YUNANCA ÖĞRETİMİ İÇİN OYUNLARIN İKİ DİL BİLEN ÖĞRENCİLERE UYGULANMASI[1]

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Öz

Bu küçük ölçekli araştırma çalışmada, ilkokul öğretmenlerinin iki dilli öğrencilere Yunancayı yabancı/ikinci dil olarak öğretmek için oyunları kullanma konusundaki tutumlarını araştırılıdı. Ele alınan araştırma konuları, öğretmenlerin oyunlara ve oyunların nasıl uygulanması gerektiğine ilişkin algıları ve iki dilli eğitimde öğretmen yetiştirme konuları elealındı. Bu araştırmanın örneklemi olarak Yunanistan'da iki dilli öğrencileri olan ve ikinci dili Yunanca olan Yunanistan'daki devlet ilköğretim okullarının öğretmenleri ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmenler öğretimlerinde oyun uygulamışlardır. Araştırmanın bulguları, tüm öğretmenlerin masa oyunları, bilişsel oyunlar, tiyatro oyunları, rol yapma gibi oyunları sınıflarında kullanmaya yönelik olumlu bir tutuma sahip olduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Çoğu zaman öğretmenin rolü kolaylaştırıcı rol olmuştur. İki dilli eğitimdeki eğitimleriyle ilgili olarak, çoğu, uygulamalı ve deneyimsel eğitim ihtiyacına vurgu yapmaları anlamında bunu eksik olarak değerlendirmektedir. Sonuç olarak, öğretmenler, öğrencilerin bir dili öğrenirken, geleneksel bir öğretim yöntemiyle öğretilen dille karşılaştırıldığında, oyun ve oyun uygulamalarını tercih ettiklerine inanmaktadırlar. Dil dersinin kendisiyle ilgili olarak, öğretmenler oyunların Yunancayı ikinci/yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin öğrenme becerilerini geliştirdiğine inanmaktadır. Ancak, bu araştırmanın küçük ölçekli bir araştırma olduğu göz önüne alındığında, daha güvenli sonuçlara varmak için daha geniş ve daha geniş bir öğretmen örneğine genişletmemiz önemlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İki Dilli Eğitim, Dil Edinimi/Öğrenme, Oyunlar, Öğretmenlerin Duruşu

THE APPLICATION OF GAMES FOR THE TEACHING OF GREEK TO BILINGUAL STUDENTS[1]

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Abstract

This small-scale research study probed into primary school teachers' attitudes on using games to teach Greek as a foreign/second language to bilingual students. The research issues under consideration, are teachers' perceptions of games and how they should be implemented, and teacher training in bilingual education. For the needs of this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers of public primary schools in Greece, who had bilingual students attending their classes and whose second language was Greek. The aforementioned teachers who participated in the research applied games in their teaching. The findings of the study revealed that all teachers have a positive attitude towards using games in their classrooms, such as, board games, cognitive games, theatrical games, and role-playing and that, most of the time, their role (meaning the teacher's role) is that of a facilitator. Regarding their training in bilingual education, most evaluate it as incomplete in the sense that they emphasize upon the need for practical and experiential training. In conclusion, teachers believe that students prefer the application of games and play when learning a language compared to been taught the language through a traditional teaching method. Regarding the language lesson itself, teachers believe that games improve the learning skills of students who are learning Greek as a second/foreign language. However, given that this research was a small-scale research, it is important that we extend it to a larger and wider sample of teachers in order to draw safer conclusions.

Keywords: bilingual education, language acquisition / learning, games, the teachers' stance

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The utilization of games in education

The use of games in the class is becoming increasingly popular, since it has been discovered that doing so alleviates any difficulties in the lesson and produces a pleasant

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and enthusiastic environment for students. Using games to motivate students could be a good idea (Avedon 1971, qtd. in Deesri 2002). They can, however, be a useful tool for the teacher in assisting his/her students into not taking a passive role in what is going on (Khan 1991, qtd. in Griva et al. 2013). In a relaxing and enjoyable setting structured via the use of games, students can acquire new content more easily and can recall it more quickly (Duong et al. 2008). They are more engaged in the class and also participate more actively (Nguyen 2010, qtd. in Griva et al. 2013).

