a prerequisite for the effective Web 2.0 integration through needs analysis procedures. Changing the 'culture' of teaching to support Web 2.0 learning environments should be a principal training goal. EFL teachers need to learn more about the educational Web 2.0 practices and challenges in order to be able to create innovative lessons. To this end, it is

necessary to strengthen the school advisors' role through their active and systematic contribution both in planning and fulfilling training courses on a regular basis.

6. Concluding remarks

Merging of quantitative and qualitative findings illustrate state EFL teachers' positive attitude towards Web 2.0 tools regarding their pedagogical benefits and significance for FLL in state schools. However, the picture is rather 'gloomy' regarding Web 2.0 integration due to various state-school barriers which discourage teachers to use them in the classroom. The major barriers are lack of digital literacy and deficient technological infrastructure which result in teachers' low confidence and, subsequently, in small-scale Web 2.0 use in schools which cannot be ignored.

Although state EFL teachers seem to be aware of Web 2.0 applications and the underlying pedagogical theories/teaching methods to a great extent, they barely plan a Web 2.0-based lesson because there is deficient pedagogical and technical support. Although they are willing to use Web 2.0 technologies, GSN services and the digital platforms provided by the Ministry of Education, they are not trained and, hence they are not skilled and confident to do so. To overcome the present state-school barriers, both teachers and school advisors suggest changing the current training policies, reviewing the curricula, textbooks and the timetable, and updating technological infrastructure in order to move from the digital 'New School' theory to 'New School' practice.

Essentially, there are remarkable implications emerging from this mixed-method research which include future action regarding training planning and implementation; the pedagogical link between technology and methodology; the need for a 'learner-driven' use of technology to serve pedagogical objectives; considerable financial investment in technological equipment; a heavy investment in teacher training. Careful planning and systematic training are prerequisites to align instructional practices and the Web 2.0 affordances. This means more than the technical helpdesk. Integrating Web 2.0 tools into the classroom requires or even presupposes changing the culture of learning through proper training to prepare teachers adjust to the new digital reality by familiarizing them with a Web 2.0 mentality. Moreover, it is necessary to infuse technology into the curriculum by developing strategies and resolving technical difficulties, in other words, by activating Web 2.0 sustaining educational policies.

All things considered, the Greek state-school system needs to maximize investment in Web 2.0 technology by exploring, assessing and pursuing its best pedagogical use for FLL in order to respond to the 21st century education challenges.

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Appendix
Crosstabs and Chi-square Tests

Crosstab 1
Academic Max * A1.1. To what extent do you think you have developed awareness of Web 2.0 technologies? Crosstabulation

			A1.1. To what extent do you think you have developed awareness of Web 2.0 technologies?					Total
			Not at all aware	Slightly aware	Somewhat aware	Moderately aware	Extremely aware	
Academic Max	Bachelor's Degree	Count	3	5	15	10	4	37
		Expected Count	1,3	4,3	9,4	16,8	5,1	37,0
	Master's Degree in progress	Count	1	6	9	30	3	49
		Expected Count	1,7	5,7	12,5	22,3	6,8	49,0
	Master's Degree	Count	0	6	13	23	12	54
		Expected Count	1,9	6,3	13,8	24,6	7,4	54,0
	PhD in progress	Count	1	0	0	3	0	4
		Expected Count	,1	,5	1,0	1,8	,6	4,0
	PhD	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
		Expected Count	,0	,1	,3	,5	,1	1,0
Total		Count	5	17	37	66	20	145
		Expected Count	5,0	17,0	37,0	66,0	20,0	145,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33,992[a]	16	,005
Likelihood Ratio	31,687	16	,011
Linear-by-Linear Association	6,654	1	,010
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 14 cells (56,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,03.

Crosstab 2

Academic Max * A4.2. Do you know how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson? Crosstabulation

			A4.2. Do you know how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson?					Total
			Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Much	To a great extent	
Academic Max	Bachelor's Degree	Count	9	9	11	4	2	35
		Expected Count	4,1	6,5	10,5	9,1	4,8	35,0
	Master's Degree in progress	Count	6	6	19	13	5	49
		Expected Count	5,7	9,1	14,8	12,8	6,7	49,0
	Master's Degree	Count	2	12	13	20	10	57
		Expected Count	6,6	10,5	17,2	14,8	7,8	57,0
	PhD in progress	Count	0	0	1	1	2	4
		Expected Count	,5	,7	1,2	1,0	,5	4,0
	PhD	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
		Expected Count	,1	,2	,3	,3	,1	1,0
Total		Count	17	27	44	38	20	146
		Expected Count	17,0	27,0	44,0	38,0	20,0	146,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32,417[a]	16	,009
Likelihood Ratio	30,487	16	,016
Linear-by-Linear Association	19,084	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	146		

a. 12 cells (48,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,12.

Crosstab 3
Academic Max * A4.7. Do you feel confident on how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson? Crosstabulation

			A4.7. Do you feel confident on how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson?					Total
			Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Much	To a great extent	
Academic Max	Bachelor's Degree	Count	14	9	11	2	0	36
		Expected Count	6,2	7,6	8,9	9,9	3,5	36,0
	Master's Degree in progress	Count	8	7	17	14	3	49
		Expected Count	8,4	10,4	12,1	13,4	4,7	49,0
	Master's Degree	Count	3	14	8	21	10	56
		Expected Count	9,6	11,9	13,8	15,3	5,4	56,0
	PhD in progress	Count	0	1	0	2	1	4
		Expected Count	,7	,8	1,0	1,1	,4	4,0
	PhD	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1
		Expected Count	,2	,2	,2	,3	,1	1,0
Total		Count	25	31	36	40	14	146
		Expected Count	25,0	31,0	36,0	40,0	14,0	146,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43,710[a]	16	,000
Likelihood Ratio	49,752	16	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	26,698	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	146		

a. 12 cells (48,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,10.

Crosstab 4
D5. Teaching Experience (in years) * A4.7. Do you feel confident on how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson? Crosstabulation

			A4.7. Do you feel confident on how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson?					Total
			Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Much	To a great extent	
D5. Teaching Experience (in years)	1-10	Count	4	11	5	8	2	30
		Expected Count	5,1	6,4	7,4	8,2	2,9	30,0
	11-15	Count	7	4	21	18	4	54
		Expected Count	9,2	11,5	13,3	14,8	5,2	54,0
	16-20	Count	12	9	7	5	5	38
		Expected Count	6,5	8,1	9,4	10,4	3,6	38,0
	26+	Count	2	7	3	9	3	24
		Expected Count	4,1	5,1	5,9	6,6	2,3	24,0
Total		Count	25	31	36	40	14	146
		Expected Count	25,0	31,0	36,0	40,0	14,0	146,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28,473[a]	12	,005
Likelihood Ratio	29,156	12	,004
Linear-by-Linear Association	,176	1	,674
N of Valid Cases	146		

a. 4 cells (20,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,30.

Crosstab 5

A1.1. To what extent do you think you have developed awareness of Web 2.0 technologies? * A4.1. How often do you plan a Web 2.0-based lesson? [] Crosstabulation

			A4.1. How often do you plan a Web 2.0-based lesson?					Total
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
A1.1. To what extent do you think you have developed awareness of Web 2.0 technologies?	Not at all aware	Count	2	3	0	0	0	5
		Expected Count	,8	1,5	1,6	1,0	,1	5,0
	Slightly aware	Count	9	7	0	0	0	16
		Expected Count	2,5	4,9	5,1	3,2	,2	16,0
	Somewhat aware	Count	6	18	9	4	0	37
		Expected Count	5,7	11,4	11,9	7,5	,5	37,0
	Moderately aware	Count	5	15	30	13	2	65
		Expected Count	10,0	20,0	20,9	13,2	,9	65,0
	Extremely aware	Count	0	1	7	12	0	20
		Expected Count	3,1	6,2	6,4	4,1	,3	20,0
Total		Count	22	44	46	29	2	143
		Expected Count	22,0	44,0	46,0	29,0	2,0	143,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	71,927[a]	16	,000
Likelihood Ratio	75,625	16	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	48,618	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	143		

a. 14 cells (56,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,07.

Crosstab 6

A4.1. How often do you plan a Web 2.0-based lesson? * A4.7. Do you feel confident on how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson? Crosstabulation

			A4.7. Do you feel confident on how to plan a Web 2.0-based lesson?					Total
			Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Much	To a great extent	
A4.1. How often do you plan a Web 2.0-based lesson?	Never	Count	14	4	1	1	2	22
		Expected Count	3,8	4,7	5,3	6,1	2,1	22,0
	Rarely	Count	9	18	12	7	0	46
		Expected Count	7,9	9,8	11,1	12,7	4,4	46,0
	Sometimes	Count	2	8	19	13	4	46
		Expected Count	7,9	9,8	11,1	12,7	4,4	46,0
	Often	Count	0	1	3	19	6	29
		Expected Count	5,0	6,2	7,0	8,0	2,8	29,0
	Always	Count	0	0	0	0	2	2
		Expected Count	,3	,4	,5	,6	,2	2,0
Total		Count	25	31	35	40	14	145
		Expected Count	25,0	31,0	35,0	40,0	14,0	145,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	108,888[a]	16	,000
Likelihood Ratio	99,678	16	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	57,632	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	145		

a. 11 cells (44,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,19.

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Crosstab 7

B3.1. Have you received any in-service training on Web 2.0 tools so far? [] * B3.5. Is it important for you to receive training on Web 2.0 technologies? [] Crosstabulation

			B3.5. Is it important for you to receive training on Web 2.0 technologies? []				
			Not at all important	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Extremely important	Total
B3.1. Have you received any in-service training on Web 2.0 tools so far? []	Not at all	Count	0	1	11	13	25
		Expected Count	,6	2,0	9,8	12,6	25,0
	Slightly	Count	0	1	5	7	13
		Expected Count	,3	1,0	5,1	6,6	13,0
	Moderately	Count	0	1	12	9	22
		Expected Count	,5	1,8	8,6	11,1	22,0
	Much	Count	0	3	5	7	15
		Expected Count	,3	1,2	5,9	7,6	15,0
	To a great extent	Count	2	1	1	8	12
		Expected Count	,3	1,0	4,7	6,1	12,0
Total		Count	2	7	34	44	87
		Expected Count	2,0	7,0	34,0	44,0	87,0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21,647[a]	12	,042
Likelihood Ratio	17,674	12	,126
Linear-by-Linear Association	,317	1	,573
N of Valid Cases	87		

a. 11 cells (55,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,28.

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The effectiveness of a parallel syllabus that uses WebQuests to enhance the New Literacies of 6th grade primary school EFL learners

Η αποτελεσματικότητα ενός παράλληλου πλαισίου προγράμματος που χρησιμοποιεί Ιστοεξερευνήσεις για την ανάπτυξη νέων εγγραμματισμών σε μαθητές της Έκτης Δημοτικού

Maria DOULGERI and Leda ANTONIOU

The present study sought to examine the effectiveness of a parallel syllabus intended to supplement the EFL textbook of the sixth grade of Greek state primary schools with ready-made WebQuests. This longer-term implementation of WebQuests would cover the gap in the research concerning more longitudinal effects of WebQuests on developing learners' multiliteracies – especially computer and information literacies – and their underlying sociocognitive/social-constructivist foundations. The action research involved twenty-one participants, sixth-grade students, and employed a mixed methods classroom research combining quantitative and qualitative data. Valuable insights were gathered by the comparison of the data of a pre- and post- meant questionnaire combined with the students' answers to semi-structured interviews and the teacher's observation log. The findings indicate that the aforementioned syllabus yielded positive results which support the use of WebQuests in primary education and satisfied the social constructivist demands with regard to new literacy achievement. The use of WebQuests presented students with ample opportunities to avail themselves of the skills and knowledge that will assist them in the future as regards their critical ability to locate, evaluate and synthesize the new information gathered in groups.

☙

Η παρούσα μελέτη επιδίωξε να διερευνήσει την αποτελεσματικότητα ενός παράλληλου πλαισίου προγράμματος σπουδών που σκοπό είχε να εμπλουτίσει το βιβλίο των Αγγλικών της Έκτης Δημοτικού των δημόσιων δημοτικών σχολείων με διαδικτυακά διαθέσιμες εφαρμογές Ιστοεξερεύνησης. Αυτή η πιο μακροχρόνια εφαρμογή των Ιστοεξερευνήσεων θα

κάλυπτε το κενό της έρευνας που αφορά στις πιο μακροπρόθεσμες επιπτώσεις των Ιστοεξερευνήσεων στην ανάπτυξη των πολλαπλών εγγραμματισμών – ιδιαίτερα των εγγραμματισμών της χρήσης των υπολογιστών και της πληροφορίας – στους μαθητές, καθώς και των υποκείμενων κοινωνιογνωστικών/κοινωνικών-κονστρουκτιβιστικών δομών. Η έρευνα δράσης διεξήχθη σε είκοσι-έναν μαθητές της έκτης δημοτικού, και χρησιμοποίησε έρευνα μικτών μεθόδων μέσα στην τάξη συνδυάζοντας ποιοτικά και ποσοτικά δεδομένα. Η σύγκριση των δεδομένων από το ερωτηματολόγιο πριν και από το ερωτηματολόγιο μετά την εφαρμογή των Ιστοεξερευνήσεων, σε συνδυασμό με τις απαντήσεις των μαθητών σε ημι-δομημένες συνεντεύξεις και το ημερολόγιο παρατηρήσεων του καθηγητή παρείχε πολύτιμες πληροφορίες. Τα ευρήματα υποδεικνύουν ότι το προαναφερθέν παράλληλο πλαίσιο προγράμματος σπουδών απέφερε θετικά αποτελέσματα που συνηγορούν για τη χρήση των Ιστοεξερευνήσεων στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση και ικανοποίησε τις κοινωνικές κονστρουκτιβιστικές απαιτήσεις αναφορικά με την επίτευξη του νέου εγγραμματισμού. Η χρήση των Ιστοεξερευνήσεων παρείχε στους μαθητές ευκαιρίες να επωφεληθούν από τις απαραίτητες δεξιότητες και γνώση, εφόδια που θα τους βοηθήσουν στο μέλλον, αναφορικά με την κριτική τους ικανότητα να εντοπίζουν, να αξιολογούν και να συνθέτουν τις νέες πληροφορίες που συλλέγουν ομαδικά.

Key words: WebQuests, New Literacies

1. Introduction

It is an inescapable reality that the Internet has profoundly altered the classical notions of literacy that existed so far, extending beyond the print-only world of reading and writing to new kinds of literacy often referred to as multiliteracies (Mills, 2009) or New Literacies (Leu *et al.*, 2014). Technology has certainly rendered information plentiful and readily available giving students ample opportunities to mine vast amounts of information. The problem that arises, however, is that there is such an overabundance of information that it necessitates sorting it, assessing it for accuracy, and especially deciding which is really useful. New Literacies encourage students to effectively engage in processes of analysis and evaluation of the subject matter so that some sort of transformation from raw information into useable and meaningful knowledge ensues. Retrieval and regurgitation of information is transformed into an active process which makes students "fully engaged as participants rather than merely information recipients" (Morrison, 2014, p.3).

Therefore, the challenge is for teaching practices and school curricula to incorporate technology so as to adapt to learners' rapidly evolving needs in a way that has a significant bearing on their lives, interests and aspirant futures (Sox & Rubinstein-Ávila, 2009). The official educational policy dictated by the DEPPS (Pedagogical Institute, 2003), the cross-disciplinary Greek EFL curriculum for primary and secondary education, and by IFLC (Pedagogical Institute, 2011), the more recent revised unified curriculum for primary and secondary foreign language teaching in state schools, place increased significance on ICT enhancement with regard to new literacy achievement as an explicit recognition of the fact that since our world is increasingly digitized, children are entitled to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that promote their digital literacy so as to address the radical social and economic transformation under way and seize future opportunities.

WebQuests, web-based activities that require students to use Internet inquiry not for a random, unfocused search, but for the solution of a real life problem through collaborative contribution (Schweizer & Kossow, 2007; Zheng *et al.*, 2008), can contribute to a large degree to the enhancement of new literacies, and in particular students' computer and information literacies, two essential components of new literacies this research revolves around, in addition to the enhancement of their collaborative skills.

Aiming at augmenting the literature concerning the effects of the implementation of WebQuests on students' computer and information literacies in association to their collaborative skills with empirical evidence, the current study put into practice the theoretical proposal Papaioannou (2011) submitted in order to verify its validity. The syllabus integration, apart from Papaioannou's initial prospect of fostering writing skills and collaboration, focused on the development of EFL young learners' new literacies, as skills and strategies that students build in order to use digital sources and adapt to new learning contexts.

2. Literature review

2.1. Dimensions of New Literacies

Literacy has been traditionally associated with reading and writing print-based texts (Cameron, 2001). Nowadays, though, a reconceptualisation of literacy to literacies so as to encompass new modes of representation that are much broader than those represented by language alone, is required in order to create a working definition of what it means to be literate in a global community.

Defining literacy has always been characterized by a certain fluidity and versatility, but the pace at which it is changing at present is unprecedented, rendering it a moving target, depending on societal expectations for literacy (Leu, *et al.*, 2013). Of the multitude of existing terms—such as multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) or multimoded literacies (Mills, 2009), e-literacy (Martin, 2003), electronic literacy (Shetzer & Warshauer, 2000; Warshauer, 1999), on-line literacy (Leu *et al.*, 2014), information literacy (Ercegovac, 1998; Virkus, 2011), ICT literacy (International ICT Literacy Panel, 2002; Goodfellow, 2011), computer literacy (Eisenberg & Johnson, 2002), 21st century literacy (NCREL, 2003)— digital literacy (Ba *et al.*, 2002) seems to be the predecessor term to the most predominant one, encompassing all of these terms as an umbrella term, the term New Literacies. 'Digital literacy' is an especially high profile literacy at present. Both definitions of digital literacy and New Literacies given by Martin (2008) and Leu *et al.* (2014) respectively emphasize the ability to search, access, and synthesize information from digital tools in order to create meanings which will be effectively communicated to others. While 'new literacies', though, put the emphasis on social practices that are shaped by emerging technologies 'digital literacy' has a broader spectrum embracing technical, cognitive, and social perspectives of learning with the aid of digital technologies, both online and offline (Ng, 2012).

New literacies share two more salient features: they are multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted. Meaning is represented through diverse modalities and media. In stark contrast to traditional texts which typically include a mixture of print and two-dimensional graphics, Internet texts integrate a wide range of multiple media formats, including animated symbols, and audio, visual, and interactive elements (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

2.2. Computer and information literacies

Computer literacy is a branch of the broader term of digital literacy or extended electronic literacy. The definition of computer literacy has come a long way since the advent of computers, initially involving the ability to use floppy discs, programming in BASIC or unzipping a zipped file and uploading files to a server (Gilster, 1997). Such definitions are obsolete due to rapid change and technology evolution (Ba *et al.*, 2002). Computer literacy is now associated with the technical skills and expertise to use computer programmes and hardware. The level of familiarity with the hardware and software concepts and the use of the Internet and electronic communications define the degree of a person's computer literacy.

Being another branch of digital literacy, information literacy, as defined by the North Central Educational Laboratory (NCREL, 2003) is the ability first to recognize when information is needed and then to locate, evaluate and synthesize it effectively with the aid of technology, communication networks and electronic resources. Virkus (2011) quotes a host of definitions, most of which centre around the aforementioned stages of needs recognition, source selection and critical evaluation of information before the final synthesis and use.

With the perception of the World Wide Web as an infinite source of information, this literacy gains tremendous urgency as an ongoing process that will empower students' future employability; it seeks to prepare young people to make sense of the world in order to thrive socially, intellectually and economically. Because of the vast quantities of information available browsing and searching have become essential skills; this requires increased research skill levels. Furthermore, evaluating and synthesizing information places a greater burden on higher level thinking skills.

2.3. Sociocognitive and social-constructivist dimensions of new literacies

Apart from framing new literacies as a process of problem solving inquiry necessitating new skills, strategies and dispositions, some theorists regard them as new social practices grounded on sociocognitive and constructivist theory. Constructivism holds that learners are solely responsible for building up their own knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning (Siemens, 2004). Both the two wider strands of constructivism, cognitive—often with reference to Piaget's theory—and social –mostly associated with Vygotsky — espouse the notion that knowledge is actively constructed by learners within a specific material and social context. Vygotsky's (1978) theory constitutes a historical strand of the constructivist perspective enriched by the social dimension of constructing meaning: children start to develop cognitively when they internalize meaning provided by social interaction under the scaffolding of a more advanced person (be it a more knowledgeable peer or the teacher).

New Literacies are embodied in new social practices: new digital technologies produce texts that engage people in social practices taking place with and in relation to others. Ability to work with others through mutual and collective understandings and negotiating ideas and practices are of paramount importance. New Literacies allow texts to be jointly authored and meanings challenged, extended and collaborated (Leu *et al.* 2014).

2.4. WebQuests

WebQuests, a Web 1.0 tool, have been attracting teachers' and educators' attention since their inception in 1995 by Bernie Dodge and Tom March at San Diego State University; ever since, WebQuests have become an effective method of incorporating technology with educational concepts. The four core elements forming WebQuests according to March (2007), are a scaffolding structure that supports students' motivation and enhances critical thinking through the integration of enriched learning resources. A WebQuest differs from a standard website because it necessitates the learner actively engaging with the material to be researched in collaboration with other learners, a vital element of the learner-centred approach, according to Şen & Neufeld (2006).

The role of scaffolding according to Dodge (2001) is to facilitate transformative learning, since students have to transform information and expertise acquired into a new product. Thus, prior knowledge is activated and new schemata are constructed upon pre-existing ones. Retrieval of prior knowledge and knowledge association undergird meaningful, deep learning, which lies at the core of WebQuests. Zheng *et al.* (2008) further purport that knowledge application and effective use of information promote transfer of knowledge to new learning. Mangelson and Castek (2008) recommend giving students guidelines, structures and relevant material; the predictable format of a WebQuest can satisfy these requirements.

Six critical components comprise WebQuests:

An *introduction* which sets the stage and provides necessary background information, aiming at attracting the students' attention (March, 1998); A doable and interesting *task* to which the students can relate (Strickland, 2005)**;** A *process* page, which describes step by step how the learners will accomplish the task, role descriptions (if any), and guidance on individual (Halat, 2008). It also includes the *resources*: (bookmarked Web sites, print resources, videos, audio materials, maps, etc) needed to complete the task (MacGregor & Lou, 2004-5); *Evaluation*: a rubric or a checklist to evaluate the students' performance or their products (Schweizer and Kossow (2007); *Conclusion*: it wraps up the quest and may include reflections on the lesson, thoughts or extensions of the lesson (Kelly, 2000).

In a typical WebQuest students assume roles that prompt them to address an issue in multiple perspectives by adopting different viewpoints. WebQuests, then, accord with situated learning, as students gather their expertise in the subject at hand through the context of their roles. As Lave and Wenger (1991) contend, the focus of situated learning is the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs. Learning should not be viewed as simply the transmission of abstract and decontextualised knowledge from one individual to another, but as a social process whereby knowledge is co-constructed; such learning is situated in a specific context and embedded within a particular social and physical environment. Apparently, a social-constructivist approach emerges as a foundation of the WebQuests, as the construction of knowledge presupposes social interaction and interdependence among group members (Arvaniti, 2014; Popota, 2014). As Osman (2014) puts it, cooperative learning builds a positive atmosphere encouraging participation, teaches group processes and facilitative and not dominant roles in a group.

WebQuests not only promote students' social and cognitive development but they also offer ample opportunities for expanding the development of new literacies. Coiro (2003) believes that WebQuests constitute appropriate activities to train students into the development of

new literacies. Students search for, locate, read and evaluate information guided by a particular purpose (as opposed to simply "surfing the Internet") and they work collaboratively to construct a new understanding of the information.

3. The research design

3.1. Aim and research questions

Taking into account the new literacies specifics , the characteristics of WebQuests, and the objective set by Papaioannou (2011, p.77), the writer of the proposed parallel syllabus, to supplement the 6th grade primary learners' textbook *Αγγλικά Στ' Δημοτικού – English 6th grade* (Εφραιμίδου *et al.*, 2010) so as to "foster sociocognitive/social constructivist assumptions to literacy achievement from the perspective of e-reading", this research aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent do WebQuests promote students' computer skills, i.e. the technical skills needed to use a computer?

2. What is the level of students' information literacy, i.e. the skills to effectively locate, evaluate and use online information, which can be reached through WebQuest use?

3. To what degree can WebQuest projects foster social constructivist assumptions to literacy by contributing to the enhancement of students' collaborative skills?

3.2. Participants

The present research addressed twenty-one (12 boys and 9 girls) 6th grade students of a state primary school in Trilofos, on the outskirts of Thessaloniki. Students had different learning styles and ethnic backgrounds and their proficiency level spanned between real beginners and elementary A2 level, according to the specifications of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2002).

3.3. Research method

For the current study a mixed methods classroom research was employed. It was an 'action research', teacher-initiated research with a view to improving the quality of learning in a specific classroom after critical examination of the specific teaching situation. Action research encourages teachers to examine the dynamics of their class, critically evaluate actions and interactions among their students and either confirm or discard existing ideas or practices (Bassey, 1998; Grabe & Stoller; 2011; Mills, 2011; Richards, 2003). The mixed method employed in the current action research combined both quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed method inquiry, as put by Dörnyei (2007, p. 62), is a way of "legitimizing findings" and permits the researcher to engage in triangulation. According to Mertler (2012, p.12) triangulation is "a process of relating multiple sources of data in order to establish their trustworthiness or verification of the consistency of the facts while trying to account for their inherent biases".

Initially, a pre- treatment questionnaire was administered to students and a post-treatment questionnaire after the implementation of the whole WebQuest syllabus. Questionnaires are among the most widely used research techniques (Blaxter et al., 2002; Cohen et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2003) since they are easy to construct and allow for a very rapid collection of a big

amount of information. The post-treatment questionnaire had similar layout and wording to the pre-questionnaire: this would facilitate the comparison of the results and the measurement of students' difference in the areas concerned as the data of the two questionnaires would be compared and analyzed.

For this research semi-structured, in terms of degree of formality, interviews were also conducted upon completion of each WebQuest with open-ended questions exploring the participants' thoughts and feelings over the process and the products, and the degree to which they achieved cooperation. Interviews followed by proper reflection enable the researcher to further explore the issue involved as they can provide rich and spontaneous data (Brown, 2001; Richards, 2003).

Additionally, the teacher observed students throughout the WebQuest projects with the help of an observation checklist regarding students' new literacies, reading habits, and collaboration among different groups. Observation as a research process offers multiple benefits to the researcher, according to Cohen *et al*. (2007): it allows the investigator to gather data at first hand and *in situ*, providing the opportunity for authentic and not mediated data. Moreover, brief and factual chronological entries of each session in the form of a recording log, as described by Taylor-Powell and Steele (1996), were also kept by the teacher, containing any observations, thoughts, and feelings relevant to the original hypothesis.

3.4. The research procedure

In the Greek educational realm Photodentro LOR (Learning Object Repository) for primary and secondary education as of 2011 hosts reusable, open educational resources (Megalou & Kaklamanis, 2014); English quests, falling according to Mitsikopoulou (2014) in the exploratory educational material category, follow the constituent parts and educational approaches and objectives of WebQuests; they are, though, age specific and can apply to any of the English textbooks in the primary (or secondary) education.

The rationale pervading the selection of the WebQuests in the proposed syllabus was to link and enrich the topics explored in the 6th grade textbook while simultaneously enhance students' new literacies. The proposed syllabus consists of six main WebQuest projects and an alternative one, which roughly follow after the completion of two textbook units (see Appendix). The first three WebQuests were completed over a period which spanned from late October until the Easter break in late April.

3.4.1. The planning stage: preparation and scaffolding

A lot of planning and preparation had to be carried out by the teacher before the implementation of the WebQuest syllabus. Before embarking on the preparation phase the teacher, as Şen and Neufeld (2006) illustrate, had to familiarize herself fully with the proposed WebQuests and prepare her material which would provide the necessary scaffolding. Since WebQuests require learners to work cooperatively in mutual co-construction efforts through project based instruction (ChanLin, 2008) enough scaffolding was provided for the collaborative group work that would ensue within the context of the WebQuests. Şen and Neufeld (2006) pinpoint the indisputable and increasing need to be able to work effectively in a team in today's workplace; hence, the importance of maintaining cooperation among students.

It was decided that the first WebQuest would be presented in the classroom with the aid of a laptop and a projector. This social shared experience would contribute significantly towards the lowering of students' affective filter, as, according to Krashen (1984), low anxiety settings are conducive to learning and boost students' motivation. MacGregor and Lou (2004-5, p.165) pinpoint that "providing students with explicit procedures facilitates WebQuest activities and supports the acquisition of knowledge"; therefore, before the application of each WebQuest the 'introduction' and the 'task' pages were presented and the 'process' page clarified so that all students would acquire a clear picture of what was required of them.

The teacher activated the students' background knowledge connecting each WebQuest with the curriculum, as Schweizer and Kossow (2007) propose. Considering how the tasks support the syllabus, some of the WebQuests' tasks had to be slightly adapted so as to cater for the differences in students' ability to comprehend the given tasks and reflect on them or had to be enriched with reliable links so as not to let students wander aimlessly and avoid the pitfall of distractibility, taking heed of Halat's (2008) recommendations.

3.4.2. The implementation

During the implementation stage as Şen and Neufeld (2006) recommend, the teacher acted as a facilitator, shifting the responsibility of learning within the WebQuest projects to the students. Towards this end, the evaluation rubrics of the WebQuests were presented so that learners would glean an idea of what was expected of them and form a rough framework for their work in their minds.

Taking notes in flow charts, grids and diagrams was a prerequisite in all WebQuest projects; these would act as "ideational frameworks", models the mind uses to organize ideas in information sets, and their consistent exploitation would yield learning benefits, according to Burgess's (1994) schema theory.

During each WebQuest's implementation phase, the students analyzed and synthesized the information they obtained from the web to complete the worksheets, and finally worked as a team on their final product. This procedure helped them solve authentic problems and be creative in the production of their output and, on a second level, gave them ample opportunities to collaborate and practice their speaking skills, either amongst them or towards their audience. Throughout the process, the teacher and the more knowledgeable students scaffolded the weaker ones not only linguistically but in technical issues as well. In scheduled in-class intervals students were provided with guidelines to use when preparing presentations in general, PowerPoint presentations and reader's theatre[1], all useful to them to apply in their work and finally create – use, in other words, their higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), as Polly and Ausband (2009) indicate, to present their final products achieved through group interaction and collaboration.

3.4.3. The evaluation and presentation stage

The evaluation stage of each WebQuest project followed the same procedure and aimed at helping students assess and reflect on their own learning: along with the teacher evaluation,

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[1] After analysing the genre (Reader's theatre is the reading of a script, as opposed to acting it out. The actors do NOT memorize their lines. They only use their voice to help the audience understand the story instead of sets and costumes) advice was given to students on how best to perform what they had produced as a result of their collaborative work on the WebQuest.

whose criteria had been put forth clearly early on at the presentation stage the students would fill in the self-evaluation list in which they assessed their own level of participation in the project and the quality of their work, a stepping stone towards their becoming more autonomous and responsible (Schweizer & Kossow, 2007). At this point each student would also complete a collaboration assessment list for each member of their team individually so that everybody would evaluate the collaborative support of each participant in their group.

The 'Conclusion' brought closure to the projects: what ensued was a whole-class discussion, in which the learners recapitulated what they had gained though the process, described their feelings -positive and negative- towards the project and, finally, received congratulations on their work. Most of the products were geared toward getting students involved into practical activities for which they had to make choices that reflected their interests, taking, thus, control of their learning, as Ikpeze and Boyd (2007) indicate. Finally, the teams' final products were presented first in their class and then in a kind of a presentation 'ceremony' at the end of the year, and credit was given to each team, according to their effort.

4. Presentation and discussion of the findings

4.1. Students' computer skills

At the beginning of the year, students reported diverse degrees of familiarity and comfort with computers. The students were already skilled enough in using computers either at home or at school, since they had a two-hour ICT lesson weekly and a small minority attended private computer lessons. These computers skills, cultivated in their ICT lessons, were confined, though, to basic knowledge of functions and access to the Internet, as conferring with their ICT teacher also revealed. Moreover, they were rather familiar with new technologies, and the majority of them used computers to play, to communicate (synchronously and asynchronously) and to browse the Internet for entertainment (Games, YouTube).

With reference to their computer literacy it must be noted that students' answers to the pre-treatment questionnaire revealed a considerably high self-confidence as regards their ability to use the various computer parts (mouse, keyboard, printer, etc), to use search engines, such as Google, to store information, to successfully use Word documents with all their basic functions. Almost half of the students, though, were not very familiar with Power Point presentations. After the implementation of the WebQuest syllabus their abilities to use computer parts, search engines and word documents really soared, as can be deduced by the higher percentages in the post-treatment questionnaire. What is really impressive is their greater familiarization with the Power Point presentations, an invaluable tool for most of their presentations after the scaffolded instruction students received during the implementation of the parallel syllabus (see Fig. 1, questions 1, 6, 7, 8, 13).

In all, the data collected by the quantitative and qualitative research tools used in this action research seem to corroborate the supposition that students' computer literacy was promoted. As discussed by Luzón (2007, p.10) hyperlinked resources in WebQuests can "train students to use inferential reasoning skills and context clues to discern which information may be found at a hyperlink on a webpage" helping them "determine whether or not a hyperlink will contribute to or disrupt their search for relevant information"; students in this study were also trained in using their ability to use inferential reasoning.

What is true about you? / What was true about you while doing the Web Quest projects?
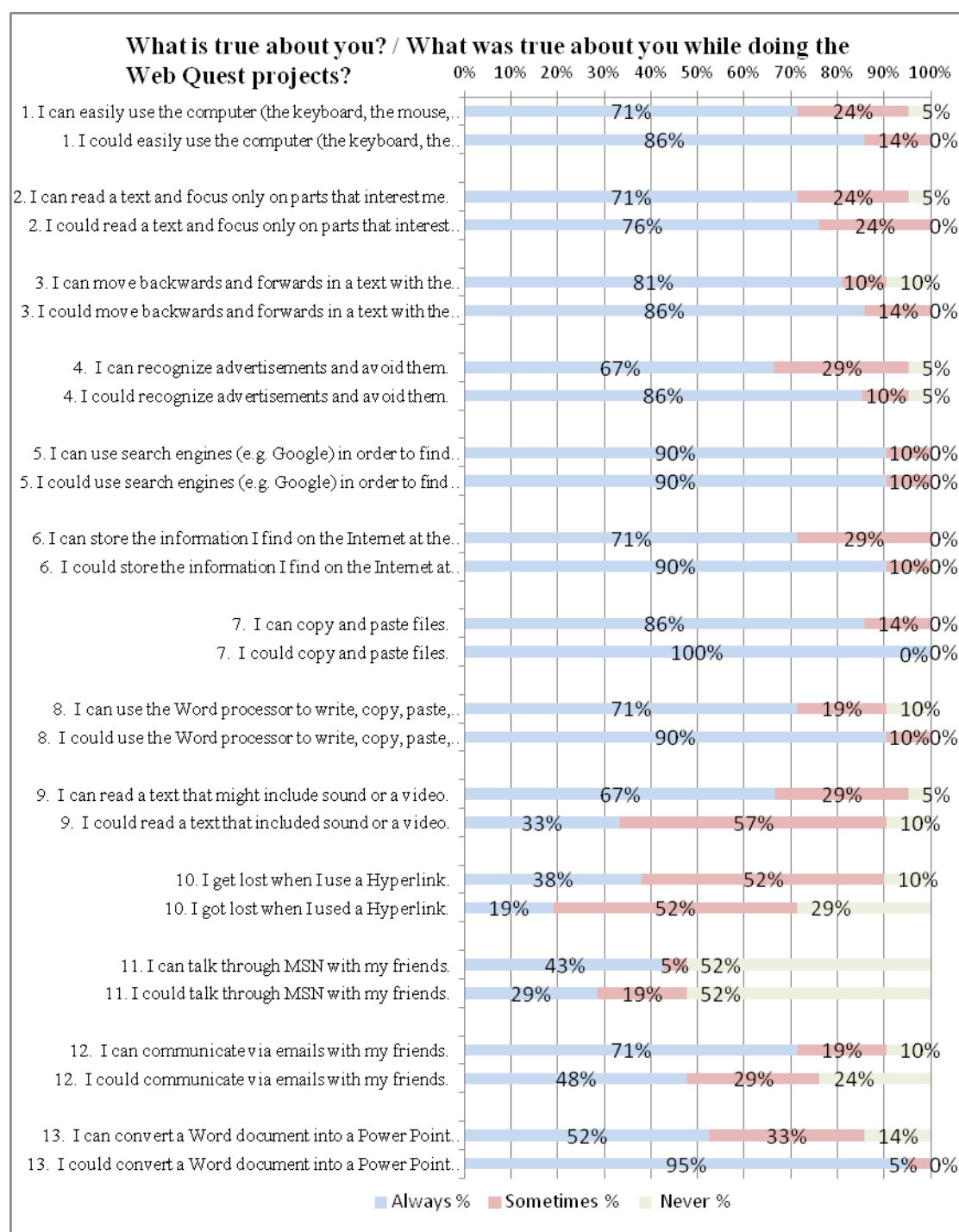
Figure 1: Students' enhancement of computer and information literacies

4.2. Students' information literacy

According to Kuiper et al. (2008, par. 4) "the Web's use of hypertext and its multimodality require specific reading skills to be able to find one's way, in order to distinguish between potentially valuable and useless information and to identify the meaning of non-textual elements". Hypertext elements (highlighted words, menus, images, links, videos) attracted students' attention and disoriented them in the first sessions at the computer lab. Gradually, though, students became accustomed to the varying appearance of the hypertext environment and moved about the pages with greater ease, scanning the content of the

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pages they visited, establishing their relevancy to their goal and deciding on which page or part of page to concentrate on. As it can be summoned from students' answers in the post-treatment questionnaire, there was a considerable rise in their ability to read online passages and focus on parts of interest therein: recognizing advertisements and evading them or using Hyperlinks without straying from their target is evident in their answers. Reading authentic English texts on line, daunting though it may have appeared in the beginning, became the norm by the end of the WebQuest applications. Apart from the first disheartening reactions, students got used to dealing with different kinds of texts and overcoming the difficulties they encountered (see Fig. 1, questions 1, 6, 7, 8, 13).

The lengthy material was accessed with great apprehension at the beginning of the WebQuest syllabus implementation, a feeling which gradually subsided through the teacher's support and positive reinforcement and students' gradual perception of what was expected of them. Initially, students encountered some problems as to fully understand the purpose of their work—especially in the first WebQuest and sought the teacher's clarifications. Collecting the necessary information either on paper or a Word document was not a big issue for them but selecting and critically evaluating it in order to synthesize it effectively so as to create an integrated output presented them with a great challenge. Students held group discussions and negotiated the relevance of information while filling in the worksheets in each WebQuest and, eventually, working towards their final outcome (see Fig. 1, questions 2, 4, 5, 9, 10).

What Milson (2001) observed while his project on WebQuests progressed, that his students engaged more in higher level thinking processes of organizing, evaluating and synthesizing information, also applied during the application of the parallel WebQuests syllabus, since students went to great lengths sifting the important from unimportant information in order to synthesize their material and not to just copy and download the texts used without any effort to comprehend them. Making critical choices and developing evaluative judgment, both indispensible to information literacy, are also corroborated by Ikpeze and Boyd's (2007) and Popota's (2014) study findings on WebQuests (see Fig. 2).
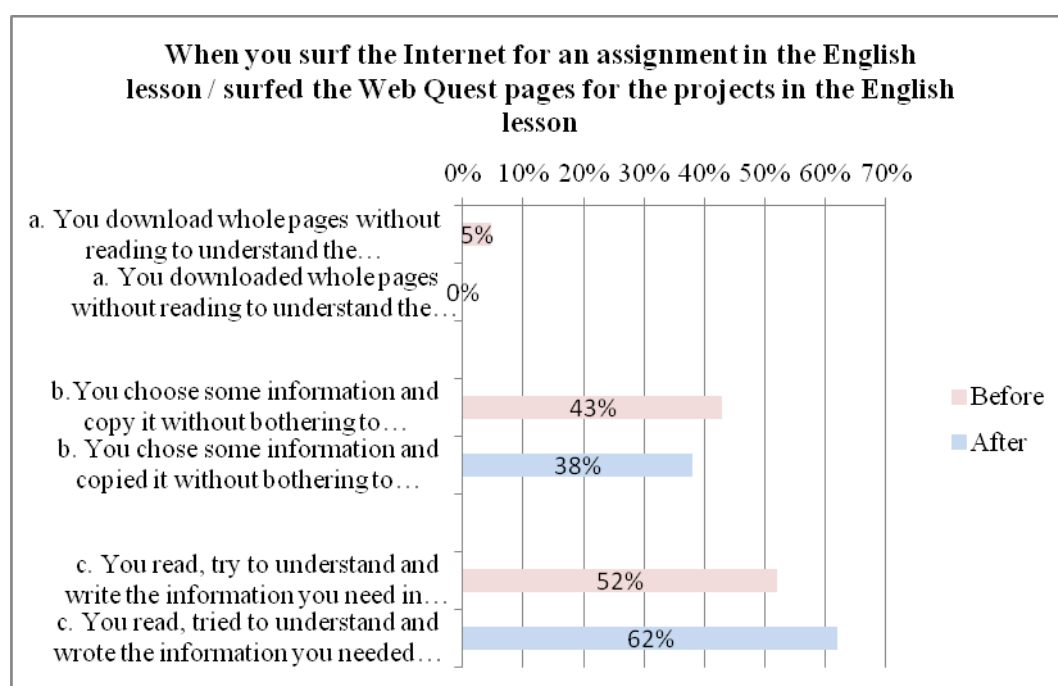

Figure 2: Students' enhancement of information literacies

4.3. Students' collaborative skills

WebQuests embrace sociocognitive and social-constructivist assumptions to new literacy achievement. Leu (2002, p.314) states that "literacy has always been a social phenomenon, but the new literacies contain more of a social component than traditional ones". Rooted on the Vygotskyan (1978) principle that construction of meaning is embedded in social interaction and within a dynamic social context and the social-constructivism strand of cognitive learning theories, which presupposes that knowledge construction is a joint venture that includes challenging, open-ended activities in realistic, meaningful contexts allowing students to generate their own hypotheses as endless possibilities, the WebQuests provided students with opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.

During the WebQuest syllabus the students actively participated with their peers in authentic activities with the aim of producing a tangible, real-life outcome. Not only did they gather and organize information but also they attained a certain goal presented within a story or a scenario which was stimulating to engage in. Students worked in groups towards a sophisticated understanding of newly acquired information and through a transformative process of new knowledge they presented solutions to problems posed, having at the same time developed their critical skills. Initially there was a lot of uncertainty as to the practical aspects of working in a group but gradually participants worked cooperatively to produce knowledge in the context of social interaction and acknowledged to a great extent that cooperation, especially within a team, is the key to accumulating knowledge in a better way. Students made new connections that enriched their production and their understanding of how to integrate technology in a constructivist manner.

In the WebQuest activities there was respect and co-operative spirit: students interacted and worked together harmoniously accepting what each team member had to offer and carefully attended to each other's opinions and arguments. Osman (2014) contends that through cooperative learning a positive atmosphere emerges where participation and not dominance is encouraged. Such was the case with the parallel syllabus: each group member carried out a specific, meaningful task and in cases of mistakes or difference in opinion they did not try to impose their viewpoints and admitted their mistakes. By doing so students focused on activities that addressed concepts of collaboration and interdependence in real life, a stepping stone for becoming autonomous and responsible in their adult lives.

