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The Didactic Use of *Mantle of the Expert* in Teaching CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) Geography: An Action Research in Primary Education

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Abstract

Research findings in the educational field show that learning within the setting of dramatic inquiry based teaching approaches, such as *Mantle of the Expert (MoE)*, develops students' creativity as regards new knowledge construction. The European Commission promotes the integration of content and language learning through the CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) approach, because it provides students with meaningful opportunities for immediate use of new language skills as opposed to later use which results from traditional mainstream teaching practices. The present study focuses on the implementation of a six teaching hours action research by means of the MoE dramatic teaching approach into the CLIL Geography teaching curriculum for the 6th grade of a Greek state primary school. The study aims at: a) enhancing students' emotional engagement in the teaching-learning process, b) improving collaboration among students as well as between teacher and students. The results derived from the qualitative Content Analysis of the research data demonstrate that the didactic use of MoE while teaching CLIL has profound educational benefits as it: a) changes the dynamic of how new knowledge is constructed and used, b) enflames children's imagination, c) develops a sense of community belonging, d) promotes students' emotional involvement in the educational process, e) creates a cooperative learning environment. Having proved MoE as a dynamic supplement to the CLIL approach through this action research, we suggest conducting the study to other age groups of both primary and secondary education as well as to more school contexts in different geographic areas.

Key Words: Mantle of the Expert, CLIL, New Knowledge Construction, Action Research.

Introduction

A recent evaluation of the Greek compulsory education course books (Institute of Educational Policy, 2015) - demonstrated that teaching English as a foreign language is outdated for it takes place in a socio-culturally heterogeneous learning context which:

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1. does not create authentic dialogic environments that promote further development of linguistic skills and life skills
2. does not foster students' experiential involvement in the educational process and cooperative knowledge discovery
3. does not offer fertile conditions for community and classroom culture creation.

These results are in accordance with the research finding about students' learning attitudes according to which learning is influenced by students' interests and motives as well as by their comprehension and expectations of the learning process (Pedagogical Institute, 2011). Consequently, students' knowledge construction is defined to a big extent by their motivating interests (Habermas, 1970). Teachers ought to realise that students' feelings, interests, abilities and perceptions have to be related to the knowledge acquisition process.

In the light of European Union policies and guidelines, the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) curriculum for Greek compulsory education was restructured in 2016 so that intended learning outcomes comply with the A1, A2 communicative competence indictors of CEFR[3] (Common European Framework of Reference) for languages. It is now recommended that course design is based on the application of educational scenarios, differentiated instruction and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) use. So far, however, there is no published research evidence to verify the effectiveness of the adopted national education policy as far as upgrading the learning process is concerned.

The researcher[4] has been applying the CLIL approach to the school subject of Geography in the 5th and 6th grade in her school context since 2014. Nonetheless, despite students' satisfactory immediate target language use, at the best of their linguistic abilities, research data resulting from the researcher's diary as well as students' questionnaire and diary demonstate lack in students' emotional involvement and meaningful engagement in the learning process. Prior effective didactic incorporation of the MoE approach in her EFL teaching practice, which produced research evidence (Papadopoulos & Kosma, 2018) aligned with related research data (Maley & Duff, 1982; Fernandez & Coil, 1986), led the researcher

[3] CEFR constitutes a European instrument/document of reference for inclusive description of language learning and effective language use.

[4] It should be noted that the study was conducted by two researchers, one of whom was the participants' EFL and CLIL teacher.

to the implementation of a MoE grounded educational scenario in pursuit of her CLIL practice optimization.

Theoretical Framework

This section presents the teaching approaches applied in the study. The section begins with the discussion of CLIL methodology and its educational benefits and is completed with the display of MoE conceptual framework.