The application of games provides participants with experiences that reflect those they will experience in the real world and allows them to solve problems on their own, rather than having to observe how others solve them. Furthermore, it provides a responsive environment, as participants are aware of their progress and performance at all times, and provides a telescopic view of time, as students can experience, in a short period of time, experiences that were normally unfolded over a long period of time (Cruickshank et al. 1980).

Students often show indifference to the tasks assigned to them. However, through the use of games their interest increases, they become more willing to participate and more easily acquire new knowledge (Tuan & Nguyen 2010). Still, games allow students to make mistakes, recognize their limitations and discover their potential (Ludvigsen et al. 2005, qtd. in Griva et al. 2013). In addition, games offer corporate and group work, from which students can benefit in a number of ways; they learn by listening and paying attention to other group members when speaking in the target language, they have the opportunity to develop their receptive and productive oral skills and they become more motivated to learn a language. (Richards 2006).

Games provide a framework for interactive communication, based on understandable linguistic input and output (Swain, 1993, qtd. in Griva et al. 2013). The pedagogical implications of games are unquestionable, especially when learning a second/foreign language (Richard-Amato 1996, qtd. in Deesri 2002). According to Haldfield (1999, qtd. in Griva et al. 2013), games should not be seen simply as a fun activity, but as an integral part of language education. In other words, it is considered a powerful tool for the teacher, who can improve the language skills of the students, while entertaining them. It can be used in all stages of the educational process in a very effective way. In addition, Deesri (2002) emphasizes that students will certainly be interested in an educational process involving the use of games, so it will be easier for them to learn new grammatical structures, as they will approach unfamiliar words and texts more calmly and they will be able to become more fluent in their spoken language and, ultimately, in the target language.

Finally, games provide an opportunity to reduce the stress and insecurity of young, shy, and introverted students (Uberman 1998). In addition, it contributes to students' self-efficacy, as they are given the opportunity to participate actively, under the auspices of the teacher, as a facilitator, while it also develops their social skills, encouraging collaboration between them and team spirit (Orlick 2006, qtd. in Griva et al. 2013). Of course, in order for the game to be successful, the teacher must, above all, take into account the preferences of the students as it is important to investigate why a student prefers a particular type of game and what motivates him/her to participate in this game (Leppänen et al. 2009).

1.2. Bilingual Education

Bilingual education is an "umbrella" term, which includes a variety of educational programs designed to meet the broader needs of students. More specifically, bilingual education refers to any educational program in which more than one language is used to teach non-language academic language or when the school's language does not correspond to the language spoken at home or in the community. However, the reasons for integrating the chosen languages, the structure of the programs, and the relationship between the school and the community may differ, influencing the outcome of bilingual education (Bialystok 2018). Genesee (2004) defines bilingual education as that which aims to promote the ability of bilingualism (or even multilingualism), using two or more languages, as a means of teaching a considerable amount of the curriculum. In conclusion, there are many important differences between "bilingual education", in general, and "bilingual students' education".

Both in Greece and abroad, bilingual education is a controversial issue, in which political expediencies are often intertwined (Nieto 2009). The example of Canada, a country with clearly many bilingual citizens, is a typical example. It is interesting to note that very few Canadians are fluent in both official languages, English and French. In 2011 only 17% of the respondents mentioned that they could hold a conversation in both official languages, compared with 12% in 1961. A possible interpretation of the recent increase in bilingual speakers, in Canada, in the last 50 years, are the language immersion programs, in which students who otherwise would have had little exposure to the French language, eventually develop into capable bilingual speakers (Lepage et al. 2013, qtd. in Bialystok 2018).