As Kelly (2000, p.4) notes "collaborative problem-solving fits in nicely with the WebQuest lesson" and can contribute towards creating ways to overcome barriers and ultimately lead to success. Prior research has also found similar findings, that Webquests promote social interaction as the students need to communicate their findings in a realistic way (Arvaniti, 2014; Laborda, 2010; Popota, 2014; Zheng *et al.*, 2008).What is interesting to note here was the collaboration and help offered not only among members of the same team but also help among members of different teams. Thus, there was distribution of knowledge throughout the classroom fostering the social dimension of literacy with more knowledgeable and "socially skilled learners" (Leu et al, 2004, p. 1598) helping weaker ones (see Fig. 3).
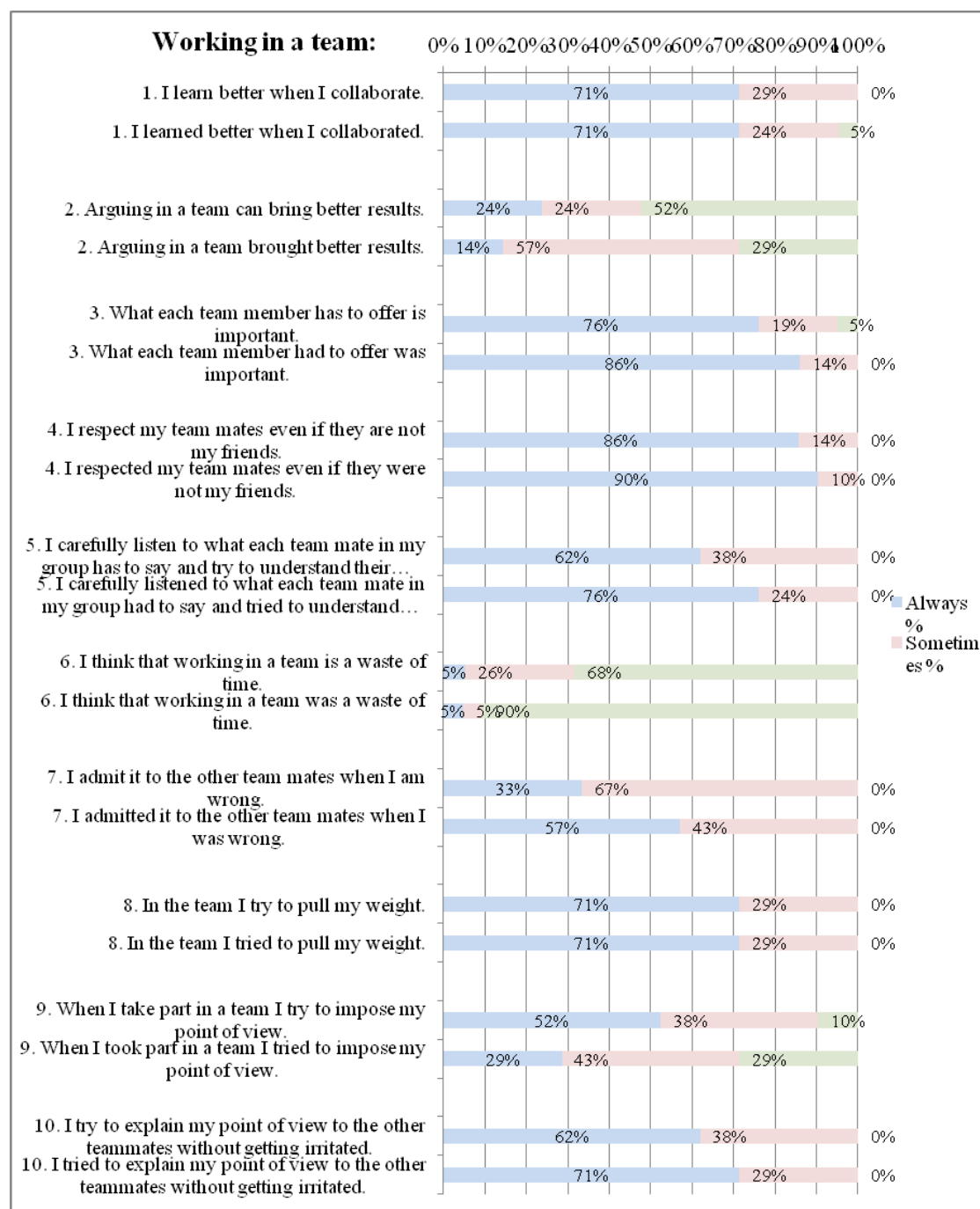
Figure 3: Students' enhancement of collaboration and co-construction of knowledge

5. Teaching implications

In the Greek reality research has been carried out on the effects the implementation of one WebQuest can have on 6th grade primary students' enhancement of new literacies (Arvaniti, 2014; Gkoritsa, 2011; Frountza, 2014; Katsoulaki, 2010; Liakou, 2011; Popota, 2014). The case study that Manou (2012) conducted was also based on the implementation of two WebQuests with the aim of promoting a more strategic reading behaviour in 6th grade students. What the current research focused on, however, was the effectiveness of a parallel syllabus based on a whole series of carefully selected readymade WebQuests for the enhancement of new literacy skills of students in the 6th grade of a Greek primary school,

proposed by Papaioannou (2011). This longer-term implementation of WebQuests will, hopefully, cover the gap in the research concerning more longitudinal effects of WebQuests on developing learners' multiliteracies—especially computer and information literacies, and their underlying sociocognitive/social-constructivist foundations.

The positive results yielded from the implementation of the aforementioned syllabus are expected to compose a comprehensive proposal for the consideration of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs which in cooperation with scientific teams from universities, like the Hellenic Open University, will, hopefully, fund programmes that will promote the use of technology like WebQuests to supplement the 6th grade textbook and in doing so, promote new literacies and learner autonomy. Furthermore, English teachers should be equipped with the essential and indispensible knowledge in order to enrich their ELT practices with the use of technology, especially the Internet based applications of WebQuests, which have proven a great asset on the teaching arsenal. Hopefully, teachers will not restrict their teaching to the printed books in the future but will combine or expand them with authentic Internet resources. It is therefore suggested that the teacher's experience of the WebQuest tool, and the challenges to its integration in the blended learning classroom, should be investigated further.

On the whole, the entire WebQuest experience was extremely rewarding. At the end of it students reported that working on the WebQuest projects engaged their creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and enabled them to re-examine the usefulness of technology in the English classroom. The results of this action research indicated that students became really interested in learning through WebQuests on computers and enthusiastically anticipated the next WebQuest. Participants were very active during the tasks and showed a genuine interest in learning to cope with the problems posed. The enhancement of their information and computer literacies along with their collaborative skills, which are a prerequisite for their lifelong learning outside class, were accomplished at a satisfactory level. What Leahy and Twomey (2005) ascertained, that students were sometimes challenged and frustrated by collaboration, but perceived the ultimate benefit of developing collaborative skills in the end, also applied in this research. Moreover, the fostering of digital literacy in the classroom not only extends the teaching potentials, as Kontogeorgi (2014) indicates, but also makes the subject learning relevant and furnishes students with the skills, knowledge and understanding that will help them thrive socially, intellectually and economically in the future.

Despite the fact that this research yielded some interesting facts with regard to the promotion of new literacies through the use of WebQuests it has to be acknowledged that there are certain limitations: its small-scale size raises reservations as to its applicability and extrapolation of general conclusions to be drawn from its findings. A class of twenty-one sixth-graders, substantial though it may be, is far from being considered broad-based. A larger sample would definitely offer more valid, generalized results. What could also be considered a limitation is the fact that advanced statistical analysis in order to examine if the results from the pre- to post- questionnaires were statistically significant was not conducted.

Moreover, access to the computer lab was very limited, due to the fact that there were ICT lessons held in it, and precarious, as it was liable to any programme change. Last but not least the time pressure was on the downsides. Any loss of lesson scheduled on the particular day the computer lab was reserved for the English lesson would result in delay in the application of each WebQuest. According to Papaioannou's (2011, p.82) calculations the parallel syllabus would cover approximately 30 teaching hours and it was suggested that

"certain WebQuests replace a number of textbook tasks"; still a lot had to be taught from the textbook if rational links with the topics explored in it were to be created, as was the aim of the prudent selection of the WebQuests at hand. A lot of teaching time was devoted to scaffolding and teaching students how to evaluate their outcome and their own and teammates' effort. Therefore, given the Greek reality and the inexperience of most EFL teachers in incorporating technology in their lessons, the framework proposed would not be feasible to its full extent: at least, though, four out of the six proposed WebQuest projects would be a logical number to be dealt with successfully.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to complement the current literature by offering some empirical evidence related to a number of issues that have perhaps been under-represented in the research field regarding the implementation of a WebQuest syllabus, synthesized by readymade WebQuests, selected on the basis of their effectiveness, proposed by Papaioannou (2011).

All things considered, the WebQuest experience proved to be extremely gratifying and fulfilling for both parties involved, teacher and students alike. The proposed syllabus, ambitious though it may be, will, hopefully, constitute an alternative proposal to enrich and alter current teacher-centred practices into more collaborative, learner-centred ones. Further research based on a wider sample of students or employing a more longitudinal course of research and more in-depth statistical analyses could provide a more thorough perception for the effectiveness of WebQuests as instructional tools which support critical engagement with technology and enhance students' new literacies.

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APPENDIX

The parallel syllabus supplementing the 6th grade textbook, a proposal by Papaioannou (2011).

Unit 1 Our multicultural class
Unit 2 Going shopping

WebQuest 1 Discovering culture by Elise Bush
URL: http://questgarden.com/112/96/7/101103141631/index.htm
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to create an artistic synthesis of four artefacts, which are representative of an ancient culture, to be displayed in the respective wing of an art gallery

Unit 3 Imaginary creatures
Unit 4 The history of the aeroplane

WebQuest 2 Fables, Legends, and Myths: A WebQuest Adventure by Kelly Mumber
URL:
http://www.google.gr/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCAQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2F
www.oncoursesystems.com%2Fdocuments%2F72b70031-e5db-4ded-975c-
ce71053ec2fc%2F451048-
501899%2FdownloadFile.aspx&rct=j&q=myths%20fables%20webquest&ei=M8rcTfGvOdS2h
Ae3_cyeDw&usg=AFQjCNEVbnyQAR0EQsa-
SHEd6IldKX5Uww&sig2=ElPfVakzEMXL36GCCwuwiA
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to help a Fairy return to the Fairy Tale Forest by determining the basic characteristics of fables, legends and myths; they also adapt one of the stories they have read and prepare its theatrical performance in order to entertain the All Powerful Wizard and escape from the Fairy Tale Forest.

Unit 5 Travelling through time
Unit 6 Me, myself and my future job

WebQuest 3 Ancient Greek gods and goddesses tour in modern Greece by April Halterman
URL: http://questgarden.com/112/96/7/101103141631/index.htm
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to organise a tour around modern Greece for an ancient Greek god or goddess, so as to trace the development of the Greek civilisation from ancient years through modern times.

Unit 7 Share your experiences

WebQuest 4 The Ancient Olympic Games by Joanne Hirst
URL: http://questgarden.com/95/40/6/100131122245/index.htm
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to explore cultural and historical facets of the Ancient Olympic Games in order to organise school games in an Olympia-like sporting venue.

Unit 8 Blow your own trumpet

WebQuest 5 Missing: Orchestra instruments-Can you help the conductor find the instruments before rehearsal starts? by Amy Rains
URL: http://questgarden.com/91/07/9/091114130658/index.htm
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to explore a number of Web sites about musical instruments and their four orchestral families, so as to fulfill their role as detectives and help the conductor of the school orchestra put the missing instruments back in their proper place in the music room before rehearsal starts.

Unit 9 Earth Day everyday
Unit 10 Time for fun

WebQuest 6i: Endangered animalsby Judy Byers
URL: http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/de/webquests/animal/teacher.html
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to behave as biologists and zoologists, so as to carry out research on an endangered animal of North America and notify the Conservation Committee of the problematic situation.

OR

WebQuest 6ii: Finding Nemo: Uncovering Ocean Secrets by Bronwen McAuliffe
URL: http://questgarden.com/author/create/preview.php?u=&l=115453-101129130711&a=&p=introduction&pt=student
Learners' aim: Ls are expected to investigate facts about life in the ocean while going on a journey to find Nemo, the major hero of the popular children's movie, Finding Nemo.

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WebQuests:
Can they contribute towards the understanding of stories?

Ιστοεξερευνήσεις:
Μπορούν να συμβάλλουν στην κατανόηση ιστοριών;

Christine OULOUSIDOU

The present paper focuses on the exploitation of the Internet and the effectiveness of WebQuests for the teaching of stories in an EFL context. More specifically, the article is an attempt to investigate how WebQuests can be used in combination with stories for the benefit of the learning process. Particularly, the research is intended to determine which reading strategies are identified through the learners' interaction with the text. In addition, it is an attempt to explore to what extent they are applied and whether WebQuests have an impact on learners' motivation and positive attitudes towards reading in English. To that end, a case study was conducted regarding two classes of fifth graders in a Greek primary school. Findings indicate progress in reading strategy use because of the learning context using WWW as a resource as well as increased motivation and more positive attitudes towards reading.

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Το παρόν άρθρο εστιάζει στην αξιοποίηση του διαδικτύου, στην αποτελεσματικότητα της ιστοεξερεύνησης και στην επεξεργασία του αφηγηματικού γραπτού λόγου στο πλαίσιο εκμάθησης της Αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, το άρθρο αποτελεί μια προσπάθεια να ερευνηθεί το κατά πόσο οι ιστοξερευνήσεις μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν σε συνδυασμό με τις ιστορίες προς όφελος της μαθησιακής διαδικασίας. Ειδικότερα, έχει σκοπό να καθορίσει κατά πόσο η κατανόηση ενός κειμένου ενισχύεται από την ιστοεξερεύνηση και να εντοπίσει ποιες στρατηγικές επεξεργασίας γραπτού κειμένου μπορούν να καλλιεργηθούν κατά την αλληλοεπίδραση του μαθητή με το ηλεκτρονικό αφηγηματικό κείμενο. Επιπλέον διερευνά τις στάσεις και τις μορφές παρώθησης που αναπτύσσουν οι μαθητές κατά τη διάρκεια της μαθησιακής διαδικασίας με τη βοήθεια της ιστοεξερεύνησης και της επεξεργασίας αφηγηματικού γραπτού λόγου σε ηλεκτρονική μορφή. Για το σκοπό αυτό η ερευνήτρια έχει διεξάγει μια περιπτωσιολογική μελέτη που αφορά δυο τάξεις της Ε' τάξης σε ένα ελληνικό δημοτικό σχολείο. Τα ευρήματα ανέδειξαν στρατηγικές ανάγνωσης καθώς και εφαρμογή αυτών ως αποτέλεσμα της χρήσης του

διαδικτύου καθώς επίσης και ανάπτυξη κινήτρων και θετικών στάσεων σε σχέση με την επεξεργασία και κατανόηση του γραπτού λόγου.

Keywords: WebQuest, EFL, stories, reading strategies, motivation, young learners

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of technology has pervaded every aspect of human activity having a significant impact on our lives. The ubiquitous presence of technology in education cannot be denied. The main aim of today's information age is to provide learners with all the skills necessary to obtain knowledge on their own (Dogan, et al, 2013). First, computers offer materials from which learners can search and select information in order to learn; second, learners' dependency on the teacher can be reduced. In this way student autonomy is enhanced.

Having the above suppositions in mind, WebQuests seem to be an ideal vehicle for teaching school children through a series of worthwhile activities. More specifically, according to Setyaningsih (2011), the WebQuest framework can help children develop deeper understanding of the problems in research. Furthermore, through the WebQuest collaboration is promoted as learners take on roles within small student groups and cooperative learning strategies are applied which are necessary for the learners' contribution (March, 2000). Moreover, via the networked computer, learners are provided with multimodal resources in order to locate, assess and present information (Douglas, 2000).

On the one hand, taking into consideration the above, WebQuests are powerful technology tools; on the other, learners have an innate love for stories (Papadopoulou & Vlachos, 2014). Based on this assumption, the present study is an attempt to examine how we can use WebQuests in combination with stories with learning being the ultimate aim. The present study was initiated after detecting that there is a dearth of research pertaining to studying stories through WebQuests in the Greek educational reality. The rationale behind the design of the experiment was to determine whether reading comprehension can be achieved with the help of WebQuests. The relevant literature of reading and WebQuests are reviewed in a socio-constructivist framework.

2. Reading and different aspects of comprehension

2.1. Social constructivist view of reading

Social constructivism, based on the work of Vygotsky and others, has pervaded EFL literature and teaching with considerable ramifications for the learning environment. It views classroom as a "community of discourse" (Fosnot, 1989) where learners must participate dynamically in reconstructing ideas within their own minds (Wilson, 2003). In other words, the teacher does not disseminate knowledge and students are not passive recipients of information (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Learners go beyond rote memorization toward understanding which cannot be achieved unless they are actively engaged (Flynn et al, 2004). Furthermore, children construct their ideas with others when they collaborate in cooperative learning groups (Lunenburg, 2011). This explains one of the fundamental

concepts of social constructivism, *scaffolding*. Scaffolding is realized in class when the teacher provides 'tools' such as problem solving tasks, questions and answers (Bouniol, 2004).

The social constructivist view of reading has many implications for the reading classroom. Social constructivists see reading as social practice. The social context plays an important role in what you read, how you read and who you read it with. For this reason, reading is taught not through disembodied texts which have no context but through meaningful as well as purposeful practices. Additionally, learners are encouraged to create their own meaning of the text instead of the teacher imposing his interpretation of the text on the learner. Furthermore, peer-scaffolding can help learners decode text effectively, participate in meaning making and become more aware of how authors manipulate text. Texts are relevant to the child's interests and his needs are emphasized and catered for (Rixon, 1991). The primary goal of all the above is to enable learners, through a learner-centered program, to become independent readers and thus lead them a step towards autonomy, (Wilson, 2003, Yang & Wilson, 2006). What is important at this point is to note what reading comprehension is and how it may be affected.

2.2. Comprehension: a cognitive process

Comprehension is a complex task that draws on many different cognitive skills and processes. Text comprehension involves the construction of a coherent representation of a text's meaning, which is called a mental model or a situation model (Cain, 2003, Cain et al., 2004). The comprehension processes that bring about this representation occur at multiple levels: word level, sentence level and text level (Perfetti et al., 2005). Elaborating further, integration and inference are important processes for the formation of an integrated and coherent model of the text. In other words, integration is necessary to establish local coherence which involves decoding the words and phrases of a text. In particular, unless the word-level processes are mastered, it will be impossible to carry out the higher order processes (Pressley, 2000). Consequently, children must decode words and encode their meaning into the mental representation they are constructing (Perfetti et al, 2005).

Background knowledge is important for memory as well as comprehension (Kintsch, 1994). Mature readers know much about the world and their prior knowledge, their schematic knowledge in particular, affects comprehension. Schemata function in the process of interpreting new information and allowing it to become part of the knowledge store (Anderson & Pearson, 1988). Thus, as Woolley (2011) states meaning is formed in the reader's head. From this perspective a reader's existing knowledge plays a crucial role in acquiring new information (Cain & Oakhill, 1999). Calfoglou (2004) maintains that efficient readers rely more heavily on contextual clues than on lexical ones. Reading comprehension depends on the reader's ability to interpret context and one's ability to decode text. Thus, according to the cognitive theory, a balanced approach to the teaching of reading combines a text-based approach and a discourse meaning approach so that the two processes are interactive (Woolley, 2011). Consequently, the intention of the author, the readers' background knowledge as well as their experiences play a critical role in the comprehension process. From the above it can be deduced that reading is a complex activity. Moreover, it requires the successful selection and application of multiple strategies (Woolley, 2011) on the part of the learner.

2.3. Comprehension and the active learner

Accordingly, effective comprehension necessitates children to be actively engaged in order to gain meaning from text. Constructivists believe that real understanding occurs when children are fully involved in the development of their own knowledge. This learning process is described as self-regulatory (Harris & Pressley, 1991). Self-regulation strategies can be taught explicitly and can lead to improved reading achievement. Skilled readers who self-regulate know how and when to use fix-up strategies during reading to regain meaning when it is lost (Zimmerman, 2002). These learners monitor their behavior in terms of their goals and self-reflect on their increasing effectiveness. Each self-regulated process such as goal setting, strategy use, and self-evaluation, can be learned from instruction and modeling by parents, coaches and peers. This gradual transfer of strategy ownership to the student is consistent with one of the precepts of constructivism, scaffolding. Learners are kept active and involved with tasks requiring meaningful processing. Subsequently, the instructor provides feedback and builds on his advice. Therefore, the concepts of constructivism underlie good strategy instruction. However, there are factors which affect comprehension and which lie within the reader or may be found outside of the reader.

2.4. Variables that influence comprehension

There may be a multiplicity of factors that affect comprehension. It has been found (Woolley, 2011) that reader variability is often linked with the economic and social circumstances of the home. As Abraham & Gram (2009) note, low socio-economic backgrounds as well as cultural and linguistic differences between home and school compounds students' reading ability. This is supported by the fact that variables such as educational background of the parents, social class, the number of books at home and family income were related to reading achievement (Romeo, 2002).

As Kendeou & van den Broek (2005) posit, one's cultural beliefs and values as well as their religious and political affiliations influence the way a reader comprehends the text. To comprehend, a reader must possess a wide range of cognitive capacities such as memory, inferencing, and critical analytic ability. Furthermore, motivation, knowledge of vocabulary and strategies as well as domain and linguistic knowledge are also identified as variables that interact with one another and with the text the reader is exposed to (Snow, 2002).

Pictures can also be exploited to influence reading comprehension enabling the reader to form a more detailed understanding of the passage. As Duke & Pearson (2002, p.218) maintain, "a visual display helps readers understand, organize, and remember". Glenberg & Langston (1992) found that pictures can help build a mental model that the readers construct facilitating inference making. In the same vein, Goldstein & Underwood (1981) assert that visual information provided by picture cues enable less experienced readers to understand better. This can be brought about by linking the reader's background knowledge to the ideas of the text. Thus, in Goldstein & Underwood's (1981, p. 6) words: "An analysis of mutual interference effects between pairs of pictures and words leads to the conclusion that the cognitive representations of meanings are organized in a semantic system common to pictures and words". Hibbing & Rankin-Erikson (2003) have found that more able readers rely less on illustrations. On the other hand, less able readers are focusing on the decoding of words rather than creating images associated with meaning. Nevertheless, comprehension must be considered under the light of motivation as well. Motivation may contribute to engagement in reading.

2.5. Engaging the reader – Motivation and affective factors towards reading

Motivation has a strong impact on reading comprehension because it influences the choices that individuals make about what activity they will deal with, their persistence and the amount of effort they will use on an activity (Woolley, 2011). Competence and efficacy beliefs refer to how efficacious individuals feel with respect to their ability at different activities (Wigfield, 2000). According to Zimmerman (2002) when a student feels positive about his efficacy to manage a task then his stress and anxiety are decreased. Thus, success raises self-efficacy whereas failure tends to lower it (Woolley, 2011). An important implication for motivation is that when children believe they are efficacious at reading they are more likely to engage in reading (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). For this to be realized, reading texts should be challenging but not too difficult (Woolley, 2011). In addition, engaged readers are motivated to read for a different purpose and interact meaningfully around reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999).

Social motivation can also affect a reader's dispositions and behaviours (Wigfield, 2000). It is asserted that students' self-efficacy is increased when they receive encouraging feedback from the teacher or modeling by their peers (Woolley, 2011). In addition, as Baker &d Wigfield (1999) note the social aspects of classroom have a considerable impact on student achievement.

3. WebQuests: Key issues

3.1. The theoretical framework of WebQuests

The principles of constructivism support the use of computers in second language acquisition. Computer technology provides the context for collaboration and social interaction in which, as Simina & Hamel state (2005), learners will construct the knowledge of the target language on their own by being engaged in meaningful activities. Knowledge construction, as Vrasidas & McIsaac (2001) assert, results when learners interact with their peers, cooperate and negotiate meaning. Consistent with that direction is the sociocultural approach Vygotsky takes to cognitive development (Simina & Hamel,2005). Within this framework learning is an active process which is based on the learners' prior knowledge and experiences (Simina & Hamel, 2005). From this aspect, the use of WebQuests appears to be a good practice in second language acquisition through a socio-constructivist perspective. First, tasks are contextualized and authentic focusing on learning that is relevant for students (Luzon-Marco, 2010, Schweizer & Kossow, 2007; Ikpeze & Boyd, 2007). Learners will use their background knowledge to analyze a body of materials, to evaluate their relevance and to create an artifact. This complies with the constructivist theory of learning which puts an emphasis on constructing artifact meaningful to the learner.

Constructivist approaches accommodate individual differences. Individuals learn in a different way. For this reason, teaching practices are flexible and serve different learning needs (Burns et al., 1998). WebQuests allow room for differentiated instruction in that they give learners the opportunity to make choices based on their ability and interests (Schweizer & Kossow, 2007). For this reason, mixed-ability groups, that are formed with flexibility and work at one's own pace, fit a WebQuest environment. They can also cater for all types of learners as the information is presented in various ways (not only texts but also videos, images, songs, etc.). In this way, according to Gardner (1983), the needs and different learning styles of the learners are accommodated and their intelligences develop.

Furthermore, a pleasant and supportive atmosphere is created in the classroom and as learners become motivated, the affective filter is lowered (Krashen, 1982).

3.2. Why WebQuests and stories?

Children enjoy listening to stories in their mother tongue and are familiar with the conventions of narrative. Stories are motivating and help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language (Ellis & Brewster, 1991). In addition, Brewster, Ellis, & Girard (1992) underline the fact that stories provide contexts familiar to the children. The activities built around stories are purposeful as they belong to a child's world and for this reason they raise the learners' motivation (Bratsoli, 2002). In this way learners form a positive attitude towards language learning. Thus, the learning environment created by the story-based framework is supportive, non-threatening and enjoyable.

WebQuests on the one hand and stories on the other are a powerful combination which can lead to comprehension. Web sites help children learn how to search information, compare it to prior knowledge, and produce new ideas. As Allington (2001, in Ikpeze & Boyd, 2007) states WebQuests also help students make connections between what they read and the world around. This promotes thoughtful literacy through activities that trigger creative thinking which next is applied in comprehending the story. The activities and information are presented through videos, illustrations, songs etc and as a result, students can read, listen to and watch to achieve comprehension. This goal is also accomplished through the multimodality of the web pages. Therefore, as information is presented through different perspectives the learners of the specific WebQuest have to focus and analyze a particular aspect of the story and contribute to its general comprehension. This is also achieved through peer collaboration which WebQuests support.

4. The research design

4.1. The teaching context

The research was conducted in a Greek state primary school in the suburbs of Heraklion, Crete. The study involved two classes (E2 and E3) of fifth graders, aged eleven. Each class is comprised of twenty-four pupils, twelve boys and twelve girls and it is a monolingual and mono-cultural class. Based on the national curriculum they have been learning English for five years. The total amount of students is forty-eight and the majority of them attend English private schools. The population for this study consisted of students from two different classes of the fifth grade. One class served as the experimental group (referred to as the EG) which was implicated into WebQuest story reading; the other served as the control group (referred to as CG) and received the traditional study of the story. The decision on which class would be the EG and which one the CG was based on two factors. First and foremost, the weaker class would be the EG. In that way, the differences noted in the group's performance would be more striking thus depicting more clearly and accurately the fluctuations in their progress. Accordingly, the research would seem to yield more reliable results. Secondly, the weaker group had dealt with WebQuests previously. So, they were familiar with the WebQuest component thus making its application more effective.

4.2. Research tools

The case study approach seemed to fit best this study because as Bell (1999) posits it allows the researcher to investigate an aspect of a problem in some depth within a restricted time.

The data collected for this research emanate from the pre-WebQuest questionnaire. Its purpose was to find out about pupils' interests, reading habits and attitudes towards English. After the completion of the research, the teacher gave a post-WebQuest and a second questionnaire to the EG and the CG respectively. The goal was to evaluate whether the purpose of the research was achieved. The questionnaires consisted of three parts and the teacher included the same questions for both. This was accomplished by keeping the same wording as far as that was possible so as to achieve uniformity across questions. More specifically, Part I referred to the development of the learners' reading strategies. Part II introduced questions concerning their motivation and attitudes towards English. Finally, Part III attempted to find out the students' favourite mode of work.

However, the researcher also used a data qualitative method based on checklists and interviews.

A classroom observation checklist and interviews

During the WQ project, the teacher observed the learners while they were working on the WQ. The strengths of this method are that it gives the researcher the opportunity to study actual behavior as it occurs in a setting (Creswell, 2012). Nevertheless, students' behavior may change when they understand they are being observed. The teacher used a checklist focusing on reading strategies, attitudes and motivation. Interviews were used at the end of the WebQuest project. They were conducted in Greek to avoid misunderstandings with the students that worked in groups.

4.3. Stories, WebQuests and their implementation

The WebQuest project was created to support the teaching of an authentic story. As suggested by Nunan, 1989 and Yuk-chun Lee, 1995, in Bratsoli, 2002, authentic texts possess a communicative quality as they were produced for real-life purposes. The particular story, *Why Mosquitoes buzz in people's ears* by Aardema Verna, was chosen because its repeated pattern and dialogues create a predictable context, thus building up the learners' confidence. It was integrated into the curriculum in terms of language and topic in the broader sense of stories (there is a unit in the course book which deals with stories).

The experimental group

The zunal template was used for the creation of the WebQuest.[1] The teacher based the selection of the resources on March's (2003) guidelines and tried to incorporate resources that are media-rich, up-to-date and of varied perspectives. Moreover, she tried to find children's websites mainly to fit the learners' language level. The WebQuest design was a long term one and was completed in approximately five weeks covering fifteen teaching sessions of forty minutes each. The story, which is a west African folktale, was examined from the perspective of detective stories. This was due to the fact that mystery stories came first in the students' preferences according to the needs analysis questionnaire. The WebQuest was named Young Detectives of Africa and according to the scenario the students assume the role of detectives who have taken on a case. The main goal for all the teams was to solve a death and find the culprit among many suspects. For this reason, the students were assigned detective names which they chose themselves. Each detective team had different responsibilities with the overarching goal of finding different clues which would

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[1] The WebQuest is available at: http://www.zunal.com/webquest.php?w=308972

complement the other team's clues. The Sherlock Holmes team was responsible for writing the case report, that is a summary of the case (the story). The Hercules Poirot team was the profilers and for this reason they were responsible for delineating each suspect's profile so as to make their portrait. The Sam Spade team was the sketch artists being accountable for sketching some scenes from the trial and also writing the moral of the case. In the same vein, the students' worksheets were named case files. They were designed in such a way so as to fit the role that each detective team had and provide in that way an additional help towards the solution of the case.

In the Introduction the scenario was launched; students were informed about the mission they were about to take on and their roles as detectives. At the Process stage the children commenced their quest by starting to read the story which was divided in three parts. Reading was seen as a process "…by which meanings are not simply extracted from the text, but mediated by the linguistic and schematic knowledge which they (the readers) bring to it" (Wallace, 1992, p.62). For this reason, the lessons were taught in postulating stages which cut through the reading process, namely a pre-, a while- and a post- reading stage.

Before setting out to read all the story parts, students were given words which they had to look up in the dictionary, uploaded on the process page. The use of a dictionary allows learners not only to develop their vocabulary but also to 'learning to learn'. As suggested in Ellis (1999, in Nitinou, 2006) 'learning to learn' leads to learner responsibility and develops an awareness of learning. It also relates to the concept of scaffolding, an instruction strategy that promotes learning. Moreover, the words were introduced with such activities such as puzzles, matching pictures with words, tables and crosswords. As Carrell (1988) claims, vocabulary development and word recognition are crucial to bottom-up decoding skills.

In the while-reading stage, which was the next step, the students had to skim and scan the story so as to answer comprehension questions and to fill in graphic organizers. The comprehension questions did not require one predetermined response. In other words, these questions, as Vale & Feunteun (1995, p.83) claim, do not assume that learners are "…empty vessels who bring nothing of themselves to the story". Instead they try to stimulate a creative bond between the learner and the story. Consequently, students create a mental picture of what they are reading and are stimulated to use their imagination. Graphic organizers, according to Nuttal (1996), are considered 'transfer of information activities' which require reorganizing information from different parts of the text or making inferences. Students were also involved in predicting and checking their predictions, in making inferences, writing summaries as well as finding out cause and effect relationships. Recognizing cause and effect relationships among sentences is important and familiarizes learners with the structure of narration (Nuttal, 1996). An additional useful strategy, which must be developed in the learners, is reading reflectively. Thus, learners are expected to recognize the chronological sequence of events by completing sequence diagrams while they are reading the story. Nuttal (1996) suggests that involving learners in non-linear activities which require transfer of information increases understanding. Furthermore, expanding the skill of making inferences helps learners make logical guesses, based on clues, about what is not said. These clues, found in the text, have to be used to get the full meaning. That is part of the fun of reading ('TeacherVision', 2000).

Games are an integral part of the activities. They can promote the creation of positive attitudes to language learning and discovery of rules "…may be a useful pay-off of pleasant informal activities." (Rixon, 1991, p. 35). They also develop learners' kinesthetic intelligence.

Finally, on completing the WQ project learners would have acquired a global understanding of the story in terms of setting, characters, moral, knowledge about folktales and the author. Links were also made pertaining to cross-thematic learning such as Geography and Environmental Studies.

The control group

The same rationale concerning the story comprehension and activities was followed for the Control Group as well. The basic difference with the EG was the absence of technology. For this reason, the website resources were photocopied by the teacher; they contained all the necessary information for the completion of the tasks but were very limited.

The Control Group was also divided in six groups of four but their mode of work was different as it did not involve the use of computers. The students were asked to bring their dictionaries and work on the same activities as the Experimental Group. The teaching sessions of the story were completed in about six weeks.

5. Presentation of the findings

5.1. The Questionnaires – Quantitative Data

The comparison of the two questionnaires (post-WebQuest and second questionnaire) was made using absolute frequency. Comparing the answers of the two groups in Item B, which concerned students' reading strategies, we can see that the Experimental Group benefited more through the implementation of the WebQuest than the Control Group. They were more effective in predicting, locating information, using the information from the sites in order to understand the story better[2] (Charts 1,2,3) (see section 2.2). Regarding the Greek educational reality, the findings of this study corroborate with the data concluded by other researchers. Accordingly, Gkoritsa (2011) reported that her students became able to use web sources and locate necessary information. Accordingly, the findings of Makrogiorgou (2013) and Voulgaraki (2013) converged on the effectiveness of WebQuests concerning learners' reading skills.
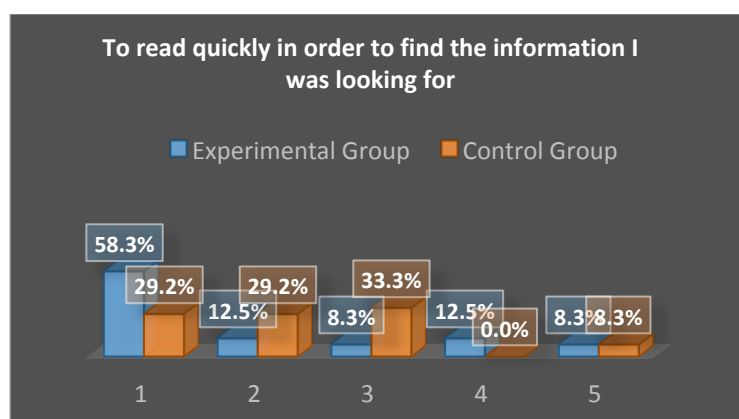
Chart 1: shows the effectiveness of WQs concerning reading strategies

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[2] The x-axis of the charts refers to the following quantities: A great deal, much, somewhat, little and not at all respectively.
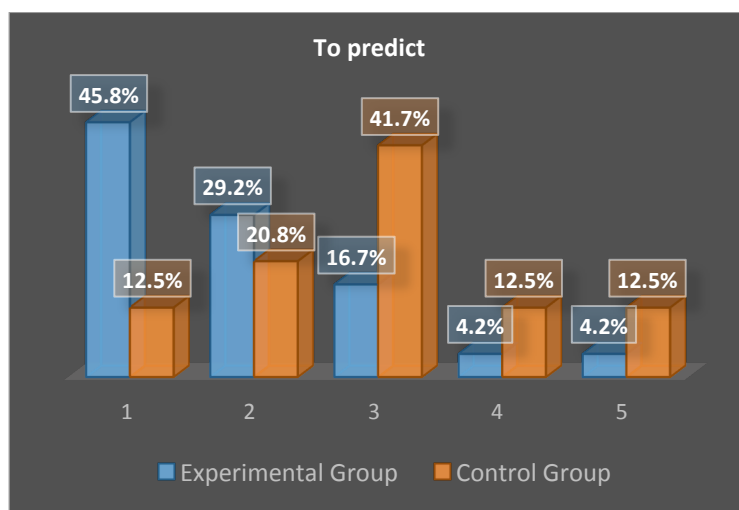
Chart 2: shows the effectiveness of WQs concerning reading strategies
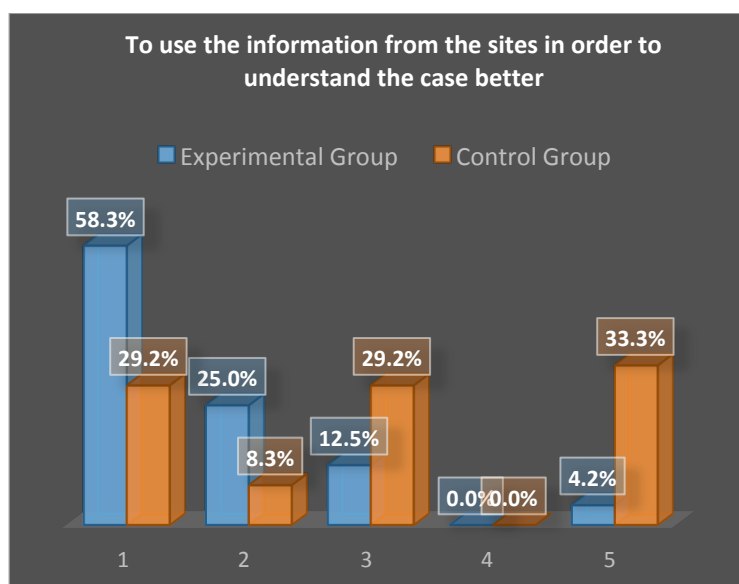
Chart 3: shows the effectiveness of WQs concerning reading strategies

The comparison of the questions in Item C, which is concerned with motivation and attitudes towards English, demonstrated that the WebQuest influenced the affective factors of motivation and stress (Charts 4, 5)[3] (see section 2.2). A high percentage of students (70,9%) of the EG disagreed that they were bored with the WebQuest project (Chart 6). The percentage regarding motivation is considerably smaller for the CG (58,3%). On an international level, a similar survey was effected by Koslowsky (2006) and Siko (2008). Koslowsky (2006) reported that students responded positively to WebQuests; WebQuests also fostered productive peer interaction and motivated his students to learn.

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[3] The x-axis of the charts (4, 5, 6) refers to the following quantities: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree.

Similarly, Siko (2008) stressed that students were also motivated by WebQuests but they were not motivated to retain knowledge.
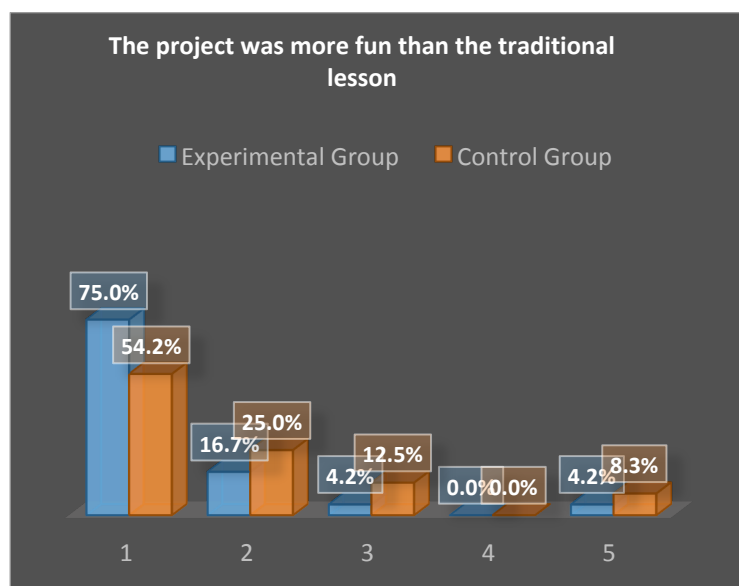
Chart 4: depicts the influence of WQs on motivation and stress
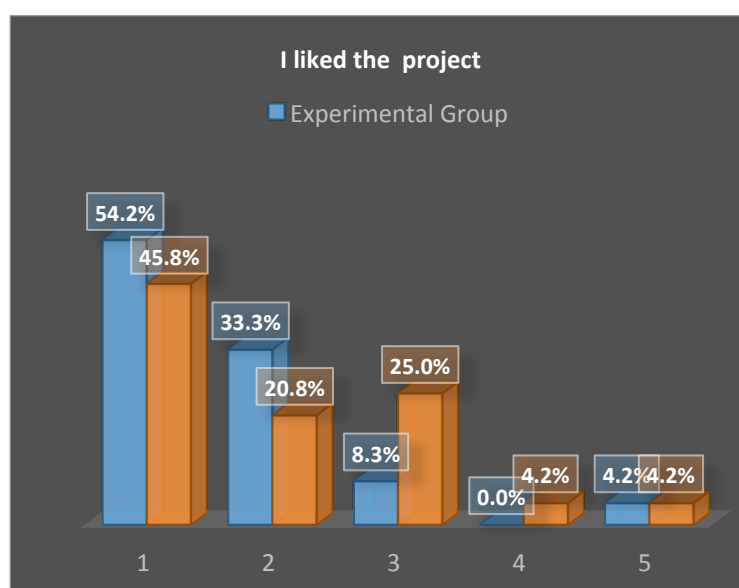
Chart 5: depicts the influence of WQs on motivation and stress
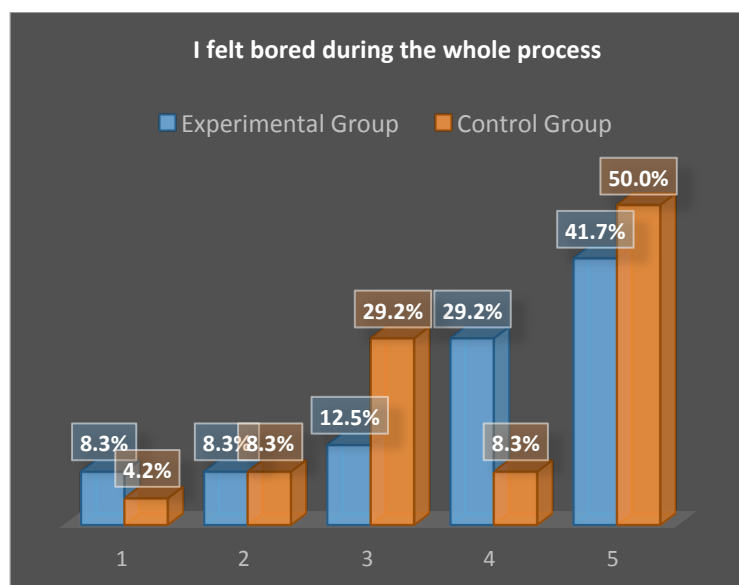
Chart 6: depicts the influence of WQs on motivation and stress

The last part of the questionnaires refers to team work. Both groups asserted firmly their preference in working with a partner (Charts 7, 8)[4] (see section 2.1) and share parts of the work that had to be done. However, the percentage in both cases is higher for the EG. Popota (2011) and Theodorou (2011), whose data were also collected in the Greek classroom, suggested that WebQuests promoted not only their learners' motivation but their cooperation and group work as well.
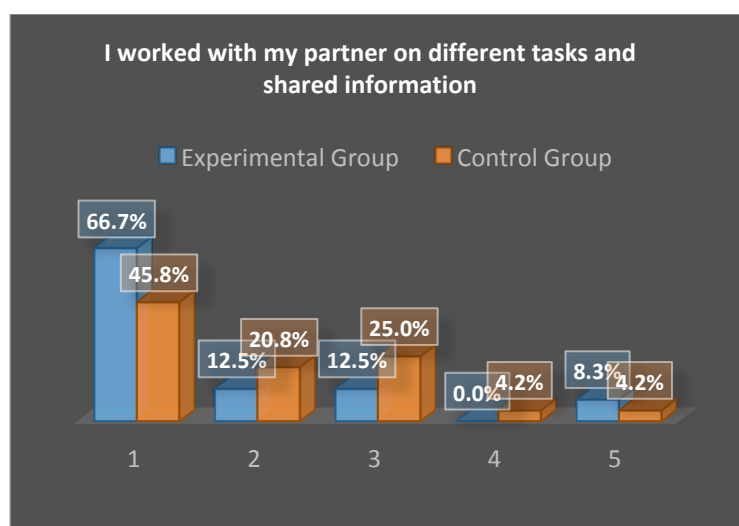
Chart 7: depicts students' preference concerning their mode of work

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[4] The x-axis of the charts refers to the following quantities: a great deal, much, somewhat, little and not at all.
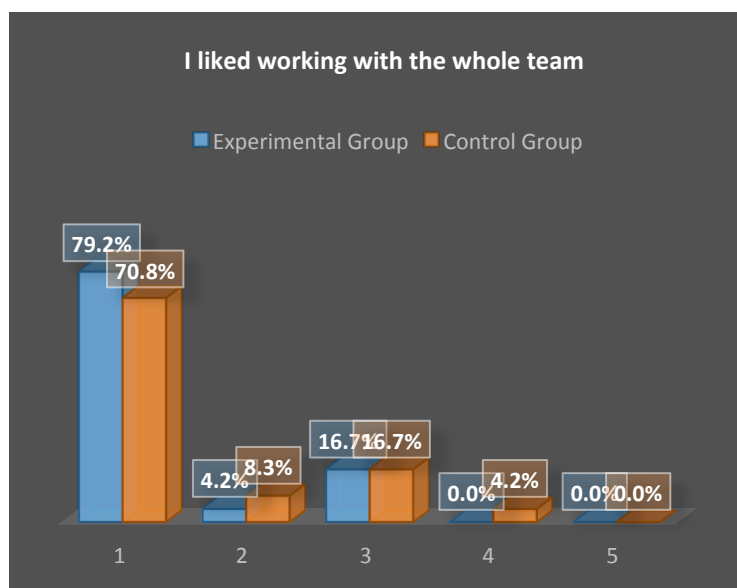
*Chart 8: depicts students' preference concerning their mode of work*

5.2. Qualitative data

An observation sheet was used for each class. During these observations, the teacher noticed that the EG showed great interest and impatience to start. This was due to the fact that they liked their role as detectives particularly because they were searching for information on the Internet. In addition, the Internet exploration offered them real world experiences as if they were real detectives. As regards the affective factor, they were all very stressed at the beginning but gradually felt relaxed. Moreover, they were eager to complete their tasks in order to read on and ascertain whether their predictions were right. They also appeared to be able to locate data but they displayed difficulty in selecting and analyzing information. They were not so sure that the information selected was the appropriate one. As a result, this affected the analysis and synthesis of the data.