The CLIL Approach

The term CLIL was first used in 1994 by Marsh & Maljers in their effort to create an umbrella term which could include different forms of language use as a teaching tool (Marsh, Marsland, & Maljers, 1998). It constitutes an innovative teaching practice that relies on four core integrated components, also called *the 4Cs conceptual framework for CLIL*: Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture (Coyle, 2010). The 4Cs conceptual framework for CLIL starts with content and focuses on the interrelationship between content (subject matter), communication (language), cognition (thinking) and culture (awareness of self and otherness) in order to build on the synergy of learning (content and cognition) and language learning (communication and culture).

The application of the particular teaching approach concerns teaching a whole or part of a nonlinguistic school subject by means of a foreign language (other than students' mother tongue) and aims at language and subject matter immersion. It is about double-focus-teaching during which the teacher sets two kinds of objectives: those related to the specific school subject and those related to foreign language learning. CLIL methodology can be summarized as follows (Zafeiriades & Kosma, 2017:28):

1. Foreign language and subject matter are learnt combined. Emphasis is placed on teaching content rather than the foreign language itself. Alternatively, either introductory teaching periods focused on the foreign language itself or *language showers* can be used.
2. Students are exposed to the foreign language in new linguistic environments without additional teaching hours.
3. Visual material use (visual organizers such as Venn diagrams, mind maps, pie charts) is regarded necessary for meaning comprehension so that students comprehend highly demanding content.
4. Emphasis on foreign language linguistic forms is determined by the requirements of the subject matter in process.

CLIL is featured by the European Commission (2005) as a highly dynamic educational practice. The approach is in complete accordance with current research findings about teaching and learning European languages because it provides students with the potential to:

1. have immediate practice in foreign language skills (*using language to learn, learning to use the language*) as opposed to the *learn now use later* logic imposed by other approaches to new knowledge acquisition
2. develop critical thinking
3. improve their self-image developing thus a positive attitude towards foreign language learning.

MoE Conceptual Framework

MoE is a dramatic inquiry-based teaching approach developed into a teaching practice by the pioneer drama educator Professor Dorothy Heathcote in the 1980s. It concerns the sociological, anthropological field of reality investigation. The implementation of the approach creates a dramatic environment asking participants to undertake expert roles across the whole spectrum of the social and historic development (Heathcote & Herbert, 1985).

The specific teaching approach relies on three interrelated pedagogical principles: inquiry learning, drama for learning and expert framing (Fraser, Aitken & White, 2013). The implementation of these principles calls students to act as adult experts with latent expertise (Figure 1).

Figure 1: MoE Pedagogical Principles

MoE presupposes the following six core/structural elements which are interrelated and transform learning into a purposeful meaningful experience: fictional context, Experts, enterprise, commission, client, tensions (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) (Table 1).

Table 1. MoE Fundamental Elements

1.Fictional context	Teacher and students agree to operate in role in a fictional context.
2.Experts	Students are framed with expertise as a fictional team.
3.Enterprise	A fictional company/community with a common goal is set up.
4.Commission	A fictional task is assigned by an external agent to students as Experts which frames them with responsibility.
5.Client	The external agent, who is the final judge of the finished work, is usually a fictional prestigious person.
6.Tensions	Unexpected obstacles either naturally occurring or intentionally caused by the teacher hinder the progress of work.

Learning evolves interactively in the imagined reality of three worlds (Edmiston, 2016) which is created by the teacher within the classroom community to foster students' interest (Figure 2). In this *fictional context*, which resembles real life and makes sense to learners, the challenge is to ensure that students have something to explore rather than receive during the learning process. Teacher and students impersonate expert professionals or scientists who are very good at their job and role play mastery of field knowledge. They agree to set up an imagined *enterprise* in the form of an inquiry community of Experts (first world) in order to carry out an imaginary *commission* in contractual form and complete an inquiry project under the teacher's guidance in authentic environments of collaborative action with concurrent personal responsibility of their actions (second world) for an imaginary, usually prominent, *client* (third world). The three worlds constitute imagined communities which are framed within the social community of the school classroom. One of the main focuses of the approach is to allow students to demonstrate personal and social responsibility in the fulfillment of the fictional contract. At some points various *tensions* arise on the learners' cognitive, emotional and intellectual level. These tensions either happen naturally or are caused intentionally by the teacher to keep learners cognitively, emotionally and intellectually engaged.