The Ministry of Education defines the goals and substance of bilingual education in Greece. The goal of intercultural education, according to Law No. 2413 /1996, article 3, is to organize and operate primary and secondary schools that will provide education to young students with educational, social, or cultural differences. The country's school classes, to a considerable part, reflect a multicultural composition, since Greece has been a host country for immigrants from the Balkans and Asia, as well as former Soviet Union countries, for the past thirty years (Anastasiadis-Symeonidis et al, 2008). In particular, almost 10% of the country's population consists of non-Greek populations, who immigrated to Greece in recent years - mainly from countries such as Syria and Sudan (Figgou 2018). Foreigners or Greeks who have been repatriated account for 18% of the student population in the country's schools (Gropas et al. 2011). In particular, this sudden and rapid influx of immigrants in recent decades, as well as the repatriation of Greek immigrants, has diversified a previously homogeneous educational system, and teachers are now called upon to adapt to the new conditions. Moreover, existing research shows that students belonging to the aforementioned categories often face difficulties in communicating in Greek, which makes it difficult for them to progress in school (Vidali et al. 2006, qtd. in Adams et al. 2006). As a result, it's simple to see why managing linguistic variety is one of the most important difficulties which the Greek educational system must face. So, the aim of this research was to document the use of games and play in bilingual education and also probed into the views and attitudes of teachers who are involved in this demanding task. This research, therefore, is important, as it attempts to show whether teachers feel ready to respond to this new,

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heterogeneous multicultural environment and to make the best possible use of bilingual education, but also whether the students, whose Greek is a second/foreign language, can actually benefit from the use of games and play.

2. METHOD

2.1. The purpose of the research and the research questions

In view of the above, the teacher's stance regarding the use of games and play in the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language, to bilingual students, was considered very important. More specifically, the research questions which were posed were the following:

1. How do teachers perceive the benefits of games and play in language teaching in bilingual classes?
2. How do teachers apply games and play in the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language?
3. What is the teacher's perception about his/her training in terms of bilingual education?
4. Is there a need for additional teacher training so that teachers get the most out of games and play when teaching Greek as a second/foreign language?

2.2. Research Method

A small-scale research was conducted and more specifically, the qualitative research method was applied as it was considered the most appropriate for the investigation of the specific issue, in order to examine the causal relationships and the reasons why educators use games for the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language.

2.3. Participants

Below are the profiles of the six teachers, as they emerge from the answers they gave to the demographic questions of the semi-structured interview. Four were aged between 23 and 30 (67%), one participant 31 to 40 (17%), and another one 41 to 50 years old, respectivel (17%). All of them had a degree in Primary School Education from different Universities in Greece, while one participant also received a diploma from the 'Didaskalio – Διδασκαλείο', which is a two-year study. Two participants (33%) completed their undergraduate studies at the Pedagogical Department of Primary School Education from the University of Florina, whereas two (33%) of the participants studied at the Democritus University of Thrace, one at the University of Ioannina (17%) and one at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (17%). Two of them (33%), had completed postgraduate studies and had one postgraduate degree in an education-related subject, one of which was in "Teaching Mathematics and Natural Sciences", from the University of Nicosia and one in "Special Education, Training, and Rehabilitation", from the University of Macedonia. Four participants (67%) had not completed any postgraduate studies, while none had a doctoral degree.

Also, regarding the seminars, one participant (17%) had attended a seminar on the use of games and play which were connected to "The Theater in Education", from the "Panhellenic Network of Theater in Education", while five participants (83%) had not

attended a seminar on games and play. Three participants (50%) had attended a seminar on Bilingual Education. More specifically, the study titles which they received by the participants were "Teaching Greek as a Second/Foreign Language" at the University of the Aegean, "Intercultural Education: Theoretical and Experiential Approaches" from the University of Athens, while one participant attended a seminar in the field of Education and more particularly on "Educational Action Zones" or EAZ (or ΖΕΠ in Greek) classes. The remaining 3 of the participants (50%) had not attended a seminar on Bilingual Education.