As regards computer skills, they had no problems using the mouse and the keyboard. They also worked with their partners splitting the activities they had to do and then synthesizing information. However, some of them complained about their partner which did not provide the help they expected. Finally, students tended to use a number of reading strategies, such as skimming and scanning to find answers to posed questions.

The CG, on the other hand, liked their role as detectives but were not so eager to start. At the beginning of the lesson they were disconcerted but gradually got interested and started working on their activities. Each student in the team did a different part of the same activity so as to move faster. Nevertheless, there were complaints about partners who were not so helpful which affected their pace of work. Consequently, they moved slower than the EG. Moreover, using a paperback dictionary to look up new words was also time-consuming. They were disconcerted as well by the amount of the Internet photocopies; a fact which had an impact on the affective factor. However, they made considerable effort to locate the information they were asked to using a number of reading strategies. These strategies included summarizing information and planning what to do.

The researcher also conducted interviews for each team for both classes. Based on the responses of the EG they all stated that they found the WebQuest difficult. More specifically, they had difficulty with the great number of new words in the story. However, as they commented they did not look up every word but guessed the meaning from context. Another difficulty they admitted they had was the story itself which some teams read two or three times in order to understand. Other teams assigned to one of their partners to read the story aloud and the rest listened and kept notes. Some students also disclosed that they found the activities difficult and would like easier tasks. However, they pointed out that the project helped them improve especially in their reading and writing and added that they learnt to think.

According to the CG, the teams had also difficulties with new words and the activities especially those which involved comprehension questions. The use of dictionary helped but to a certain degree as they still had problems in understanding the story. Some teams reported that there was some improvement in reading and writing but other teams commented that they did not improve in any of the skills. They all agreed that making predictions was also difficult for them. However, they admitted that they cooperated well with their team and each member had a different work to do.

5.3. Evaluation of the findings

The first and second research questions inquired which reading strategies can be identified with the use of the WebQuest and to what extent these are applied in contrast to a conventional reading environment. Since these two questions are intertwined, they are going to be discussed together. There is arithmetical support which signifies the identification of 'global' reading strategies such as making inferences, guessing the meaning of new words from context, skimming, scanning. The findings indicate that students showed progress in reading strategy use as a result of the learning context using the Internet as a resource. There is also evidence from the interviews that the students read and reread the texts in order to understand. In parallel, they used the Internet links to locate the information needed to understand the story better.

In contrast, the CG worked with photocopies of Internet sources which were limited in number and for this reason were deprived of variety. Therefore, the CG were not provided with varying perspectives of resources and thus multiple representations of knowledge and knowledge construction were not facilitated. This affected the development and application of their reading strategies which were not adequately developed.

The third research question examined the effects of WebQuests on young learners' motivation towards reading in English as opposed to the effects of a conventional reading environment. There is arithmetical evidence regarding the EG which supports the fact that learners' motivation has been increased and their stress has been lowered. In addition, their attitudes towards reading have been improved. It must be pointed out that a strong incentive for the promotion of motivation was the scenario which put the story in context. A situation was created via the WebQuest in which the completion of the tasks was meaningful to the learners placing their learning in an authentic environment which was designed to simulate real-life complexities and situations. As Nuttal (1996, p. 156) states "motivation to read is stronger if there are mysteries to solve and clues to look for". The fact that they had a mystery to solve provided a purpose for reading, fueled their search into the sites and was a stimulus that moved them forward. Students were fully involved. This can be seen by the fact that they persistently tried to find the culprit, made predictions and asked

the teacher whether their guesses were correct. All the above can be ascertained by the results regarding the CG on motivation and attitudes towards reading which were not as encouraging.

Motivation was also associated with the input the students received from the web pages including photos which supported their learning. Consequently, students' relevant schemata were activated which helped them gain additional insight into the story and reduced their stress. Moreover, a very important factor which triggered the motivation of both groups was peer collaboration. Group work lightened students' workload and reduced their stress. The discussion among separate teams was promoted and students participated more actively. An additional factor which must be mentioned was the use of technology tools which contributed to the students' favourable behaviour.

To conclude, one of the possible reasons for the positive results which emanate from the EG lie in the links given to the students, the videos, sounds and pictures of the WebQuest which guided them in their search reflecting Vygotsky's scaffolding. All these multisensory sources combined with web-based texts encouraged learners to navigate their own paths through the information they were seeking and to focus on meaning rather than decoding. Thereby, they developed a new type of inferential reasoning which helped them to decide whether the information would enhance or obstruct their search for meaning.

6. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

To begin with, the project might have evolved better if the composition of students' teams and the main characters of the story were different. One suggestion is that boys could have worked with girls. By having different innate characteristics, boys and girls could observe things from different perspectives. Therefore, they could offer diverse insights to the story approach. With respect to the characters, real people could be implicated in the mystery instead of animals. In such a case it would be interesting to involve secondary or university students.

Based on the students' comments the activities could be more game-like and diverse. The students were more interested in completing crosswords than answering comprehension questions whose frequent appearance at some point tired them. Moreover, a suggestion for further student motivation would be activities that are completed with the help of the computer.

Although the present study has provided positive results about WebQuests and stories, it constitutes only a preliminary research effort. For this reason, more elaborate investigation is required into the approach of second language acquisition through the ideal socio-constructivist environments that WebQuests offer.

First it would be worth having two classes deal with WebQuests which would focus on a story or a literature book from a different perspective. In particular, Class A could be involved in the exploitation of the story, that is, its characters, plot, content. Class B could exploit the main focal point of the story and then could create a presentation prompted by the book.

It would also be interesting for students to read different stories with the same thematic focus. For example, in a study about being small and helping the strong ones the African tale from the savannah folklore "The Caterpillar and the Hare" and the Greek folktale "The Lion

and the Mouse" are thematically similar. Children may read these two different stories but participate in whole-class WebQuest activities. In that way the frustration students express when they are stuck in stagnant ability groups can be alleviated as well because they share their reading experience with the whole class based on the thematic focus of WebQuests.

7. Conclusion

The present paper has attempted to examine how the use of information technology can be integrated into the foreign language classroom. The study concerned two fifth grade classes and the WebQuest was chosen as the most appropriate educational tool towards this goal. The researcher had used an experimental group which implemented the WebQuest and a control group which used WWW photocopies with the same topic and towards the same goal. For this research, a long term WebQuest has been designed taking into consideration the learners' cognitive operations in the language learning process. A social constructivist approach was adopted for both groups which allowed students to construct their own interpretations of the target language.

The research highlighted the potential of WebQuests for promoting reading comprehension. It can be suggested that teachers choose a story that the students find compelling and then build authentic learning tasks around it which facilitate learners' critical and complex thinking skills. However, attention needs to be paid to the level of difficulty of the story and the tasks as well as their appropriateness for the students.

To conclude, learners can improve their literacy and cooperative skills by getting involved in reading stories using WebQuests. Moreover, educators should be encouraged to use them for one more reason which is student autonomy as the Web demands a learning-to-learn approach over pre-digested knowledge (March, 2000). Therefore, it would be unwise to keep informational technology out of classrooms and not equip learners with all the necessary skills they need to survive in the real world.

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Exploring the effectiveness of Edmodo
on Greek EFL B1 learners' motivation to write

Ερευνώντας την αποτελεσματικότητα του Edmodo
στα κίνητρα για την παραγωγή γραπτού λόγου
Ελλήνων μαθητών Αγγλικής επιπέδου B1

Magdalini TSIAKYROUDI

The present study aims at investigating the effectiveness of the Edmodo educational social network on Greek High School EFL learners' motivation to write. For this purpose, an Edmodo-based writing project was designed and implemented with the students of a 3rd grade Junior High School classroom. For the collection of data a pre- and post- questionnaire for the students, administered before and after the application of Edmodo, the Edmodo learning platform and the analysis of the students' posts on it during the project and semi-structured interviews to probe deeper into the learners' perceptions concerning the use of Edmodo in writing lessons were employed. The results of the study revealed that the implementation of the Edmodo project had a positive effect on the aspects of writing motivation examined, as a shift in students' attitudes to writing and writing habits as well as increased participation and engagement in the writing process and tasks were detected. The research findings appeared to be quite encouraging, indicating that Edmodo can be a valuable tool in the hands of teachers who seek effective ways to develop, foster and maintain students' motivation to write.

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Η παρούσα μελέτη έχει σκοπό να διερευνήσει την αποτελεσματικότητα του εκπαιδευτικού κοινωνικού δικτύου Edmodo στα κίνητρα Ελλήνων μαθητών Γυμνασίου για την παραγωγή γραπτού λόγου στην εκμάθηση των Αγγλικών ως ξένης γλώσσας. Για τον σκοπό αυτό, σχεδιάστηκε και εφαρμόστηκε στους μαθητές της 3ης Γυμνασίου ένα σχέδιο εργασίας για την παραγωγή γραπτού λόγου βασισμένο στο Edmodo. Για τη συλλογή των δεδομένων, χρησιμοποιήθηκε ένα ερωτηματολόγιο μαθητή πριν και μετά το σχέδιο εργασίας, η πλατφόρμα του Edmodo και η ανάλυση των αναρτήσεων/δημοσιεύσεων των μαθητών, καθώς και ημι-δομημένες συνεντεύξεις που πραγματοποιήθηκαν με σκοπό να εξεταστούν βαθύτερα οι αντιλήψεις των μαθητών όσον αφορά τη χρήση του Edmodo στα μαθήματα

παραγωγής γραπτού λόγου. Τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης αποκάλυψαν ότι η υλοποίηση του σχεδίου εργασίας στο Edmodo είχε θετικό αντίκτυπο στις πτυχές των κινήτρων στην παραγωγή γραπτού λόγου που διερευνήθηκαν, καθώς εντοπίστηκαν σημαντικές αλλαγές στην στάση και τις συνήθειες των μαθητών απέναντι στη δεξιότητα παραγωγής γραπτού λόγου και αυξημένη συμμετοχή και αφοσίωση στη διαδικασία και τις εργασίες παραγωγής γραπτού λόγου. Τα ευρήματα της έρευνας φαίνεται να είναι αρκετά ενθαρρυντικά, υποδεικνύοντας ότι το Edmodo μπορεί να αποτελέσει ένα πολύτιμο εργαλείο στα χέρια των εκπαιδευτικών που αναζητούν αποτελεσματικούς τρόπους για την ανάπτυξη, ενίσχυση και διατήρηση των κινήτρων των μαθητών στην παραγωγή γραπτού λόγου.

Keywords: Edmodo, motivation to write, collaborative writing, B1 High School learners

1. Introduction

The use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in foreign/second language learning (FLL/SLL) has widely spread over the past two decades as the traditional lecture-based, teacher-centered lesson, while effective to a point, does not seem to fully meet the present generation learners' needs, who are growing up surrounded by and using digital tools (Rodinadze & Zarbazoia, 2012). In an attempt to extend conventional literacy practices and taking into consideration that motivation is one of the determinant factors in successful FLL/SLL, educators have already started harnessing digital communication tools, such as Social Network Sites, since infusing Web 2.0 technology into instruction enhances student motivation (Mills & Chandra, 2011) and social networking in particular provides new opportunities for a more motivated and learner-oriented language classroom (Türkmen, 2012).

One of the most recent technologies applied in language classrooms is Edmodo, a secure social network website specially designed for educational purposes. Although the research on the use of Edmodo is relatively new, there are a number of studies investigating its impact on EFL learners, most of which highlight its positive effect on motivation and writing performance (Duran, 2013; Purnawarman *et al.*, 2016; Shams-Abadi *et al.*, 2015). However, there is still very limited research on its effectiveness on Greek students' motivation (Douvlis *et al.*, 2015; Sotiroudas *et al.*, 2013) and no studies in relation to Greek EFL students' writing motivation in specific.

Considering the above, as well as the fact that the majority of Greek secondary students at state schools appear to be demotivated towards English (Dermanoutsos, 2010), the current case study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of Edmodo on Greek High School students' motivation to write and aims to prove that Edmodo can be effectively implemented into the Greek EFL classroom in order to engage students in the writing process and enhance their motivation to write.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Motivational variables in relation to writing*

2.1.1. *Interest in writing*

Interest has been defined as a psychological state that "occurs during interactions between persons and their environment, and is characterized by increased attention, concentration and affect" (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006, p.145). Interest-based motivation has been found to result from either a situational or an individual interest (Hidi, 1990). Briefly, situational interest tends to be evoked suddenly by certain stimuli in the environment and represents a potentially sustainable affective reaction (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007), whereas individual interest refers to both a psychological state and an enduring predisposition to attend to objects and events and to reengage with particular content over time (Krapp, 2000).

The role of interest in writing has been investigated in the light of the above distinction in studies where topic attractiveness has been viewed as the basic motivational source of writing (Benton *et al.*, 1995; Hidi & McLaren, 1991) and interest has been viewed as rather static since students were thought to be interested or uninterested in a specific topic (Boscolo *et al.*, 2007). However, more recently, scholars have conceptualized interest in writing in a different way (Hidi *et al.*, 2002; Nolen, 2003). Arguing that being interested in a topic does not necessarily mean that one is interested in writing as an activity, the above-mentioned authors consider the activity of writing itself as the source of interest. According to Boscolo and Hidi (2007, p.6), interest is rather "a student's orientation to writing" and students are expected to find writing interesting if the instruction and the classroom activities give them the chance to delve into the attractive and challenging aspects of the activity.

2.1.2. *Self-efficacy in writing*

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is defined as an individual's beliefs and personal judgements about their capabilities to perform at a certain level and attain designated goals (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 2002). Self-efficacious people set challenging goals, to which they strongly commit, are willing to expend a great amount of effort to reach them, persisting with their pursuit even when they encounter difficulties, and tend to recover their sense of efficacy in case of failure (Bandura, 1994). Regarding the sources by which people develop their self-efficacy perceptions, Pajares (2003) acknowledges mastery experience as the most influential one, arguing that success raises self-efficacy, whereas failure undermines it.

Self-efficacy for writing refers to individuals' beliefs of their ability to write certain types of text (Pajares & Johnson, 1994). Although self-efficacy beliefs about writing have received modest attention, the researchers who have explored their effect on writing performance found that the two are related. For example, Schunk and Swartz (1993) reported that self-efficacious writers are more likely to choose to write and persist with writing tasks than students who do not feel competent. Other researchers demonstrated that self-efficacy was predictive of students' intrinsic motivation to write and writing performance (Pajares & Johnson, 1994, Shell *et al.*, 1995) and that students' beliefs about their capability directly influenced their apprehension, as students who feel confident of their writing capabilities experience less apprehension compared to those who doubt them (Pajares & Valiante, 1996).

2.1.3. Self-regulation of writing

Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997, p.76) define the term as "self-initiated thoughts, feelings, and actions that writers use to attain various literary goals, including improving their writing skills as well as enhancing the quality of the text they create". According to a model they developed, self-regulation of writing involves the person, the behaviour and the environment. These elements correspond to three types of categories of self-regulatory influence, namely *personal*, *behavioral* and *environmental* which interact in a cyclic process where writers monitor the degree of success of the self-regulatory strategies they employ and continue, modify or give up what they are doing according to the resulting feedback (Graham & Harris, 2000).

A variety of self-regulated strategies that writers use to control the above mentioned processes have been identified, but Zimmerman and Kitsantas' (1999) analysis takes this descriptive classification one step further to incorporate the developmental sequence of self-regulation in writing and hypothesize that it is divided into four progressive levels. In the first level learners observe a model, in the second they attempt to emulate the model's performance, in the third they apply self-control and in the fourth they adapt their performance to different internal and external conditions.

2.1.4. Writing as a meaningful activity: The socio-constructivist approach

The socio-constructivist approach to literacy learning views writing as a process of meaning construction and assumes that writing is a meaningful activity, a way of expressing ideas in order to reflect, reason and compare, and can produce its own motivation (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006). Studies on the teaching of writing influenced by this approach have highlighted two basic conditions that should be present in order to fuel students' motivation to write: linking writing to other school activities and disciplines and exploiting its social nature (Boscolo & Hidi, 2007). Reasons and occasions to write should not be confined to the teaching of language skills, but writing can be used in various subjects, for many objectives and be practiced in a variety of genres, limiting this way the traditional isolation of academic writing and enabling students to use it as a communication tool (*ibid*). Moreover, when writing is viewed as a social activity and students collaborate to write a text, motivation is most likely to be triggered, as collaboration in a community of writers has been found to have both affective and cognitive advantages (Nolen, 2007).

2.2. EFL Writing in Greek high schools

The recently-introduced FLL curriculum, known as IFLC (2016), specifies descriptors of communicative competence and as far as writing is concerned, it suggests that B1 learners should be able to narrate stories and personal experiences, describe events, feelings and plans, discuss everyday problems in short texts, provide detailed information about themselves, exchange information on everyday social issues, suggest solutions to problems, write comments on blogs or Facebook, express opinion on topics they are interested in and summarize information drawn from multiple sources. They are also expected to be able to mediate in written form between Greek and English.

Although *Think Teen, 2nd Grade of Junior High School (advanced)* (Giannakopoulou *et al.*, 2009a), the coursebook used within the current study, includes a wide variety of genres and states that its purpose regarding writing instruction is learning to write rather than writing to learn (Giannakopoulou *et al.*, 2009b), a closer look revealed that the amount of time

devoted to writing instruction is disproportionate compared to the teaching of other skills, the choice of topics could have been more targeted and suitable to 14-year-old Greek teenagers, model texts provided often deprive students of the chance to express their own voice, create their own plans, make predictions and be creative (Goby, 1997), writing tasks often fail to incorporate process writing and ICT integration is very limited.

Considering the above, it is not surprising that many of the studies conducted in the Greek context investigating students' level of motivation (Dermanoutsos, 2010; Kousta, 2016; Lymperaki, 2015; Papageorgiou, 2007) suggest that Greek EFL learners in state schools tend to be rather demotivated to actively participate in the learning process.

2.3. Demotivating factors in relation to Greek EFL writing

Writing is considered a difficult, cognitively demanding and highly complex activity that tends to generate feelings of anxiety and apprehension and students often construe writing as a rather boring activity or find themselves in a situation of not knowing what to write and thus usually display reluctance and avoidance to do so (Cleary, 1991). Apart from the complexity of the writing process, other explanations for students' lack of motivation to write include the absence of conditions related to the process approach that could make writing attractive and students willing to write, such as freedom of choice of topics, collaborative writing and attention to the process of writing rather than the product, negative attitudes to writing that students develop throughout school years, which can greatly influence learners' self-efficacy perceptions, unattractive writing tasks where students regularly have to narrate, describe or report, mostly working on their own and over relying on model essays, always in paper form, just for assessment purposes and with the teacher being the only audience, which may easily turn writing into a routine practice, and finally the considerably limited explicit strategy instruction and ICT integration.

2.4. The Edmodo educational social network

Edmodo was created in 2008 by two school employees, Nic Borg and Jeff O'Hara, who wanted to bring the school environment closer to the 21st century world and its connectedness (Edmodo.com). Boasting currently around 75 million users worldwide, it has become one of the leading social learning networks devoted to "connecting learners with the people and resources they need to reach their full potential" (ibid, n.p.).

More specifically, Edmodo can be described as "an educational website that takes the ideas of a social network and refines them and makes it appropriate for a classroom" (Cauley, 2012, p.1). It is a free, private, social learning network that provides a secure platform for teachers and students to connect, interact and collaborate since once teachers create a group for their class, the system generates a group code that is distributed to students in order to enroll into the group and in this way privacy is secured since nobody can take part in the group or view its activity without code access. It is often described as 'Facebook for schools' because it resembles its design and interface, but it is considered to have more educational features and gives a clearer and greater emphasis on educational applications (Carlson & Raphael, 2015).

Via Edmodo, teachers and students have numerous options which are all meant to help increase communication. One of its main features is the ability it offers to post and respond to posts in real time through the *Note* tab enabling different types of exchanges to take place (teacher-student, student-teacher, teacher-group and student-group) and facilitating

multiple, simultaneous and dynamic threaded discussions in which members can post and reply to posts by adding attachments or tagging other members. In addition to enabling asynchronous interactions mediated by digital writing, posting content also includes *Assignments, Quizzes* and *Polls*. *Assignments* can be created, edited and sent out, attaching any type of file to them, and once they are submitted by students, options of grading and annotating are also offered. *Quizzes* can also be created online and uploaded, allowing teachers to insert files or links to the questions. Finally, teachers can conduct *Polls* for students to vote for virtually anything. *Notifications* inform teachers and students about any activity in their Edmodo group. Other features include checking student progress and awarding *Badges*, uploading files to the *Library* that serves as a cloud storage in which all files are automatically saved and setting a class *Planner* with assignment deadlines, presentations or exam dates.

Being a social software application and Web 2.0 tool, Edmodo largely complies with the principles of the constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1962) and can effectively assist in building a constructivist learning environment, while it also reflects the central tenet of social constructivism, that learning is a social activity occurring when people interact with others (*ibid*), and basic principles of the theory of connectivism advanced by Siemens (2004). Although the study on the use of Edmodo in EFL education is new, a number of researchers have investigated possibilities of using Edmodo for the teaching of writing and the results of their research mostly reveal that Edmodo can be successfully integrated into writing instruction, effectively developing students' writing skills (Apriani, 2015; Candrasari, 2015; Durán Lara, 2013; Fauzi, 2015; Gardner, 2013; Purnawarman *et al.*, 2016). Apart from the various studies exploring the effectiveness of Edmodo in developing EFL writing skills, Edmodo has also been researched in relation to its contribution to motivation enhancement in FLL. Findings indicate that there are motivational benefits arising from the integration of Edmodo in the teaching process (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Al-Ruheili and Al-Saidi, 2015; Hariri and Bahansal, 2015; Manowong, 2016; Tambunan, 2015; Türkmen, 2012; Yulastri, 2015).

3. The research design

3.1. Aim and research questions

Taking into account the positive results of previous international research in relation to Edmodo, writing and motivation, the present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Edmodo on Greek EFL learners' motivation to write.

The research questions posed were the following:

1) To what extent can the implementation of Edmodo change students' attitudes towards writing?
2) To what extent can Edmodo increase student engagement in writing through collaborative writing tasks?
3) In what ways can Edmodo change the writing habits of Greek EFL learners?

3.2. Participants

The participants were 11 students, 8 boys and 3 girls, attending the 3rd grade of a state Junior High School. According to the CEFR, the majority can be characterized as "Independent" users at B1 "Threshold" level, while 2 students were at the B2 "Vantage" level (Council of Europe, 2002).

3.3. Research method

The study made use of a mixed methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative research tools within one project in order to ensure *triangulation*. According to Cohen *et al*. (2007), relying on a single method may bias or distort the researcher's view of the observed pattern, but a mixed methods research can bring out the advantages of both approaches and eliminate their weaknesses (Dörnyei, 2007). More specifically, the effect of Edmodo on students' motivation to write was investigated through a pre-/post-questionnaire, students' posts on Edmodo and semi-structured interviews with them.

In order to explore students' writing habits and attitude to writing before and after the Edmodo treatment and detect a possible shift in them a pre-/post- questionnaire was administered, as questionnaires are time- and effort-saving, can gather a great amount of information in a short time and data can be easily processed (Dörnyei, 2007). More specifically, the questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part comprised questions aiming at gathering factual information about the students. The second part contained attitudinal items regarding the writing skill, all of which were of the four-point *Likert scale* format The third part consisted of items aiming at collecting behavioral data about learners' writing habits before, while and after writing. After the Edmodo treatment, the same questionnaire was administered in order to gauge changes in the learners' writing habits and attitude, but a fourth part was added, in order to explore learners' perceptions on the effectiveness of Edmodo in relation to their engagement in writing and their motivation.

Students' posts on Edmodo was another data collection instrument. By observing students' activity on Edmodo, the researcher gained useful insights concerning students' engagement in the writing process. During the implementation of the Edmodo project about 300 student posts and replies were exchanged, all of which were task-related.

Finally, semi-structured interviews comprised the last research tool, following Dörnyei and Taguchi' s (2010) suggestions about complementing questionnaire data with other data collection methods, particularly qualitative ones, in order to address the weaknesses of the quantitative nature of questionnaires, such as their limited scope for in-depth analysis. In particular, a set of open-ended questions was prepared to collect data regarding students' possible shift in their attitude towards writing and writing habits and their perceptions on the effectiveness of Edmodo on their motivation to write.

3.4. Research procedure

For the purposes of this study, an Edmodo-based writing project was designed and integrated in the classroom procedures for one month. It was linked with the syllabus through topic and task, as the two tasks chosen, a biography of a famous Greek and an advice giving e-mail, were taken and adapted from the coursebook used. The general aim of the Edmodo intervention was to increase students' engagement in writing through the exploitation of some attractive Edmodo features, such as *Polls* and *Notes*, and enhance their

motivation to write through collaborative writing tasks assigned, actualized and submitted on Edmodo, for which the process writing approach would be followed and peer-editing would be practiced in an attempt to develop students' responsibility and autonomy in learning. Following the framework proposed by Fried-Booth (2002), the project was divided into three stages: planning, implementation and evaluation/feedback, each of which included a series of teacher-designed activities conducted by the students in the school computer lab and through their home computers.

3.4.1. The planning stage

At the beginning of the procedure, the teacher created a group for her class in her Edmodo account and in the first session she distributed the group code to her students in order for them to create their own Edmodo accounts. After they signed up, the rest of the session was devoted to familiarizing them with the features of the platform, as none of the students had ever used Edmodo before. Due to the similarity that Edmodo bears to Facebook regarding its interface, students had already posted their first greeting messages and replies and set up their profiles by the end of the lesson. The teacher awarded *Badges* for profile completion to build extrinsic motivation and together with her students went through a list of netiquette rules about posting on Edmodo to avoid inappropriate content and wandering off the tasks, as there was a chance that students might consider Edmodo as more of a social networking site than an educational tool and participate in more social conversation than academic (Stroud, 2010).

Before the second session, students logged in to Edmodo at home to go through the student guides the teacher had posted and vote in three polls about their first impression of Edmodo and in one poll about the first task they would like to do on Edmodo, out of a list of tasks included in or adapted from their coursebook. This way, interest in the writing activity was generated as learners took initiative in directing their own learning, which was expected to raise their intrinsic motivation. According to the voting results, the majority of students chose to write a biography. The teacher posted a list of famous Greeks for whom students were asked to do some research before choosing the one they wanted to write about in the next session.

In the second session, students voted in the poll with the famous Greeks and according to their votes 4 smaller groups were created, each of which would collaboratively write the biography of the person they had chosen. This way, students' further arousal of interest and involvement in informed decision-making were guaranteed, which was expected to bring about more engagement and intrinsic motivation development, while motivation was also expected to be triggered through the social nature of the activity. As soon as subgroups were created, students started their online research, while the teacher posted useful material on how to write biographies to provide scaffolding. She went through this material with her students, discussed questions on the procedure to be followed and created events in the calendar/planner with deadlines for task stages and completion. This way, a positive emotional environment and a supportive context for writing were created, conditions considered crucial in developing and maintaining motivation.

3.4.2. The implementation stage

During the implementation stage and during the third session, students divided the biography into parts according to a graphic organizer posted by the teacher, which aimed to encourage them to plan, brainstorm and organize their biographies as graphic organizers are

particularly suitable for groupwork, can play a vital role in facilitating the writing process and contribute to motivation enhancement (Egan, 1999). All subgroups found this resource most helpful and decided on their own which parts of the biography each member would write, assuming thus responsibility for their writing, which could lead to increased autonomy and, in turn, internalization of motivation. As soon as they agreed on this, they did more focused research on the person's life and started posting their writing through *Notes* on the subgroup's wall. At the same time, students engaged themselves in peer-editing and peer-feedback among their subgroups, allowing thus scaffolding and learning from each other's contributions and distribution of expertise and authority among group members (Mills and Chandra, 2011). Through the use of the discussion board that Edmodo incorporates, students were encouraged not only to collaborate but also to participate in experiential learning (Brozek & Duckworth, 2011), as they could express themselves there, even the shyer ones, which according to Yulastri (2015) can raise motivation.

The completion of the first draft was assigned as homework and one member in each subgroup put the pieces together and posted a *Note* with the complete biography on the subgroup's wall for partners to see and engage themselves in peer-editing. Students were thus encouraged to engage in the writing process outside the classroom environment aiming thus to make the whole learning experience more meaningful, allowing increased interaction. The teacher provided feedback using comments and a code with symbols for students to engage in self- and peer-correction, fostering thus metacognitive skills (Ertmer & Newby, 1996; Sitko, 1998) and helping students to develop self-regulation of writing.

3.4.3. The evaluation stage

In the fourth session which corresponded to both the implementation and the evaluation stage, groups revised their writing through peer-review and produced their final drafts which they submitted through the *Assignment* post. The teacher gave feedback to final drafts, graded students' work and awarded *Badges* accordingly, while subgroups posted their biographies on the home page of the class group for other students to read and comment in order to enhance their sense of achievement.

The same procedure was followed for the second writing task, the advice-giving email as a reply to an authentic advice-seeking email. Students voted in a poll for the task they wanted to do, out of the choices left from the first poll, and then voted again on which authentic problem they wanted to give advice to. Smaller groups were created to work collaboratively and the project followed the same stages as the first one. The only difference was that, due to the different type of task, the pre-writing stage was given more emphasis as students interacted with and analyzed a model text, which gave them guidance and the opportunity to study an authentic example of the genre they were about to write regarding stylistic features, organizational framework, structural patterns and lexical items. Finally, brainstorming and generation of ideas took place collaboratively within Edmodo in order for students' thinking to be stimulated and prior knowledge to be activated. Having ideas posted on the subgroup's wall instead of taking written notes aimed at greater flexibility, interactivity and motivation during the pre-writing stage (Mogahed, 2013).

4. Presentation and discussion of findings

4.1. Attitudes to writing

The first research question sought to investigate changes in students' attitudes towards writing which was measured through answers to part 2 of the pre-/post- questionnaire and part 4 of the post-questionnaire. According to the results, a notable change was depicted. More specifically, although before the Edmodo writing project a lot of students did not enjoy writing (45.5%) and felt that it was an unpleasant experience (63.6%), these percentages decreased to 18.2 % and 27.3% respectively by the end of the intervention. Moreover, the percentage of students who liked classes requiring a lot of writing increased from 27.3% to 45.4%, while there was a short decrease in the percentage of those who felt bored when asked to write (from 63.6% to 45.5%). Regarding writing apprehension, the comparison of the results revealed a significant decrease of 46%. The percentage of students who avoid writing decreased by half as well. Finally, regarding extrinsic motivation related to the presence of a real audience other than the teacher, although before the Edmodo writing project 72.7% reported that they did not like others to read what they had written and felt uncomfortable with it, fewer students (45.4%) felt like this after the implementation of the project.

This positive shift in students' attitude towards writing was further illustrated by their responses in part 4 of the post-questionnaire where the vast majority of students found writing on Edmodo to be fun (81.8%) and more interesting than traditional writing lessons (90.8%). They also liked doing writing assignments on Edmodo (81.7%), felt enthusiastic to write (72.7%) and would like to take part in Edmodo-based writing lessons in the future (81.8%). Similar evidence was found in Perifanou's (2009), Türkmen's (2012) and Manowong's (2016) research, where the attractive features of Edmodo accounted for more enthusiastic and motivated learners.

These results were further supported by the answers elicited from interview questions where 10 out of 11 students claimed to have enjoyed the writing lessons on Edmodo and admitted a positive change in their attitude towards writing. Most of them (81.8%) described writing on Edmodo as easier and more interesting than traditional writing lessons, except for two students who preferred pen-and-paper writing because they admitted not being used to writing on the computer.

Finally, results regarding students' self-efficacy beliefs appeared interesting. On the one hand, the comparison of the pre-/post-questionnaire results did not reveal any important shift in aspects related to students' writing self-efficacy, which can be explained by the fact that levels of confidence in their writing capabilities were reported high in the pre-questionnaire and thus less possible to be marked by a significant change. However, results from some questions of part 4 of the post-questionnaire indicate that self-efficacy beliefs were further developed as students claimed improved writing ability (72.7%), more confidence in writing assignments (90.7%) and better expression of ideas (72.7%) after the Edmodo implementation, verifying Apriani's (2015) findings, who observed that the use of Edmodo encouraged self-expression and self-confidence in writing.

4.2. Participation in writing through Edmodo collaborative tasks

Students' participation and engagement in the writing process was measured mainly through a close look at students' posts throughout the project and the writings they produced, which revealed encouraging results regarding the potential of Edmodo to foster students' participation in writing procedures and tasks, as reported in Al-Ruheili and Al-Saidi's (2015) study as well. Evidence for such results were provided by the large number, frequency and relevance of students' posts (around 300) that included student-student, student-teacher, student-subgroup and student-whole-class group interactions which led to an increased amount of communication inside and outside the classroom. Such findings are in accordance with Hariri and Bahansal's (2015) findings who reported high percentages of interaction and encouragement of incidental learning through Edmodo.

The posts also show how students collaborated in the production of first and final drafts and engaged in peer-feedback and peer-editing, which is another indicator of their increased participation and sides with Gardner's (2013) view about the usefulness of Edmodo as a communication tool for peer-review. Besides, all students submitted both assignments meeting deadlines, showing thus commitment towards the writing tasks. Finally, increased engagement in the various stages of the writing process was also indicated by the fact that students developed their self-regulation in writing as they tried to correct their own mistakes according to teacher's feedback.

Apart from students' posts and writings, findings of increased participation and engagement are verified by students' responses to interview questions where the vast majority responded that the use of Edmodo motivated them to do their writing assignments (90.9%), that writing collaboratively on Edmodo can improve their writing skill (100%) and that the presence of a real wider audience other than the teacher made a difference on their writing (81.8%), meaning that they were more concerned with the quality of their work and thus engaged in more effort. Similar conclusions were drawn by Purnawarman *et al.* (2016) who reported that students were highly concerned with the quality of their work on Edmodo. A couple of students faced some difficulties with the application and technical problems, but were not discouraged to participate and completed their assignments.

The data obtained from part 4 of the post questionnaire further verified the above findings, since the majority of students stated that they were more motivated to do their writing tasks on Edmodo, compared to when they write on paper (72.7%), and liked groupwork (81.8%), since collaboration offered them support (63.6%) and wasn't problematic (81.8%), which is probably why they would prefer to write collaboratively in the future as well (90.9%). Students' willingness to participate was also depicted in their responses regarding peer review and extended audience. For example, all students were more carefully engaged in revising their work before posting it on Edmodo, compared to handing it in to the teacher (100%), while the majority tried harder because of the extended audience (90.9%), and found peer-feedback useful for self-reflection regarding errors and revision of drafts (90.9%).

4.3. Changes in writing habits

Regarding changes in students' writing habits, the results from part 3 of the pre-/post-questionnaire demonstrated various degrees of change. As far as pre-writing habits are concerned, the analysis of findings indicated a significant change only in the number of students who liked to discuss what they were going to write with their classmates (from 36.3% to 72.7%) and those who don't take into consideration purpose and audience (from

90.9% to 45.4%). A slight increase was detected in the percentage of students who don't need teacher guidance (from 36.3% to 18.2%), indicating a small step towards autonomous learning, and a slight decrease in those who have difficulty finding ideas (from 54.5% to 36.3%) suggesting that collaborative brainstorming applied on Edmodo reduces such difficulties. No shift was detected in other habits, though, suggesting that most students continued preparing for writing in the same way they did before the Edmodo intervention.

Students' while-writing habits mostly remained unchanged as well, but the ones in which an important shift was observed are closely linked to the practices students followed on Edmodo. For example, fewer students stated that their first piece of writing is also the final draft they submit (27.3% instead of 63.6% before Edmodo) and more students preferred collaborative writing (90.9% instead of 27.3% before Edmodo). As for their post-writing habits, all students expressed a favorable disposition towards teacher's feedback indicating errors instead of correcting them (100%), which suggests their preference towards self- and peer-correction and explains the decrease (from 45.4% to 18.2%) in the number of students who just look at the mark and put the essay away. Moreover, most students not only felt comfortable with classmates reading their work (63.6%), but were also interested in peers' views of their writing (63.6%).

Finally, the answers elicited from the relevant interview question revealed a change in some of the students' pre-, while- and after-writing habits, since students reported more discussion of ideas with classmates and more willingness to gather useful information for the topic because researching while online was easier and faster, more revising of content and form, self-correction, peer-editing, online dictionary use, collaborative writing and production of more than one draft. However, there were a couple of students who reported no changes whatsoever in their writing habits.

5. Implications

Taking into consideration the findings of relevant studies in the Greek EFL context that suggest low motivation levels and the factors causing Greek learners' writing demotivation, teachers could exploit Edmodo to instill more positive attitudes towards writing into their students, engage their interest in writing, increase their participation in the writing process, help them develop more positive writing habits and thus ultimately foster their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to write.

Additionally, the fact that the vast majority of students claimed to have enjoyed the Edmodo-based writing lessons and found them more interesting than traditional writing lessons, while at the same time their writing apprehension was dramatically decreased, suggests that teachers should implement changes to, adapt or enrich their teaching methods in relation to writing and integrate Edmodo as a way of developing and sustaining students' interest in writing and as a means of creating a positive emotional teaching environment.

Furthermore, the opportunity that Edmodo offers for collaborative writing, which had a strong motivational effect on students' degree of participation and engagement in writing processes, should urge teachers to promote and encourage groupwork and peer-review in writing through Edmodo, allowing learners to become more responsible and autonomous and experience feelings of support and a sense of community. This way, learners could perceive writing as a meaningful activity and understand the benefits of the social nature of writing.

Finally, since Edmodo was found to improve students' writing self-efficacy beliefs, educators are encouraged to incorporate Edmodo in their writing instruction in order to help them develop more confidence in their writing capabilities and improve their writing performance, while Edmodo can also be exploited by teachers who want to make their learners active participants in the learning of writing, engaged in enhancing the quality of their writings, fostering thus their self-regulation, as depicted in the participants of this study who were highly concerned with the quality of the work and reported improvement of their writing skill through self- and peer-correction.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that the use of Edmodo in writing instruction had a beneficial effect on Greek EFL learners' motivation to write, as it can not only stimulate, but also enhance and sustain it. Firstly, the integration of Edmodo resulted in significant changes in students' attitudes towards writing, rendering their perceptions of writing more positive and stimulating their interest and enjoyment in writing as an activity. Secondly, it brought about changes in students' writing habits, which reflected process writing approaches to a larger extent than before the Edmodo project and contributed greatly to the development of their self-regulation and self-efficacy in writing. Finally, Edmodo had a powerful influence on students' participation in the writing process through its collaborative nature which rendered writing a meaningful activity and fueled interaction, communication and engagement.

Taking into account the positive results the specific Edmodo intervention had but also the fact that the current research was a small-scale one with a limited number of participants, it is recommend that further, wider longitudinal studies be conducted in order to obtain more valid and reliable outcomes regarding the degree of effectiveness of Edmodo in relation to writing motivation enhancement. Quoting Maehr and Meyer (1997, p.378), motivation is "the *sine qua non* for learning", and thus educators, who play a determinant role in influencing students' motivation, should try to take full advantage of the potential of Edmodo since its integration in Greek EFL contexts in order to foster learners' motivation to write seems quite promising.

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Adopting the ESP approach to Senior High School: Generating students' motivation through the development of writing skills

Η χρήση της διδασκαλίας της αγγλικής για ειδικούς σκοπούς στο Λύκειο: δημιουργώντας κίνητρα στους μαθητές μέσω της ανάπτυξης του γραπτού λόγου

Athina KIOSE

The present paper aims at illuminating the implications of adopting the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to a class of 3rd-grade pre-adult learners who are learning English within the context of a Greek senior high school. The research's main purpose is to generate the particular learners' motivation; hence, the English course is linked with the Written Expression subject so that learners could upgrade their Greek writing skills for the forthcoming pan-Hellenic exams. Strictly speaking, the study proposes two English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) lessons which adopt the genre-based approach to writing and aim at catering to learners' short-term needs. The research includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative data obtained from focus group interviews, classroom recordings and an evaluation questionnaire. According to the research findings, the majority of the students welcomed the idea and found the materials interesting and relevant to the target situation. Secondly, the materials managed to satisfy a great number of their needs and lacks in writing. Finally, adopting the genre-based approach to teaching writing proved more than effective as it achieved in raising learners' genre awareness by rendering them able to apply and distinguish pertinent features to each text type.

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Η παρούσα εργασία έχει ως στόχο να διερευνήσει τις συνέπειες από την χρήση της Διδασκαλίας της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας για Ειδικούς Σκοπούς (ESP) στους μαθητές της 3[ης] τάξης ενός ελληνικού δημοσίου Ενιαίου Λυκείου. Ο κύριος σκοπός της έρευνας είναι να δημιουργήσει κίνητρα στους συγκεκριμένους μαθητές, επομένως, το μάθημα των αγγλικών συνδέεται με το μάθημα της έκφρασης-έκθεσης ούτως ώστε οι μαθητές να μπορέσουν να αναβαθμίσουν τις γραπτές δεξιότητές τους στα ελληνικά για τις επερχόμενες πανελλαδικές εξετάσεις. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, η έρευνα προτείνει δυο μαθήματα γραπτής έκφρασης γενικού

ακαδημαϊκού σκοπού (EGAP) τα οποία υιοθετούν την διδασκαλία κειμενικών ειδών και αποβλέπουν στην κάλυψη των βραχυπρόθεσμων αναγκών των μαθητών. Η έρευνα περιλαμβάνει ένα συνδυασμό από ποιοτικά και ποσοτικά δεδομένα τα οποία αποκτήθηκαν από την ομαδικά εστιασμένη συνέντευξη, τις ηχογραφήσεις της διδασκαλίας στη τάξη και το ερωτηματολόγιο αξιολόγησης. Σύμφωνα με τα ερευνητικά αποτελέσματα, η πλειοψηφία των μαθητών επικρότησαν την ιδέα και θεώρησαν ότι το υλικό ήταν ενδιαφέρον και ανταποκρινόταν στον επιδιωκόμενο στόχο. Δεύτερον, το υλικό κατάφερε να ικανοποιήσει ένα μεγάλο μέρος των αναγκών και των ελλείψεων τους στην γραπτή έκφραση. Τέλος, η υιοθέτηση της διδασκαλίας κειμενικών ειδών αποδείχθηκε κάτι παραπάνω από αποτελεσματική διότι κατόρθωσε να αυξήσει την επίγνωση των μαθητών ως προς τα διάφορα είδη κειμένου καθιστώντας τους με αυτόν τον τρόπο ικανούς να εφαρμόζουν και να διακρίνουν τα συναφή χαρακτηριστικά του κάθε είδους.