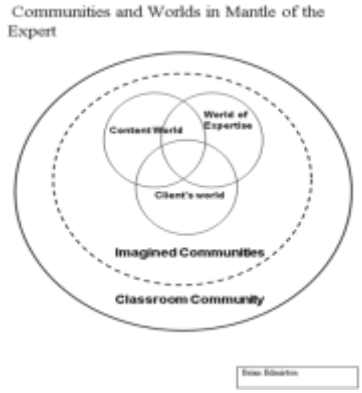

Figure 2. Communities and Worlds in MoE

Papadopoulos (2010) defines an organizational model as regards design, application and evaluation of the MoE approach (Table 2). In light of the theories on symbolic play (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978) and reflection (Dewey, 1964), participants are actively engaged as Experts and interact predominantly in role, but also out of role when necessary, depending on the progress of delivering the commission, that is the scenario needs. On the grounds of the imaginary context, they are involved in situations using objects as tools in order to investigate and recreate notions different from everyday ones (Vygotsky, 1967).

Table 2. Brief Overview of the MoE Application Stages

1) Field problem
2) Topic specification
3) Thematic areas signalization
4) Experts' work assignment
5) Introduction to the dramatic environment
6) Themes selection for Experts' work
7) Data collection
8) Data processing
9) Presentation of Experts' work

10) Evaluation of Experts' work

The recently growing body of research in the didactic use of MoE in Greek compulsory education (Papadopoulos & Kosma, 2018; Kosma, 2018) highlights how the specific teaching approach enables students to become active agents in knowledge construction, develop intercultural awareness and accept *otherness* within the social community of the school classroom. The findings lie in accordance with results of related researches conducted worldwide (Huxtable, 2009; Edmiston & Whittaker 2014; Swanson 2016)

Method

The present study focuses on the implementation of a six teaching hours qualitative action research into the teaching curriculum of CLIL Geography to 6th grade primary school students by means of utilizing the MoE dramatic teaching approach. The study is designed in three different time phases featured by reflection and connection between previous and new data. In particular, the Kemmis & McTaggart (1988) model was used according to which each action research follows a cyclical process consisting of four steps (design, action, observation, reflection). The choice of the specific research method was grounded on the following reasons which are included among the main features of action research:

1. Action research constitutes a holistic problem-solving approach for the fullest comprehension of the condition under research (Hollingsworth, 1997).
2. Action research aims at changing the mainstream teaching practice (Burnaford, Fisher & Hobson, 1996), as it focuses on the reframing and redesigning of a teaching practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) through the introduction of an innovative approach to the existing educational system.

Research objective

The objectives of the study are: a) enhance students' emotional engagement in the teaching-learning process, b) improve collaboration among students as well as between teacher and students.

Participants and Study Field

One sixth grade class of the 1st Experimental Primary School of Alexandroupolis, Greece participated in the research. The criterion for the particular grade choice was the fact that students were expected to be at CEFR A1 level as they had already been taught standard

linguistic and grammar structures in the 5th grade. The class consisted of 22 students in total (10 boys and 12 girls) aged 10-11. As Theatre Education was included in the school curriculum and the students' teacher applied theatrical techniques to her EFL teaching practice, students were already acquainted which *improvisation*, *role play*, *still image*, *thought detection* and *character outline*.

Students were not notified of the undergoing research so as to avoid the feeling of study objects, thus minimizing the Hawthorn effect (Sedgwick & Greenwood, 2015).

The school was situated in a socio-economically and culturally heterogeneous featured urban area. The impact of students' socio-economic and cultural heterogeneity on their EFL learning potential was known to the researchers, because one of them was also their EFL teacher, as mentioned earlier. Students' learning potential heterogeneity was measured by their EFL teacher through the evaluation criteria in the Teacher's book progress tests provided by the Ministry of Education. Students' learning potential heterogeneity was evident in CLIL Geography classes of the first 2019-2020 school term.

