Greek Language Development and awareness of Ancient Greek Philosophy: Introducing a Content-based Project to Immigrant Students

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Abstract

This paper outlines the rationale for and the purpose of designing a thematic project based on themes of history of Greek philosophy for bilingual students in Greek primary education. More specifically, it presents a descriptive account of a thematic project to be introduced with the aim to develop not only L2 skills of immigrant children attending Greek primary schools but also their knowledge about the history of Greek philosophy within a multimodal context. The importance of such a project stems from the growing number of bilingual students in Greek primary education because of the fact that Greece has been an immigrant receiving country for the last two decades. The proposed project aims at promoting aspects of the history of the Greek philosophy and developing the language skills of bilingual students in Greek as a second language

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through their participation in various inquiry and creative writing activities as well as in activities of intergroup conversation and oral presentations. Given the fact that most of the content-based practices in Greece focus on a combination of language development with a typical school subject, this project is suggested to include themes of Greek philosophy and more specifically some of the most representative Philosophers so that bilingual students can raise their awareness of the era of philosophical research in Greece. For the evaluation of the effectiveness and feasibility of this thematic project, the researchers propose three methodological tools; a) a pre- and post- test to examine the language development progress and students' knowledge about the history of Greek philosophy, b) teacher's/researcher's journals and c) students' portfolios.

Keywords: Second Language, Clil, History of Philosophy, Communicative Skills .

Introduction
Greece has been the host country of immigrant populations for the last two decades while the growing number of bilingual students in Greek education constitutes an additional challenge for teachers and the country as well (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2015). This fact has been in accordance with the tries of the Greek state to help these populations through the practices in the Greek schools while CLIL is believed to be a very popular and helpful methodology that can serve beneficially for these students (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2014).

However, most of the CLIL programs in Greece have come to include mainly the typical school subjects and they do not cover themes of "Greek philosophy" despite the fact that students engagement in philosophy and philosophical research can lead to cognitive development especially when it has been already proved that CLIL is a dual focused methodology than can develop students' language skills and the knowledge of the subject studied.

Although philosophy holds emblematic place in the global civilization, in its birthplace (Greece) students are deprived of any contact with the philosophical thought within the educational system. The international literature dissociates whether children can deal with philosophy or not (Nikolidaki, 2005). The approach P4C (Philosphy for Children) has indicated advantageous outcomes concerning the engagement of children (4-12 years old) with the philosophy as a research and interactive process (Theodoropoulou, 2013). This paper does not aim to highlight the arguments of both sides as it approaches philosophy as a cultural element with which bilingual language students have to come into contact learn about and understand the offer of Greek thought in European culture.

"Philosophy" can be a vague definition which many people and especially young students are familiar with. However, with the help of the teacher, the students can approach it as a reflection on their thinking ability development and discover its logical sequence. Furthermore, dealing with important philosophers, students can understand the importance of rationality in the formation of Western civilization, the difficulty of the definitions of concepts and the importance of this process and the important role of carefully listening to a dialogue-philosophical or not.

The Proposed Project
Rationale and the objectives of the project
The proposed project is to be implemented in primary schools of Larissa (Central Greece), where

there are a large number of immigrant children of Albanian origin. Having considered the feasibility of CLIL approach in international studies (Stoller, 2004; Linares & Whitaker 2007; Mehisto & Asser, 2008) and in national ones (Papadopoulos & Griva 2015; Griva et al, 2014a; Griva et al, 2014b; Griva & Kasvikis, 2014), we propose a thematic CLIL project based on Greek philosophy. Furthermore, the limited number of studies carried out as well as projects implemented in Greece with Greek as a second language (GL2) as a medium of instruction was another reason for proposing this project (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2015).

This educational intervention aims at developing students' second language skills and enhancing their awareness of the Greek philosophy.

More specifically, the CLIL project is being introduced to serve the dual aim of:

- Developing immigrant students' productive language skills (speaking and writing) in Greek as a second language
- Enhancing immigrant students' awareness of the Ancient Greek philosophy and the representative philosophers of antiquity.