Keywords: ESP, writing, genre, Genre-based Approach, motivation, pre-Adults, EAP, EGAP, Pan-Hellenic Exams, Written Expression Subject

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1. Introduction

Recent trends in educational psychology have suggested the emergence of learner-centered curriculums that aim at catering to students' needs, wants and interests; thus, keeping their motivation levels high. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) this tendency was translated in the terms of ESP courses which go to great lengths to promote learner autonomy and learner-centeredness in the language classroom.

However, the teaching of English in Greek secondary education is a far cry from encouraging such practices as still retains a general-purpose orientation, totally disregarding learners' needs. The present study aspires to adopt the ESP approach to the particular context so as to generate pupils' motivation and give them a real reason for attending the course by combining the English course with Written Expression, a 'high profile' subject in senior high schools, and developing a number of writing lessons that will potentially assist them in ameliorating their writing skills in Greek for the pan-Hellenic exams.

2. Delineating the teaching context

The class that was used for the completion of the particular study is one of the four classes of the 3rd grade in the 1st senior high school of Edessa. It consists of 26 pupils, 15 girls and 11 boys, aged between 17 and 18 from all academic orientations. It is a heterogeneous class and different proficiency levels co-exist[1]. The teaching of English occurs under adverse conditions. The vast majority of the learners do not participate during lessons and either engages in discussion with their peers or is preoccupied with doing homework exercises for other subjects.

Taking into consideration Robinson's (1991) criteria, the course can hardly be considered as "goal-directed" and it has not been organized around needs analysis which would specify

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[1] The majority of the students has obtained a B2 level certificate, 7 students have been awarded a C1-C2 certificate whereas the rest of them either find themselves in B1 level or they exhibit no knowledge of English at all.

what exactly it is that students have to do through the medium of English. Strictly speaking, learners seem as belonging in a situation where no obvious learning objective is envisaged, termed teaching English for no obvious reason (TENOR) (Abbot, 1981).

However, based on the assumption that nearly every teaching and learning situation can turn into an ESP one, further classification of the context needs to take place. According to Robinson's diagram (1991), the course constitutes an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) situation and falls into the Type 4 description of EAP situations around the world (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) where the national language is used for the teaching of all subject courses whereas English is mainly used for ancillary reasons. In terms of specificity, the particular course can be defined as English for General Purposes (EGP) at the intermediate level focusing on the common core language with emphasis on specific skills holding position 2 in Dudley-Evans & St John's (1998) specificity continuum.

3. The research method

3.1. The purpose of the research

The research hereby was designed in an attempt to examine the implications of adopting the ESP approach to the students of the 3rd class of a senior high school. In this vein, the research questions emerged are the following:

- Is adopting the ESP approach to a class of pre-adults effective in generating their motivation?
- What are the specifications of the Written Expression subject that the English course should meet so as to cater for the learners' needs in academic writing for the end-of-the-year Pan-Hellenic exams?
- What are learners' needs and wants in writing in Greek and to what extent the existing ESP program catered to them?
- Is the genre approach to teaching writing effective in assisting students in their academic writing skills for the Pan-Hellenic exams?

The study followed the steps of ESP syllabus design which, according to Graves (1996), consist of: needs analysis, determination of goals and objectives, conceptualization of the content, materials design and evaluation. Firstly, a detailed examination of the target situation, the present curriculum for the Written Expression subject, was conducted so as to define the necessities of the Pan-Hellenic exams. Moreover, a research on students' needs regarding academic writing was undertaken via focus groups interviews. The information obtained from these analyses helped the researcher design two lessons tailored to the specific situation and group of learners. After the writing lessons had been taught and recorded, a questionnaire was designed and administered to the students in order to investigate the extent to which their writing needs have been addressed and, consequently, the lessons' effectiveness towards motivating them in attending the English subject with more eagerness.

3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. The focus group interview

The focus group interview was chosen as it can extensively investigate the educational needs of the participants, it is time- and cost-effective, participants are regarded and treated as

individuals rather than as mere numbers and it facilitates the exploration of new ideas and perceptions (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The focus group interview, used for the purposes of the research, is divided into five sections which seek information on learners' attitudes, present abilities, wants from the course, preferences in learning, target situation needs, lacks, strengths and weaknesses.

3.2.2. Recordings

In order to gather empirical material regarding the students' reactions and their performance during the teaching of the writing lessons, recording the teaching sessions seems to be more than crucial. The density and wealth of the collected data allow the researcher not only to better approximate the issues under question but also to capture aspects that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Whatever happens in the classroom is recorded, details are spelled out simply by replaying or reviewing the audio recordings and a full account of the lesson is there for the taking (Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

3.2.3. The Evaluation Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to the particular students after the completion of the lessons aiming at the evaluation of the course. The questionnaire "enables teachers to collect a large amount of information relatively quickly about learners' preferences, attitudes, beliefs or motivation" (Richards and Lockhart, 1996, p. 10) in addition to being a fairly systematic, rigorous, focused and tightly controlled procedure that, more often than not, elicits reliable and valid data (Dornyei, 2003). The particular evaluative questionnaire is divided into four parts: materials/lessons' evaluation, learner motivation, lacks in the Written Expression in Greek and the genre-based approach in writing.

4. Presentation and analysis of results

4.1. Target Situation Analysis: The Written Expression subject

According to the curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education (10/88/Γ2/05-03-1999 Y.A., ΦEK B' 521), language is seen as a communicative product that is strongly linked to society; therefore, it should be taught in an active, interactive and communicative way. Additionally, learners come across and are expected to produce a variety of genres[2]; most importantly, though, learners are trained to express themselves having a specific audience and purpose in mind and raise an awareness of the various communicative settings as well as of the characteristics of the register that is required.

In pan-Hellenic exams, there are two sections that target at an overall assessment of the learners' language skills. Firstly, the section on reading, comprehending and writing requires students to read a text and answer questions regarding a) its content b) its structure and c) its use of language. Moreover, learners are asked to produce written discourse in the form of a summary based on the text that was given to them.

As far as the second section, learners are expected to produce a text, no more than 600 words, within a given context on a topic which has been taught during the academic year. Three criteria should be taken into consideration: a) the content b) the ways of expression

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[2] Essays, articles, formal and informal letters, diary entries, leaflets, newspaper columns, announcements, speeches and lectures

and c) the structure. Learners should aim at relating their thoughts and ideas to the topic, justifying their opinions based on arguments, developing the topic in depth, putting forward original ideas, expressing themselves in a clear and accurate way, using rich vocabulary, choosing the right register for the particular genre, complying with the morphosyntactic rules, using appropriate spelling and punctuation, following a sequence in the meanings to be expressed, creating cohesion and coherence on the paragraph level and writing the text in the given communicative context.

4.2. Learner's needs: The findings from the focus group interviews

A great number of students characterized the English course as uninteresting, boring and useless, having no actual reason to exist. Exploring the reason they feel this way, a lot of them raised the issue of having acquired certificates and their need to focus more on the subjects that are assessed in the Pan-Hellenic exams. On the contrary, others placed the responsibility on the teacher, whereas only in the last focus group the problem of different proficiency levels in the same class emerged (Table 1).

Feelings	*Interview data*
No reason to exist	o *"It's the time when we do other things, exercises from other lessons. Basically, we shouldn't have had English this year, it should have been optional",* o *"We have the Pan-Hellenic exams and it doesn't seem so important, we don't give much attention"*
Blame the teacher	o *"The teacher can't control the class, it's chaos",* o *"Sometimes the teacher is to blame, if you don't like the teacher, you may not want to attend the lesson at all"*
Different proficiency levels	o *"In this class there are different levels, so one student that doesn't know English well may feel bad and one student that knows the language well may feel that he/she does not make any progress".*

Table 1: Feelings

Writing subskills	*Interview data*
Vocabulary skills	o *"I'd like to learn to use richer vocabulary, a variety of words"* o *"I think if I knew and used rich vocabulary, I would write better"* o *"Maybe to be able to organize my writing logically, it should follow an order. We have to know where to put the ideas and in what order"*
Paragraph structure	o *"I'd like to be able to write a more concise summary"* o *"I need to work on how to create good paragraphs; the ideas should follow a logical order, from the topic sentence to the examples".*

Table 2: Writing Subskills

Proceeding with what writing subskills they would like to improve by the end of the year, learners placed special emphasis on improving their vocabulary skills. Moreover, organising ideas logically in addition to constructing paragraphs effectively is something the students need to work on (Table 2).

As for the teaching of the writing skill, there was a broad consensus that writing instruction is to focus on the teaching of specific genres assessed in the exams and the majority of the learners supported the use of a model text and the drawing of an outline or plan prior to writing. Additionally, students would like the teacher to provide them with more ideas for topic development and discuss in depth the themes they are required to write. However, a rather surprising issue that arose during the interview was that learners do not practice writing in class and they are left alone to do the writing at home; hence, they insisted on practicing writing at school as they feel they need to gain experience (Table 3).

Writing instruction	Interview data
Model text-outline	o *"The teacher can bring us many model texts to see the words they use, how they are structured, the forms of reasoning they follow, in that way we could have an idea of what the exams ask".*
Topic development	o *"We need to talk about the topics before we write about them, to prepare the essay in class, to discuss ideas, the structure, the teacher could give us relevant words for the topic".*
Writing in class	o *"The teacher could write, show examples and ask us how we could syntax our ideas, correct our responses, we could create an article all together, not like take it home and do whatever you want. Because at home every student gets help".*
Interactive instruction	o *"The teacher could use an interactive board, write a piece of writing and ask students if they agree, disagree, ask for suggestions and not to hurry all the time, let's get over with".* o *"If it was possible to get in touch with other schools and see how those students write, to compare for example how a student in England or in other country writes an essay with how we write it", "To see how the others write so I can get some ideas".*

Table 3: Writing Instruction

The next question focused students' attention on the ways the English course could actually help them in improving their writing skills for the Written Expression subject. Not all learners saw the possibility of being benefited from such an idea and abruptly stated that English cannot help them in any way. Nevertheless, there was a great number of participants who welcomed the idea acknowledging the fact that there should be similarities in writing in both languages (Table 4).

Concerning the most challenging tasks the students encounter in the Pan-Hellenic exams, almost every focus group mentioned the summary part in addition to issues of cohesion and coherence (Table 5).

How English can help	Interview data
No help	○ *"The thing is that the essays we write for the Pan-Hellenic exams is of another level from that in English because the level of the proficiency, for example, corresponds to that of the 2nd class of Senior High School so the ideas and the ways of expression we use in English will not be sufficient for Greek"*
Similarities	○ *"I think writing introductions and conclusion is the same in both languages and also the techniques to follow in order to structure a text is again the same".* ○ *"It would help to be aware of cohesion and coherence, as I guess a text that has continuity if we transfer it to Greek it will still have continuity"* ○ *"Since we have plenty of time here we could practice how to develop a paragraph, techniques for example or how our text to have coherence and cohesion, some words maybe that can help us in Greek".*

Table 4: How English Can Help

Challenging tasks in exams	Interview data
Summary	○ *"To understand the text they give us and make a good summary is difficult for me, sometimes I don't include all the main points"* ○ *"Most of the times, it is the summary that it's the most difficult but of course it depends on the text they give us"*
Means or persuasion	○ *"We have to be careful about the ways of persuasion we can use in a text. Probably, it depends on the text and what we have to write", "We need to use some form of persuasion in our texts and we need to be careful about it".*

Table 5: Challenging Tasks in Exams

Later, participants were asked to brainstorm topics that they will be required to write in the Pan-Hellenic exams. Several topics that emerged are: immigration, racism, environmental issues, fanaticism, human rights, arts and culture, religion and more precisely Messianism, violence, the phenomenon of bullying at schools, unemployment, homophobia, education, terrorism, health – nutrition and death penalty.

Finally, students were required to think of specific genres that could be addressed in the English course. Some of the responses included the article in the school's or community's newspaper, in a magazine or on the school's website taking the forms of for and against, compare and contrast, cause and effect, offering suggestions, giving examples or responding to an announcement. Other genres that were put forward were the speech either in the Youth Parliament or within the school context and the formal letter addressing or responding to someone in authority. What is more, the essay and the newspaper column were mentioned by numerous students.

5. Materials design

5.1. The summary

The first lesson revolves around writing a summary (Appendix I) of an original text which revolves around environmental issues. Relevant schemata about the summary are activated, students' metacognition skills are exercised and contextual analysis is performed. Examination and analysis of two model texts occurs and as one of them is a deliberate false provision, this can develop a more critical sense among the learners leading them to discover why a text may not be effective in the particular situation (Macbeth, 2010). The lexico-grammatical features of the summary are under scrutiny with learner autonomy being promoted as learners will eventually become able to notice and think about new situations with sophistication and strategic awareness (Bazerman, 1997). Learners jointly improve the false summary and independent construction of text follows. Next, learners focus attention on aspects that need special treatment through a peer evaluation and, obviously, this revising does not simply involve checking for language errors; however, global content and organization come to the spotlight (Widodo, 2006). Finally, students revise and redraft their summaries taking into account the peers' comments from the previous feedback session.

5.2. The problem-solution article

The second lesson stress the article's problem-solution structure as well as the typical language found in it (Appendix II). Learners, once again, recognize the fact that language occurs and is formed in a social context through the context analysis tasks. Relevant schemata from the Greek context are activated and learners are practicing their text analysis skills. The situation-problem-solution-evaluation pattern is made apparent whereas language issues are also practiced. The sample texts are treated again as a source of input and the teacher can scaffold for students the distinctive use of the language appropriate (Henry and Roseberry, 1998). Students don't just jump into writing but recognize the importance of framing the structure of the text in addition to becoming increasingly aware of the readers' needs, the social purposes and the linguistic features of the specific genre (Ahn, 2012). Lastly, individualization is overcome, students are trained to co-operate by checking each other's work (Wingrad, 1981) and the final draft is produced taking into consideration the partner's comments.

6. Revisiting the research questions

6.1. Is adopting the ESP approach to a class of pre-adults effective in generating their motivation?

The designed ESP course seemed to have had an impact on altering the students' stance towards English. As it was apparent from the actual teaching sessions, the majority of the learners in both classes engaged in the lessons and participated eagerly and willingly. The idea of linking the, according to students, meaningless English course with the Written Expression subject was more than welcomed and, ultimately, the English class worked towards the specific goal to assist learners in improving their writing skills for the pan-Hellenic exams. The findings from the questionnaire also contribute to the above conclusions (see Figure 1; Appendix IV). Learners unanimously responded that the whole learning experience was deemed positive and clearly stated that the English course took on a more meaningful character acknowledging that their immediate needs are being addressed and satisfied. According to Kiely (2009, p. 108), a positive experience that is

holistically satisfying has the capacity to "engage, motivate, generate effort and lead to desired outcomes". Thus, adopting the ESP approach to a general education class succeeded in turning the learners into active participants and rendering the learning and teaching procedure more learner-centered (Kaur, 2006).

6.2. What are the specifications of the Written Expression subject that the English course should meet so as to cater for the learners' needs in academic writing for the end-of-the-year Pan-Hellenic exams?

Communicative writing tasks are a sine qua none for the English subject and it is imperative that learners be involved in interaction with their potential audiences, achieve the defined communicative goal and produce texts that will ultimately reflect reality. Secondly, the English course ought to provide practice to a variety of genres and genre awareness activities need to be adopted with the students considering specific criteria for identifying and classifying the various text types.

Moreover, students in the Pan-Hellenic exams are to be engaged in writing academic discourse; hence, forming powerful arguments using the various means of persuasion is of the utmost importance. Paragraph development and the proper sequencing of thoughts is another point to consider and the English course should provide pupils with ample practice in devising and linking paragraphs so that a coherent body of a text to be created. Lastly, learners' summary skills ought to be exercised given that writing a summary constitutes a crucial academic ability and it is assessed in the first part of the examination.

6.3. What are learners' needs and wants in writing in Greek and to what extent the existing ESP program catered to them?

The NA findings showed a clear necessity for ameliorating their topic development skills as well as practicing the effective use of linking words. Paragraph development also emerged. Lastly, improvement in their summary skills was required. In other words, learners expressed a demand to critically analyse the original text, distinguish the main points from supporting ones, paraphrase the initial ideas and eventually be able to write an accurate summary. As far as the teaching of writing is concerned, an approach based on the genres that are assessed in the pan-Hellenic exams was extremely favoured with learners putting forward the analysis and scrutiny of model texts in terms of vocabulary, syntax, grammatical features and ideas. In addition, learners would like to draw an outline right before venturing into writing. Finally, pupils demanded that writing be performed in class more often; thus, giving them the chance to engage in practice and ameliorate their writing skills.

The results obtained from the evaluation questionnaire (see Table 6; Appendix III) showed that a significant number of learners' needs were addressed and satisfied by the two writing lessons. Learners admitted having been assisted in paragraph development and, more precisely, how to place their thoughts in order; thus, achieving a great level of cohesion. What is more, it seemed that vocabulary exercises were more than welcomed as students reported to have been made conscious as to the words and expressions each text type should include. Lastly, their genre awareness was reported to have been enhanced to a large degree with learners acknowledging the importance of conforming to the conventions of a particular text type.

6.4. Is the genre approach to teaching writing effective in assisting students in their academic writing skills for the Pan-Hellenic exams?

During the ESP lessons, the genre approach managed to focus students' attention on the lexical, grammatical and discourse choices that should be made so as communication to be accomplished (Shushua et al, 2009). The questionnaire data showed (see Table 7; Appendix V) that pupils were assisted in noticing the most salient features of both genres. More precisely, they became fully aware of the genre's internal organization and of the fact that features vary from genre to genre (Lee, 2012), noticed several discrepancies deliberately provided to them, successfully composed a cognitive map of each genres' inventories and appreciated the value of context, audience and purpose in writing effectively.

These results came in total harmony with Chaisiri's (2010) findings which stressed the positive attitudes of students having experienced genre-based writing lessons. Nevertheless, the learners refused to write an actual piece of writing; therefore, the researcher does not possess any tangible data confirming an actual improvement in their writing skills. What is clear, though, is that learners managed to be benefited from genre pedagogy in developing deep awareness of the genre's rhetorical structure and discourse, enhancing their autonomy levels as they gained control over language, as well as perceiving language as contextualized communication that occurs in an identifiable context (Amogne, 2013).

7. Concluding remarks

Overall, based on the results of the study, investigating and addressing target learners' needs led to enhanced motivation levels; thus, students escaped the TENOR situation and a real purpose for attending the English course was given to them. In other words, a thorough needs analysis of what the learners want and lack as well as an examination of the target situation where students will be using the English language constitute a prerequisite for a successful course. Secondly, since linking English with the Written Expression was highly welcomed, it is imperative that the teachers establish direct correlations with the particular subject and cater to the learners' short-term demands. Lastly, adopting the genre-based approach brought out considerable benefits concerning learners' writing skills. Therefore, it is advisable to expose learners to such practices that will ultimately make them genre aware through noticing and anticipating pertinent features or discrepancies.

To conclude, generating and enhancing learners' motivation in the 3rd class of senior high school presupposes the design of curricula and the adoption of practices aligned with students' target and learning needs. The English course ought to gradually withdraw from its general-purpose orientation and attain a more specific character that will ultimately trigger students' interest.

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Appendix I
Summary Task Sheets

Contextual Analysis

TASK 1:
What comes into your mind when you hear the word "**summary**"? What are the features that make a summary effective? Work with your partner for a minute and come up with a list of characteristics in your notebook that a good summary should include!!!

TASK 2:
Here is a list of the most important features of a summary:

> ✓ It uses an **objective** tone, comments on or evaluation of the original text are not included
> ✓ It mentions the **source** and the **writer** of the original text
> ✓ It points out the **thematic centre** of the original text
> ✓ It reproduces the text in a **brief** yet **clear** way
> ✓ It follows the **organizational pattern** of the **original text**
> ✓ It presents the **main ideas** of the text omitting unnecessary details and examples
> ✓ It **paraphrases the ideas** of the original text
> ✓ It is written for a **purpose** and addresses a **specific audience**
> ✓ It runs **smoothly** (we don't want a collection of sentences that do not flow!)
> ✓ It uses **reporting verbs**

a) Compare your answers to the list above! What things did you include? What things did you miss?
b) Is there anything else you would like to add to the particular list?

TASK 3:
Here is a task on summary writing along with the original text (text 1)! Read both of them and with your partner answer the questions below:

> You've recently come across an interesting article on climate change in http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/magazine/science-and-technology/climate-change-facing-future and you thought that it would be a great idea to write about it on your school's newspaper. Read the article and summarize it in no more than 100 words so that you can raise your peers' awareness about the consequences of this phenomenon.

a) Who will read your summary?
b) What is your purpose for writing?
c) What is the channel of communication?
d) What is your relationship with the readers? Have you got equal status?
e) What style of language should you use? (formal, informal, neutral)
f) What will be the subject matter of the summary?

TASK 4:
These are two summaries of the original text:
a) Which, according to your opinion, is more appropriate for the particular task? Why? (Take into consideration your answers in the questions in task 3!)
b) Look again at the features of a good summary in task 2! Which summary of the two appears to be more effective? What characteristics are missing from the "bad" summary?

> 1) Emma Douty in her article "Climate Change: Facing the Future" puts forward her concerns about the possible consequences climate change can have both on us and on the future generations to come. According to her, climate change is an undeniable fact and unless the earth's temperature stops to go up, the situation will get even worse. More specifically, the world will experience severe weather conditions in addition to the rising sea levels caused by the melting of the ice in the poles. As she claims, this could actually lead to the point that several places will be covered by water; thus, forcing people to search for other places to settle down. Towards the end of the article, she urges people to act immediately and start realizing the huge impact this phenomenon can have on their lives. Otherwise, as she humorously concludes, we could start finding a way to become mermaids!

> 2) The article I have recently read and I would like to talk about discusses the phenomenon of climate change. Many people talk about the phenomenon of climate change, the fact that the earth is becoming warmer and that if we carry on living like that, the global temperatures will rise even more. The writer questions about the future of the planet and goes on to offer a rather implausible solution to the problem: people to move somewhere else such as the poles of the Arctic and Antarctica where the ice would have been melted and the climate would have been warmer. This devastation is rather scary and people should realize how their actions can have an impact on the future generations. So, we need to start thinking about the environment.

Modeling - Deconstructing

TASK 5: Reporting Verbs

a) A range of reporting verbs should be used in summary writing. However, some of them are objective while others seem to reveal the summary writer's personal attitude towards the original text and should not be used frequently. Look at the examples below:

- Marcia Barinaga in her article "Is There a Female Style in Science?" _alleges_ that men and women exhibit differences in the way they pursue science.
- Marcia Barinaga in her article "Is There a Female Style in Science?" _assumes_ that men and women exhibit differences in the way they pursue science.

b) Do these verbs allow the writer of the summary to convey his/her attitude?

c) Look at the table below. Can you identify which verbs are objective and which verbs tend to be evaluative?

Reporting Verbs

	Objective	Evaluative	Followed by that-clause
Describe			
Discuss			
State			
Present			
Explain			
Maintain			
Examine			
Affirm			
Argue			
Reveal			
Presume			
Assume			
Assert			
Contend			
Allege			
Claim			
Imply			

d) Look at the summary 1 again and try to identify the reporting verbs. Are they Objective or Evaluative? Add them to the table above!

e) A lot of reporting verbs in English are followed by a that-clause containing a subject and a verb. Look at the table above and tick the verbs that are followed by a that-clause.

TASK 6: The First Sentence in the Summary

    a) Have a look at summary 1 again. How does the writer begin the summary? What tense has he/she used?

        Most summaries begin with a sentence containing two elements a) the source and b) the main idea. Here are some examples:

- In Anthony Tyson's article "Mapping Dark Matter with Gravitational Lenses,"_____(main idea)
- According to Yvonne Boskin in her article "Blue Whale Population May Be Increasing off California," _____(main idea)
- Young and Song's 1991 paper on fluoridation discusses_____(main topic)
- Author Peter Bernstein in his book *Capital Ideas* states /claims/argues/maintains that _____(main idea)
- Marcia Barinaga, in her article "Is There a Female Style in Science?" states/ argues/maintains/suggests/claims that_____(main idea)

    b) Here are some introductory statements for a summary of the "Climate Change" text in Task 3. Which, if any, would you prefer to have written? Why? Edit the weaker sentences.

- Author Emma Douty in "Climate Chance: Facing the Future" states that how the world can be changed as a result of the rising temperatures.
- "Climate Chance: Facing the Future" by Emma Douty claims that changes in climate have led to a rising sea level.
- According to "Climate Chance: Facing the Future" Emma Douty suggests that the world's climate has been changed.
- Douty in "Climate Chance: Facing the Future" mentions that increasing temperatures will have an impact on the environment and the population.
- In Douty's "Climate Chance: Facing the Future", the global temperatures will rise even more if we carry living on the way we do.

<div align="center">Joint Construction</div>

TASK 7:

It's time to have a look at summary 2. Now that you now what a good summary should look like, how to begin your text and what reporting verbs to include, work with your partner and correct the false points.

<div align="center">Independent Construction</div>

TASK 8:

Here is another task for summary writing:

> You've recently come across an interesting article on recycling in http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/magazine/science-and-technology/climate-change-facing-future and you thought that it would be a great idea to write about it on your school's newspaper. Read the article and summarize it in no more than 100 words so that you can talk your peers into recycling.

a) Read the task and the text (text 2) and discuss these questions with the class:

- Who will read your summary?
- What is your purpose for writing?
- What is the channel of communication?
- What is your relationship with the readers? Have you got equal status?
- What style of language should you use?
- What will be the subject matter of the summary?

b) The main points of the article have been summarized for you.

✓ Many people consider recycling too hard for them
✓ Countries have encouraged recycling by offering financial incentives to those who recycle
✓ A great variety of things can be recycled
✓ Recycling saves on energy and leads to decreased production
✓ Lack of recycling leads to increased landfill
✓ Lack of recycling causes deforestation
✓ Recycling can have a negative aspect as well
✓ A solution to the problem should be found

c) Write your summary taking into account the context and pay great attention on how you will refer to the main idea of the text at the beginning of the summary and what reporting verbs you will use. Good luck!

<center>Peer Evaluation</center>

TASK 9:
It's time to exchange summaries with your partner! Spend 10 minutes to read and evaluate each other's texts and make some suggestions for improvement. While evaluating the summaries, consult the following checklist:

<center>Evaluation Questions</center>

→ Is the summary appropriate for the particular audience? (readers of the school newspaper, peers)
→ Is the summary appropriate for the particular context? (published in the school's newspaper)
→ Does it achieve its purpose? (to talk peers into recycling)
→ Does it involve all the main points raised in the article? (see list in task 8, b)
→ Are the reporting verbs used objective?
→ Are the source and the main idea mentioned at the beginning of the summary?
→ Does it follow the structure of the original text?
→ Does the writer of the summary use his/her own words as much as possible? (Paraphrasing)
→ Are the examples and the unnecessary details omitted?
→ Does the summary flow? (are the ideas and sentences connected?)

TASK 10:

Taking your partner's comments into account, revise your summary. Make sure you include your partner's suggestions for improvement and don't forget to pay attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Note: Tasks 5 and 6 were adopted and adapted from: Swales, J. M. & C. B. Feak, (1994). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students – Essential Tasks and Skills*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Appendix II
Problem-Solution Article
(For economy reasons only sample tasks are included)

Contextual Analysis Sample tasks

TASK 1
  a) What does the writer hope to achieve?
  b) Who will read it?
  c) What text type are you asked to write?
  d) What is the channel of communication?
  e) What is the writer's relationship with the readers? Is he/she of equal status?
  f) What style of language should you use?
  g) What is the subject matter discussed in the article?
  h) What pattern of organization should you follow?

TASK 2
  a) Create an outline of the article
  b) Make a list of the features you would include in your text so that it achieves its purpose.

TASK 3
  a) Compare articles with your outline.
  b) Discuss a checklist on the features of the article and compare it with your own lists.

Modeling – Deconstructing sample tasks

TASK 4:
Complete the flow charts below with relevant sentences from the articles:

Situation: Introduction of general topic, specific areas to be coved in the article

↓

Problem: Describe the problem (effect, consequences)

↓

Solution: Provide responses, offer evidence

↓

Evaluation/Conclusion: Which is perhaps the best response? What might be the end result of applying each response? Final statement

TASK 5:
The following problem – solution paragraphs have been jumbled. Work with your partner to place the sentences in order so that a coherent paragraph is formed following the pattern of: Situation, Problem, Solution, Evaluation.

TASK 6:
Read texts and notice how the problem and solutions are introduced and fill in the table below with the relevant expressions! Can you think of other ways to introduce a problem in an article? Add your ideas to the table:

Introducing a problem
•

Introducing solutions
•

Joint Construction

TASK 7:
You have been given the introduction and conclusion of the article; however, the body seems to be missing. Look at the notes below and with your partner construct the main body keeping in mind the things that we discussed above (pattern of organization, introduction of problem and solution, style, audience, features of the article etc):

Independent Construction

TASK 8:
Now it's the time for you to respond to the first task! Take on the role of the editor-in-chief in the school's newspaper and write an article on bullying for the next month's issue.

Peer Evaluation

TASK 9:
Exchange your text with your partner. Spend 15 minutes to read and evaluate each other's article and make some suggestions for improvement.

TASK 10:
Taking your partner's comments into account, revise your article. Make sure you include your partner's suggestions for improvement and don't forget to pay attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar. Good luck!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Appendix III
Materials/Lesson Evaluation

Materials / Lesson Evaluation	5= I strongly think so	4= I think so	3= I'm not sure	2= I don't think so	1= I don't think so at all
1) The material was interesting	13 (29%)	17 (38%)	9 (20%)	2 (4%)	4 (9%)
2) The instructions were explicit	25 (55%)	11 (24%)	5 (11%)	3 (8%)	1 (2%)
3) The writing steps were clear	17 (38%)	18 (40%)	8 (18%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
4) The materials were relevant to my needs in writing in English	8 (18%)	14 (31%)	12 (27%)	9 (20%)	2 (4%)
5) The materials were relevant to my needs in writing in Greek	13 (29%)	16 (35%)	10 (22%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)
6) The lessons gave me important information about writing the specific genres	6 (14%)	24 (53%)	11 (25%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)
7) The lessons provided me with information I didn´t know before	10 (22%)	8 (18%)	7 (16%)	8 (18%)	12 (26%)
8) The lessons addressed the specifications of the Pan-Hellenic exams in the Written Expression subject	11 (24%)	20 (44%)	6 (13%)	4 (9%)	4 (9%)
9) The tasks resembled those of the Pan-Hellenic exams in the Written Expression subject	14 (31%)	15 (33%)	16 (35%)	0	0
10) The topics chosen are often assessed in Pan-Hellenic exams in Written Expression subject	19 (42%)	9 (20%)	9 (20%)	8 (18%)	0
11) The tasks were appropriate regarding my level in English	12 (26%)	18 (40%)	9 (20%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)
12) The materials promoted writing practice, not only theory	9 (20%)	17 (38%)	13 (29%)	6 (13%)	0

Table 6: Materials/Lesson Evaluation

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Appendix IV
Learner Motivation

Learner Motivation

89% 7% 91% 56% 47% 44% 55% 44%

- ☐ 1) The English course became more meaningful
- ☐ 2) I found a real purpose for attending the English course
- ☐ 3) It was a positive learning experience
- ☐ 4) I want the English courser to be linked with the Written Expression subject
- ☐ 5) I really liked the way writing was taught
- ☐ 6) I think the English course will help me to perform better in the Pan-Hellenic exams in the Written Expression subject
- ☐ 7) I think I will be able to use what I learnt in the Greek context
- ☐ 8) I' m confident that after the lessons I can write an effective summary/article

Figure 1: Learner Motivation

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Appendix V
The Genre-based Approach in Teaching Writing

The Genre-based Approach in Writing	5= I strongly think so	4= I think so	3= I'm not sure	2= I don't think so	1= I don't think so at all
1) The genre approach helped me to improve my writing skills in English	7 (16%)	15 (33%)	11 (24%)	9 (20%)	3 (7%)
2) The genre approach helped me to improve my writing skills in Greek	6 (13%)	11 (25%)	14 (31%)	9 (20%)	5 (11%)
3) The genre approach helped me to understand the discourse structure of the summary/article	9 (20%)	20 (45%)	6 (13%)	8 (18%)	2 (4%)
4) The genre approach helped me to notice the typical vocabulary found in a summary/article	15 (32%)	18 (40%)	5 (11%)	5 (11%)	3 (6%)
5) The genre approach helped me to notice the typical grammar structures found in a summary/article	11 (25%)	18 (40%)	10 (22%)	2 (4%)	4 (9%)
6) The genre approach helped me to notice the typical features of the summary/article	11 (25%)	25 (55%)	5 (11%)	4 (9%)	0
7) Analyzing the model texts helped me a lot to write my own text	19 (42%)	15 (33%)	11 (25%)	0	0
8) The checklists were useful in reminding me the typical features that should be present when writing a summary/article	23 (51%)	13 (29%)	9 (20%)	0	0
9) The genre approach helped me to get autonomy over writing	9 (20%)	15 (33%)	13 (29%)	5 (11%)	3 (7%)

Table 7: The Genre-based Approach in Teaching Writing

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Implementing tutorials within the context of an English for General Academic Purposes course at the University of Patras: A Preliminary study

Ourania KATSARA

This article discusses an initial survey on the implementation of tutorials within the context of an English for General Academic Purposes course (EGAP) in order to explore students' perceptions of successful tutors using the model INSPIRE developed by Lepper and Wooleverton (2002). Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1986) are also used in order to exemplify Greek students' culturally oriented learning behaviour within the tutorial learning context. Specifically, these dimensions explain that cultural orientations are inclinations describing the effects of a society's culture on its members' values and how these values are linked to their behaviour. Interviews with 29 students indicated that, despite students' culturally teacher-centred learning background, they would be in favour of participating in tutorials in order to benefit from the tutor's facilitator role. Specifically, it was found that students seemed to prefer the tutor to be their guide in their studies helping them engage in self-assessment of their performance. Their overall experience of attending interviews on the use of tutoring appeared to be positive, triggering their willingness to attend future tutorials with more specific enquiries. The main initial finding of the survey indicates that Greeks' cultural orientations seem to change in specific learning settings, for example in tutorials. A set of preliminary implications, which could be used to establish the parameters for further research, are also offered.

Key words: tutoring, Greek students, Higher Education, English for General Academic Purposes, culturally -oriented learning

1. Introduction

Understanding fully students' needs has become necessary because, according to Scott (1999), effective education depends partly on teachers being able to establish a two-way learning dialogue. Large classes might prevent classroom teachers from using appropriate teaching strategies while student diversity makes it harder for teachers to understand both their students' knowledge base at point of entry and their performance skills during learning. According to Sander (2005), supported and targeted teaching is achieved when teachers are familiar with students' conceptions and perceptions of teaching and learning. Maunder and Harrop (2003) suggest that personal tutoring

systems and teaching students in small tutorial groups could help teachers gather information about students' learning profiles. In this sense, feedback appears to play a very important role. Murphy and Cornell (2010) argue that the two-way communication process between tutors and learners is crucial in understanding students' perceptions and utilization of feedback. They note that feedback is a key issue when it comes to motivating and encouraging students. In the light of the research above, this article discusses an initial survey undertaken at the University of Patras regarding students' opinions of tutorial sessions and their usefulness.

2. Literature review

In order to contextualise the main argument of the study, this section offers a critical literature review on the use of tutoring in Greek higher education and on the framework of developing approaches to understand learning across different cultures.

2.1 Models of tutoring and tutors' characteristics

Studies regarding the effects of tutoring in colleges have shown that tutoring has generated positive results (House and Wohlt 1990). The Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois (2009) has found that one-to-one tutoring increased student achievement, especially for students at risk for academic failure. However, a study carried out by Norton and Crowley (1995) indicated that students in tutoring develop more sophisticated ideas about how to approach learning but no significant differences resulted as overall academic achievement. This controversy over the effectiveness of tutoring is related to differences in targeted student outcomes (Hock et al., 2001). The different foci of tutoring models can determine the efficacy of the tutoring sessions. If, for example, completing homework is a valued outcome, then assignment-assistance tutoring might be effective. Similarly, if the valued outcomes of tutoring are to increase literacy skills and content knowledge, then instructional tutoring could be effective.

Gardner, Jewel, and Mccarthy (1996) state that tutoring serves as an alternative approach to increasing the effectiveness of the traditional lecture styles of teaching and learning. According to survey findings reported by researchers in the centre for prevention Research and Development in University of Illinois (2009), the best performing tutoring programmes should have some qualities. These qualities include, among others, training of tutors on effective instructional strategies, tracking the progress of students in order to adjust their content and strategies to improve tutoring sessions and identifying structured principles of learning which follow a systematic approach. In this sense, during a tutorial session, the learning process indicates that student engagement is important. Topping (1996) argues that the tutoring process gives the student the chance to interact with the material and concepts to be learned. An essential aspect is to explore the concept of critical thinking and approach used in learning and not just receiving a correct answer.

In line with this assumption, Lepper and Woolverton (2002) identified in their survey seven characteristics of the most successful tutors, which they identified by descriptors that spell out the acronym INSPIRE. This model describes the characteristics and behaviours of expert tutors and the results for tutees. More specifically, under "Intelligent", it was indicated that the best tutors have both command of their subject matter (content knowledge) and of understanding of how students learn and how best to teach them (pedagogical content knowledge). Under "Nurturant", the best tutors establish rapport with tutees being supportive with their efforts. Under "Socratic", the best tutors provide almost no facts, solutions or explanations but try to elicit these from tutees through questions. Under "Progressive", the best tutors engage tutees in 'deliberate practice' by moving from easier to progressively more challenging cycles of diagnosis and thus repeating the problem -

solving process many times. Under "indirect"', the best tutors avoid judgmental atmosphere by providing feedback by implication and subsequent questioning. Under "Reflective", the best tutors ask students to reflect on their own thinking. Finally, under "Encouraging", the best tutors use a variety of strategies to motivate students and boost their confidence. This model means that the best tutoring involves student self-analysis where tutees are engaged in constant thinking gaining confidence in their abilities.

2.1.1. Tutoring in Greek institutions

There is little research on the use of one-to-one tutorials in the Greek public educational system. In Greece, education is very important and Greek parents invest a huge amount of money on private tutoring for their children. According to an article featured in Kathimerini newspaper (2011), research published in 2011 by the Network of Experts in the Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE), indicated that Greek families invest 952 million euros a year on tutoring either at home or cramming schools. However, in the public sectors, to the best of my knowledge, there is little research on the implementation of tutoring in Greek institutions.

One of the few studies on tutoring available in the literature is a study conducted by Doukakis and Koutroumpa (2013) which involved a pilot implementation of an e-tutoring programme on students of secondary education. This study involved a programme where students informed the e-tutor of the materials of the morning course on which they wished to be supported and the e-tutor tried to support these students with appropriate presentations, targeted questions, tasks and exercises. The results showed that students were very satisfied with the provision of this help from the pilot e-tutoring programme. It was also found that only 6 out of 10 students thought that this programme helped them control their progress. The researchers argued that this finding indicates that the rest of the students considered this tool useful in overcoming their daily learning problems and not their overall improvement in learning. Another survey undertaken by Valkanos, Papavasiliou-Alexiou, and Fragoulis (2009) indicated that Open University Greek postgraduate students reported that within the context of distance learning, the use of tutorials could be useful and they wish their education to be more autonomous. Students reported that they wish the instructor to have concrete and multi-dimensional characteristics so that they are effective in their work. They also noted that team work during these tutorials is useful since it creates motives for learning and strengthens the discovery of new ways of learning. However, the Open University survey discusses the distance learning instructor and not the campus-based instructor. There is a need, therefore to carry out more research in order to identify students' opinions about the effectiveness of tutorials within the context of campus-based instruction.

There is also some evidence that tutoring services are available in the Hellenic American Centre. According to Kourbani and Papantoniou (2007), students submit their work through blackboard, a computer programme and receive their tutors' feedback electronically. Students are also entitled to send an email in case they need an onsite visit. After completion of the onsite session, tutors receive feedback through blackboard. However, there is no published research on the usefulness of this service and whether certain issues are persistent throughout the course.

2.2. Framework of developing approaches to understand different cultures

There is an ongoing area of work among intercultural and communications scholars in relation to the development of approaches to understand and compare cultures. One of the frameworks receiving the most attention is the model proposed by Hofstede (1986). Hofstede (1991, p. 5) states that culture is a 'collective phenomenon'; it is learned, not inherited. This means that culture could be described as a repository of values, customs, and achievements, which one generation leaves as a

'testament' to its descendants. Hofstede (1986, 1996, 2001) and Hofstede et al. (2010) analyzed 70 countries and identified and validated six dimensions of culture, that is power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, femininity vs. masculinity, short term normative orientation vs. long term orientations, indulgence vs restraint. These dimensions as described below can be applied to differentiate classroom cultures and help to understand learning and teaching approaches:

- Power distance is a dimension which refers to the degree of inequality which is accepted among people with and without power.
- Uncertainty avoidance relates to the degree of anxiety that society members feel when they engage in uncertain situations.
- Individualism refers to the strength of the bonds among the community members.
- Masculinity represents a tendency in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. On the contrary, femininity stands for a tendency for collaboration, modesty, and caring for the weak.
- Long term orientation describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the present and future challenges. Societies, which score high on this dimension are encouraging effort and persistence in education as a means to prepare for the future. In contrast, societies, which score low on this dimension, prefer to maintain traditions and norms placing value on fulfilling social obligations while viewing societal change with suspicion.
- Indulgence describes the extent to which people control their desires and impulses based on the way they were raised. Cultures which have weak control are called indulgent while cultures which have strong control are called restraint. People in societies characterized by a high score indulgence are willing to realize their impulses in relation to enjoying life tending to be optimistic. On the other hand, societies with a low score on indulgence tend to be pessimistic. People in these societies perceive that their actions are restrained by social norms (Hofstede et al. 2010).

According to Hofstede (1986, 1996, 2001) and Hofstede at al. (2010) the Greeks score high in power distance (60), uncertainty avoidance (100) and masculinity (57) while their score is low in individualism (35) and intermediate in long term orientation (45). Greeks show no vivid tendency to either indulgence or restraint (50). These scores imply that Greek students expect the teacher to be the expert in a teacher-centered classroom, prefer explicit instruction and get stressed with the concept of independent learning. The teacher's academic reputation and students' priority on getting high achievement scores are predominating issues. In addition, Greek students exhibit high collectivism, which illustrates that students often form subgroups in class. Maintenance of 'face' is also important in avoiding discord. Finally, Greeks seem to expect their academic efforts to produce immediate results while they tend to change plans to suit their needs.

Despite the merits of Hofstede's model, scholars reviewed and criticized his work. McSweeney's (2002, p. 112) review stated: '...Hofstede's claims are unbalanced, because there is too great a desire to 'prove' his a priori convictions rather than evaluate the adequacy of his 'findings'. This is reflected in a survey (Katsara, 2014), where it was found that Greek students' self-assessment report indicated that 38.23% of them were not confident to use certain strategies when dealing with exam questions implying that they need specific instruction on how to apply these techniques. This case study shows that for some Greeks employing formative assessment within the teaching practice is useful. Therefore, it is implied that some Greek students indicate that their voice could be useful to teacher practice. This finding highlights some limitations in Hofstede's model including lack of empirical evidence from educational settings (Signorini, Wiesemes, and Murphy, 2009). Signorini, Wiessemes and Murphy (2009) suggested that a new approach of researching culture could be to

start examining micro-cultures, for example one specific learning setting in HE in combination with individuals' relevant experience.

3. Research method

3.1. Purpose of the study

Based on the literature review, the main implication is that limited research in Greek higher education settings in combination with arguments put forward by McSweeney (2002) and Signorini, Wiessemes and Murphy (2009) indicate that there is a need for more research in relation to the impact of culture in learning within one -to one traditional university tutoring. This research could improve our understanding of the nature and importance of tutorials in Greek universities and of the role of culture within teaching and learning reflecting the argument put forward by Miles and Huberman (1994) who argue that qualitative research is needed in order to provide more information about something already known.