The research was conducted during the second school term of the 2019-2020 school year in the context of students' weekly schedule. It should be noted that since there were thematic classrooms in school, both EFL and CLIL classes took place in the same classroom which the teacher used.

Data Collection Tools

Our need for effective investigation of the aforementioned research objectives dictated the joint use of the following data collection tools which, in our view, would ensure participants' unrestrained responses: teacher's diary, students' diary, students' questionnaire[5]. Research data were processed by means of qualitative *Content Analysis* (Berelson, 1954). In order to ensure research reliability and validity, we decided to apply the method of *triangulation*, which, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), concerns crosschecking research data gathered by means of different data collection tools and is included in reliability and validity criteria of related scientific researches.

[5] Students were allowed to use both English and Greek while keeping a diary and in their questionnaire answers so that weak students would not be discouraged.

Diary

Due to its reflective function, diary is considered to be an effective methodological instrument for writing down cogitations and observations while conducting research (Ely, 1991). In our case, the particular data collection tool was used as follows:

1. Throughout the research the teacher kept a diary on her experience of the MoE approach application as well students' engagement in activities with regard to the research objectives.
2. After each teaching period students anonymously kept a diary on their engagement in activities as well as their feelings.

Questionnaire

At the end of the research students filled in an anonymous questionnaire which consisted of four open-ended questions[6]. The choice of the particular data collection tool was our intention to provide students with the potential of free expression of opinions and their justification based on their educational experience as people usually do in their everyday life (Geer, 1988). The first question asked students to express their overall impression of their experience as Experts. The second question looked into their viewpoint regarding their cooperation with their classmates during group work. The third question urged students to describe their feelings about their cooperation with their teacher. The fourth question provided students with the opportunity to mention specific instances which they would prefer to have been different during their MoE experience.

Procedure

Students worked with MoE by means of a teaching scenario, titled *Australia fire animals rescuers*, which focused on the uncontrolled fires in Australia since September 2019. On this particular occasion, the Australian government assigned to companies of animals rescuers, established in other countries, the commission of nursing burnt or wounded animals and temporarily keeping them in their company premises.

1st teaching hour (45 min)

[6] Questionnaire questions were written in Greek as well in order to avoid potential misunderstandings by weak students.

Warmer: Activate prior knowledge: Teacher gives students A4 paper. Students write down all they know about Australia (cities, fauna, flora, interesting facts) and report back to whole class after 5 minutes. Interaction: group work, whole class.

Vocabulary input: 1) to check understanding of key vocabulary, 2) to prepare for watching a video about Australia (3.28 min).

Teacher gives each student a card with a word, a definition or a Greek translation on it in random order (Table 3). Students must find their partner who can match their word/definition/translation. Students dictate their words/definitions to the class (5 min). Everyone writes the vocabulary down. Interaction: Student-Student (SS).

Table 3. Word Bank

crocodile	Κροκόδειλος
kangaroo	καγκουρό
koala	κοάλα
ecosystem	environment of interconnected organisms (plants, animals)
coral reefs	κοραλλιογενείς ύφαλοι
cliff	(semi) vertical rock
Aborigine	native inhabitant of a country
desert	barren area of land with little water or vegetation
state	polity

Content input: to understand geomorphologic elements and interesting facts about Australia.

After watching the video students take down notes individually. Next, they check their answers in pairs. Students watch the video again to check answers (10 min). Interaction: individual work, pair work.

Language input: to practice simple present tense.

Students watch a video about Uluru Ayers Rock (1.23 min). Students form groups. They are given three comprehension questions and are asked to discuss answers (10 min). Interaction: group work.

Production of language and content: Students are called to:

1) prepare a mind map about Australia using the information from the two videos

2) draw related pictures (10 min).