Regarding the teaching experience of the participants, four participants (66%) had one to five (1-5) years of teaching experience in a public primary school, one (17%) had six to ten (6-10) years while only one participant (17%) had sixteen to twenty (16-20) years of service. Three participants (50%) were teachers in EAZ classes, two (33%) were general class teachers with bilingual students attending their classes too, while one (17%) was parallel support teachers (which is the name given to them in Greece) or 'shadow teachers' as they are known in the United States (see Baker and Mori, 2010). Finally, regarding the previous teaching experience of participants, three teachers (50%) had not worked in a different position, other than the one they hold today, two (33%) had worked in a different position, while only one teacher had taught in EAZ, and she also taught in general primary schools which included bilingual students, and as a parallel support teacher or 'shadow teacher' in schools. The term "bilingual" refers to students who do not have Greek as their mother tongue, and more specifically, in the present study it refers to students who had Albanian, Indian, Syrian or Roma as their mother tongue. The above information shows that, in general, this is a sample of participants, who do not have a long-term experience in teaching, but who have gained valuable qualitatively experience from their different posts in the schools in which they have taught, and from the responsibilities they have had to attend to in the schools in which they worked and which (the responsibilities that is) have not remained the same throughout their careers.

2.4. Data collection tools

The research tool which was applied was that of a semi-structured interview. Participants were selected through a combination of Convenience sampling and Snowball sampling (Jenner et al. 2004). A semi-structured interview was used as the primary research instrument. Participants were chosen using a combination of Convenience and Snowball sampling methods. Six (6) teachers, five (5) of whom were women and one (1) of whom was a man, took part in the research. They were all teachers in Greek public primary schools who had bilingual students in their classes and employed games and play in their instruction. A semi-structured interview was conducted, which included demographic questions, teacher experiences with bilingual students, the implementation and benefits of using games and play in bilingual education, and, last but not least, teacher training in both games and play and teaching bilingual students (Jenner et al. 2004).

The semi-structured interviews were divided into three sections: the first section included demographic questions; the second section included bilingual education questions (for example: Do you think that students' second language could be used as a

teaching tool? Do you think you have the necessary training to implement bilingual education?), and the third section included questions about the use of games and play (Do you think that games and play improve students' learning outcomes in the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language? What kind of games do you usually apply in your teaching of Greek as a second/ foreign language?)

2.5. Data collection process

The collection of research data was carried out by conducting semi-structured interviews with six teachers, using distance communication platforms, because on the one hand, the research took place during the lockdown period in Greece, and on the other hand, because this procedure was considered the most appropriate, since the participants were able to choose the time and place which was the most convenient for them. The interviews were 60-90 minutes long, prior to which teachers' verbal consent was sought in order for the interviews to be recorded for the purposes of the research.

2.6. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics was chosen for the analysis of data and the contents of the interviews were coded and presented in the form of graphs and frequencies. What follows are the results of the research questions of the next two phases of the interview, which were grouped into thematic axes.

3. RESULTS

3.1. First Axis: Experience in the teaching of bilingual students - problems and their treatment.
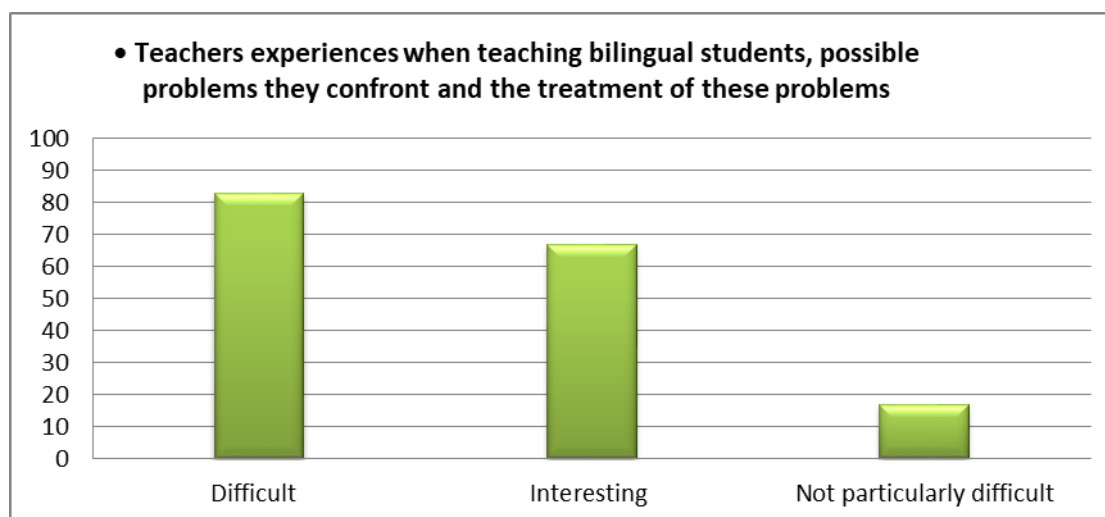