Design of the Project

This CLIL module is designed in the form of topic-based sessions in which students will be engaged in inquiry and creative writing activities as well as in conversations and presentations regarding tasks that will have to carry out throughout this program about the Greek philosophers.

In this framework, the expected learning outcomes involve the development of the students':

i) Cognitive skills, through the students' engagement in inquiry and knowledge-based activities about the Greek philosophers and their theories. Students will develop their awareness in terms of Ancient Greek philosophy, through their engagement in content-based activities about the teachings of ancient Philosophers that have been a part of Greek culture and education.

ii) Communication skills, through their participation in creative writing activities, intergroup conversations, investigations and oral presentations where students will be asked to express their views using Greek as a medium of communication in authentic situations.

The Philosophers of this proposed project were selected on the basis of including the most representative ones. Philosophers that were selected for this program are important figures that constituted milestones in philosophical thought. Their "brightness" goes beyond the Greek borders and makes them personalities with a global focus which influenced and continues to influence the thinking of each nation. They are a constant reminder that the thought and knowledge know no borders but they are developed and enriched by passing from people to people. Students, who will participate in it, will have the opportunity to come into contact with important personalities of antiquity, with their lives and their teachings through a foreign language.

This proposed project will be delivered in 4 units encompassing an introduction to Greek philosophy and 3 well-known Philosophers of Greece.

Introduction to Greek Philosophy

Students will be introduced to Greek philosophy through the activities that have been designed by the teachers of this action research. They will realize its importance in the Greek history and

they will be provided with information useful for the continuation of this programme. This part of the proposed program is very important as it aims at activating the background knowledge of students, introducing them in the thematic area of Ancient Philosophy and placing special emphasis on the important philosophers that students will focus on in a later stage of the program.

Thales from Miletus (640 or 624 BC - 546 BC)

The students will have the opportunity to learn about the oldest Pre-Socratic philosopher, the first of the seven sages of antiquity, mathematician, physicist, astronomer, engineer, meteorologist and founder of the Ionian School of natural philosophy in Miletus. Based on the information of his life, they will be engaged in inquiry activities that can help them realize that the philosophers who followed chronologically consider Thales as the first Greek philosopher. Thales had come to have all the characteristics of the first investigator, trying to dispel the darkness of myths and prove the causes of natural phenomena. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the Ionian philosophers inspired by the spirit of Thales pave the way for Western science.

Socrates (470 BC or 469 BC - 399 BC)

Throughout this unit, students will develop their knowledge about the Greek Athenian philosopher and one of the most important figures of world thought. He has been a milestone in the history of philosophy, which is evidenced by characterizing the philosophers who lived before him as pre-Socratic ones. His work consisted of numerous philosophical dialogues - recorded mainly by his pupil, Plato- which were based on the maieutic (obstetrics) method for the emergence of truth. The thought and the way of life that was also in accordance with his teachings, fertilized the thought of important philosophers, both ancient as Plato and Aristotle and modern ones.

Aristotle (384 Stagira - Halkida 322 BC)

The bilingual students will participate also in the unit focusing on this ancient Greek philosopher that dealt with many sciences. At the age of 17, an apprentice at the Academy of Plato, was closely linked to his master and had remained close to him for almost 20 years. After the death of Plato, he left Athens and on the orders of Philip, undertook the teaching of Alexander the Great. Aristotle is the cornerstone of Western civilization and is regarded as the homo universalis that deals with almost every aspect of sciences and knowledge: physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, poetry, theater, music, rhetoric, policy. Aristotle organized and officially lays the foundations of Western thought.

Implementation

The project is designed to include 20 intervention sessions focused on the thematic area of "Greek Philosophers". Special emphasis will be placed on the creation of an environment in which research, communication and active participation will be the basic characteristics while a pleasant and creative learning environment, where students actually could develop personal and interpersonal skills (Papadopoulos, 2014) is among the aims as well. Thus, students will have the chance to come into contact with some of the Greek philosophers of antiquity, analyse, examine and present information that they will find out and they are aimed to create a context with

collaboration, interaction and communication.
This pilot project is to be carried out through three stages:

a) Pre-stage

The focus of this stage will be stressed on activating students' background knowledge. Before starting, the teacher will introduce students in the lesson by activating background knowledge and motivating students by introducing the target Philosopher. There will be used multimodal educational material to initiate discussion, such as power point slides, videos and pictures of the philosophers. Meanwhile, the students will be encouraged to express their queries, interact and participate in initial discussions about the Greek philosophers while coming across the necessary vocabulary.

b) Task-circle

Throughout the main stage of every session, the students will be placed in the center of the learning process being provided with opportunities for communication and interaction with the classmates and the teacher. They will be involved in various inquiry-based activities and have the opportunity to investigate, collaborate interact and communicate with each other, while trying to "discover" a new philosopher each time.