2nd teaching hour (50 min)

Stage 1 (Field problem)

Reflective discussion about Australian endangered animals during which students draw up related knowledge and formulate their viewpoints (5 min).

Stage 2 (Topic specification)

The teacher reads aloud a letter from the Australian government to the class plenary. According to that letter, in an effort to save animals seriously burnt or wounded due to the uncontrolled fires in Australia since September 2019, the government assigns to animals rescuers companies all over the world (such as the one which teacher and students have established earlier) the task to nurse and temporarily keep the animals in their company premises. Moreover, through that letter the teacher, who is considered to be the most experienced company member, undertakes the obligation to submit a written report to the Australian government about the final outcome of the commission (5 min).

Stage 3 (Thematic areas signalization)

After thorough discussion, teacher and students agree to undertake and carry out the commission and signalize related themes, such as birds, small sized animals, sized animals etc. (20 min).

Stage 4 (Experts' work assignment)

The teacher presents and explicates the duties to be undertaken by each specialty of the Experts groups, such as vets, nurses, chefs, animal feeders, cleaners, suppliers (20 min).

3rd teaching hour (45 min)

Stage 5 (Introduction to the dramatic environment)

Students and teacher in role make their professional tags and decide on a company name (10 min).

Stage 6 (Themes selection for Experts' work)

Experts choose thematic areas on the basis of their role, such as animals examination, meals preparation, premises clean maintenance, necessities supply (10 min).

Stage 7 (Data collection)

Students as Experts collect data from various sources on the Internet, in the teacher's presence (25 min).

4th teaching hour (40 min)

Stage 8 (Data processing)

Experts draw animals, invent the animals' daily routine, engage in role plays and dramatizations using suitable theatrical techniques such as still image, thought detection, character outline, improvisation.

5th teaching hour (40 min)

Stage 9 (Presentation of Experts' work)

Experts present their work to the class plenary. The teacher in role prepares the relevant written report with the Experts' help.

6th teaching hour (45 min)

Stage 10 (Evaluation of Experts' work)

The teacher presents and reads aloud to the class plenary a letter, through which the Australian government expresses to the Experts' company its satisfaction for the successful completion of their assigned commission. The final stage is completed with the students' and teacher's joint reflection on the MoE experience by means of inquiry activities, such as questionnaire and artistic creations, such as depictions.

Findings

Students were not used to keeping diaries, so originally they were quite hesitant and their entries were rather brief. However, soon most diary entries became more detailed and were

decorated with drawings such as smiling faces, flowers and hearts. Qualitative data processing by means of Content Analysis offered useful pedagogic insight with regard to the following indicators:

1. promoting students' emotional involvement in the educational process through their role as Experts

   Despite their initial surprise, students were soon framed as Experts. The positive effect of MoE on students is stressed in the researcher's following diary entries:

   "*At first most students were observed to be surprised and challenged, however, they soon accepted their new imaginary roles*."

   "*Their new identity as Experts made students more eager*."

   Students' new identity as Experts made them feel more important and useful. This, in turn, increased their eagerness to group work in order to carry out the assigned commission successfully. Their imaginary, yet at the same time realistic, roles enhanced their self-esteem and fostered their self-confidence. Project completion gave students a feeling of pride and satisfaction. They even expressed their desire to keep their Expert identity in more school subjects. The following quotes from students' diaries and questionnaire answers are indicative of their feelings:

   "*I feel like a real Expert! It's great!*" (Student 10)

   "*We are real rescuers because we have our own company!*" (Student 20)

   "*I am excited because we have to carry out a real task!*" (Student 2)

   "*I am thrilled because we cooperate with Australia! We mustn't let them down.*" (Student 6)

   "*We are very proud because we saved Australian animals*! *I don't want the project to finish.*" (Student 21)

   "*Let's be Experts in more school subjects!*" (Student 1)

2. creating a cooperative atmosphere

   This is evident in the following students' quotes from their diaries and questionnaire answers:

   "*I like working with other Experts!*" (Student 3)