More specifically, the semi-structured interview questions were developed using open-ended questions around four themes which were drawn from surveys in the literature (Alexander, 2004; Murphy and Cornell, 2010). This was decided in order to address "dependability" (Lincoln and Cuba 1985). This concept refers to whether or not the results of the study are consistent over time and across researchers. In this way, Lincoln and Cuba (1985) note that qualitative research is evaluated by trustworthiness. The questions used in the interviews are offered in Appendix A.

3.2. Research Setting: Overview of the EGAP course and learning approach

The EGAP course is taught during the first term offering a three-hour teaching session every week. Students are given a course-book while extra photocopies are distributed in class in order to facilitate class activities. The content of the course aims to train students produce academic pieces of writing. Paraphrasing techniques, summary writing, structure of different types of paragraph, essay writing, cohesion and coherence in academic writing, and referencing styles are taught. Students participate in weekly group work activities, which comprise 15% of the points allocated to the course. Every class is divided into two parts. During the first part, the tutor teaches and explains a skill on academic writing, for example how to synthesise literature sources offering an individual point of view. Exercises from the book are used to explain the skill. Then additional exercises are given to students in order to help them practice this skill. For example, a variety of academic vocabulary use exercises are done in class in order to help students paraphrase and produce a short academic text reflecting their academic voice. After completion of these exercises, students are given a new group task in order to practice on the skill of the week. The tutor moves from table to table assisting students complete the task. At the end of the weekly three- hour session, students are invited to book for an individual tutorial session should they need more clarification or explanation on the taught concept.

3.3. Participants

Twenty-nine (29) students participated in the interviews. They were undergraduates from the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises (58.62%) and the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Management. (41.37%). The students' profile regarding gender and year of attendance is offered in appendix B.

3.4. Instrument

The interviews were based on an interview guide proposed by Patton (1990). It is argued that the interview guide provides a framework within which the interviewer develops questions, sequences them making a decision on what kind of information to investigate further. A semi-structured approach was adopted for this survey. The interviews had a structured overall framework but the researcher had the flexibility to change the order of questions. In this way, the interview sessions were using scope for more personalised responses (McDonough and McDonough, 1997).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Data Collection

After the commencement of the spring term in 2013, an announcement was made and all students were invited to come to my office to attend an interview. Students were given two weeks to come to my office or email me and book an appointment for these interviews. At the end of these two weeks 23 students had arranged to participate. However, after this two-week period, six more students contacted me and expressed their desire to participate in these discussions. A schedule was planned and students were informed about the date and the time the interviews would take place.

Ethical issues were discussed at the beginning of the conversations/interviews. Participants were informed about ethical matters regarding confidentiality, anonymity and that these discussions would be recorded. They were also informed that the main aim of these interviews on tutorials was to identify issues to be explored in more depth in a future project. These sessions lasted between twenty (20) to forty-five (45) minutes.

4.2. Data analysis

Patton (1990) argued that case analysis combined with cross case analysis is a simple way to analyze interviews. By case analysis, a case study for each person interviewed is written while cross case analysis involves grouping together answers from different people to common questions by analysing different angles and perspectives of the issues raised. In this study, the actual words used by students in each part of the interview were used (case study). Next, the data was organised in terms of similar patterns and other emerging patterns (cross-case). The next stage involved coding and categorising the primary patterns in the data, a process that Patton (1990) refers to as content analysis. Direct quotations from students were also used to provide further context for the analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that analytic induction is beneficial where meanings are inferred from the collection of data rather than being imposed from other sources or theories. In addition, Lawrence, Lightfoot and Davis (1997) state that the role of the researcher is to combine the retrieved data with narrative that allows the reader to connect with the research by revealing the data in story form from the participants' perspective. The stories are vivid descriptions of people willing to share their experiences.

5. Results

Nearly half of the students (48.27%) were attending the course regularly, at least 8 weeks out of the total 13 of a full academic semester (31.03% of the students studying at the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises and 17.24% of them studying at the Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Management). The majority of students who chose to attend the interviews were first year students (64.28 %). A full report on students' answers in the

interviews is offered in Appendix C. Students' responses in the interview questions are offered and discussed below.

5.1. Q1: Reasons why students chose to attend the interviews

Most students (86,20%) reported that the reason why they decided to attend this session is because they wanted to check whether any tutorials would provide them with some relevant information about the forthcoming exams and marking criteria. They said that in the winter semester exams they expected a better mark and that they thought that their answers were dealt appropriately. A bit more than half of the students requested to see their script asking for further explanations regarding the nature of a good script (51.72%) while many of them asked for further explanation of specific marking criteria (62.06%). Comments revealed students' desire to do well getting high marks reflecting thus their high score on masculinity, which in Hofstede's analysis (1986) represents a society's tendency for achievement. Students also seemed to passively want to be told by the tutor where they went wrong, indicating that for them a useful cognitive strategy could be to operate directly on incoming information in order to enhance their comprehension (O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 44). An indicative selection of their answers includes:

Exam feedback
- I don't understand why I was given a pass mark (5) for my script in the first semester. I answered all questions and wrote the summary as requested.
- I think that I did the right thing. I used words and expressions from the original text when writing the summary. I am not sure which strategies to use when I have to paraphrase a text.
- I would like to get a model of a good script with examples of good answers.

Assessment criteria
- Can you explain in detail the assessment criteria when you mark our papers?

Study skills
- Maybe I need to think about the way I interpret exam questions.

These comments indicate that students are in favour of facilitation. According to Regmi (2012), facilitation is an interactive learning process. It is implied that tutoring strengthens student understanding. This finding is in accordance with Yam's 2010 survey, where it was found that students viewed feedback during face to face discussion with the tutor useful because it gave them the opportunity to rectify mistakes before damage is done. Greeks' concerns in the current study indicate that they seem to recognise the need for deeper self-understanding asking the tutor to repeat assessment criteria, basic concepts on summary writing and to give them specific feedback on their exam performance. This finding suggests that the characteristics "Socratic" and "Progressive" describing best tutors in the INSPIRE model are valuable traits that should be moulded by every tutor.

This result suggests that the tutor could provide question-based feedback where students could be asked to reply to the tutor's questions in relation to how they interpreted the exam questions. Additional tutor questions could be related to asking the student to identify examples of good or bad answers in their script. Students' answers would provide the opportunity to the tutor to ask further questions as to why their approach to answering the exam question was appropriate or inappropriate. This technique could be useful since it embraces a humanistic learning approach, which according to Jarvis (2002, p.80) assumes that "learning is a recovery of or remembering (of)

that which we already know. Some believe that this inner knowledge is lost in the plethora of what we are told we should know".

The main difference among students who shared the same enquiries regarding marking criteria is that those students who attended weekly classes realised that they did not revise properly the material for the examination and that had they done some work independently they would have been given a better mark. They also mentioned that all the skills needed to answer the examination questions were taught and practiced throughout the winter semester while group work activities in class were useful (31.03%). Some students noted that it was their fault why their performance was not as expected (21.13%). They reported that they would like to attend a tutorial session in order to ask for any strategy which could enhance autonomous study and individual or group effort. These comments show that the students who attend classes regularly might need extra training on working without the tutor's help. This finding reflects the high Greek score on power distance in Hofstede's analysis (1986) where it is shown that Greeks might get stressed with the concept of independent learning. Some of their responses were:

Study independence
  - I acknowledge your teaching help throughout the semester. I did not practice enough on my own before the exam.
  - Is there any way to improve my independent study in combination with your tutoring?

Learning resources
  - Can you suggest any exercises to practice with one of my classmates? My friend is hard working and we get on well together.
  - Some words do not mean exactly the same and I can't use them as synonyms in paraphrasing. Can you give us a list of words that should not be used as synonyms of others? This could help us understand the importance of accuracy in paraphrasing. For example, salary and wages do not mean exactly the same.

The students who did not attend classes regularly (51.52%) did not appear to acknowledge their responsibility for failing the course since they simply asked for exam feedback. This behaviour might be attributed to a general Greek mentality that foreign languages cannot be taught properly at public sector institutions and quality language teaching can only be provided at private centres (Katsara, 2007).

5.2. Q2: Nature of the relationship between students with the tutor

All students reported that they expect the teacher to guide them academically. This finding reflects Greek cultural perspectives in learning where the students expect the teacher to be the guru in the teaching situation (Hofstede, 1986). The main similarities among students' comments involved the notion of respect integrated in the teacher-student relationship. Almost half of the student population (48.27%) reported that what the tutor needs to understand is that students have different needs, concerns and interests. They mentioned that in this way the tutor shows respect for their learning. At the same time, they indicated that students themselves should respect the tutor and his/her work in an endeavour to impart knowledge to learners. This finding reflects the characteristic "Intelligent" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model where the tutor's command on how best to teach them seems to be of vital importance.

The findings of this study show some disagreement with Hofstede's analysis (1986) which dictates that Greeks do not feel comfortable to question the teacher's authority. Greek students seem to criticise the tutor's teaching methodology and the level and choice of tasks done in class. In some

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cases, this criticism was the result of the students' ignorance of the difference between various study modes such as seminars, lectures, classes, labs, tutorials etc. Many students mentioned that at university settings they expect their teachers to explain more in a lecture while students should be permitted to interrupt them asking for clarifications (65.51%) In analysing data, it was found that students' understanding seemed to have a link with the year of attendance. Older students attending the 4th or 5th year of study seemed to recognise the study modes offered at university. They reported that as the years of attendance go by, they figured out the code of their teachers' behaviour (13.79%). Nevertheless, they still mentioned that teaching could be improved if teachers changed the structure of their lectures.

This distinction between Hofstede's claims and the findings of this study reflects the argument put forward by Signorini, Wiessemes and Murphy (2009) who suggested that culture could be seen as a set of micro-cultures (for example one specific learning setting) that needs to be examined with individuals' relevant experience. Therefore, Greek students' learning behaviour in specific learning settings, for example seminars, lectures, classes, tutorials, labs etc. should be researched in Greek HE.

Comments included:

Study modes
- I think that the content of lectures should be more specific and our teachers should allow us to ask questions during their teaching.
- I have a feeling that teachers just get in a lecture theatre and give a speech. This isn't teaching. To my understanding teaching involves a dialogue among teachers and students.
- Your English class is not a lecture like other subjects. However, even in lectures, our teachers should change the structure to make their teaching more understandable.
- I think that your class is a workshop. I mean, you are not talking all the time. We are given a set of tasks and we are working on them. We can always ask you for any help if needed. I think that's very useful.
- Is your class a seminar or a class?

Task level
- I think that you should realise that we find Academic writing quite hard.
- Many students have forgotten English and find it hard to cope. I think group work in class should be divided into tasks for different levels. Thus, all students could work on tasks. You know sometimes some students do not contribute much in group activities because of their low English level.

Task instruction
- I am not quite clear about the peer evaluation activity in group work.
- I think it would be useful if you gave us exact instructions on how to do tasks in class.

Teaching practice
- Mutual respect on the part of both teachers and students during learning is important.
- I know that professionalism is important for you.
- Your class is very organised. You take your work very seriously.

5.3. Q3: Students' preferred learning strategies gained in a tutorial session

Students' comments showed that the majority of them recognised the need to self-assess their skills and performance. A large number of students reported that the tutorial sessions could be used as a vehicle to make them identify their weaknesses and trigger their effective study (82.75%). These comments indicated that the characteristic "Reflective" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model was important and that this should be taken into account when a tutor plans tutoring sessions. Tutors are suggested to encourage students to discuss their own thinking in relation to their learning.

The group of students who attended classes regularly (48.27%) reported that this discussion on tutoring process proved valuable in making them realise the importance of study skills in learning. Students' responses show that Greeks seem to realise the importance of metacognitive strategies that could manage the learning process (Oxford, 1990), for example the concept of control in learning, recognising their insufficient planning skills (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.44). Some of their comments are offered below:

> *Learning process*
> - I think that I need to learn how to organise my notes when writing a piece of academic writing.
> - I just realised that It would be useful for me to jot down my enquiries before attending a tutorial session.

The group of students who did not attend classes regularly (34,48%) appeared to lack study skills, specifically the skill of proper note taking. They noted that they don't know how to write down notes quickly during a class and that it is important to learn how to do it. This finding implies that this group of students seemed to lack both metacognitive strategies demonstrating lack of evaluation of the learning activity and cognitive strategies showing that they don't have the knowledge to manipulate the language material and reorganise information to develop knowledge structures (Oxford, 1990). A few comments include:

> *Student Mentality*
> - I don't keep notes during your class because I don't think it is important.

> *Student ability*
> - I don't know how to keep notes.
> - I think I am not sure what to write down when you explain to us different ideas and concepts.

> *Student self-assessment*
> - I think I need to admit that I don't understand the importance of note taking.

5.4 Q4: General Benefits derived from tutorial experiences

The main thrust of information derived from the interview discussions indicated that all students had a positive experience. They all mentioned that these discussions were interesting, encouraging them to attend a future tutorial with more specific enquiries. It was noted that 68.96% of the students acknowledged the teacher's effort to boost their confidence. This shows that the characteristic "Encouraging" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model is appreciated since students reported that the student-tutor discussion is reassuring, motivating them to prepare for a

tutorial. This finding shows the importance of awareness that feedback and encouragement are essential in any learning experience. This is in accordance with a survey undertaken by Duarte (2013, p. 7) who found that engaging students in terms of their emotions could be used as a means to instil students "the will to learn". Duarte (2013, p. 7) argues that this could be done when "the teacher acts as a facilitator who will motivate students to want to learn; to want to explore and learn for themselves". Some comments are offered below:

Learning support
- I appreciate your effort to help me understand key issues and improve myself.
- Although I am still struggling, this discussion made me feel better.

Learning modes
- Tutorials are very useful. I plan to come regularly. Can I book appointments for that?
- When I book an appointment for a tutorial I will come prepared. I will bring a list of questions.

Some interesting comments revealed that some perceptions are ingrained due to past experiences at secondary education. Students reported that during their senior high school years, their foreign language teachers were indifferent and did not seem to cater for students' individual needs (27.58%). The main implication is that students are seeking positive interaction with the tutor, reflecting results in Alexander's (2004) survey. This indicates that the characteristic "Nurturant" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model is appreciated since students reported that they need their teachers' support on their efforts. In addition, this was emphasised by Yam and Burger (2009) who found that teachers' personality is significant in reaching all students who expect their tutor to help them in their transition to university learning. It also shows that Greeks seem to appreciate the importance of teacher-student interaction in learning reflecting the use of affective strategies for controlling emotions during language learning (Oxford, 1990). Selected comments were:

Rapport
- At school my English teacher was very strict. She never had a conversation with me. I came to your office because I wanted to say that students need individual attention.

Classroom management
- In secondary education, foreign language teaching is not properly organised.
- My French teacher was very disappointed because we were very noisy in class. She gave up after a while.

This result corroborates findings in Karavas's (2010) survey where it was found that more than half of the teachers in her sample find teaching stressful and more than 1/3 have felt emotionally drained from their work. She argues that a possible explanation for these negative feelings may be that the learners' lack of interest in the subject and discipline problems in class may impair teachers' own enthusiasm for teaching.

6. Some implications and future research

With reference to the overall tutorial use within an EGAP context, it was found that Greek students' orientation towards learning is identified by performance rather than any learning goals. Specifically, with regard to the reason why students chose to attend the interview, their responses indicated that their motivation was extrinsic since their purpose was to get exam feedback in order to get better marks in the future. This is also shown in their comments regarding the tutor-student relationship.

Students' opinions indicated that tutor feedback needs to be "relevant, specific and understandable" mirroring similar findings in Murphy's and Cornell's study (2010, p 50). Their comments on task level and difficulty show that academic performance is a dominant factor. As far as students' preferred learning strategies gained in a tutorial are concerned, students' answers point to the fact that teacher invitation enhances student self-assessment on study skills. This is further shown in commentary regarding general benefits gained in tutorials. Students' replies showed that students appeared to appreciate the tool of teacher invitation in the learning process; therefore, the tutor's behaviour might enhance students' transformation from passive to active.

Results gleaned from this initial study indicate that the intersection between the tutor role, the learning environment, and learning strategies appears to be crucial for Greek students' learning behaviour. On the one hand, students reported that they need the provision of academic support and tutoring, perceiving the tutorial as an effective way to clarify taught material by the tutor. In this sense, the Greek high score on uncertainty avoidance and power distance as discussed by Hofstede (1986) is confirmed. In addition, their responses indicated that proper use of learning strategies appears to be pivotal in their learning and that the use of tutorials is a means to encourage them to employ different types of learning strategies. This implies that there is a close relation between the learning environment and appropriate selection of language learning strategies. On the other hand, findings suggested that students are in favour of developing rapport which creates an environment for open communication. This finding is in contradiction to the Greek high score on power distance as discussed by Hofstede (1986) and indicates that for the students the tutor in a tutorial on EGAP is seen as a facilitator rather than the absolute teaching authority.

The results might indicate that students prefer to explore their learning difficulties with a good 'local guide' (Fox, 1983, p. 156). However, as Fox (1983, p. 156) argues, 'no guide though, no matter how competent or experienced, can do your exploring for you. Exploration is a personal activity'. This teacher guide could help Greeks develop their self-confidence and when this is achieved, they could be ready to explore learning strategies by themselves. Two initial suggestions on tutor behaviour during tutorials are offered. Firstly, the tutor should listen to what students have to say and view each tutorial as a unique case. Results of the study show that for Greeks the tutorial process embraces a personalized dimension, which addresses personal interaction with the tutor where the tutor provides special help in difficult cases offering guidance to students' educational development (Boronat, Castano ad Ruiz, 2007 as cited in Veiga Simao et al., 2008, p.74). Secondly, the tutor should set the rule of question-based feedback during tutorials whereby students' individual learning potential could be triggered. The results of this study show that for Greeks the tutorial discussion provides an opportunity to enhance their confidence.

The main implication is that findings of this survey point to the limitations in Hofstede's model (1986) as argued by Signorini, Wiesemes, and Murphy (2009) and suggest that more empirical evidence in the specific learning setting of tutorials with Greeks' relevant experience is needed in order to evaluate the use of tutorials within the Greek context. It can be suggested that, since the personalised dimension of the tutorial process is very important, tutors need training in order to ensure that this tool is properly used in academic settings. This is also noted by Ruutmann and Kipper (2011, p.60), who argue that this tutor training includes "knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies and the flexibility to change them". Therefore, the results of this preliminary study could be used in order to analyse further the identified preferable tutor behaviours by gathering quantitative data on students' specific responses in relation to tutorial use. This analysis could be useful in identifying the extent to which such tutor behaviours could be applied to a future pilot teacher tutorial training programme that could facilitate learning for Greeks.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

a) Why did you chose to attend the interview on the use of tutorial sessions?
b) What do you think is the nature of student tutor relationship?
c) What kind of learning strategies would you like to gain in a tutorial session?
d) Discuss the general benefits derived from tutorial experiences.

Appendix B: Students' Profile

Table 1 Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises

Year of study	1st year %	2nd year %	3rd year%	4th year %	5th year %
Female students	13.79	3.4	3.4	3.4	0
Male students	24.13	3.4	6.89	0	0

Table 2 Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Management

Year of study	1st year %	2nd year %	3rd year %	4th year %	5th year %
Female students	17.24	6.89	3.4	0	0
Male students	3.4	0	0	3.4	6.89

Appendix C: Students' Interviews

Attendance to classes (at least 8 weeks)

Table 3 Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises

Year of study	1st year %	2nd year %	3rd year %	4th year %	5th year %
Female students	14.28	0	0	7.14	0
Male students	28.57	0	14.28	0	0

Table 4. Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Management

Year of study	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year %	5th year%
Female students	28.57	7.14	0	0	0
Male students	7.14	0	0	7.14	0

Students' comments in the four interview questions

Table 5 Reasons to attend interview

Reasons to attend interview	%
Information about the forthcoming exams and marking criteria	86.20
Explanation of specific marking criteria	62.06
Strategy to enhance autonomous study	55.17
Request to see the script	51.72

Table 6 Nature of student tutor relationship

Student-tutor Relationship	%
The tutor is a guide who facilitates learning	100
The tutor should explain more in a lecture and students should be allowed to interrupt to ask for clarifications	65.51
The tutor needs to understand that students have different needs	48.27

Table 7 Preferred learning strategies gained in a tutorial

Learning strategies	%
Tutorial as a vehicle to identify weaknesses and triggers for effective study	82.75
Organisation skills	48.27
Note-taking	34.48

Table 8 General benefits of tutorials

General Benefits	%
Encouraging to attend future tutorials with specific enquiries	100
Boost confidence	68.96

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Exploring Differentiated Instruction in TESOL:
The Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Greece

Venetia TZANNI

This study explored differentiated instruction in relation to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). More specifically, it investigated teachers' beliefs and practices related to differentiated instruction in order to give an account of the status of the approach in Greek TESOL contexts. Data were collected from 234 practitioners teaching in a variety of TESOL contexts in Greece, who were asked to complete an online questionnaire consisting of 42 items. Their responses were statistically analyzed, and the frequencies on items investigating beliefs and practices in relation to differentiation as well as the relationships between them were closely examined. The analysis showed generally promising teacher beliefs towards differentiation and relatively weaker differentiated teaching practices, especially in areas that require preparation time. The discussion focuses on significant statistical observations and possible interpretations, concluding with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: differentiated instruction; TESOL; Greece; teacher beliefs; teaching practices

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1. Introduction

Undeniably, students with diverse needs increasingly populate TESOL contexts worldwide. Student diversity can be identified in areas relevant to cultural and educational experiences, including target language proficiency, skills competence in their mother tongue, learning styles and preferences, motivation and attitudes towards English, age or personality. This kind of student diversity makes TESOL contexts challenging teaching environments for educators, who may find it difficult to accommodate such diversity through their teaching practices.

As a response to learner diversity worldwide, recent research has concentrated on the idea of differentiated instruction, a teaching approach based on the underlying philosophy that 21st century classrooms should be supportive learning environments where a variety of opportunities and instructional paths are available to students to accommodate their

diverse needs. A growing body of research has validated the positive effects of the approach in various classroom settings, and the positive feedback and findings clearly imply that differentiated instruction can be effective in TESOL settings as well.

1.1. Background

1.1.1. An overview of differentiated instruction

In a literature review on differentiation, Tomlinson and her colleagues provide a comprehensive definition of differentiation, as follows:

> Differentiation can be defined as an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom (Tomlinson et al., 2003: 121).

A close examination of that definition reveals the character of differentiation as a deeply learner-centered approach. In that sense, differentiation aims to accommodate individual needs by offering the learners various choices of learning materials and teaching processes, which allow them to reach a common learning goal following different instructional paths (Bailey & Williams-Black, 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2003). In practice, differentiation requires teachers to modify certain areas of their curriculum in response to their learners' characteristics (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion of these aspects, it might be worth drawing attention to the proactive character of differentiation, which implies that a successful implementation of the approach is associated with careful planning and preparation.

Curriculum areas

There are four curriculum areas frequently outlined in the literature as modifiable in differentiated contexts: content, process, product and learning environment (Bailey & Williams-Black, 2008; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Differentiation of content involves varying what is taught or how students gain access to that content (Bailey & Williams-Black, 2008; Tomlinson, 2001); this means that in differentiated TESOL contexts, teachers can use a variety of input materials to ensure equal learning opportunities for every student. Differentiation of process is related to how a particular learning outcome will be achieved (Bailey & Williams-Black, 2008); in other words, it refers to various instructional paths that can be followed by students in order to satisfy their learning preferences. Teachers who adopt techniques relevant to differentiation of product allow their students to choose different ways to demonstrate their learning, granting them the opportunity to apply what they have acquired to their future needs, aspirations, and talents (Tomlinson, 2001). Finally, the learning environment is generally associated with extra-curricular aspects affecting the learning process, linked to classroom arrangement and the relationship between teachers and students; it is clear that differentiated instruction contexts are directed towards making sure that the influence of such factors on learning is in fact positive.

Learners' characteristics

Those four curriculum areas are usually differentiated in relation to three main learner characteristics: readiness, interests and learning profiles (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Readiness

is related to how much scaffolding may be needed by a particular student for the completion of a given task, depending on their past experiences, attitudes, and cognition; this is directly related to the theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which suggests that there is a certain point where individuals can manage to accomplish a particular task without external support (Vygotsky, 1978). A student's learning profile is frequently associated with individual characteristics connected to either personality or background. Finally, addressing the learners' interests in the classroom results in more engaged individuals and higher motivation levels (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

1.1.2. Teacher's role in differentiated contexts

There is no doubt that differentiation is a highly complicated task for teachers, who are required to keep a balance among student needs, lesson objectives, teaching methods, readiness levels, material variance and learning aids. Aside to ensuring effective implementation of an innovative and complicated approach such as differentiated instruction, are the teachers' beliefs, the influence of which on teaching practices can be decisive.

Beliefs

Beliefs are frequently associated with how teachers think about teaching and learning (Aguirre & Speer, 2000). Researchers have frequently examined teachers' beliefs, mainly because of their critical role in the teaching process and content (Borg, 2006; Pajares, 1992) and their function as filters to new information. If considered in differentiated contexts, this could mean that teachers' beliefs filter which aspects of differentiation are acceptable, therefore implementable in class, and which not. Apart from that, beliefs may also be related to teacher efficacy, which plays an important role in successful differentiation (Dixon et al., 2014).

Instructional choices

Classroom decision-making, including instructional choices, is another teacher-related factor that may have a strong influence on the effectiveness of a lesson. Differentiation, by definition, is closely connected to constructive lesson planning and materials design or adaptation. However, this is frequently inhibited by preparation time, which has been reported as overwhelming in differentiated contexts (Carlucci & Paoletti, 2009; Gregory & Chapman, 2013). Therefore, language teachers may need further training to gain insight on feasible ways to differentiate their lessons. Of course, effective lesson planning is not achievable without a good understanding of learners' needs. This area has been reported as problematic mainly because educators often face difficulties in identifying the needs of individual learners in differentiated contexts, especially in large classroom settings (Gregory & Chapman, 2013). These issues may prevent teachers from making effective instructional choices that would adequately address their learners' unique needs.

The relationship between beliefs and practices in differentiated contexts

Several studies have focused on the relationship between teaching beliefs and practices in various teaching contexts, probably because the latter are a reflection of the former (Borg, 2001; Gabillon, 2012). The majority of those studies have shown a clear influence of teaching beliefs on practices. On that account, it is expected that language practitioners' beliefs may have a strong influence upon differentiation, mainly because the process of the

implementation of such innovative approaches may involve an alternation of the educators' own beliefs (Fullan, 2001).

Two relatively recent publications have focused on the relationship between beliefs and practices in differentiated contexts in particular. First, Santangelo and Tomlinson (2012), investigated teacher educators' perceptions and use of differentiated instruction strategies through a survey, concluding that, although their beliefs showed an acknowledgement of the importance of differentiation, to a large extent they did not use differentiated strategies in practice. Secondly, Joseph (2013) investigated pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions and practices of differentiated instruction through a survey and interviews and concluded that, while the concept of differentiation was understood, in practice, the learning environment and the learning process were the main areas that were differentiated. These conclusions may imply that aspects of differentiation that require proactive actions are particularly weak.

1.2. The research context

Greece is an Expanding Circle country (Kachru, 2006), where English is not an official language, but enjoys a high status as it is widely considered to be, and used as, a valuable tool for international communication and employment. On that account, the majority of language learners aim to earn language certifications to satisfy the employment market prerequisites; most of them do so by attending lessons either in language institutes of the private sector or in one-to-one tuition. Apart from an extra-curricular activity, English is also taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education and in some higher education institutions.

1.3. The research questions

As English is taught across a range of contexts and to a range of audiences in Greece, aiming to accommodate various individual learning needs, it would be beneficial to explore teachers' beliefs on differentiated instruction, the ways they currently use to address individual differences as well as the relationship between their beliefs and practices. Answers to these questions would provide an account of the current status of differentiation in EFL in Greece and valuable insight to teacher education programs.

Consequently, the main questions of the current research are three:
- What are the EFL teachers' beliefs about differentiated instruction in the Greek TESOL context?
- What is the status of differentiated instruction teaching practices in the Greek TESOL context?
- Are the teachers' beliefs on differentiated instruction reflected on their teaching practices?

2. Methodology

2.1. The nature of the current study and the research instrument

The character of the current research is exploratory, as we aimed to gain an initial understanding of the status of the EFL teachers' beliefs and practices related to differentiation in Greece through a small-scale study. For that purpose, we developed a questionnaire, which was administered online; in that way, we would be able to reach a

large sample, separated by great geographic distances which otherwise would be difficult to contact.

2.2. Questionnaire development

A number of steps were followed for the construction, administration and analysis of the questionnaire. The nine variables that were identified are explained below.

For the first research question, which seeks answers connected to the relevant teachers' beliefs to differentiated instruction, the identified variables were four:
- Teaching beliefs on the nature of differentiation
- Beliefs towards differentiation in response to the students' readiness
- Beliefs towards differentiation in response to the students' interests
- Beliefs towards differentiation in response to the students' learning profile

For the second research question, which is aimed at investigating differentiation in practice, the identified variables were four:
- Teaching practices related to differentiation of content
- Teaching practices related to differentiation of process
- Teaching practices related to differentiation of product
- Teaching practices related to differentiation of learning environment

A ninth variable, examining contextual factors, which could affect differentiation in practice, was also identified, based on the background literature revealing that some extra-curricular areas, such as training and classroom facilities, have been reported as particularly problematic in successful implementation of differentiated instruction.

Most items addressing the variables presented in the previous paragraphs were created based on the background literature on differentiation, while some of them were adapted from other instruments investigating educators' perceptions and practices in differentiated instruction contexts (mainly from Joseph, 2013 and Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2012).

2.3. Rating scale development

In order to address these variables, we developed a rating scale, following a number of steps. First, we created a number of statements describing the nine variables presented previously (as recommended in DeVellis, 2003). Next, we narrowed them down to a manageable number of statements, excluding items that were not reported to be significant in previous studies (as recommended in MacKenzie et al., 2011), or that were not considered to be significant for the current study (as recommended in DeVellis, 2003). Then, we organized them in three main sections and we designed the online version of the questionnaire.

2.4. Piloting

The next step followed for the development of the questionnaire was piloting. At that stage, six teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire, and provide feedback. One of the areas tested was the wording of the questions to ensure that the questionnaire statements and the instructions were clear and easy to understand. After piloting, the questionnaire was amended to ensure comprehensibility.

2.5. The research participants

Taking into consideration the variety of TESOL contexts in Greece, we contacted a large number of EFL teachers, asking them to complete the questionnaire. The aim was to gather as many responses as possible, since a greater sample would allow for a smaller sampling error and, consequently, for more accurate results (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering message, in which we introduced the researcher and the institution, described the main objectives of the study, conveyed general instructions for its completion and explained the voluntary character of participation and anonymity. After collecting 234 answer submissions, which constitutes a sufficient sample for the purposes of the current research, the questionnaire form was turned off and the answers were screened to ensure validity.

2.6. Data analysis

The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using Matlab R2014a. First of all, we tested the internal consistency of the whole questionnaire by calculating the Cronbach' s alpha coefficient; it was equal to 0.83, which is characterized in the bibliography as a good internal consistency level. Further analysis was focused on relationships between questions and/or groups of questions. For this purpose we conducted Student-t tests and calculated Pearson correlations to compare groups of questions. We also conducted ANOVA and Post-Hoc analysis to examine differences in the replies of participants grouped according to their age, previous education and experience or even based on their endorsement for a specific question.

3. Findings

3.1. General findings

3.1.1. Sample demographics

The analysis of the sample demographics showed that the target population was well represented, as our sample was diverse. More specifically, and in relation to age, 15% of the participants indicated that they were less than 25 years old, 54% that they were aged 26-35, 24% that they were 36-45 and 7% that they were more than 45 years old. In addition to that, 74% said that they were TESOL-qualified while 26% that they were not. A broad representation of teaching sectors was also evident; 44% of the teachers said that they were working in a language institute, 29% in primary and secondary schools of the public sector, 2% in primary and secondary schools of the private sector, 4% in tertiary education and 21% were delivering lessons in private tuition. The participants also indicated a broad representation of teaching experience; in detail, only 3% indicated that they had 1 year or less of teaching experience, while 31% said that they had been teaching for 2-5 years, 32% for 6-10 years, 19% for 11-15 years, 9% for 16-20 years and 6% for 21-25 years.

3.1.2. Extra-curricular factors

The teachers' context-related information we collected (see Table 2) indicated that the great majority of the respondents enjoy average levels of flexibility in their workplace, although the trend is positive; this is confirmed in the means and standard deviations of the relevant items, which range from 2.59 to 3.1 out of 5. However, there are certain areas that might have a negative influence on instructional decisions friendly to differentiation. For instance,

a lack of equipment, such as electronic whiteboards or internet-enabled PCs or projectors, may be a detrimental factor; this is implied by the teachers' report that their classrooms are not always adequately facilitated (see Table 1). Another example is found in responses showing that the participants do not feel adequately trained to address their learners' diversity (see Table 1), presumably due to the relevantly recent evolution of differentiation. However, what can be promising is that the majority of teachers indicated that they are interested in undertaking additional training on how to address their learners' needs more effectively (see Table 1) and that they are familiar with the meaning of the term differentiated instruction (see Table 1).

Questionnaire items	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I know what the term "differentiated instruction" means.	1%	2%	12%	22%	43%
I feel adequately trained to address my students' diverse needs.	1%	7%	28%	52%	11%
I am interested in learning more about how to address learners' diverse needs in TESOL.	0%	0%	3%	40%	57%
My classroom is adequately facilitated to enable me address my students' diverse needs.	14%	20%	24%	27%	15%

Table 1: Teacher's responses in relation to influence of extra-curricular factors

Questionnaire items	Completely	Very	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
Restricted as to making decisions on what to teach.	3%	15%	30%	25%	27%
Restricted as to making decisions on how to teach.	0%	6%	22%	29%	43%
Restricted as to choosing/designing my own teaching materials.	3%	10%	19%	24%	44%
Restricted as to making decisions on how to assess my students' learning.	8%	16%	17%	27%	32%

Table 2: Teacher's responses in relation to flexibility in their teaching contexts

3.2. Findings on research question 1: teachers' beliefs towards differentiation

The first research question was designed to explore the teachers' attitudes towards the nature of differentiated instruction (DN) as well as their beliefs regarding the importance of addressing student readiness (R), interests (I) and learning profile (LP) in TESOL. The findings are promising, as they indicate that, in general, teachers are positively inclined towards differentiation.

3.2.1. Teachers' beliefs on the nature of differentiated instruction

With respect to the participants' general attitudes towards differentiation, the responses can be generally thought to be in agreement with the general characteristics of the approach; however, this agreement is not particularly strong, as the mean composite score for DN items was 3.22 (s=0,40). This can be further confirmed by the means and standard deviations for the questionnaire items related to the participants' attitudes towards DN, presented in Table 3 (Items 16-21), with individual item means ranging from 2.4 to 3.9 out of 5. The strongest agreement (m=3.9 out of 5) was expressed for the importance of student motivation enhancement (Table 3, Item 19), which is a promising result, taking into account the role of motivation in successful learning. However, relatively low endorsement (m=2.37) was expressed for the statement examining the importance of expecting hard work and effort from every student (Table 3, Item 20). This may imply an inhibiting factor on the learners' dedication to do their utmost to succeed, since it has been proved that learners usually build self-directed feelings of self-esteem and improve their academic performance in situations where teachers have high expectations and support them correspondingly (Brophy, 2013).

Item	Questionnaire Part II Statement	m (s)
16. (DN)	Most students can learn most things that are fundamental.	3.0214 (0.8047)
17. (DN)	Teaching should address students' lacks and aims.	3.2607 (0.6652)
18. (DN)	Tasks should reflect the use of language in real world situations.	3.4957 (0.6435)
19. (DN)	Enhancing students' motivation is important.	3.8632 (0.4124)
20. (DN)	Hard work and effort should be expected from every student.	2.3675 (0.9814)
21. (DN)	Teaching should address individual learning preferences.	3.3034 (0.6854)
22. (R)	A learner's knowledge and level of other languages.	2.6795 (0.8861)
23. (R)	A learner's mother tongue skills performance.	2.7393 (0.9056)
24. (R)	A learner's study habits/skills.	3.1496 (0.7049)
25. (R)	A learner's need for scaffolding.	3.0470 (0.8143)
26. (I)	A learner's personal interests/talents.	3.4103 (0.6506)
27. (I)	A learner's motivation to learn English.	3.4701 (0.6225)
28. (LP)	A learner's learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).	3.5556 (0.6276)
29. (LP)	A learner's individual characteristics (age, gender, cultural background).	3.3376 (0.7536)
30. (LP)	A learner's language learning strategies use/preference (asking questions, guessing).	3.3504 (0.6259)

Table 3: Questionnaire Part II (means & standard deviations)

3.2.2. Teachers' beliefs on the importance of individual characteristics

The analysis of the section investigating the teachers' beliefs on the importance of differentiating according to the students' individual characteristics showed that the teachers

tend to be positively inclined towards differentiation, acknowledging its importance; this is confirmed in the mean composite score of the items, which was 3.19 out of 5 (s=0.43). However, our participants indicated stronger endorsement for differentiation according to a student's learning profile and interests, considering readiness as being less important. A deeper analysis of the relationship between groups R-I and R-LP, further validated this observation. More specifically, and with high statistical significance (p<1%), we found that R has lower mean to both I and LP (R: m=2.90; I: m=3.44; LP: m=3.41 out of 5 and p<1% for R-I & R- LP). This finding could be attributed to the practical difficulties associated with the identification of readiness levels.

With the purpose to describe the situation more accurately, we proceed to a more detailed discussion of our findings related to each of the groups R, I and LP. The participants' weak beliefs on the importance of readiness are reflected on their low endorsement for the role of the learners' knowledge of other languages (m=2.68 out of 5) and language skills performance in their mother tongue (m=2.74 out of 5). These findings have rather negative implications, as the important role of metalinguistic awareness in foreign language learning has frequently been highlighted (Jessner, 1999).

Despite the unfavourable for differentiation teachers' beliefs in relation to readiness, their answers on the importance of students' interests and learning profile are more promising. In detail, both I items were relatively highly rated as their individual means were 3.41 (Table 3, Item 26) and 3.47 (Table 3, Item 27) out of 5; these findings are encouraging as students' motivation and interests or talents have been previously reported as supporting effective language learning when addressed (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Similarly, LP individual items have been somewhat highly endorsed (Table 3, Items 28-30), ranging from 3.33 to 3.56 out of 5; thus, the numbers are quite favorable as they suggest an agreement between the teachers' beliefs and learning profile importance as depicted in popular differentiated instruction models (Tomlinson et al., 2003).

Another interesting observation is that age seems to have an influence on the teachers' beliefs. More specifically, younger teachers seem to consider differentiation in response to learners' characteristics (R, I, LP) more important than their older counterparts; that finding was validated in the statistically significant correlation found between the respondents' ages and their beliefs (R, I and LP). A number of hypotheses, such as a possible improvement of teacher training programmes in the last decades, could explain that. Another explanation might be that younger teachers tend to adopt beliefs and attitudes towards teaching based on their own experiences as learners (Borg, 2003; Gabbilon, 2012), which were presumably more differentiation-friendly due to the fact that language teaching contexts have become more learner-centered in the last decades. However, such hypotheses are beyond the scope of the current study thus cannot be validated.

3.3. Findings on research question 2: the teachers' practices related to differentiated instruction

The second research question was designed to explore the degree to which EFL teachers utilize strategies that support differentiation of the learning environment (LE), content (C), process (PR) and product (PD) in their teaching. The findings are twofold since they show first average levels of differentiation in practice and second, that our respondents tend to differentiate in some areas more than others.

Item	Questionnaire Part III Statement	m (s)
31. (LE)	I use activities that develop a sense of community among students.	2.6880 (0.6815)
32. (LE)	I take deliberate efforts to ensure that every student feels safe, welcome and respected in the classroom.	3.6838 (0.5582)
33. (LE)	I take deliberate efforts to ensure that every student is engaged in my lesson.	3.4444 (0.6207)
34. (LE)	I take deliberate efforts to enhance my students' positive attitude/motivation towards English.	3.4786 (0.6159)
35. (LE)	I arrange my classroom (e.g. displays, seating) according to my students' preferences.	2.1325 (0.9737)
36. (LE)	I take deliberate efforts to make myself approachable/available to my students.	3.7265 (0.5342)
37. (C)	I use materials that present new content in a variety of formats (e.g. video, audio, web-based, text).	3.0043 (0.8666)
38. (C)	I use materials that present new content in a variety of ways (e.g. through graphs, explanation of theory, examples).	2.8761 (0.9251)
39. (C)	I present new content in various teaching modes (e.g. demonstration, display, oral explanation).	3.2436 (0.7210)
40. (C)	I use materials that present new content at varied levels of complexity (e.g. different complexity versions of same text).	2.1838 (1.0422)
41. (C)	I provide optional/supplemental material to students who have difficulty in understanding or master new content with ease.	2.7436 (0.8997)
42. (PR)	I use materials that reflect my students' experiences or interests.	2.7991 (0.7223)
43. (PR)	Depending on the student, I give explanations in English and/or Greek.	3.1453 (0.8960)
44. (PR)	I use materials that promote interaction among students.	2.8974 (0.7571)
45. (PR)	My students are allowed to choose how they will work (e.g. individually, with a partner, in groups).	1.9872 (0.9006)
46. (PR)	I group students according to their interests.	2.0000 (0.9125)
47. (PR)	I group students according to their English language competence.	1.8504 (1.1267)
48. (PR)	I use flexible grouping (I avoid grouping the same partners constantly together).	2.9017 (0.9645)
49. (PR)	I allow different time for a given task to each student.	2.2051 (1.0110)
50. (PD)	I use tasks that offer format options (e.g. write a paragraph or create a visual).	2.2735 (0.9230)
51. (PD)	I ask students to choose among a collection of activities/tasks.	1.8547 (0.8766)
52. (PD)	I use multiple types of final assessment (e.g. a test and/or an assignment and/or classroom performance).	2.7009 (1.1138)

Table 4: Questionnaire Part III (means & standard deviations)

The participants tend to differentiate more in learning environment than in content, process and product (Table 4); as can be seen, the teachers indicated higher endorsement for LE (m=3.19 out of 5) while weaker agreement was expressed for C (m=2.81 out of 5), PR (m=2.51 out of 5) and PD (m=2.28 out of 5) groups. A possible explanation could be potentially attributed to the feasibility of differentiating the learning environment; in other words, the teachers may tend to implement differentiated instruction techniques in areas

that do not require additional workload, such as the learning environment, which is directly related to factors that can be differentiated at some point without requiring extensive previous preparation (Table 4, Items 31-36). This attribution is in accordance with previous research findings that the practitioners' overwhelming preparation time in differentiated contexts may be demotivating for them (Carlucci & Paoletti, 2009; Gregory & Chapman, 2013).

A deeper analysis of the answers allows for a clearer depiction of the situation. With regard to items investigating practices relevant to the differentiation of content (Table 4, Items 37-41), the average mean composite score was slightly above the average (2.81 out of 5 (s=0.64). Therefore, the teachers' practices in this area averagely meet differentiation of content as outlined in the background literature (Bailey & Williams-Black, 2008; Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson et al., 2003). What is more interesting is that especially low endorsement (m=2.18 out of 5) was expressed for the statement examining the presentation of new material at varied levels of complexity (Item 40), which implies that the students' readiness levels to perform specific tasks are not taken into account. It can be suggested that teachers do not differentiate in readiness because they may not able to identify their learners' readiness needs. Of course, another possible explanation could be attributed to preparation time, which can be overwhelming, as discussed previously.

Inadequate classroom facilities or a lack of teacher training may also be inhibiting factors for differentiation in content. Our analysis showed that contextual factors related to training and classroom facilities (see Table 1) affect differentiation of content. That relationship becomes further validated if we take into account that teachers who indicated that they classrooms were adequately facilitated tended to differentiate more; this inference was drawn by a statistically significant positive correlation found between C and the answers to the item investigating the adequacy of the classroom facilities. Therefore, classroom facilities need to be up to date in order to enable EFL teachers address their learners' diverse needs more effectively. Despite that, the Pearson's correlation of groups C and CI was moderate (p=0.43), which indicates that, even though CI definitely affects C, there are other factors influencing the participants' choices related to differentiation in content that need to be investigated.