Table 1

Teachers were initially asked to describe their experiences in teaching bilingual students as a whole. The majority of the participants (83%) described their experience in teaching bilingual students as a difficult process, while four participants (67%) mentioned that, in addition to being difficult, it was also interesting. A small percentage (17%) reported that teaching bilingual students was not particularly difficult for them

(Table 1). Some indicative answers were the following; Anna, "I did not face any particular problem, as most students who are bilingual were born here […] the Greek language is their mother tongue now". Eleni, mentioned that, "[h]owever, it (meaning teaching bilingual students) also presents several difficulties, which are mainly due to the fact that the use of Greek in the family environment is either absent or minimal."
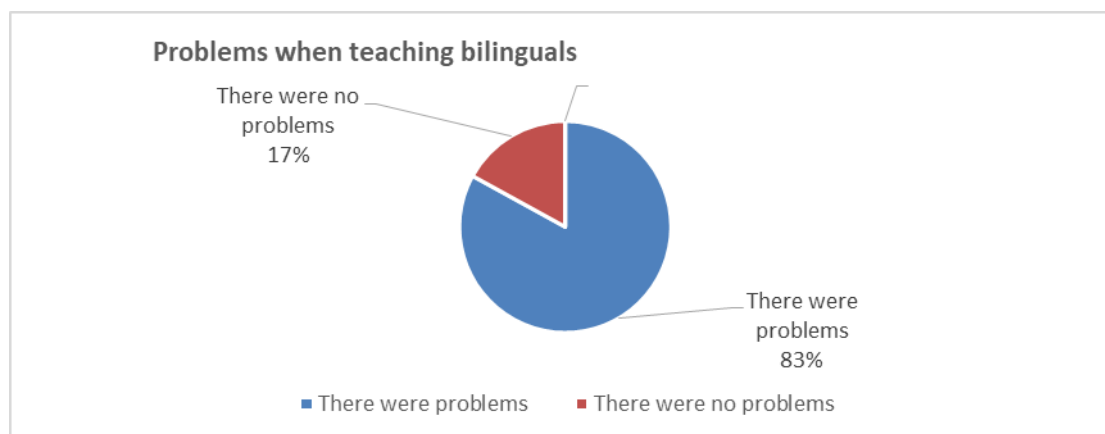