Following are stated the activities that students will participate in while the teacher will act as facilitator by easing anxiety, creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere and encouraging the children's interaction, creativity and use of imagination.

Among the activities the students will participate in are:

- *Creative writing activities*, in which student will think creatively and critically writing their own stories placing themselves in as heroes and figures of the era studied each time. Besides creating a safe and stress-free environment for language use and development, creative writing activities can help students' cognitive development as they can decrease the "emotional filter" and students do not feel stressed and they gain knowledge.

- *Game-based activities*, in which students will learn about the Philosophers being engaged in physical and board games whose role has been proved to be beneficial for the language development and the knowledge acquisition in many studies (Papadopoulos & Griva 2015; Papadopoulos et al., 2014; Griva & Semoglou, 2013). Bilingual students may develop their listening comprehension while listening to the rule of the games and their speaking skill while playing and interacting with their coplayers (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2015; Griva & Chostelidou, 2012)

- *Dramatizations* as learning a language is reasonably considered as an important process and a unique experience for both old and young students and dramatization of stories was proved to be beneficial (Papadopoulos, 2014). Positivity, motivation and encouragement of students are a necessary characteristic for students to pursue and achieve the best possible language outcome (Arnold, 1999; Tomlinson, 1998c, 1998d) while the dramatizations of stories and the philosophers teaching can constitute a context in which language is used, developed and understood by students (Krashen, 1985).

- ***Task-based activities*** because they constitute an entirely natural way to learning by doing rather than by memorizing sentence patterns (Nunan, 2002: 23). Also, a task-based activity allows students' working on meaningful tasks and use language to accomplish those tasks' (Hudelson, op. cit.) offering chances for cooperation and interaction with the classmates (Papadopoulos & Peiou, 2014) while this kind of activities are implemented effectively in CLIL programs in Greece (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2015; Griva & Chostelidou, 2012).

c) Follow-up stage

The focus of the follow up stage will be on the provision of teachers' continuous feedback and students' reflection on the learning process as well as on recycling certain specific vocabulary. After students' engagement in activities based on each Philosopher, the teacher will try also to engage them in discussions based on what they will have read in an environment where reflection is of major importance. Also, students in this stage will be motivated to transform their own knowledge and what they will learn through each session and produce their own texts, passages, videos and so on. People use an array of communication strategies from which they choose in situations where persuasion is necessary and in this stage, students are to enhance their creativity by producing their own texts and by integrating elements that they will have learnt or examined during the above mentioned procedure. Of course, the continuous feedback of the teacher and the interaction of students on the "Greek Philosophers" theme with each other will help them use Greek as a Second Language competently as a tool of authentic communication.

Evaluation of the Project
   a) **a pre- and post- test of Language and Philosophy**

For the estimation of the efficacy of the CLIL project in relation to content and the target language (GL2), there will be used a pre-test at the beginning of the programme and a post-test after the completion of it in order to identify the students' cognitive level related to aspects of Greek Philosophy, as well as their competence in GL2. Students' will be asked to choose the correct answer in multiple choice activities, crosswords, matches and creative writing activities as game-based activities are an effective way to evaluate students' performance (Papadopoulos, 2014).

   b) **The journal of the researcher/teacher**

The journal keep will constitute another methodological tool that will be used by the researchers/teachers because of the fact that it is a very effective tool to assess experimental and educational interventions organized by teachers (Altrichter et al, 1993; Papadopoulos & Griva, 2014; Griva & Chostelidou, 2012). The researcher will keep notes and recordings after each teaching session putting special emphasis on the students' continuous examining and questioning themes of Greek philosophers. The structure of the journal will be based on the "questions to guide reflection journal entries" of Richards & Lockhart (Richards & Lockhart, 1994: 16 -17) as follows:
More specifically, the first focus-area will consist of three questions about the objectives

set a priori by the teacher and the extent they will be fulfilled. Also, it will include questions about the teaching material that will be used and it will examine their effectiveness. Finally, it will also focus on the forms of communication among the students and between the students and the teacher.