Our analysis showed that differentiation of process (Table 4, Items 42-49) and product (Table 4, Items 50-52) take place in average levels in the Greek TESOL context; this is confirmed in the mean composite score for PR, which was 2.51 out of 5 (s=0.38), and PD, which was 2.28 out of 5 (s=0.67). Although the analysis showed that the respondents tend to use multiple types of final assessment (Table 4, Item 52, m=3.70 out of 5), they rarely offer choices of activities and tasks (Table 4, Item 51, m=1.85 out of 5). Similar findings were reported by Santangelo and Tomlinson (2012) and further reflected on the EFL teachers' low endorsement (m=1.99 out of 5) for the statement examining whether their learners are allowed to choose how to work (Table 4, Item 45).

3.4. Findings on research question 3: associations between beliefs and practices

The purpose of the third research question was the exploration of any associations between the teachers' beliefs and practices related to differentiation. The statistical analysis of R, I, LP in correlation to LE, C, PR, PD, reported in Table 5, showed that the participants tend to adopt weaker differentiation techniques than their beliefs indicate and shows that some key differentiation practices are beliefs-driven.

Groups of beliefs	m	Groups of practices	M	P	Pearson's correlation
R, I, LP	3,19	LE, C, PR, PD	2,73	<1%	0,18
Differentiation Nature (DN)	3,22	Content (C)	2,81	<1%	0,18
		Process (PR)	2,51	<1%	0,17
		Product (PD)	2,28	<1%	0,07
		LE, C, PR, PD	2,73	<1%	0,24
Readiness (R)	2,90	Learning Environment (LE)	3,19	<1%	0,09
		Process (PR)	2,51	<1%	0,06
		Product (PD)	2,28	<1%	0,008
		LE, C, PR, PD	2,73	<1%	0,07
Interests (I)	3,44	Learning Environment (LE)	3,19	<1%	0,16
		Content (C)	2,81	<1%	0,08
		Process (PR)	2,51	<1%	0,16
		Product (PD)	2,28	<1%	0,09
		LE, C, PR, PD	2,73	<1%	0,11
Learning Profile (LP)	3,41	Learning Environment (LE)	3,19	<1%	0,26
		Content (C)	2,81	<1%	0,196
		Process (PR)	2,51	<1%	0,168
		Product (PD)	2,28	<1%	0,15
		LE, C, PR, PD	2,73	<1%	0,252

Table 5: Statistical correlations between groups of beliefs and practices

More specifically, the results confirmed Fang' s (1996) observation, that teachers' beliefs tend to be stronger than their practices; in other words, while participants have indicated stronger beliefs towards differentiation, in practice it seems that they differentiate less than one may have expected based on their beliefs. This is confirmed in the statistically significant relationship (p<1%) that was found between groups R, I, LP (m=3.19 out of 5) and LE, C, PR, PD (m=2.73 out of 5) and further validated by the statistical difference noticed between groups in separate (Table 5); therein it becomes clear that, excluding the correlation between groups R and LE, in all other cases beliefs have received stronger endorsement than practices. Here, it is worth noting that the Pearson's correlation between the groups of questionnaire items addressing beliefs and practices was relatively weak ($\rho 15 = 0.18$); this means that more factors, apart from beliefs, affect the respondents' differentiated instructional choices. While it is beyond the scope of the current study to identify them, we

will attempt to provide possible explanations based on the background literature and the teachers' comments on the final section of the questionnaire.

Teachers' comments in the final optional open-ended items of our questionnaire, indicated that factors like training, materials, flexibility, time and workload were inhibiting for differentiation; these comments may provide explanations for the teachers' weaker differentiated instruction techniques implementation. These factors, which were further validated to the answers collected in the other questions, are discussed below.

First of all, a lack of training on how to differentiate may prevent the practitioners from actually adopting differentiated instruction techniques in their classrooms. This is not only reported in their comments, but also reflected in statistically significant correlations found between the practices {LE, C, PR, PD} and contextual factors {CI, Flex} ($p<1\%$, $\rho=0.39$) as well as CI only ($p<1\%$, $\rho=0.40$). In brief, the more training and flexibility provided to our teachers, the more they tend to differentiate in practice. Training as possible inhibiting factor for differentiation has been further confirmed in relevant literature, outlined in the first chapter (Bailey & Williams-Black, 2008). Of course, the weak Pearson's correlation ($\rho=0.39$) between the groups of contextual aspects and teaching practices suggests that teaching practices related to differentiation are affected by other factors, apart from those related to teaching context.

Another inhibiting factor for differentiation could be the lesson preparation time, which has been documented as overwhelming in such contexts (Carlucci & Paoletti, 2009; Gregory & Chapman, 2013). This component is directly related to the "proactive rather than reactive" (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p. 133) character of differentiation, which requires teachers to have an excellent understanding of their learners' needs in order to prepare effective lesson plans (Riley, 2009; Stefanakis, 2011). Therefore, if EFL practitioners do not acknowledge their students' diverse needs, they may not be able to differentiate effectively; hence, the EFL teachers' understanding of their learners' needs might be another aspect preventing them from applying differentiated strategies in practice.

A promising observation is that in some areas differentiation-friendly practices are beliefs-driven. First, we observed that the stronger teachers agree that most individuals can learn most things that are fundamental the more they tend to differentiate in general. Therefore, the participants who believe that their students can reach a standard achievement level tend to offer them better support through differentiation. Second, not unexpectedly, the more teachers believe that enhancing learners' motivation is important, the more they tend to enhance their students' positive attitude and motivation towards English; therefore, they tend to adopt teaching techniques that are closer to differentiation, in order to enhance learning. Both observations were validated by statistical correlations between items examining the respondents' beliefs and attitudes (DN, R, I, LP) and items investigating teaching practices related to differentiation (LE, C, PR, PD). What is promising with these findings is the implication that the EFL teachers who have more positive beliefs towards differentiation tend to adopt teaching techniques which are closer to differentiation in practice as suggested in the literature (Gregory & Chapman, 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2003).

4. Discussion

Taking everything into consideration, it can be concluded that differentiated instruction is welcome in Greek TESOL contexts, although there are areas related to teachers' beliefs and practices that can be improved.

4.1. Implications

The participants' answers indicated that their beliefs and attitudes towards differentiated instruction are generally promising, with some exceptions. In detail, despite their weak endorsement for expecting hard work and effort from every student, they indicated positive attitudes (m=3.22 out of 5) towards differentiation, indicating that they consider learner motivation enhancement very important (m=3.86 out of 5). Furthermore, they showed stronger beliefs towards differentiation according to the students' learning profiles (m=3.41 out of 5) as well as interests (m=3.44 out of 5) and weaker beliefs towards the importance of differentiating according to readiness (m=2.90 out of 5). Their weak beliefs on the importance of readiness were confirmed in their low agreement with items examining teaching according to each learner's background foreign languages knowledge (Item 22, m=2.68 out of 5; Item 23, m=2.74 out of 5), despite its endorsement in the literature (Jessner, 1999). Two explanations for that finding have been suggested. First, a lack of training on ways to identify students' readiness levels, for example through continuous assessment as suggested in Pham (2012), may prevent teachers from acknowledging their learners' needs related to readiness. Second, given that younger participants indicated more positive beliefs towards differentiation than their older counterparts, it was suggested that the teachers' previous learning experiences might influence their readiness-related beliefs. This interpretation is confirmed in a recent literature review suggesting that the teachers' own experiences as language learners may have an impact on their beliefs (Borg, 2003).

The results also showed that the participants tend to differentiate in learning environment (m=3.19 out of 5) more than in content (m=2.81 out of 5), process (m=2.51 out of 5) and product (m=2.28 out of 5). A possible explanation could be that modifications on the learning environment can be made without extensive previous preparation; thus, the respondents may prefer addressing their learners' differences reactively rather than proactively, as opposed to popular differentiated instruction models (Tomlinson et al., 2003). This hypothesis is reflected on teachers' own comments and background literature (Carlucci & Paoletti, 2009; Gregory & Chapman, 2013) indicating that the overwhelming preparation time required for differentiation may demotivate teachers from implementing it. This observation does not necessary mean that differentiation is impossible without preparation, but it might imply that new ways of differentiating reactively need to be researched and suggested.

Examination of findings related to practices in more detail, indicates that the participants differentiate more in learning environment, especially through trying to make themselves approachable to their students (Table 4, Item 36, m=3.73 out of 5). Differentiation of content takes place in lower levels, with an item directly related to readiness, receiving low endorsement (Table 4, Item 40, m=2.18 out of 5). Furthermore, and in opposition to reports of teachers differentiating the process (Joseph, 2013), the respondents indicated low endorsement for differentiation of process. The explanation suggested is that factors like training and classroom facilities limit the teachers' instructional choices; this was confirmed in the statistical correlation between items investigating contextual factors (CI) and differentiation in content (C). Over and above that, as documented in previous research (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2012), we found that the participants do not offer many choices to their students. In detail, they indicated particularly low endorsement to items investigating the frequency of offering choices of activities and tasks (Table 4, Item 51, m=1.85 out of 5) together with allowing their learners to choose how they will work (Table 4, Item 45, m=1.99 out of 5). The implication here is that teachers may not acknowledge the importance of offering student choices in their lessons, either due to their own experiences

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as language learners, as explained above, or due to a lack of training on how to do so. Thus, it is suggested that teacher-training programs need to promote the importance of offering student choices as well as provide insight on ways to do so in the language classroom.

It was also found that, although the EFL teachers indicated positive beliefs towards differentiation, in practice they differentiate less than we might have expected taking into consideration their beliefs. This is an implication that other factors, apart from beliefs, affect their instructional choices. Such factors could be related to the learning context or training, as suggested by Borg (2003) and shown in the statistical correlation found between the teachers' differentiated instruction practices and contextual aspects related to their training and classroom facilities. Despite that, the results are promising since they showed that the stronger the teachers' beliefs on differentiation are, the more they tend to differentiate. Therefore, any policies related to differentiated instruction should aim to strengthen teachers' attitudes towards the approach to promote it. On the whole, the correlations between beliefs and practices imply a need for further training on how to differentiate in a TESOL context. This implication is not only reflected on the participants' comments but also on the findings showing that training issues influence their instructional choices.

Finally, it is worth commenting on the similarities between the findings of this study and background studies; it seems that, first, teachers tend to differentiate more in terms of the process and, second, they tend to do that reactively rather than proactively. This may imply that teachers tend to differentiate in those areas that do not add more burdens to their busy lives with extra preparation requirements. It might be useful for teacher training programmes to help their trainees develop teaching strategies that enable teachers to approach differentiation reactively, in order to give them the opportunity to recognize the benefits of differentiated instruction drawing conclusions from their personal teaching. This would strengthen their positive attitudes towards differentiation and would encourage them to be more proactive.

4.2. Limitations and suggestions for further research

As the main aim of the current research was exploratory, it collected data from a large sample (234 research participants) to initiate a general overview of the status of differentiated instruction perceptions in Greek TESOL contexts; thus, a quantitative approach was considered to be adequate for that purpose. The findings need to be validated using qualitative means, such as interviews and classroom observations, in order to overcome reliability limitations of self-reporting data. Moreover, as beliefs are particularly difficult to elicit, it is suggested that they are explored through longitudinal studies, which would provide insight on the nature and process of the beliefs change itself as well as the factors affecting their formulation.

Furthermore, future research should investigate more specific areas related to differentiated instruction in a TESOL context, related both to curriculum aspects and language learners' characteristics. This would create a better understanding of the position of differentiation in TESOL settings and would provide valuable insight on actions to be taken in order to facilitate the implementation of the approach. Drawing both on the teachers' comments and the background literature reporting the overwhelming lesson preparation time (Carlucci & Paoletti, 2009; Gregory & Chapman, 2013), it is suggested that future research may need to focus o ways to make differentiation more feasible, for example through the use of technology. Furthermore, research on the relationship between continuous assessment and differentiated instruction may be used to address issues

relevant to learner readiness in differentiated contexts. Finally, research on ways of using differentiation re-actively rather than pro-actively might promote the approach in various teaching contexts.

4.3. Concluding remarks

Despite the limitations previously mentioned, the current study offers a general overview of the status of differentiation in Greek TESOL contexts as well as insight on the EFL teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards differentiation, which would facilitate any effort taken to promote differentiation in these settings. We hope that further research will support EFL teachers in addressing their learners' diverse needs; after all, differentiation is not a pure set of instructional strategies that can be followed for effective teaching, but rather a belief system that acknowledges individuals' uniqueness to promote learning.

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Flipped classroom integration in Greek state primary schools: An action research project

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This article provides the descriptive analysis of an action research project upon the application of the Flipped Classroom Approach in twelve teaching cases of 6th graders in the Greek public primary school context. Based on recent studies, no research can be found on flipping in the area of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at a primary school level in Greece. Flipped Classroom Approach is a relatively new pedagogical approach which has gained momentum recently to overcome the rigidity and ineffectiveness of traditional teacher-centered practices which over-rely on lectures, homework assignment, testing and rote learning. In Flipped Classroom, the traditional lecture and homework sessions are inverted with students being provided with online material in order to gain the necessary knowledge before class, while class time is devoted to clarifications and application of this knowledge. Therefore, the research presented in this article, aimed at examining whether English Language Teachers were ready to embrace flipping as part of their professional development, to evaluate the provided flipping material and to develop new one. Finally, the flipping implementation was discussed concerning its effectiveness into promoting students' Active Learning processes.

Keywords: Flipped Classroom Approach, Educational Technology, Active Learning, Teachers' Professional Development

1. Introduction

The instructional practice of most teachers in Greek public primary schools nowadays is portrayed as traditional teaching characterized by the passive transmission of theory by the teacher, little or no peer interaction and textbook instruction. Under such circumstances, the Flipped Classroom Approach (FCA) is a realization of teachers' tendency to modify their practices with the aid of Information Technology (IT). They have the chance to transform the traditional lectures at school into video-recorded lectures retrieved from a wide range of online educational resources to teach students key concepts of a particular topic as part of

their homework (Abeysekera and Dawson, 2015) providing class time for a more active and sociable learning and teaching (Tucker, 2012).

Such a learning environment is described in this article with the readers being smoothly introduced to FCA features. A brief historical background of the approach is initially provided followed by the presentation of its main advantages and limitations. Then, FCA Adoption is discussed in association with Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) aligning with the two-folded research purpose which is, in turn, explained in Section 4. The research method as well as the procedure followed are analysed in Sections 5 and 6 while the core of the research is given in Section 7 where the findings are thoroughly presented and analysed in relation to the research questions. Based on these, the two final sections focus on the limitations of the current research and relevant recommendations made for future FCA applications.

2. FCA historical background and past studies

FCA dates back to the early 1960s when Gregor Novak began teaching evening physics classes to his students. However, the first record of FCA instruction took place in the Harvard University Physics classroom by Professor Erik Mazur. His students read their physics textbooks prior to class to gain the basic information to participate in the discussions resulting in reducing the amount of time for lecture in class and more time for peer instruction activities (Crouch, Watkins, Fagen and Mazur, 2007, p. 14). The most prominent figures in FCA are Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams who, in 2007, created videos of their class lectures to deliver the instructional material to their science class students who were continuously absent from school. Finally, perhaps the greatest contribution to flipping the K-12 classroom has been the advent of the Khan Academy.

In the early 1980s, Baker had a vision of using electronic means to "cover" rote material outside of class. An early edition of an online content management system resembling the current Learning Management System (LMS) allowed Baker to upload his notes and retrieve them during class meetings referring to this method as "The Classroom Flip" (Baker, 2011). Lage, Platt and Treglia designed and implemented a similar procedure called *"The Inverted Classroom"* on five sections of an economics course. Love and Hodge compared a classroom using the traditional lecture format with a flipped classroom during an applied linear algebra course (Love, Hodge, Grandgenett and Swift, 2014).

3. FCA advantages and limitations

Technology has a deep impact on 21st century learners who can no longer solely rely on classroom-based instruction. "Many theoreticians believe that the traditional model of lecture-based learning is becoming increasingly unappealing to the contemporary student and that a paradigmatic shift in pedagogy is needed to keep students engaged (Hanover Research Council, 2013, p.8)." Additionally, FCA allows teachers to leverage video lectures at home to increase interaction with students in class without, though, advocating their own replacement with online instruction. Flipping the classroom can be an ideal merger of online and face-to-face instruction known as a *"blended"* classroom where more time is freed up to support student learning (Fulton, 2012; Springen, 2013).

Apart from the teacher-to-student interaction, students interact with each other improving their problem solving skills, team work, creativity and innovation (Bergmann, 2012; Laman, Brannon and Mena, 2012) without sacrificing content (Gardner, 2006). Similarly, Bergmann

and Sams (2012) believe that interactive learning environments can fuel students' curiosity and with proper support from the teacher, this can increase students' motivation, that is, students' learning. Consequently, FCA facilitates the development of students as active learners rather than passive receptacles of information and transforms instructors from "being dispensers of facts to being architects of learning activities (Pierce and Fox, 2012, p.22).

Under such circumstances, many of the classroom management problems evaporate to a great extent, too (Alvarez, 2011). The need of an "audience" for unruly students is eliminated because of the small group and independent work style of the classroom (Bergmann, 2012). Absenteeism and homework completion (Alvarez, 2011; Forsey, Low and Glance, 2013) are additional issues associated with FCA. The class no longer falls behind in progress when either the teacher or students cannot keep up with the rest of the class. Moreover, in a FCA environment we can discern numerous opportunities for differentiated instruction (Ash, 2012; Hanover Research Council, 2013; Springen, 2013) as well as addressing multiple learning styles (Flipped Classroom Offers New Learning Path, 2011).

However, many primary schoolers, particularly those from low-income districts who have limited resources availability, are deprived of access to technology outside of school making it difficult to attend the assigned videos (Hamdan et al., 2013; Nielsen, 2012). Therefore, FCA is alleged to create or exacerbate a digital divide. Moreover, Herreid and Schiller's survey (2013) confirmed students' resistance to come to class well-prepared mainly due to the fact that they have not learned how to familiarize themselves with the new content prior to being exposed to it in class. Finally, creating the videos becomes more labor intensive on the part of teachers than planning for a traditional classroom environment (Hanover Research Council, 2013). Teachers often have mixed feelings of excitement and trepidation concerning their familiarity with IT. However, there is an abundance of technological tools (see Appendix) enabling teachers to produce well-organised FCA lessons, for instance, Video Hosting Tools, Video Interaction Tools, Video Creation Tools and LMSs.

4. FCA adoption and teachers' professional development

On-going TPD is welcomed nowadays due to the changing role of teachers from distributors of knowledge to designers of learning experiences and since technology is a significant driver behind that change. TPD goes hand in hand with reform and innovation in teaching which comes as a result of study, reflection, practice and hard work. Therefore, engaging teachers in the design and incorporation of educational technology-FCA in our case- into their daily practices is a step towards TPD.

FCA instruction has a lot to offer when successfully implemented. It can contribute to teachers' better understanding of technology use in teaching and learning activities integrating both face-to-face learning in the class through group discussion and distance learning outside the class by watching asynchronous video lessons and online collaboration (Halili and Zainuddin, 2015). The FCA adoption can also encourage individual and personalized support to students, both the struggling and the advanced ones, due to the additional class time ensured for interaction.

Additionally, FCA can be conducive to the establishment of an Active Learning (AL) classroom environment. Due to their student-centered, technology-rich nature, AL techniques help mitigate the chaotic classroom environments present in the traditional model of teaching which entail distracted students negatively affecting other students'

learning. FCA instruction can keep students continuously engaged in the classroom so, classroom behavior problems are reduced if not eliminated (Emmer and Stough, 2001). FCA teaching experience followed by reflection further ensures TPD as it involves teachers' critical analysis of their practices with the aim of reaching a new perspective with modified attitudes. Teachers have the chance to experiment, reflect and adapt new theories, practices and content in their professional context.

Apart from becoming agents of change, EFL teachers are urged to develop their own contextualized materials. "The opportunity to develop expertise for themselves as materials developers can quite definitely help them to develop and grow (Tomlinson, 2003)." Finally, as already stated, teachers involved in FCA projects can reap the benefits of constant collaboration with colleagues as well as building a communication bridge with their students' parents towards a common set of goals.

5. Research purposes and questions

With reference to the twelve classroom contexts, the researcher, with the EFL teachers' contribution, attempted to:

1) investigate whether or not the latter were willing to incorporate the FCA features in their teaching choices, in other words, the effect of the FCA implementation on their TPD. The issues emphasized include Technology Awareness and Integration, Teacher-Student degree of classroom interaction, Classroom Management and Evaluation of the FCA support material as well as the Development of original FCA material.

2) investigate whether FCA contributed on rendering 6th graders into active learners in a primary school context.

Particularly, the research questions that guided the research purposes were the following:

1) As part of TPD, were the EFL teachers in the 6th Grade of the primary school setting willing to incorporate the FCA features in their teaching on a regular basis and to what extent?

2) Were they satisfied with the effectiveness of the suggested FCA material in this experiment?

3) Did these lessons act as an incentive for the EFL teachers to create their own FCA material and design original FCA lessons?

4) What were the teachers' perceptions on the impact of the FCA lessons on their 6th graders' AL?

6. Research method and instruments

6.1. Mixed method research

The value of the mixed method of research has long been discussed in the literature (Ellis, 2005; Ponce, 2014; Scott and Sutton, 2009). It uses both qualitative and quantitative methods[i] either concurrently or sequentially (Venkatesh, Brown and Bala, 2013) leading to triangulation of data (Erzberger and Kelle, 2003 in Ostlund et al., 2011) that enhances the validity (Mengshoel, 2012) of the results. The application of such a convergent research approach was also imperative for the purposes of this paper.

6.2. Research instruments

For the purpose of this study, the researcher firstly designed a Google Forms questionnaire[ii] addressing the participating teachers after completing their FCA lessons. The questionnaire consisted of 70 items written in English and it was divided into three sections under the headings *"Background, Teaching Style and Resources available", "FCA and Teachers' Professional Development"* and *"FCA and Active Learning in EFL classroom"*. It included fixed-response questions ranging from *"yes/no"* questions, which make respondents "come off the fence" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.250), *multiple choice* and *rating scale* questions, most of which followed the Likert format of "*Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree*" choices as well as *open-ended*, narrative-response questions. To cater for issues not covered in the questionnaire and in order that the participants could elaborate more extensively on their flipping experience, unstructured discussions took place in social networking sites such as *Facebook* where their views, concerns and perceptions were exchanged. They were carried out in a friendly, natural flow resembling unstructured interviews.

7. Research procedure

7.1. The preparation stage: Designing the FCA support material and selecting the participating teachers

In order for the researcher to ensure participants in this FCA experiment, an open call was made to English teachers working with 6th graders in state primary schools both in Ilia and around Greece to offer at least one FCA teaching hour. After the researcher had designed the necessary FCA support material[iii], she uploaded it in *Facebook* groups, English teachers' forums like the *Hellenic Open University Yahoo Groups* and English Teachers local

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[i] Particularly, the major characteristics of the traditional quantitative research of deduction, confirmation, theory/hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, standardized data collection and statistical analysis are combined in an articulated and harmonic manner with those of the qualitative research, that is, induction, discovery, exploration, theory/ hypothesis generation and the researcher as the primary "instrument" of data collection.

[ii] FCA questionnaire for Primary School EFL Teachers:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1toRlVJA3Qf1qi_ckIDQrraOBBBf6ldJnBQ58tLSd6g4/edit?usp=forms_home

[iii] Designed Flipped Lessons Material:
 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B839sq-tOLIAbUJZTTd3ODJVUzQ?usp=sharing

associations. Finally, she emailed the material to most Experimental Primary schools of the country.

It is important to mention that the support FCA material was freely distributed online in order that more teachers could familiarize with the purpose and procedures of the current research and, thus, be attracted to it. An introductory Powerpoint presentation described what FCA entails and gave information and suggestions for the effective teaching of the four designed FCA lessons. Other useful documents were also attached including an *Information Brochure* addressing students' parents, four *Lesson Plans* for the teachers' convenience, a *Video Tasksheet* for each lesson with instructions and notes for the students to follow when working at home on their own and finally, an *In-class Tasksheet* to be distributed during the lessons. It was in the teachers' convenience to teach from one to four of the suggested FCA lessons or even totally depart from them and develop their own input meeting the constraints of their teaching situations.

More specifically, the suggested material concerned *Unit 3* introducing the *comparative* and the *superlative degrees of adjectives* and presenting the *"Midnight Summer's Dream"* Shakespearean story. The other two FCA lessons dealt with describing memories from the past and past habits, thus, teaching YL the *Simple Past tense* and the *"used to"* grammatical structure covered in *Units 4* and *5*. As for the video lectures, the researcher was in favour of the *GoEnglish.tv* site, *Photodentro* and the *LearnerEnglishKids* website. The researcher also confided in the high quality material offered free of charge in a couple of EFL educators' personal blogs and websites, that is, *Billie Haase*'s and Claudio Azevedo's blogs.

7.2. Participants' profile

The result of the open electronic call was an overwhelming minority of twelve teachers working in primary schools around Greece, for example, in Drama, Kozani, Serres, Halkida and Crete. Based on their answers in the demographics part of the questionnaire they completed, eleven of them were female while only one was a male teacher. Nine of them had a teaching experience of more than 11 years retaining their current position from 1 to 15 years. Most teachers worked with classes of 10 to 15 students keeping a balance between teacher-led and student-friendly activities in their lessons. Only a minority resorted to a largely teacher-centrered method. Moreover, half of the participants considered themselves as average technology users with four of them being advanced and only a couple of them being either expert or beginner IT user. As for IT integration in their lessons, seven of them occasionally did it and the other five always or almost always resorted to it. However, almost all of them introduced FCA in their instruction for the first time.

7.3. The implementation stage: Description of the FCA lessons

The FCA lessons were conducted in the academic year 2016-2017 from late January to late April. All potential stakeholders, including the school principals, the students and their parents, were notified about the FCA investigation through the *Information Brochure*. The students were exposed to online pedagogical videos that included visual and audio instruction at home with the teachers also explaining beforehand the various tasks needed to be completed at home. The video lectures were carefully selected by the researcher to be creative, engaging and interactive. Most of them were followed by multiple choice questions, gap filling, drilling and reading comprehension questions. The same material was also offered in DVDs so that the students, who were deprived of Internet connection at

home, could have access to it. The *Video Tasksheet* for each lesson was distributed by the teachers to their students to help them follow along.

During the lessons, the teachers made a considerable attempt to create student-friendly conditions based on what FCA dictates. To cater for possible ambiguities, they followed the guidelines in the *Lesson Plans* and the suggested *In-Class Taskheets*. The students worked collaboratively to boost their confidence and use the language in a communicative context. Group members tried to exchange their ideas and negotiate their understandings and later, present them to the rest of the class. Before ending class, an outlook on the next lesson was made especially on the topic, the support material and the contents of the next class meeting.

7.4. The follow-up stage: Reflecting on the FCA experience

Upon the implementation of the FCA lessons, the twelve teachers completed the questionnaire and at the same time, they participated in the unstructured discussions in *Facebook* exchanging views, concerns and perceptions.

8. Research findings

8.1. Research Question 1

A general feeling of hesitation and even unwillingness was received for the devotion of some class time to experiment with the alternative FCA method. Based on the researcher's assumptions, the factors which held EFL teachers back can be identified with the deprivation of technological resources, students' heavy reliance on passively receiving knowledge, the rigid structure of working days and the lack of in-service training on FCA aspects. The time-consuming and demanding tasks of creating educational videos and designing AL class activities acted as a deterrent, too. Similarly, some traditional EFL teachers feel that there is no need to change their own practices because of the lack of personal benefit. In a culture of compliance, they do not value risk-taking, particularly in the field of new technology feeling more comfortable when they delegate the responsibility of experimenting with new-fangled ideas to novice colleagues. Collaboration with parents is still a barrier to overcome in order that the latter feel more comfortable and flexible with educational innovations such as FCA. Nowadays parents are too busy to spend time to support the innovative learning which they find confusing because they are accustomed to one way of being educated.

Regardless of the above, the participating teachers handled FCA technology successfully by using different technological tools, mainly desktop computers and laptops. The fact that they were further familiarized with educational technology and experimented with innovative methods and materials made them more assertive and confident in their computer skills, which is confirmed by the following extract from the unstructured discussions:

> *"I have created an Edmodo class for my 6th grade students and I'm using it to post the video links."*

Moreover, they discovered a wealth of educational content online appropriate for the design of FCA lessons motivated by the effectiveness of the support material provided by the researcher. Equally important is the fact that the teachers as well as the researcher enjoyed their collaboration upon the barriers they encountered such as the frustration

caused by the limited time during the school day, some students' lack of home Internet connection or their demotivation to watch the videos. Despite working from distance, the participants were encouraged to collaborate in multiple ways aligning with what TPD dictates, something which is also obvious in the statement:

> *"It has been a pleasure and an honour working with you all! Thank u for a wonderful experience!!!"*

The FCA adoption in the EFL class ensured additional class time for the teachers to communicate and practice with their students (Graph 1) departing from their traditional role of information providers and becoming learning facilitators instead (Graph 2). They gained a deeper insight of their students' needs and preferences and dealt with their inquiries both individually and in groups. Thus, the teachers were able to manage their classes more effectively due to the fact that incidents of unruly behavior were reduced.
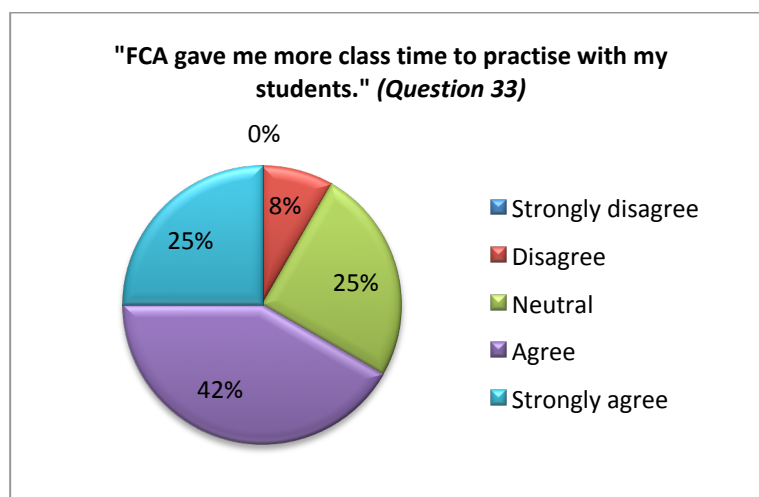
Graph 1
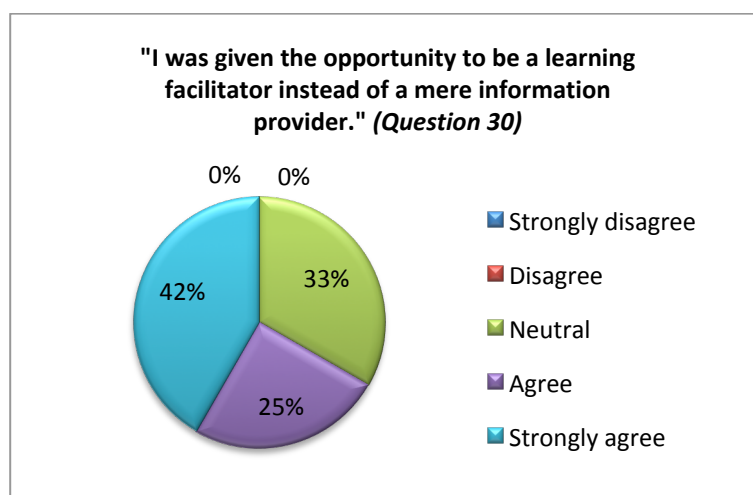
Graph 2

8.2 Research Question 2

The participants expressed their satisfaction and appreciation to the researcher for the well-structured and organized work done (Graph 3).

"The material was well structured and organised." *(Question 55)*

0%   0%   0%

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

25%

75%
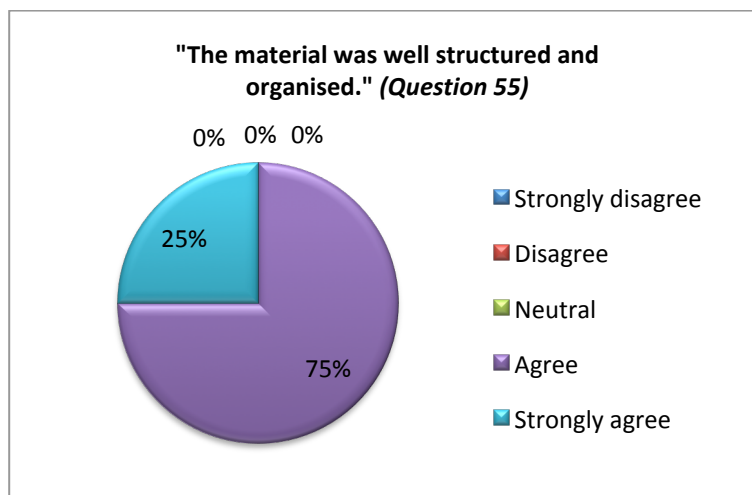
Graph 3

They found the embedded videos appealing and the home and in-class activities approachable and enjoyable by students addressing various learning styles and encouraging pair and group interaction (Graph 4).

"The resources encouraged pair and group work." (Question 52)

0%   0%

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

17%

25%

58%
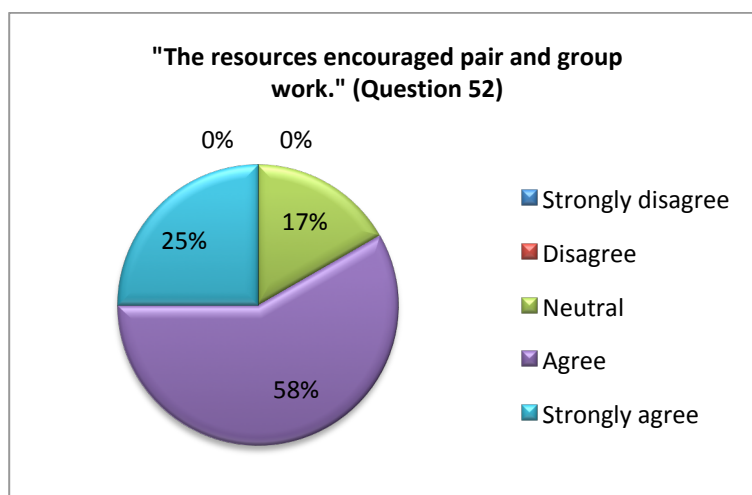
Graph 4

The above teachers' perceptions were expressed in the following words:

> *"The material was very well designed and carefully selected. It worked well with my six graders. My group is quite low level, but they felt that they could understand the material and work quite well with it."*

The majority of the teachers delivered the lessons about the Shakespearean play *"Midnight Summer's Dream"* and the *Simple Past* tense. They spent more than a 45-minute teaching hour for each lesson, therefore, the overriding reason for not implementing all four FCA designed lessons was the limited time according to the syllabus and the deadline of the study.

8.3. Research Question 3

It is worth mentioning that out of the twelve teachers, a couple of them designed their own FCA lessons[iv] upon their students' demand while almost half of them committed themselves to making such an attempt in the short run.

> *"I am now looking forward to designing relevant material myself for the following school year."*

> *"Thank you for the experience-I will definitely keep using it and I'm thinking of starting from the 5th grade!"*

Starting with the former, they used existing material, such as videos and quizzes, which were funny and simple. Once they prepared the necessary tasksheets, they shared them with their students and the rest of the teachers involved in this investigation. The particular group of teachers even expressed the desire to work collaboratively to design a flipped version of the whole 6th grade textbook.

8.4. Research Question 4

The teachers reported that their students were engaged during the FCA lessons (Graph 5) having numerous opportunities to communicate with one another.
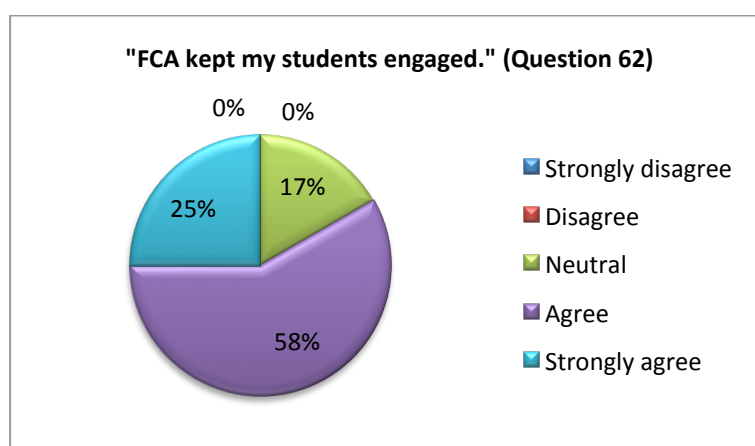
Graph 5

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iv "The History of an Aeroplane"- Unit 4-Past Tenses Lesson: padlet.com/panosevi111/k5phplgj8jxl

The learners managed to gain knowledge of the subject matter at their own pace at home and proceeded to its application in class through engaging hands-on activities. The same points were also highlighted in the teachers' comments appeared in their blogs and in the *Facebook* instant messaging service:

> *"My students were enthusiastic about the flipped classroom lesson! They liked all this idea of watching videos at home and doing exercises on their own! I will definitely try it again!"''*

> *"They all participated, they all got involved, they all raised their hands to contribute, they all appreciated the work of their team members…"*

Although they may have not saved time from homework since they watched the videos several times, they completed a significant number of tasks at home in some cases reaching a point of homework completion mastery.

> *"It must be noted that the rate of student homework completion increased during the course of the lessons."*

9. Research limitations

Because of different reasons why EFL teachers around Greece were reluctant to experiment with FCA, the research sample size was limited, so it may not have been a true reflection of school reality underpowering the results. Furthermore, the three-month-time, from late January to late April, for the conduction of this action research project was constrained by the due date of the dissertation to examine its impact on TPD and students' AL. As for the research method instruments and particularly, the online questionnaire, the twelve teachers were expected to answer all the questions. However, they skipped a number of them particularly those requiring more descriptive responses. Therefore, it could be alleged that the research findings were partly incomplete distorting the validity of the analysis. As for the unstructured discussions through social networking services, not all teachers held *Facebook* accounts or were familiar with *TitanPads* or *Padlets*, so they may have missed some important points raised. Finally, the fact that the involved teachers came from different regions of Greece made it challenging for the researcher to take advantage of in-person interviews or classroom observations.

10. Recommendations for future research

The first suggestion made would be the research sample expansion to a wider number of 6th grade classes to ensure more extensive results in the future. To this end, EFL teachers working in primary schools have to be encouraged to depart from their deeply-rooted and sometimes outdated teaching practices and through on-going, long-term teacher education to be rendered into skilled and confident agents of innovation. Aware of what the FCA innovation actually entails, they will be able to proceed to the careful organization and preparation of their own FCA material and the design of original and appealing FCA lessons.

It is also essential that a more extended time expansion of the research be ensured, for example, on an annual basis to fully unfold the potential of the method. EFL teachers could be more flexible with flipping without being intimidated by fixed timetables and deadlines. In addition, concerning the research data collection and analysis, it would be wiser that future researchers make use of multiple research instruments such as individual in-depth

interviews, structured and non-structured interviews, focus groups (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 315) or systematic classroom observations. Finally, teachers who hesitate to experiment with flipping because they cannot have full control over before-class homework preparation or because reliable and consistent Internet access at home cannot be ensured could try the alternative way of the *In-Class Flip[v]*.

11. Conclusion

This research aimed at examining whether EFL teachers in the 6th grade of Greek primary schools were ready to introduce the FCA innovative teaching model in their practices as part of their TPD and as a means to establish AL in their classes. The prevailing sense left to the researcher was that EFL state teachers treat educational innovations with trepidation. The fear of the unknown and the daily workload absorb most of teachers' preparation and teaching time. However, FCA had a great impact on the participants' TPD due to the fact that they became more flexible and competent IT users and they were familiarized with a wealth of educational online content appropriate for flipping. Equally important were the higher teacher-student and student-student interaction and practice that took place in class due to the time saved by video presentations at home. In this way, the learners' autonomy was encouraged, that is, their AL rendering their teachers into learning facilitators instead of information providers.

When evaluating the support FCA material designed by the researcher, the twelve participants reported that it was well-structured, organized and enjoyable aligning both with learners' preferences and how FCA works. In fact, so motivated were a couple of teachers after their initial flipping experience that they embarked on designing their own FCA lessons according to the researcher's expectations. Despite the limitations, FCA can be a workable solution against the everyday hurdles that EFL teachers face preventing them from being professionally and personally developed.

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[v] As in the traditional flip, the teacher records video lectures but instead of having students watch the content at home, those video lectures become *stations* in class that small groups rotate through. The rest of the time is spent on other independent and group work activities. Although setting up stations is time-consuming at the beginning, once the teacher has been flipping several times, stations and videos can be recycled.

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Appendix
Technology Considerations before Flipping

- ➢ **Video Hosting Tools**
  - o YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/
  - o TeacherTube: http://www.teachertube.com/
  - o YouTube EDU: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3yA8nDwraeOfnYfBWun83g
  - o BBC Learning English: http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish
  - o FilmEnglish: http://film-english.com/
  - o BrainPOP: https://www.brainpop.com/free-stuff/
  - o Crash Course: http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/crash-course/
  - o EduTube: http://edutube.org
  - o Educational Videos: http://www.educationalvideos.com
  - o GoEnglish.tv: https://goenglish.tv/
  - o History Channel Online: http://www.history.com/videos
  - o KhanAcademy: https://www.khanacademy.org/welcome
  - o National Geography Video: http://video.nationalgeographic.com/
  - o NeoK12: http://www.neok12.com/
  - o LearnEnglishKids: http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/
  - o Photodentro: http://photodentro.edu.gr/lor/

- ➢ **Video Interaction Tools**
  - o TedEd: http://ed.ted.com/
  - o WatchKnowLearn: http://watchknowlearn.org/
  - o EduCanon: https://www.playposit.com/
  - o Office Mix: https://mix.office.com/en-us/Home
  - o EdPuzzle: https://edpuzzle.com/

- ➢ **Video Creation Tools**
  - o ScreenFlow: http://www.telestream.net/screenflow
  - o Jing: https://www.techsmith.com/jing.html
  - o CamStudio: http://camstudio.org
  - o Screencast-o-matic: http://screencast-o-matic.com/home
  - o PowToons**:** https://www.powtoon.com/

- ➢ **Learning Management Systems**
  - o EdModo: https://www.edmodo.com/?language=el
  - o Moodle: https://moodle.org
  - o Schoology: https://www.schoology.com/

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"If I stay here, I will learn the language":
Reflections from a case study of Afghan refugees learning Greek as a Second Language

Marina MOGLI and Maria PAPADOPOULOU

At the end of the 19th, and especially during the 20th century, a lot of people from countries in the South of Europe, including Greece, emigrated to other European countries, the US or Australia. In the past two decades, however, countries like Greece have been transformed into host countries, originally accepting immigrants from the former Soviet Union and later from different countries of Africa and Asia. In modern Greece, the integration of immigrants is an issue of great importance. The role of learning the language spoken in the country, Greek, is very important so that the process of integration will be facilitated. This study examines, through qualitative methods, the factors which influence the process of learning the Greek language by immigrants from Afghanistan. A semi-structured interview in Greek in a non-random group of immigrants was used. According to the results of the study, attitudes, along with personal motives of the participants for learning the target language appeared to be very important factors for their socialization and integration in the Greek society.

Keywords: second language learning, attitudes, motives

1. Introduction

The need for learning the language of the host country is among the first challenges to be faced by anyone who changes places of residence and moves to another country. The immigrants' attitudes towards the language and the native population can significantly affect the learning of the language of the host society (Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner, & Reyes, 2004; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Dörnyei, 2001, 2003, 2005; Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011; Hosseini, 2013; Istiyani, 2014). Many studies have found positive correlation between language attitude and language proficiency (Atchade, 2002; Winke, 2013). Researchers in social psychology and education have recognized the importance of motivation for successful second language (L2) learning (Csizér & Dörney, 2005; Gardner, 1985, Gardner & Clement, 1990; Hiromori, 2009). Affective variables, such as attitude, orientations, anxiety,

and motivation, have been shown to be at least as important as language aptitude for predicting L2 achievement (Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2003).