   "*I am very happy because I work with other professionals and our teacher.*" (Student 19)

   "*Classes are more interesting because now I cooperate with other students*." (Student 4)

   It is also emphasized in the researcher's following diary entries:

"*Working in groups as Experts students developed intimacy with each other.*"

"*Students' behaviour to one another during group work seems to be more responsible now.*"

"*They discovered new partners. This increased their learning interest."*

From the above it appears that the results confirmed at large our research objectives. Qualitative data processing revealed that through their active interaction as dramatic characters while keeping their personal identity at the same time, students worked as co researchers and co creators of the teaching-learning process. The result of this, in turn, was that they became emotionally engaged, they came closer to their classmates and developed collaboration with their teacher as well.

Nonetheless, we consider it necessary to underline the following difficulties which arouse during the present study:

1. In order to facilitate group work seating arrangements were necessary to be made, a process which proved out to be quite noisy.
2. Time insufficiency obliged the teacher twice to ask students to remain in the classroom during break time so as to complete their work in progress. That was not agreeably accepted by all students.

   These findings are evident in the following students' answers in the fourth questionnaire question:

   "*There was so much noise when we had to move seats in order to work in our groups.*" (Student 16)

   "*I did not like it when our teacher asked us to continue working during break time*." (Student 7)

Results and Discussion

Taking into consideration the aforementioned research constraints, we strongly believe that our research made it clear that as the teacher is now seen more like a facilitator of knowledge and less as a transmitter of it, the relationship between teacher and students is reformed because it becomes more trusting and dialogic. Instead of using the traditional teacher authority in asking students to give responses to posed questions, the teacher now designs authentic engaging educational situations in order to develop dialogue with learners.

Play is considered to be the real essence of life as it is of fundamental importance to the growth of the mind (Abbott, 2012). Keeping in mind that play in the form of undertaking

roles is the infrastructure of MoE, it becomes clear that the specific teaching approach instills to students a more positive attitude to learning. Bearing in mind the argument that human nature seeks motivation in direct pleasure, in what is interesting (Dewey, 1959), it appears that the didactic use of MoE is a dynamic supplement to the CLIL approach. MoE allows students to explore all aspects of human experience and natural environment under professional consciousness terms. In this way, they acquire a multiple angled experience which in turn fosters an open interpretation of reality. In MoE knowledge construction is situational and purposeful and thus internalized and more meaningful compared to other current teaching practices. In particular, MoE has a multidimensional effect on students as it:

1. expands the cognitive and emotional basis of social learning through the creation of authentic inquiring learning environments which promote the social nature of learning
2. creates a cooperative atmosphere between teacher and students. It calls learners as co researchers in role to collaborate setting particular targets and following particular steps.
3. establishes research in drama role as a problem-solving form. Examining reality is elaborated within an imaginary context, where learners cease being students and undertake a task impersonating others. They detect, investigate and solve problems under specific circumstances which they specify themselves.
4. promotes active learning. It requires from students to take responsibility for their learning, which in turn enhances their self-confidence, as this responsibility is based on the power of their growing field expertise.

In a nutshell, MoE creates learning environments which are fundamental to achieving optimal learning. As students cross into new imaginary contexts during the drama experience, they identify with others and their perspectives (*Nicholson, 2005)*. In this sense, development of students' new insights contributes to development of their intercultural understanding.

Suggestions

According to Robson (2011), real life constraints should be taken into consideration while conducting research in a specific context. In this perspective, the scenario described earlier constitutes an indicative suggestion as every teaching scenario has its own stages which depend on factors such as topic, available sources, students' age and experience as well as teacher's own method comprehension (Taylor, 2016).

In our view, the short time duration of the present study should be included in the research constraints as well. Moreover, as the study concerns primary school students, we consider its application to other age groups of both primary and secondary education of particular interest. Finally, a more extended study conducted in more school contexts located in different geographic areas could result in a richer research data analysis which, in turn, would provide us with a broader view as regards the effectiveness of MoE.

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