Table 2

Regarding the problems that arose when teaching bilingual students, four participants (83%) reported that there were difficulties and problems, while only one teacher (17%) stated that he did not face any problems (Table 2). In order to solve the problems that arose, in class, when teaching bilingual students. The teachers, who participated in the research, used mainly visual stimuli and motivation, while the use of more capable students, as assistant mediators, also seemed to be useful, and so did the use of non-verbal communication. Finally, one teacher stated that in order to prevent some Roma students from being absent from school (see also Theodoropoulou and Zafiri, 2022), it was considered appropriate, by the school, for the police to intervene (Table 3). Gianna mentioned that, "[m]any times the police are forced to intervene by going to the house of the student and asking where the student is". Anna stated that […] "some of the students acted as mediators, I try to take advantage of these students […], I often also try to use visuals, especially some which have some form of movement".
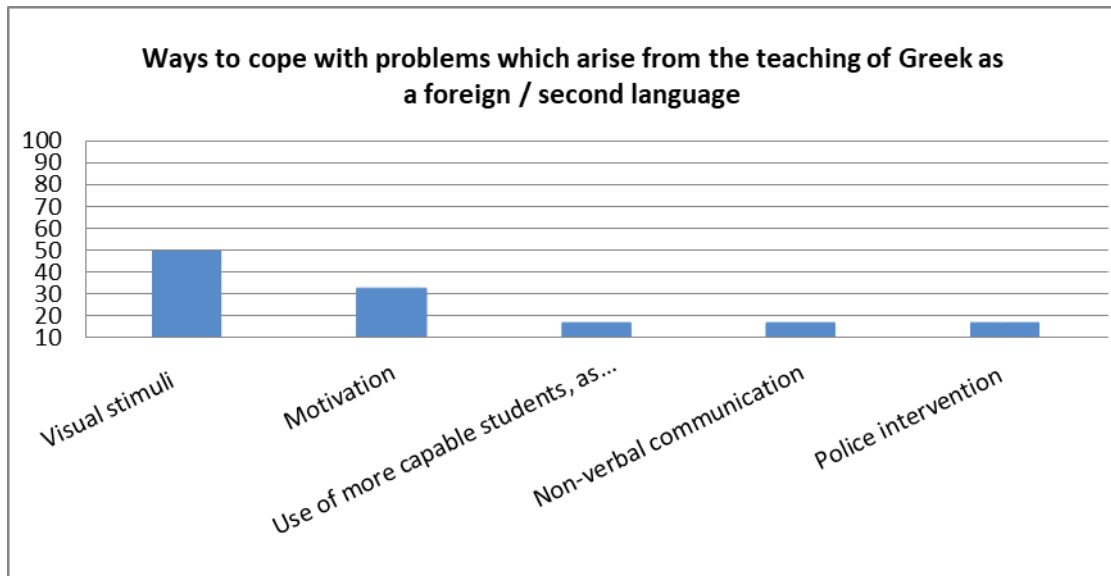
Table 3

3.2. Third Axis: Utilization of students' first language during the teaching of Greek as a foreign / second language
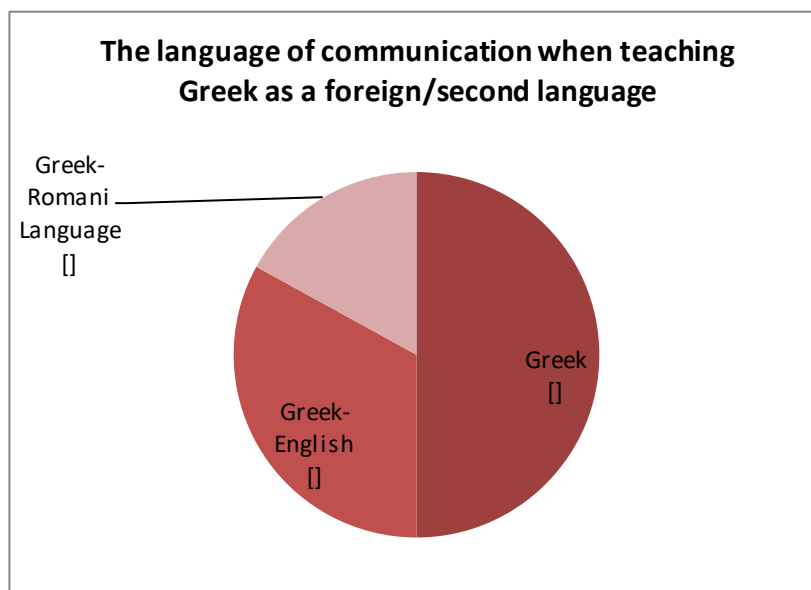