The second area is related to the students' attitude and participation, including a question about the attitude of the students at the beginning, during and at the end of the activity in response to the educational needs of students. The final area is related to an overall estimation of the instruction and it will contain two questions on possible problems that may arise as well as the points that the teaching will have gone well, always giving possible explanations by the teacher with supplementary proposals to improve the teaching sessions.

The structure of the journal that is proposed is presented in the following table:

Teacher's/Researcher's Journal	
a) Questions about instruction	1. What objectives did I set? To what extend did I achieve them? 2. What teaching material did I use? How effective were the teaching aids? 3. What forms of communication among students and the teacher were used?
b) Questions about students' attitude and participation	1. Which was the students' attitude at the beginning, middle and at the end of each activity? How did I react?
c) Questions about the general estimation of the instruction.	1) What went well and what did not? Why? 2) What could I change? Why?

c) Students' Portfolios

Students' portfolios will also be a methodological tool throughout this project that can help students' self-assessment. Keeping portfolios, recording your strengths and weaknesses and keeping games, constructions, stories and poems in folders is believed to be advantageous for language learners. In fact, portfolio keeping was chosen thanks to their beneficial role on students' thinking abilities and the development of organizational ones that may be useful for

students' future life (Papadopoulos & Peiou, 2014; Wade & Yarbrough, 1996). As for the language and cognitive field, keeping portfolios in the language class has been proved to be advantageous and help students develop meta-cognitive skills (Brown, 2002; Young, 2002).

Concluding Remarks

Through this proposed project, we expect that the children can exhibit both linguistic and cognitive development. This program encompasses themes of Greek philosophy and aims at developing the language skills of L2 students in Greek as a second language within a CLIL context with content about Greek philosophy. Although most practices for immigrant students focus on their language development it is of utmost importance for these populations to be engaged in culture-based learning environments related to the culture of the host country.

Immigrant students in Greece which is the birthplace of Philosophy will have the opportunity to "navigate" through the philosophical research and develop their communicative skills and their knowledge in the history and the evolution of Greek philosophy.

The project encompasses a variety of functional activities such as comparisons, discoveries, problem solving and interaction. Through them, students are aimed to develop receptive and productive skills but on top of that, the themes function as vehicles for contextualizing L2 in a way which makes sense to the L2 learners while the language input is tried to be not only comprehensible, but also memorable.

The task based activities are ideally addressed to L2 learners because they present an entirely natural way to learning by doing rather than by memorizing sentence patterns (Nunan, 2002: 23) and content. Greek philosophy which the immigrant students may not be aware of can become a meaningful task that students will work on, they will realize how language works in authentic situations and they will interact and collaborate with their classmates using Greek as a medium of communication.

Also, the creative and game-based activities enhance the multimodal learning environment in which students will try to develop language and their cognition and it can constitute the ideal environment in which touch of languages and cultures can be achieved. The students will be offered rich and meaningful input about Greek philosophy in a language that is not their mother tongue. So, in such a context, students will feel free and relaxed and they will be not concerned with the errors that are very possible when dealing with an unknown content and especially when it is given in another language while they will also pay particular attention to the continuous feedback of the teacher and their classmates.

Finally, this proposed project has been designed to be in accordance with the process of Greece to comply with the European plans for multilingualism and multiculturalism. The immigrant students who come to Greece will be offered a wide range of input that is related not only to language but to culture of the host country generally. Without any try and fear of losing their national identity and touch, bilingual students can develop their being open to other cultures and know the others while Greek schools try at the same time to develop the Greek students' multicultural awareness so that they can create an environment with constructive interaction and collaborate among nations starting with the foundations, the children.

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