1.2. Language and cross-cultural adaptation

For immigrants arriving in a new country, knowledge of the second language is important in many respects, to find employment, to satisfy basic needs and to communicate with the local population which is the carrier of a different cultural system. Initiatives such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2013) have started promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism recognizing the multicultural environment of modern Europe and can become strategic means of counterbalancing and responding to the challenges of globalization (Sifakis, 2004). According to Ortega (2009), when learning a second language, cognitive abilities alone cannot explain individual differences. Since learners are conscious and volitional subjects, in explaining perception, behavior and learning, human intentions, goals, plans and commitments should also be taken into account. These are influences that include volition and motivation and can contribute to language learners' success or failure in learning the second language. One of the main antecedents investigated in L2 motivation research is attitudes towards the language, the L2 community and its speakers. The learners' attitudes towards the second language are considered essential factors that influence language performance and explain linguistic behavior (Eshghinejad, 2016). The most successful learners display strongly positive attitudes toward the second language, its culture and social practices (Triantafillidou & Hedgcock, 2007). In her study, Istiyani (2014) found that both the high and low achievement students who studied English as a foreign language had positive attitudes towards community, English speakers and English in general. Those attitudes were incorporated with their motivations, which means that they increased their motivation. Language is not just a one-dimensional means of naming objects; it's a means of understanding the world and a means of socialization. Particularly in the case of immigrants, different languages are connected to different worlds and different cultures and the immigrants' socialization took place under very different circumstances compared to that of the host country. Consequently, the transition from one stage of socialization to another is not always smooth (Mpatsalia, 2003). Cross-cultural adaptation is important for immigrants' adaptation. It takes place through communication, so aptitude in the language of the host country facilitates it. Relevant studies have shown that learning the host language can be reinforced by motives of adaptation (the will to participate in the culture of the host country), positive attitudes towards themselves, the host environment and the host culture, and emotional rapport with the locals (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2003). It is also about succeeding in attaining material, symbolic and affective returns that the immigrants desire for themselves and being considered as worthy social beings. People who undertake to learn an additional language are engaged in changing their worlds, so L2 learning is always transformative (Ortega, 2009).

1.3. Language attitudes and motivation

Attitude is defined as a disposition to respond positively or negatively towards an idea, object, person, or situation. Students have positive or negative attitudes towards the language they learn or the people who speak it (Hosseini & Rourmandnia, 2013). To substantiate the theoretical assertions about the relationship between attitude and language learning, extensive studies have been carried out. Truitt (1995) found that students' beliefs and attitudes vary based on cultural background and previous experiences.

Other researchers have reached similar findings, such as Malallaha (2000), who investigated the attitudes of Arab learners towards English in Kuwait, a predominantly Arabic and Muslim environment. She discovered that they have positive attitudes towards English and their proficiency in tests was positively related to their attitude. Attitudes towards a language are connected to opinions regarding its speakers. Ellis (2008) claims that one of the ways social settings can influence L2 acquisition is through affecting learners' attitudes towards the target language, target-language speakers, the target-language culture, the social value of learning the L2, and themselves as members of their own culture.

According to a lot of research (Dornyei, 2001; 2003; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009), motivation for learning a language is positively related to the educational and professional success of the immigrants. According to Brown (2000), L2 learners benefit from positive attitudes, while negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation. According to Becker (2007), there are three basic factors in learning a second language: motivation of the individual learning it, exposure to the language and effectiveness of the L2 learner. As Ortega (2009) stresses, the overall amount of motivation is quantified via three dimensions, motivational intensity (how much effort people expend in learning a language), attitudes towards learning the L2 (how much enjoyment people report when they learn the language) and desire to learn (how much personal investment in succeeding in the language people claim for themselves).

1.4. Language and integration

As Esser (2006) claims, knowledge of the language of the host country plays an important role for the integration of immigrants into host societies. Language is a valuable resource, through which other resources can be obtained and in which one can choose to invest. Educational success, placement on interesting positions and the structuring of identities all clearly depend on language proficiency and affect it (Esser, 2006). According to research carried out by Hou and Beiser (2006), although demographic characteristics and pre-immigration achievement were the major factors determining English-language proficiency during the early years of resettlement, post-migration opportunities and incentives became increasingly important over time. Other researchers confirm the importance of learning the host country language for immigrants (Bernaus, Masgoret, Garderr & Reyes, 2004; Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003; Mattheoudakis, 2005). The results highlight the responsibility host countries have to provide opportunities to facilitate language acquisition by newcomers. Regarding refugees, in particular, according to Morrice (2007), lifelong learning policies should stem from a more holistic which would understand social exclusion. This approach would recognize that in order for refugees to become integrated, effective members of society there is the need for a process of assimilating into social networks, developing cultural understanding and knowing the rules of social engagement. Often, it is through informal and non-formal learning opportunities that these are picked up. Something which also has to be taken into account is that many refugees are illiterate in their own native language, something which significantly affects their ability to acquire a new language. Consequently, traditional approaches to teaching a second language to adults do not really work for them, so there is a need for programs specifically suited to their needs (Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011; Huntley, 1992; Marrapodi, 2013).

2. The research

2.1. Rationale and aims of the case study

The present study focuses on language education offered to refugees in Greece, where Modern Greek is the dominant language and it intends to explore a non-formal educational setting that offers free of charge language courses to immigrants and refugees aged 15 and above, as, according to literature research, this group seems to be a rather neglected one (Scientific Committee in Support of Refugee Children, 2017). The refugees' and immigrants' attitudes towards the language of the host country are important in facilitating its learning. In order to invest in learning the language spoken in their new country, immigrants need to develop positive attitudes and motivation to acquire it and devote time and effort learning it. According to Androulakis, Mastorodimou & van Boeschoten (2016), knowledge of the local language is necessary to improve immigrants' socio-economic and professional status. In the case of the Greek context, excellent knowledge of the Greek language is seen as a necessary tool to enable them to change their employment conditions, by allowing them to redefine their identity. By improving their knowledge of Greek immigrants hope to make progress, negotiating, in essence, their identity; who they are and who they want to be in this social context, facilitating their goals in terms of employment and their ambitions. The degree in which they learn the host language constitutes a symbolic act of choosing an identity and is linked with interconnecting attitudes and representations (Androulakis, 2011). A survey carried out by Mattheoudakis (2005) indicates a high interest by immigrants in Greece to learn Greek but a very low level of enrollment on and attendance of language courses. According to Rodakopoulos and Lily (2010), if the immigrant group learning Greek lacks clear goals this contributes to the Greek lessons not living up to the attendants' expectations.

Second language acquisition and L2 motivational and attitudinal considerations are particularly relevant in today's globalized world. This is the case not only in Greece, but in many countries, since international migration has reached record levels. There is no previous research on Afghan refugees' language attitudes towards the Greek language, so the present study aims to examine their attitudes, the relationship between language aptitude and their attitude toward Greek as well as the relationship between language aptitude and the degree of integration into Greek society. The choice of the nationality of the participants (refugees from Afghanistan) was made because the specific group now has a dominant presence in Greece (Dimitriadi, 2013). The top nationalities of arrivals in Greece in 2016 were from Syria and Afghanistan. The number of refugees from Afghanistan arriving in Greece rose during the past few years (ESI, 2017).

There is little evidence shedding light on the attitudes of the refugees trying to learn Greek in non-formal educational settings like the one of the study. The primary research questions of the study are the following:

- What are the attitudes of Afghan refugees toward learning Greek as a second language?
- What are their profiles and goals?
- What are their perceptions towards the usefulness of the host language?
- What are their reasons and motivation for learning Greek?
- How do the participants learn the Greek language and how long do they consider they need in order to acquire some basic skills in it?
- What is the role of the host language in their integration into the host society?

The study aimed to examine the ways Afghan refugees approached the Greek language, the methods through which they acquired it, the difficulties they faced learning it, their attitudes towards its usefulness and the relation between those attitudes and their level of attaining it. The participants were prompted to talk about how language aptitude was related to confidence in Greek, if the frequency of using their mother tongue related to their ability to speak Greek and if their knowledge of Greek was connected to their integration into Greek society. Finally, they were asked to comment on the role of the state regarding their learning Greek and facilitating their communication with civil services.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Place and time of the study

The present research was carried out in the fall of 2012 with a non-random group of seven people who had Afghanistan as their country of origin and lived in a medium size Greek city, Volos. The first researcher taught Greek to most of the research subjects in a non-formal class of Greek as a second language at the Immigrant Centre of Volos, a non-profit organization, where teachers volunteer and students do not have to pay to attend. The research subjects that were not her students were acquaintances and friends with the other participants. This relationship facilitated access to the specific group of immigrants.

2.2.2. The sample

The subjects aged from 21 to 26 years with an average stay in Greece of 3 or 4 years. Their mother tongue was Farsi and only one participant spoke Dari. They were all asylum seekers and considered themselves refugees. They claimed that they fled Afghanistan because of the war and the persecution they faced there, as they were all members of the Hazara minority group. Many of them were originally planning on going to other EU countries and Greece was considered a transit country. Most of them had very little schooling in Afghanistan. They had not attended any formal education classes in their country or had only been to school for a very short period of time (according to their statements, the average school attendance in Afghanistan for the participants was 2 years). In addition, they did not speak any English or other languages which would enable communication with the local population.

Their reading and writing skills in their mother tongue were mainly acquired through personal effort and occasional attendance of lessons in reading the Koran in their local mosque in Afghanistan. Their level of language efficiency in speaking Greek was good for most (5 people); in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) their speaking skills were B1 level. One spoke very good Greek (level C1) whereas one of the subjects did not even have basic skills in the language. They had been attending Greek class Level A1/A2 of CERF, as their reading and writing skills in Greek were very basic, although some of them had speaking skills which were much better than the specific level.

2.2.3. Research tool and data analysis

Qualitative methods of research were considered more suitable to the specific study (Androulakis, Mastorodimou & van Boeschoten, 2016; Ersanili, 2014). Data regarding the attitudes of the participants and their motivation to learn Greek was obtained through semi-structured, individual interviews with each participant, conducted by the first researcher. According to Newton (2010), the influence of a responsibly engaged researcher helps

interviewees describe perceptions they would otherwise think irrelevant or in their normal social context feel inhibited from mentioning.

The interviews were characterized as semi-structured because, though they drew on pre-designed questions, they offered both the researcher and the participants a lot of flexibility. They were conducted in Greek and only one of the participants who could not speak Greek gave the interview in Dari while another participant interpreted. Newton (2010) stresses the force of this particular research method in finding similar perspectives from a small sample of individuals interviewed in-depth in the context of a case study. He considers it is the power of semi-structured interviews to provide rich, original voices which can be used to construct research narratives that gives the method its invaluable quality.

The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis. It is a research method for making valid references from data to their context, with a purpose of providing new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action, with the aim of attaining a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis can be used even with very unstructured interviews and provide comparable data (Newton, 2010). The basic approach of qualitative content analysis is to retain the strengths of quantitative content analysis and against this background to develop techniques of systematic, qualitatively oriented text analysis (Mayring, 2014).

3. Results

3.1. L2 acquisition

As one participant said regarding the way he learnt Greek: "I didn't learn so much from the classes, I learnt more from work and friends, foreign friends and Greek friends, but mostly from the Greeks". Acquisition of Greek was mainly through talking with Greek friends and in non-formal educational settings with a total average of 7 months in different time periods. The participants' answers regarding the time they took to achieve a basic level of the target language were their own self-evaluation and not in any way formally assessed by the researcher or any other relevant educational authority. The time they took to acquire basic communication skills in the target language was significantly different for every participant, probably because communication is evaluated in a different way for every person. The people who spoke the best and the worst Greek stated the same amount of time, 2 months, another said he took 4 months and the rest 1 to 1 ½ years. They all thought that the first lessons they had, mainly in the shelter for unaccompanied minors, had a positive or even very positive impact.

No matter how much emphasis was placed by the subjects on the usefulness of the lessons, the average time of attending them was very low, only a few months. In addition, the fact that most of them stated that they needed about one year to get basic knowledge in the language reflects their lack of confidence regarding their language skills, something which must have impeded communication with the Greek speakers and their smooth integration in the host society for a long period of time. They also connected their lack of effort in learning Greek to the fact that they considered Greece as a stopover on their way to another EU country. One of the participants said: "I didn't do any studying at home nor attended lessons for 4 years, because I was thinking of leaving Greece, so I didn't learn anything. I am still not doing any studying because I am thinking of going".

3.2. Difficulties in L2 acquisition

Regarding the difficulty of Greek, most of the participants had encountered difficulties in their effort to learn it. However, their answers varied, so there were no consistent findings in this respect. It is interesting to note that the person who spoke no Greek did not regard the language as being difficult, while another one of the participants attributed the difficulty to the fact that he was illiterate in his mother tongue. For most people (5 out of 7), the most difficult part was grammar and syntax while two also mentioned pronunciation. Some of them connected their level of proficiency in Greek to their motivation and their hopes of staying in Greece. One of them connected the difficulty of learning the language to the effort you put into it: "it's not very difficult, it depends on the effort somebody makes".

Six participants stated that if they did not understand something they asked for clarification and in this way they improved. Mistakes seemed to cause feelings of shame to most participants (5), while two of them stated they did not mind and they found the process of correction constructive. The reaction of others to their mistakes varied; laughter, indifference, and in some cases connection to their origin ("he is a foreigner and he doesn't know"). They really elaborated when talking about what the local Greek population said when they made a mistake speaking in Greek, something that shows that the Greek people's comments and reactions were particularly important to the participants. Although they did not say so, the possibility of refusing to speak the language altogether or limiting their communication to the minimum of instances required would seem a possible approach from the part of the subjects in order to avoid being ridiculed because of their poor language skills.

3.3. L2 Usefulness

Most of the participants stated that a good knowledge of Greek would help them, especially in their work environment and transactions with private (e.g. bank transactions) and public sectors. The person with the best knowledge of spoken Greek connected it with better communication with the Greeks and knowledge in general, while for one of the subjects a better knowledge of Greek had no practical purpose. One of the participants said that he considered learning any language useful, but "if I leave Greece I will not use this language". The main reason that motivated the participants to learn the language was to facilitate their work efforts: "I learnt the language in order to be able to work", "being able to speak Greek helps you with work and everywhere else".

Language, therefore, was restricted to its usefulness in the work environment, without being considered to have a vital role regarding communication with people of the host society and the refugees' better integration in it. This, in turn, affected the participants' motivation for learning it, which seemed to be in a rather low level, as they did not show particular enthusiasm regarding their language learning apart from general statements about the L2's usefulness.

3.4. L2 language aptitude and confidence

Their evaluation of their knowledge of Greek in the fields of reading, comprehension, writing and speaking was particularly low, in comparison to their real language skills, as they were judged by the first researcher who had taught most of the research subjects for 1 year. They did not have any confidence in their abilities in the second language at all. Only two people

claimed they were good in speaking and comprehension, while in the other language skills they evaluated their abilities in a medium level.

Their confidence in the knowledge of Greek was very low because, in their opinion, they did not come into much contact with native speakers. Another factor mentioned by the participants was a lack of a longer, more organized L2 education. They had tried different types of classes, mainly in non-formal settings, usually for short periods of time. They also mentioned that their performance in Greek was not very good because they mainly focused on improving their speaking skills and not on other fields like reading and writing.

3.5. L1 use and L2 language aptitude

All subjects but one read information and listened to the news on the Internet in their mother tongue. They had friendly relations with people of many nationalities, including Greeks. Most of them (5) lived together with people of the same nationality, while two lived on their own. Most of the participants communicated using Greek in their working environment. Two used Greek and English alternatively and one Greek and Dari. In their everyday life they mainly spoke their mother tongue, while one of them stated he spoke Greek only in Greek class and nowhere else.

The subjects with the worst or even medium knowledge of Greek did not seem particularly integrated into Greek society as they hardly even socialized with the Greeks and they spoke Greek mainly at work. They only associated with people of their own nationality and relied very much on members of their own community for help and support. The frequency of the use of their mother tongue in their everyday life did not help towards the improvement of their skills in the language of the host society, as they said themselves.

3.6. L2 and integration

Most subjects said they liked Greece. "There is no war here and the climate is nice" said one participant. However, they all stated the difficulty of getting legal permits and help from the government. They all mentioned the fact that they did not have permanent residency status which seemed an issue of great importance to them: "The government doesn't give papers; they don't help if we get hungry". They related getting residency permits with learning the L2. "If we stay here we will learn the language well". Five people expressed their wish to return to their homeland; however, two of them connected it to the existence of peace. Almost all individuals but one regarded the Greeks as friendly to foreigners and said they helped them learn the language. The participant with the best spoken ability in Greek mentioned a Greek girlfriend who "really helped me when I first arrived and corrected me when I made mistakes".

The level of L2 aptitude seemed to be a determining factor in the sense of belonging to the host society. The relationship between language and culture was important in all the answers. Most participants (5) regarded their Greek as not sufficient for the life they wanted to lead in Greece, in contrast to the two (2) people with the best level in the language.

Knowledge of the host language was for them a determining factor for understanding the Greek culture and not a means of better integration into Greek society. They all stressed its importance during the interviews. They had also realized the importance of coming into contact with the local population in order to improve their language skills: "You learn the

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language better if you have experiences with Greek people". Although the participants had positive attitudes towards their host country, they had not accomplished, even those with the best level of language skills, to be integrated in their society. This was connected, in their view, not only to the insufficient knowledge of the target language, but to the culture difference as well. One of the participants connected it to the fact that he didn't want to stay in Greece but was forced to remain in the country due to his inability to reach other European countries: "I still haven't gotten used to the country because I have stayed here without wanting to".

3.7. Role of the Greek state

The participants claimed that the Greek state did not help immigrants learn Greek. Most of them (5) would prefer to have an interpreter when dealing with civil services; however, that did not seem to relate to their level of Greek. The need of the specific group of immigrants for the government's help and for official support to learn the target language and to be integrated into the host society was more than evident. One of the participants also narrated an unpleasant incident regarding his contact with public services: "I went to the police when I crashed my motorbike to ask what I had to do and when I didn't understand what they told me they said: 'This is your problem'".

The subjects connected the negative learning experiences they had in the past, prior to their participation in the lessons in the Immigrant Centre of Volos, to the indifference of the teachers. One of the subjects said about a previous teacher: "She didn't even give us any photocopies or any other material". About another teacher they stressed the fact that he didn't even try to explain when they hadn't understood something: "When we asked him a question, he said: 'Just let it be'". They also stressed the fact that in the Immigrant Center the teacher used a dictionary in Farsi which they thought helped them immensely in their efforts to learn Greek.

4. Discussion

This study relates to second language learning by immigrants and refugees living in a host country. It is concerned with the motivational propensities to learn a L2 which were analyzed regarding L2 use in the participants' everyday life, effort and persistence while attending classes and their attitudes and motivation towards the L2. Emphasis should be placed on how immigrants and refugees' motivation to learn the language of their host community can be connected through educational initiatives, as well as how learners in their daily effort can feel the personal relevance of learning the L2 and relate themselves to their host country. In doing so, we need to consider how motivation and attitude theories are used in this process.

Proficiency in the host language is vital for the economic and social integration of immigrants. It improves access to higher-paying jobs and facilitates interactions with the native population. The participants in this study, however, mainly associate with members of their own ethnic group and so their opportunities for learning and using the host language are significantly diminished. They live together with other Afghans, they have friends from their own community and some of them even work with people from their country. While this can have initial positive effects on employment probabilities, it can impede acquisition of the second language by reducing exposure to it. The duration of the lessons in learning the L2 was very short, which is connected to the extensive use of their mother tongue in

their everyday life and the lack of lessons adapted to their needs. So, the study confirmed similar research findings regarding the negative influence of the use of ethnic communication in intercultural adaptation and the obstacles it places in L2 acquisition (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Kim & Kim, 2016). Language is a very important prerequisite in the process of integration (Krumm & Plutzar, 2016). According to Ishphording (2015), immigrants tend to move into ethno-linguistic enclaves inhabited by earlier immigrants with the same ethnic background, to benefit from existing ethnic networks. A negative relationship has been documented by a lot of research between enclave density and host country language acquisition for a range of settings and in many countries, like the US, Australia, Canada, Israel and the UK (e.g. Ishphording, 2015).

The findings support the importance of attitudes and personal motives for the learning of the second language and confirm, therefore, similar research findings (Androulakis, 2011; Dornyei, 2001; 2003; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009; Ellis, 2008; Hosseini & Rourmandnia, 2013; Malallaha, 2000, Truitt, 1995). In addition, they bring to the forefront the importance of the knowledge of the host language to facilitate integration into the host society. However important the Afghan refugees think the knowledge of Greek for their everyday life, their integration into Greek society and understanding the culture of this society is, they do not consider their level in Greek sufficient. Although they claim to have positive attitudes towards members of the L2 community, in practice they do seem integrated into the host community. One of the participants characteristically said: "I speak Greek only every Tuesday and Thursday during your class", which means that he had virtually no contact with the local population and there were no opportunities for him to practice the language. Except for the participant who spoke very good Greek, everyone else had no Greek friends or acquaintances, apart from the ones who worked with Greeks. Even in this context, their contact with the locals was minimal and consisted only of interactions with their co-workers regarding work-related matters. Integrativeness refers to "a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community" (Gardner, 2001: 5), which might explain their low level of effort and investment in learning Greek. Another antecedent which is important in motivation research is self-confidence when using the language, which can also affect the participants' communicative competence. In this case, the subjects' communicative anxiety when using Greek is very high and their self-perception of their communicative competence very low. Most of the subjects said: "My Greek is not good at all". They did not separate their speaking competence -which was quite good for many of them- from other skills and they assumed that their general level was not satisfactory since they evaluated their writing and reading skills as poor. The comments or jokes of the locals when they made mistakes caused a lot of anxiety to the Afghan refugees in their attempts to use Greek in their everyday interactions. This confirms similar findings that anxiety when learning a second language can play a debilitating role (Ortega, 2009) and is not static but evolves as a consequence of interactions with those around the L2 learner (De Costa, 2015). The fact that there was a participant who stressed that being illiterate in his mother tongue caused additional problems in his efforts to learn Greek as a second language confirms similar research findings (Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011; Huntley, 1992; Marrapodi, 2013) and asserts the fact that special programs, curricula and educational materials need to be developed for illiterate or semi-literate adult L2 learners, specifically suited to their needs and interests (Fanta-Vagenshtein, 2011).

Limitations of the current study need to be discussed. The sample of the study was small so the results are mainly pertinent to the specific group. Further research on the attitudes of immigrants towards the Greek language is recommended, in order to draw more reliable conclusions. However, since many Afghan refugees in Greece but also in other European

countries share a lot of common characteristics with the participants of this study, like for example the fact that they are illiterate or semi-literate in their mother tongue, further research would draw conclusions relevant to other similar groups of Afghan refugees living elsewhere or perhaps even for groups of refugees from other countries with similar prior educational experiences.

5. Implications of the research

The learning of the host language in non-formal settings and the need for organized classes and information about the systematic learning of Greek is evident. Positive attitudes towards the host society and the speakers of the target language come to the surface, together with the desire for integration, both of which need to be enhanced in order to increase the participants' motivation in learning Greek. Further research is required on the elements that encourage the learning of Greek as a second language so that the learners' needs can be more accurately pinpointed and didactic approaches suitably adapted. There is the need to increase motivation and find appropriate methodological approaches with the aim of the immigrants attending language classes for a longer period of time. The selective use of mother tongue during teaching is something which could also be taken into consideration. All these can contribute to enhancing their desire to learn the language and secure them greater and faster acquisition of communicative skills that will facilitate their social integration.

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Explicit collaborative reading strategy instruction: A pilot intervention in the EFL context

Συνεργατική ρητή διδασκαλία των στρατηγικών κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου: Μια πιλοτική παρέμβαση στο πλαίσιο της ξένης γλώσσας

Maria KOUKOURIKOU, Polyxeni MANOLI and Eleni GRIVA

The present study, quasi-experimental in design, aims to investigate the impact of a multiple-strategy intervention on Greek EFL secondary school students' reading performance. More specifically, an experimental (n=40) and a control group (n=22), comprising learners between 14 and 15 years old participated in the research that lasted two months. The approach selected for the teaching intervention was the Collaborative Strategy Instruction, which involved previewing, main idea identification, clarification and summarisation strategies. Both groups were administered pre-test, post-test and follow-up measurements to account for any potential improvement in their performance but only the experimental group received strategic training. In addition to the quantitative data, two qualitative instruments were employed in the form of a) semi-structured interviews conducted with the EFL teachers on issues related to strategy conceptualization, strategy use and teaching, before the teaching intervention and b) the researcher's journal aiming at reflecting on and assessing the strategic instruction process on an 'on-going' basis. According to the results of the study, it was revealed that the EFL teachers were not familiar with the strategy use and instruction. Moreover, both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated an improvement in the students' reading comprehension ability. In particular, it was found that the students of the experimental group enhanced their reading comprehension ability between the pre-test and post-test measurement, which was statistically significant in the delayed measurement as well.

 ❦

Μέσα από την παρούσα μελέτη επιχειρείται η διερεύνηση της επίδρασης μιας παρέμβασης διδασκαλίας πολλαπλών στρατηγικών στην επίδοση των Ελλήνων μαθητών στην κατανόηση κειμένων στην αγγλική γλώσσα. Συγκεκριμένα, η πειραματική εφαρμογή διήρκησε δύο μήνες και συμμετείχαν μια πειραματική ομάδα (N = 40) και μια ομάδα ελέγχου (N= 22)

μαθητών ηλικίας 14 και 15 ετών. Η προσέγγιση που επελέγη για να εφαρμοστεί ήταν η Συνεργατική Στρατηγική Διδασκαλία, η οποία στόχευε στην εξάσκηση των μαθητών στις στρατηγικές της προεπισκόπησης, της αναγνώρισης της κύριας ιδέας, της διασαφήνισης και της περίληψης. Και στις δύο ομάδες διεξήχθητε προέλεγχος και μετέλεγχος για να αποτιμηθεί η ενδεχόμενη βελτίωση της απόδοσής τους στην κατανόηση γραπτού λόγου, αλλά μόνο στην πειραματική ομάδα εφαρμόστηκε διδασκαλία στρατηγικών. Επίσης, χρησιμοποιήθηκαν δύο ποιοτικά εργαλεία: α) η ημιδομημένη συνέντευξη που διεξήχθη με τους εκπαιδευτικούς της αγγλικής γλώσσας αναφορικά με ζητήματα εννοιολογικής προσέγγισης των στρατηγικών, στρατηγικής χρήσης και διδασκαλίας και β) το ημερολόγιο του ερευνητή, το οποίο στοχεύει στον αναστοχασμό και τη συνεχή αξιολόγηση της διδασκαλίας των στρατηγικών. Από τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης διαπιστώθηκε ότι οι εκπαιδευτικοί δεν ήταν εξοικειωμένοι με τη χρήση και τη διδασκαλία στρατηγικών. Επιπλέον, τόσο τα ποσοτικά όσο και τα ποιοτικά δεδομένα κατέδειξαν βελτίωση της κατανόησης γραπτού λόγου από τους μαθητές. Συγκεκριμένα, διαφάνηκε από τα αποτελέσματα του προελέγχου και του μετελέγχου ότι οι μαθητές της πειραματικής ομάδας βελτίωσαν την ικανότητα αναγνωστικής κατανόησης σε στατιστικά σημαντικό επίπεδο.

Keywords: collaborative strategy instruction, reading strategies**,** reading comprehension, EFL learning

1. Introduction

Learning to read, as Barnett (1989) maintains, is actually "an invisible process" (p. 38), while its complex and multifaceted nature places great demands on the learners, especially when Second Language (L2) reading is concerned. More specifically, since reading entails multiple and complicated cognitive functions, text interpretation requires more active and versatile readers that orchestrate strategies in an effort to become more successful and independent (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).

Graesser (2007) defines a reading strategy as a "cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted under particular contextual conditions with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension" (p. 6). Hence, an effective reader deliberately implements conscious and time-consuming techniques in order to repair or avoid reading elements not thoroughly understood (Block & Parris, 2008; Graesser, 2007).

Among the many strategy classifications, Grabe and Stoller (2011) classified reading strategies in four categories including global, context level, monitoring and support strategies. At the same time, Psaltou-Joycey (2010) adopts the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading framework accounting for time of use and class interaction. These categorisations attempt to provide instructors with the tools to help their learners achieve deeper understanding of the L2 texts (Oxford, 2011).

2. Theoretical underpinnings

Evidently, becoming a strategic reader is not accomplished rapidly and effortlessly. Learners need to be exposed to various text types and reading strategies for long periods of time in order to manipulate their strategy inventory, while instructors should provide them with ample opportunities for practice (Mokhtari & Shorey, 2008; Griva et. al., 2009). In this way, explicit instruction aims at raising students' awareness of strategy deployment, while the teacher's role is to model proper use and prepare students to transfer this knowledge to similar tasks (Chamot, 2004). Concurrently, Grabe (2009) highlights the importance of students' exchange of ideas after strategy use in order to secure better comprehension of their reading processes. The focal point of explicit instruction is to create strategic readers who automatically coordinate their strategy use (Koda, 2005). Metacognition, which is raised through explicit strategy training, plays a critical role in controlling comprehension, since it provides knowledge about how cognition works (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001).

The learning strategy literature is loaded with instructional approaches, which guarantee students' success in the L2. Some of the most widely used models are Oxford's (1990) framework, where she emphasises the importance of gradually releasing teacher control and O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). Another popular model, Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), draws its main principles from reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning. It is directed primarily to mixed-achievement reading learners who work in groups. The gains in the development of learners' reading skills are a result of the selected reading strategies and the group members' communication (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999).

Research on reading strategy intervention programmes abounds in the past few years, as the results manifest significant progress in the readers' comprehension ability after explicit strategy instruction (e.g., Aghai & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Kusiak, 2001; Takavoli & Koosha, 2015; Wichadee, 2011). Regarding the Greek context, particularly, research showed significant improvement in the learners' reading performance when implementing strategy deployment (e.g., Manoli, et al., 2016; Sarafianou, 2013). With reference to the CSR approach, relevant research has proved the benefits collaborative strategic teaching has on EFL learners' reading performance (Fan, 2010; Karabuga & Kaya, 2013; Puspita, et.al, 2013).

However, most research put emphasis on the immediate impact of strategy training disregarding the delayed benefits explicit instruction may offer to L2 readers. Only few studies investigated the effects strategic intervention programmes had on learners after a substantial time from the instruction withdrawal. To be more accurate, Ikeda and Takeuchi (2003) as well as Jafari and Ketabi (2012) confirmed the long-lasting influence of strategic instruction on EFL readers, as in all their measurements the experimental group outperformed the control. In the Greek context, Manoli et al. (2016) working with 99 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) primary students and using the Direct Explanation approach indicated a positive correlation between explicit strategic training and reading comprehension, which was maintained in the delayed post-test measurement. Allowing for the fact that most studies investigate the immediate impact of strategy training, this research focuses on both the immediate and delayed effects of a multiple-strategy instruction in public secondary schools in Greece.

3. Method

3.1. Research hypotheses

Before conducting the research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

It was assumed that Greek L2 student reading performance can be improved after strategy instruction (e.g., Aghai & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Kusiak, 2001; Manoli et al., 2016; Wichadee, 2011).

It is expected that the experimental group will be able to maintain their test scores even after the intervention withdrawal (e.g., Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Manoli et al., 2016).

Last but not least, it is assumed that reading strategies are not explicitly taught in Greek state schools (Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2013).

3.2. Research design

The present study, quasi-experimental in design, investigates the influence of a small-scale multiple-strategy intervention on secondary EFL school students. The intervention lasted 2 months comprising an experimental and a control group. The experimental group underwent explicit multiple-strategy training in particular text genres. In contrast, the control group continued their regular EFL lessons without any special attention paid to reading strategies. Both groups were administered a standardised language proficiency test and a researcher-designed reading test before and after the intervention as well as two months after the intervention withdrawal. However, it should be mentioned that before the teaching intervention, an interview was conducted with the Greek EFL teachers in order to explore whether strategy instruction was taking place.

3.3. Participants

The participants of the research consisted of 62 Greek EFL students, aged 14 and 15 years old, who attended the third grade of Junior High School in two different schools located in the city of Thessaloniki. Their linguistic level was determined B1-B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2001). The experimental group, who received explicit-reading strategy instruction, comprised 40 students belonging to two separate classes. The control group included 22 students in a single class and received no explicit strategy treatment.

Moreover, both teachers who participated in the study graduated from the Faculty of English Language and Literature of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and were approximately 40 years old. They both spent a few years teaching in language schools and for the past years they have been teachers in secondary state schools.

3.4. Teaching intervention

The teaching intervention lasted five weeks consisting of a 45-minute session per week. The teaching method implemented was CSR because, according to Klingner, et al. (1998), it is considered effective for heterogeneous groups of learners of various cultural backgrounds, as is often the case in Greek classrooms. The particular strategies that were selected

involved previewing, clarification, main idea determination and summarisation (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999).

The first session included a detailed introduction on the nature and usefulness of reading strategies aiming to raise the students' awareness of the strategies they have already used, provide a purpose for this new venture and motivate them to become more successful readers. During this first session the students were divided in groups and particular roles were assigned and explained. It was made clear that roles would rotate so that everyone would get the chance to lead the group. More specifically, besides the leader who relegated responsibilities to the group members, there was the clarification expert, who reminded the students of which strategy to follow when there was a problem, and the gist expert, who focused everyone's attention on the main ideas. Finally, the encourager provided feedback and urged all of them to participate. As Klingner and Vaughn (1999) illustrate, through this social interaction students learn how to "listen attentively...take turns speaking, provide positive feedback, and resolve conflicts" (p. 743).

In the second session, the instructor was involved in strategy modelling by verbalising her thinking step by step. During the 'think aloud' process, the researcher explicated the choice of the specific strategies providing scaffolding for learners (Macaro, 2001). More specifically, during preview, prompted by the pictures, she predicted the text topic and highlighted the usefulness of background knowledge in this process. When she started reading, she stopped, whenever a tricky point occurred, verbalising her thoughts on how to resolve the problem. In most cases, she reread the obscure sentence, while sometimes it was helpful to look at the word prefixes and suffixes to make sense of the text. When she completed reading the first paragraph, she asked herself questions about the content to identify the main idea. During this process a graphic organiser was completed to help recall and retrieve the information. In summarisation, she used her personal interpretation, thus, encouraging the students to personalise the text and not write a mere copy of actual facts and events. The initial passage used was relatively short but deliberately a little demanding to help students familiarise with this new process.

When strategy modelling was over, each group was provided with a new text, intentionally less demanding than the previous text to facilitate the use of the requested strategies. A number of clarification cards, formulated according to Klingner and Vaughn's (1999) pattern, was also handed out aiming to assist the groups to work more independently. During the reading activity, the teacher circulated encouraging the application of the appropriate strategies, thus, facilitating comprehension. After discussing the answers with the whole class, a short conversation on what led them to the particular answers was conducted concluding the session.

In the third session, the teacher introduced an instructive text and, while modelling the strategy use, she highlighted the importance of brainstorming attempting to draw a mental picture of her interpretation of the text. Before students were administered a similar text, they were encouraged to ask questions about the different genre and started doing the requested activities using their clarification cards. During the rest of the session the teacher guided and assisted all the groups reinforcing the use of headings and images as time-saving devices, when skimming and scanning for particular information.

In the fourth session, the learners encountered a quite challenging expository text about football focusing on the inferences students could draw about the content through the sub-headings. Mental imagery was instigated by the pictures and students were urged to share

these images with the rest of the class. While summing up, the students could also evaluate their effort ensuring that they understood the text message and ideas. Since students had already practised strategy deployment, the teacher limited her role allowing more freedom to the group members.

The final session included narrative passages, which are by nature more open to multiple interpretations and require concentration on subtle details like mood or the author' intentions. The story administered, despite its length, was deliberately easier than the previous texts, because the students were asked to deal with it more independently. To be more accurate, besides previewing, the students were left alone to create their own graphic organiser in an attempt to regulate their learning and expand on the previous lessons feedback. The instructor gradually released control and allowed students to take full responsibility. After the activity completion the instructor and students evaluated the usefulness of strategy employment through a short discussion.

3.5. The reading materials

The material used during the lessons included authentic texts, which were considered to be slightly beyond the learners' current proficiency level, as passages without a degree of difficulty require no strategy use (Bereiter & Bird, 1985). As far as the passages are concerned, four types of genres were selected: descriptive, instructive, expository and narrative texts, as students should practise reading strategies in a variety of texts, which will help them to further consolidate their use (Mokhtari & Shorey, 2008). The topics were selected according to students' interests and the opportunity to present the required strategies in a satisfactory way. The texts selected for the instruction were between 60 and 90 according to a Flesch-Kincaid scale readability measurement, which is considered appropriate for students between 12 and 15 years old.

3.6. Estimating the intervention: Research instruments

In order to estimate the feasibility of the teaching intervention, the following research instruments were used:

The TOEFL Junior test was administered as a pretest, post-test and follow-up measurement both to the experimental and control groups to certify their reading proficiency level and possible changes in it. It is a formalised test designed for learners over 11 years old and establishes the English proficiency level worldwide.

Concurrently, a researcher designed test was applied before and after the intervention as well as two months after the intervention withdrawal. The same test was administered in all three measurements to ensure that all measurements were comparable. The test comprised four texts, reflecting the four different genres the students were exposed to during the strategy instruction and involved multiple-choice questions based on the particular strategies the learners were taught and summary writing.

Additionally, qualitative information was collected through interviews with the two EFL educators in an effort to gain an insight into the teaching of reading comprehension within the official assigned syllabus and investigate the instructors' awareness of strategy training. To accomplish that, semi-structured interviews were designed, which are flexible enough to involve both parties in a focused discussion and concomitantly allow a degree of freedom to talk about something not planned in advance (Oxford, 2011; Psaltou-Joycey, 2010).

Finally, the researcher's reflective journal was used as an instrument of 'on-going' evaluation with the purpose to gain an in-depth understanding and monitoring of the teaching intervention. Thus, the focus was not only on reporting data of the intervention process, but also on reflecting on students' behaviour and progress, the difficulties and problems they faced during the interventions (Georgopoulou, & Griva, 2012). Concerning the form of the researcher's journal, it was based on the "questions for journal keeping" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994 in Korosidou & Griva, 2016), and was designed around three axes of questions related to the strategy training intervention.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative measurements

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20,0 was used, while the statistical analyses of Repeated Measures of ANOVA, One-Way ANOVA, Further Univariate analyses of variance, and Paired *t*-test were computed. The level of significance was set at .05. Concurrently, the teachers' interviews were analysed using content analysis to give a thorough account of the research qualitative results.

4.1.1. Comparison of the reading ability of the experimental and control groups before the training

Prior to the strategic instruction, the students were administered two reading comprehension tests: Reading Ability Test 1 (RAB1) and Strategy Test 1 (STR1); the former was a standardised reading ability test, while the latter was designed by the researcher. One-Way analysis of Variance was conducted between the experimental and control groups to evaluate their difference in reading proficiency. The results of the formalised test, RAB1, F (1, 60) = 1.00, p >.05 (M = 22.74, SD = 7.07), revealed no statistical difference between the experimental and control group reading ability. Similarity to the experimental and control groups' proficiency level was also confirmed by the designed test: STR1, F (1, 60) = 0.05, p >.05 (M = 15.71, SD = 5.26). This finding is valuable, as it proves that the reading ability of both groups was comparable before the teaching intervention and, therefore, renders the results after the teaching intervention more reliable (see also Figure 1 and Figure 2).

4.1.2. Comparison of the reading ability of the experimental and control groups based on the immediate and delayed post-test measurements

The Repeated Measures Anova analysis was conducted using the group as the between subjects independent variable, the time of measurement as a within subjects variable, and the scores of all reading comprehension tests in the three different measurements as the dependent variables to determine the effect the strategic training can have on EFL students' performance. In particular, the findings revealed that in the standardised test the main effects of group, F (1, 60) = 69, p <.001, η^2 = .92, time, F (2, 120) = 112.60, p <.001, η^2 = .65 as well as the interaction between time and group factors, F (2, 120) = 45.01, p <.001, η^2 = .42 were statistically significant. The mean scores and standard deviation for the experimental group were M = 29.88, SD = 7.15 for the standardised reading ability post-test (RAB2), and M = 28.13, SD = 7.79 for the delayed test (RAB3). The scores for the control group were M = 25.82, SD = 8.39 (RAB2) and M = 25.09, SD = 7.97 (RAB3) for the post-test and delayed test measurement respectively (see also Figure 1).
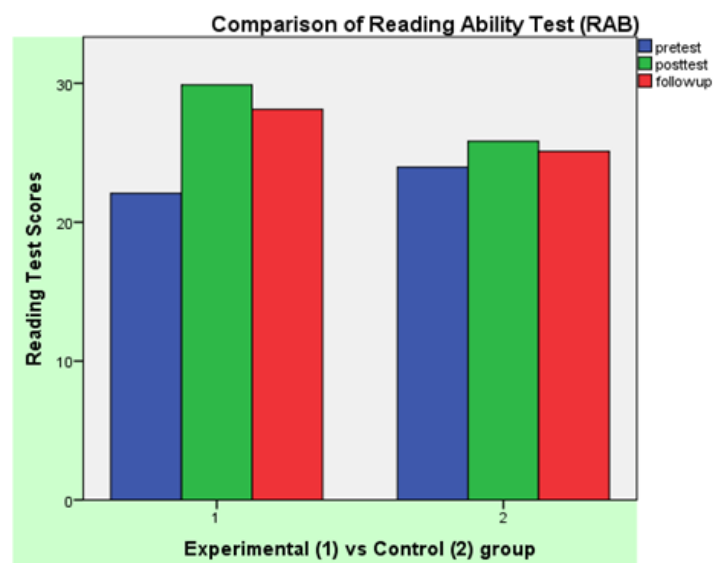
Figure 1: The Results of the Reading Ability Test (the standardised test)

Additionally, in the constructed test the main effects of group, $F(1, 60) = 55$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .90$, time, $F(2, 120) = 90.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .60$ as well as the interaction between time and group factors, $F(2, 120) = 32.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .35$ were statistically significant. The mean scores and standard deviation for the constructed test were $M = 23.22$, $SD = 6.25$ (STR2) in the immediate post-test measurement and $M = 22.13$, $SD = 6.37$ (STR3) in the delayed post-test measurement for the experimental group. The respective scores for the control group were $M = 17.14$, $SD = 6.74$ (STR2) in the immediate post-test measurement and $M = 17.41$, $SD = 6.98$ (STR3) in the delayed post-test measurement with an obvious predominance of the performance of the experimental group (see also Figure 2).
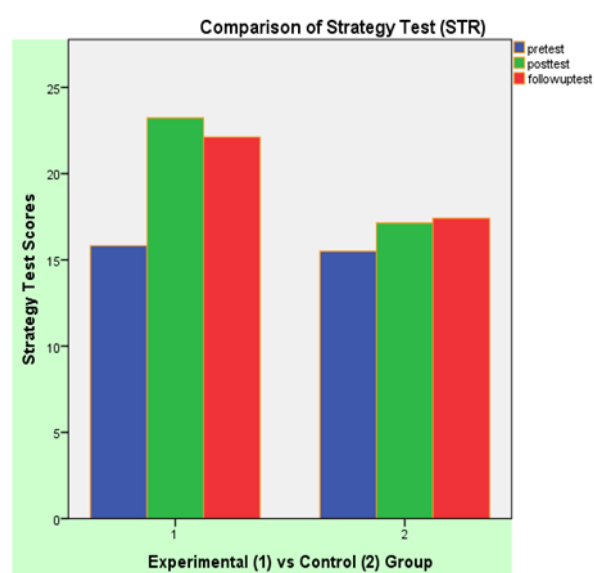

Figure 2: The Results of the Researcher-Designed Test

Further Univariate Analysis of Variance with group as the independent variable indicated that the difference in the standardised test between the two groups was statistically significant only after the intervention in favour of the experimental group, F (1, 60) = 2.8, p >.05, η^2 = .71 (RAB1, pre-test measurement), F (1, 60) = 57.8, p <.001, η^2 = .98 (RAB2, post-test measurement) and F (1, 60) = 31.6, p <.001, η^2 = .77 (RAB3, follow-up measurement).

As for the designed test, the difference between the two groups was statistically significant in favour of the experimental group only after the explicit instruction, as further Univariate Analysis of Variance with group as the independent variable verified, F (1, 60) = 0.41, p >.05, η^2 = .54 (STR1, pre-test measurement), F (1, 60) = 14.8, p <.001, η^2 = .85 (STR2, post-test measurement) and F (1, 60) = 11.4, p <.001, η^2 = .66 (STR3, follow-up measurement).