Table 4

As shown by the analysis of the results, all teachers use the Greek language when teaching Greek as a foreign/second language, while two participants (33%) use English in addition to Greek, and only one teacher (17%), uses the mother tongue of the students in the teaching of Greek as a foreign/second language. Half of the teachers (50%) use only the Greek language when teaching (Table 4). When asked if the first language of the students could be used in teaching students who learn Greek as a foreign or second language, the majority of teachers (83%), answered that the first language of the students could be used effectively in the teaching of Greek as a foreign or second

language, while only one teacher (17%), answered that it could not be used effectively. More particularly Anna mentioned that "[a]lmost not at all […], I mainly speak Greek to them, because I think this is the right thing to do in a Greek school environment […] otherwise you do not help them at all" (Table 5).
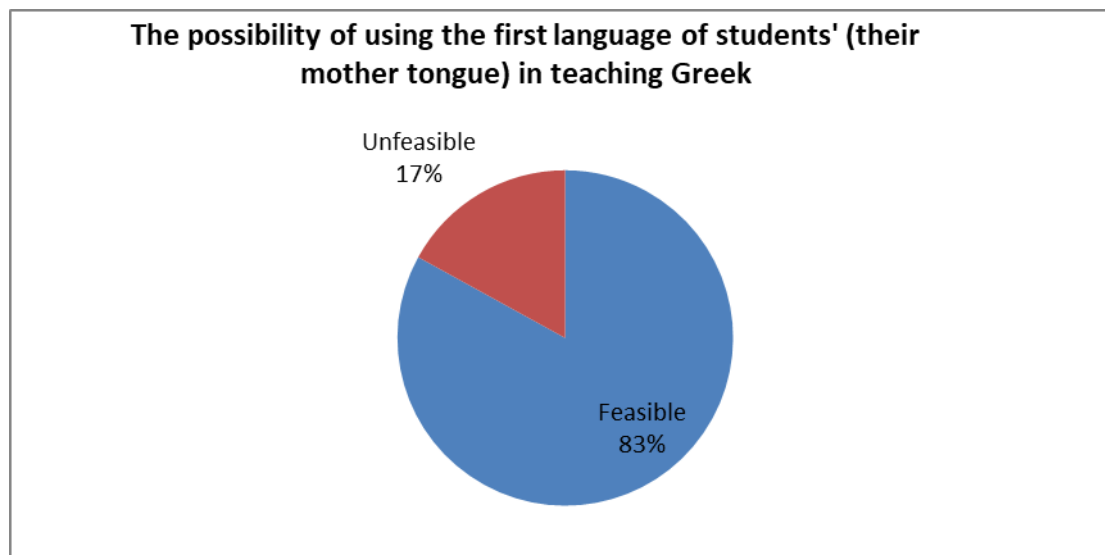

Table 5

Teachers went on to highlight some practical applications for the use of the students' mother tongue in class. More specifically, two participants stated that by encouraging students to use their mother tongue in the class, they managed to help their students to develop their vocabulary in the Greek language, while a corresponding percentage mentioned that by using the mother tongue of the students during their lessons, they motivated their students more to participate more actively in the teaching and learning process. One participant (17%) believes that students are able to connect new knowledge more effectively with pre-existing knowledge, when their mother tongue is used in class, while when the teacher utilizes their language, it seems to attract the student's attention. Anna mentioned that:

"I have used Indian words many times, which I had the pleasure of learning during the course of my teaching career, such as when I want them to pay attention to what I am asking them to do, for example, I tell them "Likha/ लिख", which means "write" or "Dhyāna dō/ध्यान दो" which means "pay attention". That often motivates them even more".

One participant (17%) uses the mother tongue of the students to highlight the customs, traditions, and culture of their country, and to encourage them to participate in recreational activities (Table 6). Vasilis mentions:

"[o]f course I could […] encourage students, and their parents, to speak the student's mother tongue at home, but I prefer to use it didactically in the classroom. A simple example that comes to my mind is a time when a student had his birthday, and we sang the happy birthday song in Greek […] and in Albanian […] but he did not want to sing it with us, I think he was ashamed, for some reason!"