4.1.3. The progress of the experimental group

It is worth examining the progress of the treatment group throughout the three measurements. For that reason, Paired t-test analysis was conducted, which illustrated a statistically significant difference in the scores of the designed test between the pre-test and immediate post-test measurement (STR), $t(58)$ = -12.65, p <.001, between the post-test and follow-up measurements, $t(58)$ = 4.22, p <.001 as well as between the pre-test and follow-up measurement, $t(58)$ = -10.34, p <.001. The scores revealed the gains in the students' reading performance after the teaching intervention, which remained statistically significant two months after the intervention withdrawal (see also Figure 3).
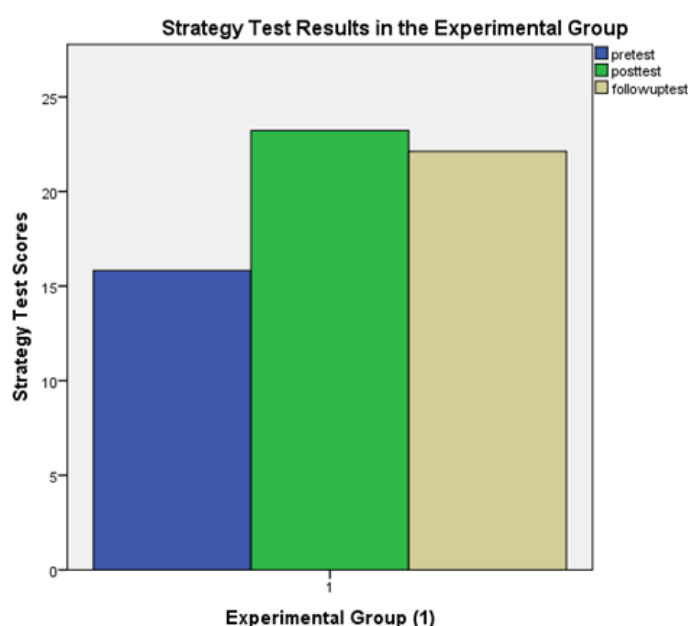
Figure 3: The Results of the Researcher-Designed Test in the Experimental Group

The benefits from the strategic instruction can also be noticed in the statistical values of the standardised ability test (RAB). Paired t-test demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of the standardised test between the pre-test and immediate post-test measurements, $t(58)$ = -16.84, p<.001, between the post-test and follow-up measurements, $t(58)$ = 6.43, p<.001, and between the pre-test and follow-up measurement, $t(58)$ = -11.36, p<.001 (see also Figure 4). Although a slight drop in the

learners' performance was observed between the post-test and the delayed measurement, the difference was still statistically significant.
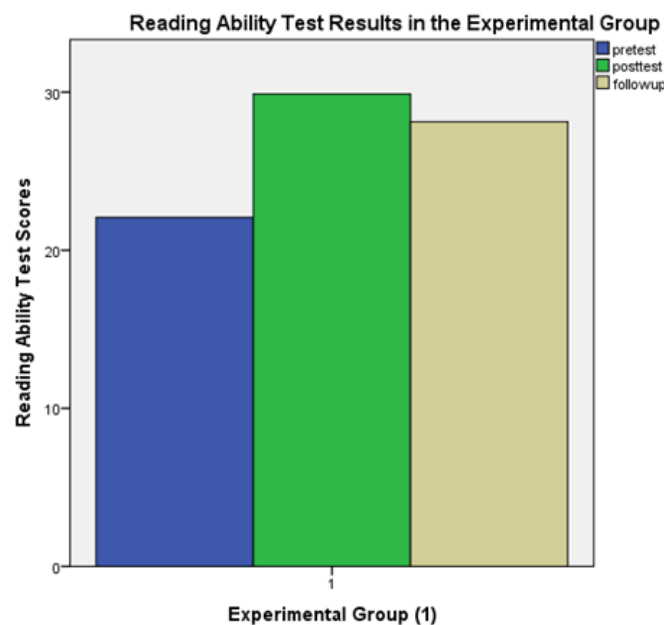
Figure 4: The Results of the Reading Ability Test (the standardized one)
in the Experimental Group

4.2. Qualitative measurements

4.2.1. Teachers' interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from teachers, which comprised the following sections: a) types of classroom reading, b) reading strategy use, c) explicit strategy teaching and d) co-operative learning. The interviews were conducted individually, were tape recorded, transcribed and analysed through using the content analysis method.

Qualitative data analysis, consisting of identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns or themes found in the interview data, was followed. More specifically, the data underwent the following procedure: data reduction, which involved first and second level coding, resulted in groups of categories and codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Table 1).

Categories	Codes/descriptions	Codes/descriptions
	Ms Smith	Ms Young
Types of classroom reading	RORORE=Round robbing reading SILREAD=Silent reading	RORORE=Round robbing reading -
Reading strategy use	PREVIST=Previewing strategy SKIMSCA=Skimming/Scanning TRANSL1L2=Translating from L2 to L1 USEDICT=Using Dictionary USCOMQU=Using Comprehension questions USECONT=Using context DEMAIDE=Determining Main idea	- SKIMSCA=Skimming/Scanning TRANSL1L2=Translating from L2 to L1 USEDICT=Using Dictionary USCOMQU=Using Comprehension questions USECONT=Using context -
Explicit strategy teaching	LAEXPTE= lack of awareness of explicit strategy teaching	LAEXPTE= lack of awareness of explicit strategy teaching
Co-operative learning	MOTICO=Motivating students to cooperate CONDIPR=Expressing concern about discipline problems	NOMOCOP=Not promoting cooperating learning

Table 1: Categories and codes related to Reading comprehension process

Interviewing the instructors revealed a lack of awareness of the reading strategy instruction. The control group teacher admitted: "I had no idea that I could explicitly teach my students specific techniques to comprehend a text better". Although being experienced educators for nearly twenty years, they acknowledged no relation to strategic reading other than skimming and scanning, to which they devoted very little time within the lesson. Their responses indicated that when facing a syntactic or lexical difficulty they advised their students to use the context or a dictionary without explicitly presenting the proper way to do it. In particular, the experimental group teacher reported "I tell my students to deploy certain strategies when facing unknown vocabulary but usually in a hurry and without analysis as to the conditions of their use". Likewise she stated, rather emphatically, "Since I can give them all the definitions they need, why waste time to explain alternative ways to understand the text meaning!".

Finally, as far as cooperative reading was concerned, both educators professed their dislike because they would not "have enough time to deal with the syllabus instructional material", as the control group teacher explained. The experimental group teacher, however, displayed a more positive attitude towards group-work admitting that cooperative work "is enjoyable to the students... but causes discipline problems", which was the reason why it was a rather infrequent occurrence in her classroom.

4.2.2. Researcher's journal

The qualitative analysis of the journal entries led to the emergence of three typologies (Bailey, 1994): a) Strategy Training Process, b) Strategy development and c) overall reflection on the intervention, encompassing a number of categories and subcategories, which are presented on Table 2 below.

Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning
Hellenic Open University
School of Humanities

Typologies	Categories	Subcategories
Strategy Training Process	Methods	Strategy modeling
		Scaffolding a combination of strategies
	Techniques	Thinking aloud
		Brainstorming
		Verbalizing thoughts
		Providing solutions
	Ways of working	i. Pair/group work
		ii. Individual work
		iii. Intergroup cooperation and interaction
		iv. Cooperation between teacher-class
	Teacher's Role	Encouragement – motivation
		Facilitating student comprehension
		Guidance – assistance
		Familiarizing student with the process
Strategy development	Cognitive strategies	Previewing
		Predicting the text topic
		Using mental imagery
		Using the context
		Summarisation
	Metacognitive strategies	Create a graphic organizer
		Coordination of strategies
Overall reflection on the intervention	Problems Encountered	Students' difficulty in cooperation
		Students' difficulty in using original phrases to summarise
	Learning Outcomes	Regulation/responsibility of the learning process
		Strategic/efficient readers
		Improvement on the reading performance
		Effective collaboration among students
		Awareness of the reading usefulness

Table 2: Typologies, categories and subcategories of journal entries

5. Discussion

Scaffolding learners to orchestrate a combination of strategies in order to become more efficient readers was a primary goal of the present study. It was hypothesized that the strategy training would improve students' reading performance. The results of the study verified the specific research hypothesis. Namely, it was found that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both reading comprehension measures after the strategy training. These results were in accordance with the findings of other empirical studies on the effectiveness of strategic intervention (e.g., Aghai & Zhang, 2012; Akkakoson, 2013; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Kusiak, 2001; Manoli et al., 2016; Wichadee, 2011). Moreover, considering the fact that both groups were at a similar proficiency level before the teaching intervention, the experimental group improvement can be attributed to the strategy instruction, which offered students step-by-step guidance on how to use particular strategies under specific circumstances helping them become more efficient and strategic readers.

In addition, the results of the follow-up measurement demonstrated that the experimental group maintained the gains of the strategic instruction after the intervention withdrawal. Thus, the results validated the second hypothesis of the study regarding maintenance effects and supported relative research findings (Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2003; Jafari & Ketabi, 2012; Manoli et al., 2016). The lack of studies exploring the maintenance effects of strategy training, which is obvious in the reading literature, makes the need for further research more urgent.

Regarding the CSR approach, the coordination of several strategies and student collaboration seemed to facilitate reading comprehension, as it was revealed by the treatment group test scores. The improvement in the scores of the experimental group can also suggest that the set of strategies selected addressed the needs of the particular learners. Gains in reading performance after the application of collaborative instruction were verified by the findings of similar studies (Fan, 2010; Karabuga & Kaya, 2013; Puspita, Tasnim & Ariyanto, 2013).

In the Greek context, the interview data validated the assumption that Greek EFL teachers were not familiar with reading strategy training, as they found traditional teaching easier to implement and closer to their field of expertise. These findings were in agreement with previous studies revealing that Greek EFL teachers were unaware of the efficiency of strategic instruction (Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2013; Vrettou, Psaltou-Joycey, & Gavriilidou, 2016). In this way, the need for special seminars to educators emerges to help them adopt new, learner-centred methods of teaching and adjust their role in the classroom, where teachers are no longer the ultimate source of information, but they are coaches and facilitators who encourage strategy use, class interaction and learner communication (Cohen, 2011; Weaver & Cohen, 1994).

Conclusion

Concluding, the present study provides evidence for reading comprehension improvement in EFL secondary students after strategy instruction, especially in the Greek context, where explicit multiple-strategy instruction has not been sufficiently explored. According to the results of the study, strategy training had a positive impact on students' reading performance not only in the immediate but also in the delayed post-test measurement, which has not been extensively investigated in the relevant literature as well. The

encouraging findings of this study can signify the beginning of a new approach to reading comprehension in Greek public schools, which can make collaborative learning and multiple-strategy instruction an integral part of the curriculum.

However, it should be mentioned that this study had certain limitations, such as the rather limited number of participants and duration of the teaching intervention, which should be considered for future research. In this way, further longitudinal research is required, which should shed more light on the contribution of CSR instruction to EFL learners' reading ability.

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Greek EFL teachers' engagement *with* and *in* research and their perceptions of research

Η ενασχόληση των Ελλήνων καθηγητών Αγγλικής γλώσσας με / στην έρευνα και οι αντιλήψεις τους σχετικά με αυτήν

Zoe KANTARIDOU and Glykeria KALTSIOU

A growing number of studies have focused on the relationship between conducting research and teaching from different perspectives. This study is based on the premise that lately, a drive to engage teachers more fully both in and with educational research has been a prominent feature of educational policy in several international contexts. An understanding of these issues is central to the development of informed policies for promoting teacher research engagement, but relevant systematic evidence is lacking in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Using Borg's (2009) questionnaire as a tool for investigation, the objective of this paper is to examine the conceptions of research held by 111 Greek EFL teachers and their involvement in and with research activities and attitudes. Quantitative data with the aid of an online questionnaire were collected, and later analyzed and interpreted. Evidence suggests that Greek EFL teachers, though positive in their feelings and ideas about research, are not inclined to be actively involved in research projects. The major reasons cited for this were a perceived lack of time and knowledge of research methods. Implications for educational policy are also discussed.

కు

Η ενασχόληση με των καθηγητών Αγγλικής με την ερευνητική διαδικασία στην διδασκαλία των Αγγλικών αρχίζει σταδιακά να κερδίζει έδαφος, τόσο σαν αντικείμενο μελέτης, όσο και σαν κομμάτι της εργασίας των εκπαιδευτικών. Σε διάφορα διεθνή εκπαιδευτικά κέντρα τελευταία, γίνεται μία συντονισμένη προσπάθεια οι εκπαιδευτικοί να ενημερωθούν και να λάβουν ενεργό ρόλο στη διεξαγωγή ερευνών, με απώτερο στόχο την βελτίωση της εκπαιδευτικής διαδικασίας εν συνόλω. Έχοντας ως εφαλτήριο την έρευνα που πραγματοποίησε ο Simon Borg το 2009, η οποία εξέταζε κατά πόσο καθηγητές της Αγγλικής ως Ξένη Γλώσσα παγκοσμίως ασχολούνται ή γνωρίζουν σχετικά με την ερευνητική διαδικασία και για να καλυφτεί το κενό που υπάρχει στην Ελληνική εκπαιδευτική κοινότητα σχετικά με την έρευνα, η παρούσα έρευνα χρησιμοποιεί το ερωτηματολόγιό του ως εργαλείο έρευνας. Η έρευνα αυτή αφορά τις πεποιθήσεις των Ελλήνων καθηγητών της

Αγγλικής ως δεύτερης / ξένης γλώσσας σχετικά με την ερευνητική διαδικασία. Στη διεξαγωγή της συγκεκριμένης ποσοτικής έρευνας συμμετείχαν 111 Έλληνες καθηγητές Αγγλικών, οι οποίοι απάντησαν στο ερωτηματολόγιο ηλεκτρονικά. Τα ευρήματα είναι πραγματικά ενδιαφέροντα, καθώς, παρά το γεγονός ότι οι καθηγητές είναι ευνοϊκά διακείμενοι προς την ερευνητική διαδικασία, ανασταλτικοί παράγοντες όπως η έλλειψη χρόνου και αυτοπεποίθησης στην ερευνητική διαδικασία τους αποτρέπουν.

Keywords: teacher-research, engagement with/in research, EFL teacher, scenarios, conceptions of research, action research

1. Introduction

The Language Teaching profession is an extremely demanding job not only cognitive-wise but also because of the set of skills from other disciplines (psychology, education, technology and culture to name a few) that it needs to incorporate in order to have successful outcomes. At the same time it is not valued relative to its importance as it is signified by the teachers' salaries in general and the language teachers' status in the educational system. Meanwhile, the knowledge-based society we live in the 21st century and the increased uncertainty it entails (Hargreaves, 2000) necessitate informed justification for teachers' decisions and choices as evidence of their professionalism. In this sense, teacher research highlights their knowledge base as they reflect on their professional needs and current understandings rather than being functionaries who unquestionably follow top-down orders (Kincheloe, 2003). EFL teacher research becomes much more meaningful and essential due to the distinctiveness of the subject matter compared to other subjects in the curriculum (Borg, 2006). Language being a dynamic system by definition (De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2007) and English being an international lingua franca make additional and distinctive demands on the part of the teachers (Sifakis, 2014). They need to be creative and flexible, able to apply diverse methodologies, well beyond the mere teaching of grammar and vocabulary, to create communicative contexts relevant to their learners' needs. They need to convey a more open-minded approach to cultural issues and incorporate in their teaching the dynamic changes in the language much more quickly than other more standardized subjects (such as hard sciences, e.g. maths or science) in the curriculum would require (Borg, 2006). Within this framework, the present study sets out to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of research, their engagement with or in research and their reasons for doing or not doing so.

2. Teacher research

Defining teacher research is "in itself not a straightforward issue" (Borg, 2009, p.365). Stenhouse (1981, p.103) defines research as "a self-critical inquiry, founded in curiosity and a desire to understand, stable and systematic in the sense of being sustained by a strategy". Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999, p.22), define teacher research "in the broadest possible sense to encompass all forms of practitioner inquiry that involve systematic, intentional, and self-critical inquiry about one's work in K-12, higher education, or continuing education classrooms, schools, programs, and other formal educational settings". Borg (2009, p.377) defines research as "systematic, rigorous enquiry by teachers into their own professional contexts". The most commonly referred to constructs of research are a problem of questions, data analysis and interpretation. A common theme among studies reveals a need

for commitment to research for teachers to support their professional development (Hulme, et al., 2009). At the present worldwide enterprise of TESOL, what is most highly valued as research is that which is publishable in international peer-reviewed journals written in the English language (Stenhouse, 1981; Crookes, 1993). Nonetheless, as Lewin (1946) had argued, research that produces only books would not be adequate.

In recent years, there has been a growing inclination to bridge the gap between the teacher's and the researcher's world. This trend has several expressions, one of which is the growth of *action research* conducted by teachers themselves or with academic partners as a means of increasing teacher professionalism. Since the end of the 1980s, there has been a rapid development of the concept of action research in the field of applied linguistics and second language teaching influenced greatly by the 'teacher as researcher' movement (Burns, 2011). There are varying understandings of the term action research. In more general terms, it is perceived as a means to engage teachers in self-reflective and investigative approaches to understand and research their practice. Crookes (1991) distinguishes action research from other research done by teachers, on issues that are thought as important by the society of scholars in the relevant field. He emphasizes that in action research the questions should emerge from a teacher's own immediate worries and problems rather than an authoritative position. Stringer (1999, p.17) defines action research as "a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems." Action research is a description of what fine teachers might be expected to do in the course of their teaching and thinking, and consequently while commendable, seems hardly pioneering.

Against this backdrop, *evidence-based practice (EBP)* is the ability to verify your arguments with evidence. The basis of the evidence-based policy movement is that research can contribute essentially to the current state of policymaking and practice in education, as it encourages practitioners to make more use of the research evidence that is already available (Hammersley, 2001). The notion that research can make a key contribution to improving practice derives from the hypothesis that it is systematic and precise, and provides explicit evidence which can be assessed objectively.

The appearance in recent years of evidence-based practice as a model for professional action in the educational setting has stressed even further the suggestion that teachers' involvement in research is essential (Borg, 2006). It is generally believed, that when teachers engage with and in research and make reasonable pedagogical decisions based on sound research evidence, both teaching and learning will be benefitted. "While the validity of the EBP metaphor for education has been challenged, it is generally accepted that more informed use and involvement in research by teachers can have a positive impact on their work" (Borg, 2010, p.398). Additionally, Hancock (1997) pinpoints that professionals who are able to combine research with practice may not find themselves on such unsteady theoretical ground. They are perceived as owning knowledge that is not easily possessed by others and are somehow regarded with respect by the public.

3. Engagement *with/in* research

The study of language teacher research engagement is a rising field of inquiry, with growing interest in comprehending the extent to which such engagement takes place, the conceptions of research that support it and the factors which aid or hinder language teachers' efforts to be research engaged (Borg & Liu, 2013). *Engagement with research* essentially means reading research. Reading research on current methodologies, approaches

to teaching or developments in learning theories in academic and professional journals enable teachers to make appropriate informed decisions in their teaching contexts (Borg, 2010). Numerous theories support that reading research is for the benefit of the field as a whole, not only for a few specialists. It actually enables teachers "to read, critique, and evaluate research information themselves" rather than "depend on others' assessments of the credibility or usefulness of research" (Borg, 2010, p.410).

Engagement with research can benefit teachers in numerous ways, as it can help them understand their work deeper, and come up with ideas to use in their classroom. In addition it can broaden their teaching discourse, examine their practice against a theoretical basis, and inform their planning and decision-making methods (Borg, 2010). A deeper understanding of the ways in which practical and scientific knowledge and deeper knowledge can be productively integrated must also be developed (Borg, 2010).

Engagement in research involves the teachers actually doing research, either for professional/promotional or for personal reasons. The teachers' role is manifold, and extends beyond mere teaching. Their most important role is to investigate pedagogical problems. The usual approach that focuses only on the evaluation of classroom teaching is not suitable to the assessment of teacher efficiency in the current changing educational setting (Cheng and Tsui, 1999). Traditionally, class teachers have never been expected to comment on the theory and practice of their work and very few have done so. The notion of inquiry is what helps teachers understand their students better and construct a better perception of the educational process, which in turn will lead both the teacher and the students to a new experience for learning. As early as 1989, Gurney encouraged teachers to explore the potentials of the researcher perspective in the implementation of the curriculum in order "to move out of their submissive position". He believed that the researcher perspective would substantially improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Borg (2010, p.402-403) summarizes the *potential benefits of teacher research* as proposed in the literature. Teacher engagement with and in research has been claimed to: (a) develop teachers' capacity for autonomous professional judgements, (b) reduces teachers' feelings of frustration and isolation, (c) allows teachers to move out of a submissive position and be curriculum innovators, (d) allows teachers to become more reflective, critical, and analytical about their teaching behaviours in the classroom, (e) makes teachers less vulnerable to and less dependent on external answers to the challenges they face, (f) fosters connections between teachers and researchers. He also includes Olson's (1990, p.17-18) list of six benefits which even further enhance the value of teacher research. She observes that teacher research: (a) reduces the gap between research findings and classroom practice, (b) creates a problem-solving mindset that helps teachers when they consider other classroom dilemmas, (c) improves teachers' instructional decision-making processes, (d) increases the professional status of teachers, (e) helps empower teachers to influence their own profession at classroom, district, state and national levels, (f) offers the overriding and ultimate advantage of providing the potential for improving the educational process. In more general terms, the experience of engaging in self-study research makes teachers more confident about their ability to promote student learning, sharpens their critical awareness through observation, and thus acts as a consciousness-raising exercise in the process of classroom life (Nunan, 1997). Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to explore Greek EFL teachers' awareness of issues in teacher research, their engagement with and in it as well as their perceptions of the institutional culture in relation to research. Despite individual teachers' involvement with or in research the issue of teacher research is rather unexplored in Greece.

4. Method

The present study aims to explore Greek EFL teachers' conceptions and notions towards research, their engagement with and in research and their perceptions of their institutional research culture. It aims to replicate Borg's (2009) international study which involved 505 teachers of English from 13 countries around the world. Lack of evidence from Greece in the original Borg's study, is a gap that this study is attempting to fill.

4.1. Research questions

This study attempts to explore the following research questions:

a) What are the conceptions of 'research' held by Greek EFL teachers?
b) What are teachers' perceptions of their institutional research culture?
c) To what extent do teachers say they read published research?
d) To what extent do teachers conduct research?
e) Which are their reasons for conducting (or not) research?
f) To what extent are teachers' reported levels of research engagement associated with specific background variables: qualifications, experience, state or private sector of employment, and confidence in conducting research?

4.2. Participants

Data were gathered from 111 Greek EFL teachers working in the public (40.5%) and in the private (59.5%) sector. Most of them work full time (82%), have postgraduate studies (65.5% MA holders), teach primary education level students (50.5%) and have 10-14 years of teaching experience (36%). The participants' demographic characteristics are presented in detail in Table 1.

Teaching Experience	%	Qualification	%	Age of learners	%
0-4 years	9	Doctorate	2.7	Primary	50.5
5-9	27	MA	65.5	Secondary	40.5
10-14	36	BA	26.4	Adults	9
15-19	11.7	Diploma	2.7		
20-24	9	Certificate	2.7		
25+	7.2				

Table 1: The participants' demographic characteristics

4.3. Instrument

The instrument used is the 'English language teachers' views of research' questionnaire originally devised by Borg (2009). The questionnaire comprises six sections:

a) the respondents' notions of what counts as research with ten case study scenarios. Scenarios are used in new style research questionnaires inspired by the demand for more "innovative, usable, rigorous" yet "interesting" research (Ramirez et al. 2015, p.70). Each scenario has a short description of a situation followed by four options each one

representing the respondents' notions of research (1: definitely not research, 2: probably not research, 3: probably research, 4: definitely research). The reliability of the scale was acceptable, Cronbach *a*=.714.

b) views on the importance of eleven characteristics of good quality research on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the scale was good, Cronbach *a*=.840.

c) perceptions of the institutional culture in relation to research (9 statements on a 5-point Likert scale from disagree strongly-1 to agree strongly-5). The reliability of the scale was very good, Cronbach *a*=.891.

d) engagement with research: (i) frequency of reading published language teaching research (1: I used to read when I studied at university, 2: Less than once a year, 3: After attending conferences or professional workshops, 4: Once a month), (ii) type of published research accessed, and (iii) the influence of published research accessed on the teaching practices (1: no influence, 2: slight influence, 3: moderate influence, 4: fairly strong influence, 5: strong influence).

e) engagement in research: (i) frequency of conducting research (1: never, 2: once every two years, 3: once a year, 4: usually after attending a conference or a professional presentation, (ii) a list of nine possible reasons for doing research, (iii) a list of ten possible reasons for *not* doing research. In the last two lists multiple answers were acceptable, and

f) background information: years of teaching experience, highest academic qualification, type of institution (1: private, 2: public), age of learners, their confidence for doing research as a result of their postgraduate studies (4-point Likert scale) and their type of employment (1: full time, 2: part time).

4.4. Procedure

The data in this study were collected with the aid of Google Forms, through which the questionnaire was distributed online to Greek EFL teachers throughout the country allowing administration to a wider variety and number of participants. The online questionnaire was made available from October till November 2016 to HOU M.Ed TEFL lists and HOU students' lists on Facebook. Participants retained their anonymity in the online submission.

4.5. Data analysis

The study being exploratory in nature focused on descriptive statistics and percentages to highlight teachers' views, correlations between variables and independent sample t-tests to check the differences between various subgroups in the participants' cohort. The statistical package SPSS 24 was used for the analyses.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Conceptions of research

Conceptions of research were investigated by means of the ten case study scenarios and the identification of the characteristics of good quality research. The participants' assessment of the extent to which each scenario constitutes research are presented in table 2 (the 4-point Likert scale was collapsed into 2: research and not research to create a clearer picture of the

results). Although Borg (2009) stated in the original study that there are no right or wrong answers, the authors suggested an interpretation of each scenario according to the literature (in *italics* in table 2).

The participants' assessments of the scenarios were accurate in five scenarios (2, 4, 5, 8, and 9). The participants recognized the elements of research in action research by teachers (2, 5, 8), in an academics' research project and subsequent publication (4), and in qualitative type of investigation (9). Scenarios 1 and 6 describe the practices of motivated professionals who want to constantly improve their practices and be able to provide informed evidence for their teaching choices. They refer to reflective teaching (1) and using quasi-experimental methods of quantitative research (6). The participants' assessments were mostly accurate without taking into account the element of publicizing the results of their action research. Scenario 3 describes the literature review (or annotated bibliography) assignment for an MA course which aims to raise students' awareness of applied linguistics and TEFL theories and research results. The participants' interpretation of the scenario can be attributed to their frequent engagement in such assignments as part of their postgraduate studies. Scenario 7 clearly describes report writing to educational authorities and scenario 10 describes the process of a course book evaluation which may instigate further research, if the need arises. The scenarios are open to different interpretations in different contexts and from different standpoints such as that of the individual EFL teacher (micro level) or from educational authorities of whatever level (macro level). Their ultimate point is to stimulate the various groups involved in the teaching process into more systematic and evidence-based teaching for more effective learning outcomes. Overall, Greek EFL teachers' perceptions of research are quite similar to Borg's (2009) international study and in some respects to Tabatabaei & Nazem's (2013) Iranian sample.

	Teachers' assessment	
0. Scenarios *Suggested interpretation of scenarios*	Research %	NOT research %
1. A teacher noticed that an activity she used in class did not work well. She thought about this after the lesson and made some notes in her diary. She tried something different in her next lesson. This time the activity was more successful. *This scenario describes a conscientious teacher, who may do this activity every day, as personal reflection. It might be a starting point, 'the origins' of research, however it is not research. It belongs/refers to the realm of reflective teaching.*	54.0	45.9
2. A teacher read about a new approach to teaching writing and decided to try it out in his class over a period of two weeks. He video recorded some of his lessons and collected samples of learners' written work. He analyzed this information, then presented the results to his colleagues at a staff meeting. *This scenario describes a more organized teacher, who came up with a method, video-recorded his sample, analyzed it, and finally made the results public, in order to get feedback from colleagues. Even though the results were made public at a staff meeting, which is a small number of people, this activity constitutes action research, as it emerges from the teacher's own immediate worries/concerns and problems.*	94.6	5.4

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3. A teacher was doing an MA course. She read several books and articles about grammar teaching then wrote an essay of 6000 words in which she discussed the main points in those readings. *This scenario describes a teacher reflecting on what she/he has read by writing an essay. This is not research. It is a presentation of the key points of one's studying. It is the literature review part of a research study or in this case of an MA course assignment.*	78.4	21.6
4. A university lecturer gave a questionnaire about the use of computers in language teaching to 500 teachers. Statistics were used to analyze the questionnaires. The lecturer wrote an article about the work in an academic journal. *This is classic quantitative research, in which a large sample of students participated, statistics were used, and an article with the results was written in an academic journal, that is, the results were made public.*	95.5	4.5
5. Two teachers were both interested in discipline. They observed each other's lessons once a week for three months and made notes about how they controlled their classes. They discussed their notes and wrote a short article about what they learned for the newsletter of the national language teachers' association. *This activity constitutes action research for personal development, as it describes two teachers engaging themselves in research by spending a considerable amount of time observing each others' work. Then, they reflect on it by discussing it, and finally they make their reflections public. Even though it is a small sample of teachers, it has research characteristics.*	73.8	26.1
6. To find out which of two methods for teaching vocabulary was more effective, a teacher first tested two classes. Then for four weeks she taught vocabulary to each class using a different method. After that she tested both groups again and compared the results to the first test. She decided to use the method which worked best in her own teaching. *This activity constitutes research for problem solving in classroom practices and personal development, as it was used to find the most effective way for vocabulary to be taught. It exemplifies most of the characteristics of research except for the systematic organization for public presentation.*	88.3	11.7
7. A headmaster met every teacher individually and asked them about their working conditions. The headmaster made notes about the teachers' answers. He used his notes to write a report which he submitted to the Ministry of Education. *This activity is not research. It was used to elicit information about the teachers' opinions on their working conditions. It refers to data collection for report writing. If it was supplemented by literature review and systematic coding and analysis of the answers according to a certain theoretical framework or were used to build up one and was made public in a journal/newsletter or presented in some form of conference, it could potentially qualify as research. As it stands it refers to report writing to one's authorities.*	51.3	48.6
8. Mid-way through a course, a teacher gave a class of 30 students a feedback form. The next day, five students handed in their completed	35.5	64.5

forms. The teacher read these and used the information to decide what to do in the second part of the course.
This activity is not research, as the sample is quite small (5 out of 30), and we cannot draw reliable conclusions from such a small sample. It also lacks other important characteristics of research such systematic organization of the data and results and their public exposition. It is most likely an inquiry into the feelings of the class in case any specific student concerns were raised.

9. A teacher trainer asked his trainees to write an essay about ways of motivating teenage learners of English. After reading the assignments the trainer decided to write an article on the trainees' ideas about motivation. He submitted his article to a professional journal. *This activity seems representative of research, as it gathered the opinions of trainee teachers, analyzed them, and then made them public. This is an example of qualitative research.*	60.3	39.6
10. The Head of the English department wanted to know what teachers thought of the new course book. She gave all teachers a questionnaire to complete, studied their responses, then presented the results at a staff meeting. *This activity is basically an evaluation of a new course book. It seeks teachers' feedback on the new book. The questionnaire was essentially a feedback form. The systematic organization and public presentation of the results are elements of research but the primary characteristic of research, that of posing a problem or question to be investigated, may probably arise later if the teachers' views on the specific course book are negative and thus the need arises for further action. As it stands the scenario does not constitute research.*	70.0	30

Table 2: Teachers' assessment of scenarios and interpretation

On the whole, Greek EFL teachers have a fairly accurate notion of what constitutes research and this was further verified by their assessment of the importance of the eleven *characteristics of good quality research* presented in the questionnaire (Table 3). Participants value the importance of rigorous scientific research such as objectivity, hypothesis testing, statistical analysis, controlled variables and generally the characteristics of quantitative research. The high percentages of 'unsure' answers in the use of controlled variables and experiments may indicate their recognition of characteristics of qualitative research in which preference is given to more holistic and bottom-up approaches which will reveal hidden variables rather than prescribed ones. A similar high percentage of unsure answers in these characteristics was also indicated in the Borg (2009) study. On the other hand, practicality of results is at the top of their priorities, which combined with the relatively high importance attached to applicability of results across teaching contexts may indicate a tendency for clearly defined solutions to teaching problems. Such solutions are far from realistic as the variables involved in each teaching context as numerous and require specific and insightful adaptations to novel teaching situations.

The independent sample t-test comparisons between BA and MA holders in their views of these characteristics indicated statistically significant results in the testing of hypotheses (t(98)=-2.26, p=.026, two-tailed) and the need for questionnaires (t(96)=2.00, p=048, two-tailed). Postgraduate studies seem to have fine-tuned MA holders' perceptions of research as they scored higher in the need for hypotheses-testing (M=4.30, SD=.91; BA holders:

M=3.79, SD=1.20) and lower for the use of questionnaires (M=3.22, SD=1.29; BA holders: M=3.76, SD=1.02), as they have become aware of the conventions of qualitative studies where more in-depth data are gathered than the self-report questionnaires may allow.

Additionally, the comparisons by private or public sector indicated statistically significant results in the need for publication of the research results (*t*(108)=-2.88, *p*=.005). Public servants (M=3.58, SD=1.32) seem to recognize this need more than their privately employed peers (M=2.83, SD=1.34). This finding may look counterintuitive given the generally more competitive attitude of private schools. A possible explanation may be that the school itself capitalizes on any success or publicity rather than the individual teachers. Lack of qualitative data in this case deprives us of any further insights.

Teachers' views	More important (%)	Less important (%)	Unsure (%)	Mean (SD)
The researcher is objective	93.5	5.5	0.9	4.64 (.80)
The results give teachers ideas they can use	87.2	10.0	2.7	4.20 (.94)
Hypotheses are tested	81.8	10.9	7.2	4.12 (1.06)
Information is analysed statistically	72.7	18.1	9.1	3.81 (1.12)
A large number of people are studied	71.8	24.5	3.6	3.75 (1.19)
Variables are controlled	68.1	10.0	21.8	3.87 (1.00)
A large volume of information is collected	62.7	24.5	12.7	3.56 (1.15)
Questionnaires are used	61.1	28.7	10.1	3.41 (1.22)
The results apply to many ELT contexts	60.0	21.8	18.1	3.58 (1.23)
The results are made public	50.0	30.9	19.1	3.14 (1.37)
Experiments are used	49.1	30.0	20.9	3.25 (1.19)

Table 3: Teachers' views on the importance of 11 characteristics of good quality research

5.2. Institutional research culture

Table 4 summarizes the results of the teachers' views on their institutional research culture. It is interesting to note that conducting research and attending ELT conferences to get updated in current developments in the field are perceived to be at the top of the ELT institutions' priorities. It is likely that the type of research implied here could be that described in scenarios 1 and 6 where teachers test new methods for more effective teaching. Teachers are fairly divided in their perceptions of whether they are supposed to do research by themselves rather than with the assistance of higher (educational or academic) authority, in their degree of access to published research in books and (professional or academic) journals and in the workload this may imply for them. Discouragement from the management and lack of sharing colleague interest in research, though, indicate the highest

percentages of disagreement among the participants. This may demonstrate an overall environment which is not conducive to the teachers' engagement with research as it is not supported by their management or their immediate community of practice.

The independent sample t-test comparisons between privately and state-employed teachers indicated statistically significant results only for the first statement on the list: 'Teachers feel that doing research is an important part of their job' ($t(108)=2.20$, $p=.030$, two-tailed). Doing research is statistically more important in the private (M=3.50) than in the public (M=3.02) sector. Moreover, as a general trend the means of the private sector teachers are higher for the eight out of nine school research culture statements. The only statement in which public sector teachers indicated a higher mean (private: 2.79, public: 3.11) refers to the time involved in doing research and the increased workload that this would imply. However, the difference is non-significant. These findings may indicate the more competitive attitude prevailing in the private sector.

	Agree strongly + Agree %	Disagree strongly + Disagree %	Don't know %
Teachers feel that doing research is an important part of their job	51.8	27.3	20.9
Teachers are given support to attend ELT conferences	51.8	36.4	11.8
Teachers have opportunities to learn about current research	50.9	30.0	18.2
Teachers do research themselves	45.5	32.7	21.8
Teachers have access to research books and journals	43.9	41.1	15.0
Time for doing research is built into teachers' workloads	42.7	42.7	14.5
Teachers read published research	33.9	37.6	28.4
The management encourages teachers to do research	31.8	50.9	17.3
Teachers talk about research	31.2	48.6	20.2

Table 4: Institutional research culture

5.3. Reading research

In Section 4 of the questionnaire the respondents were asked whether they read published research and the type of published research they mostly access. 49.1% of the respondents reported that they read research once a month, and 35.5% after attending conferences or professional workshops. 10% of the respondents stated they used to read research when they studied at university and 5.5% said they read research less than once a year. The type of published research they read comes from web-based sources of research (79.8%), professional journals (76.6%), academic journals (74.5%), books (47.9%), and professional magazines (34.0%).

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The majority of the participants claim to be engaged with research quite frequently but the depth of this engagement is unclear. The fact that web-based resources prevail in their preferences highlights the ease of access for online resources but it does not indicate their type. It would be more useful in further studies to enquire the specific websites they frequently visit and their goals for doing so. Moreover, conferences and professional workshops seem to stimulate their interest in reading about research and this was also indicated as a positive attitude in their institutional culture characteristics (see section 4.2 and table 4).

The frequency of reading research was checked in the private and public sectors with an independent sample t-test. Although the mean score for state-employed teachers (M=3.39) was higher than their peers in the private sector (M=3.14) the differences were not statistically significant. The comparisons between groups of different years of experience (t(21)=2.33, p=.030) indicated that the 15-19 years of experience teachers (N=13, M=3.54, SD=.52) read more published research than the 20-24 years of experience group (N=10, M=2.70, SD=1.16; see Table 5). Moreover, the comparisons between BA and MA holders indicated statistically significant results (t(98)=-2.20, p=.030). MA holders (N=70, M=3.40, SD=.87) read more published research than BA holders (N=30, M=2.97, SD=.96).

There were also low but significant positive correlations (Spearman non-parametric test) between reading research and the degree this influences one's teaching (N=96, ρ=.211, p=.039) as well as with the qualification the teacher holds (N=109, ρ=.332, p=.000). More qualified teachers read more research and this positively influences their teaching.

5.4. Doing research

Section 5 investigated teachers' engagement in research and their possible reasons for doing or not doing so. 9.1% stated they never did it, 13.6% said they did it every two years, 36.4% once a year, and 40.9% (45 teachers) usually after attending a conference or a professional presentation.

The frequency of doing research was also checked in the private and public sectors with an independent sample t-test. Although the differences were not statistically significant the mean score for the private sector (3.14) was higher than their state-employed peers (M=3.02). Additionally, the comparisons among groups of different years of experience indicated statistically significant results (t(48)=-2.01, p=049) between the 0-4 years (N=10, M=2.60, SD=1.07) and the 10-14 years of experience group (N=40, M=3.25, SD=.87). More experienced teachers feel more confident to experiment in their teaching than novice teachers (see Table 5). Contrary to expectations, qualification did not indicate any statistically significant results.

Overall, there is an increasing trend in mean scores of conducting research (see table 5) for the first two decades of teaching experience and then there is a decline. More experienced teachers seem to be more set in their ways, to have established their own personal methodologies for different contexts or levels after having experimented in their earlier years. A similar trend is also noted in the reading published research column of table 5 although there is a sudden increase in the 25+year group, which is not significant, though.

Years	N	Reading	Conducting
0-4	10	3.10 (1.19)	2.60* (1.07)
5-9	30	3.13 (.93)	3.20 (1.03)
10-14	40	3.40 (.87)	3.25* (.87)
15-19	13	3.54* (.52)	3.31 (.75)
20-24	10	2.70* (1.17)	2.80 (1.13)
25+	7	3.14 (1.21)	2.43 (.53)

*$p<0.05$

Table 5: Means for reading and conducting research by years of experience

The teachers' main reasons for doing research are presented below in descending order:
   a) To solve problems in my teaching (91.6%),
   b) To find better ways of teaching (90.4%)
   c) Because it is good for my professional development (80.7%)
   d) As part of a course I am studying on (55.4%)
   e) Because I enjoy it (34.9%)
   f) To contribute to the improvement of the school generally (32.5%)
   g) Because other teachers can learn from the findings of my work (27.7%)
   h) Because it will help me get a promotion (7.2%)
   i) Because my employer expects me to (1.2%)

Greek EFL teachers demonstrate a high degree of professionalism by the first three main motivators for research and seem intrinsically motivated in their effective performance in class and in their professional development. Extrinsic motivators such as promotion and employer pressure are quite low on the list and chosen by a very small number of teachers (seven in total).

On the other hand, teachers' prime reason for not doing research seems to be lack of time. The other reasons are presented below in descending order:
   a) I do not have time to do research (77.4%)
   b) I do not know enough about research methods (22.6%)
   c) I need someone to advise me but no one is available (19.4%)
   d) Most of my colleagues do not do research (19.4%)
   e) My job is to teach not to do research (16.1%)
   f) I am not interested in doing research (16.1%)
   g) I do not have access to the books and journals I need (16.1%)
   h) Other teachers would not co-operate if I asked for their help (16.1%)
   i) The learners would not co-operate if I did research in class (12.9%)
   j) My employer discourages it (9.7%)

6. Conclusion and implications for educational policy

The present study explored Greek EFL teachers conceptions of research, the research attitude prevailing in their institutions, the extent to which they read and conduct research themselves, their reasons for doing so and any interrelations among these variables. It is an initial investigation into a rather unexplored topic where ample of prejudice prevails in particular in relation to the individual EFL teachers' motivation.

The overall findings demonstrate that Greek EFL teachers hold fairly accurate perceptions of what constitutes research as they can recognize both the characteristics of rigorous quantitative research and more holistic qualitative research traditions. They can identify the great majority of the research scenarios even if they do not consider publicizing the results as an essential element. Institutional and school research culture which discourages such engagement may be the reason behind this inhibition. They consider doing research as an important part of the job in the form of testing new methods and critically reflecting on their teaching practice. At the individual EFL teacher/practitioner level and especially in the private sector, Greek teachers seem to consider research as a private task conducted behind closed classroom doors and/or during their private time as a form of personal professional development.

The majority of teachers read published research once a month and this seems to be increased by conference attendance and professional workshops where they possibly get the supportive environment they need to get stimulated. Teachers' engagement with research is increased as the years of experience increase, with the 15-19 years of experience group being the more dynamic, and as they gain more insights from their postgraduate studies. This has also indicated significant positive correlations with the degree this engagement influences their teaching.

The majority of EFL teachers also claim to engage in research and this is mainly affected by their teaching experience rather than their academic qualifications. In fact, this is increased as the years of experience increase, with the '10-14 years of experience' group significantly standing out from the rest. Engagement with and in research seems to increase with professional experience probably due to the confidence the teachers accumulate on their abilities and the contexts they frequently get engaged in.

The teachers' main reasons for conducting research are solving problems in their classrooms and finding more effective ways of teaching. Professional development is another highly valued motivator, while extrinsic motivators such as promotion and management expectations are far from important.

Bair (2016), in a comparative study of teachers, nurses and social workers in the USA in relation to the professionalism demanded and incorporated in their education and training concluded that teachers exhibited "*restricted professionalism,* characterized by a perspective that focuses solely on what is immediate in time and place. Work was described in terms of practical classroom skills that would be honed with experience, […] as a largely intuitive activity, […] which seems idiosyncratic" (p.459). The characteristics of our participants largely fit the above description. In the globalized society of the 21st century and its relentless competition and increased uncertainty (Kalantzis & Cope 2012) teachers should aim more towards a more *extended* (Hoyle 1975) or *knowledge and status professionalism* (van Ruler 2005) to highlight their position in the education system and the overall functioning of the society. Apart from a sense of professionalism, teachers would also gain

more recognition for their work both within their workplace and outside it, would feel more confident about their teaching and more connected with their students (Edwards & Burns 2016).

Further avenues of research in relation to this initial exploration of the Greek EFL teachers' views of research could involve in-depth interviews of the participants' underlying understanding of these conceptions of research to reveal institutional, academic or personal issues involved in them.

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