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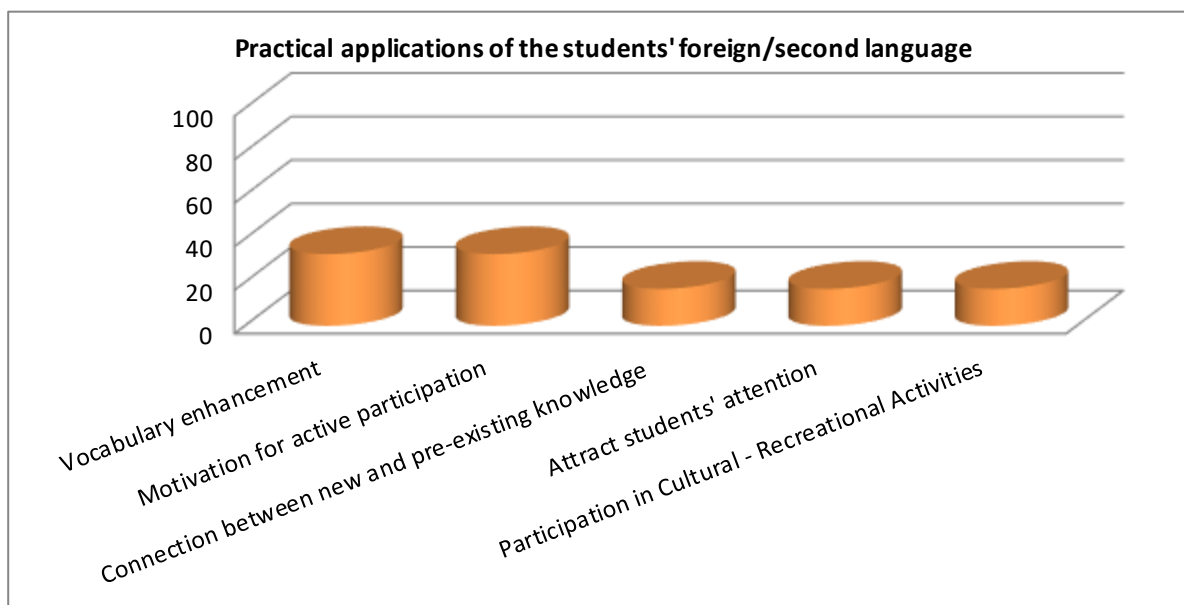Association

Table 6

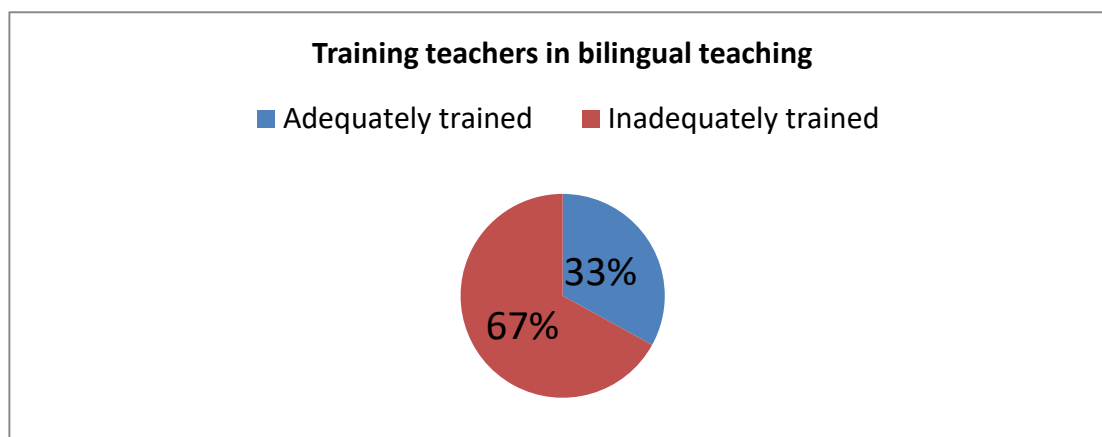## 3.3. Fourth Axis: Training teachers in Bilingual Education

Table 7

Teachers were asked if they were adequately trained to implement bilingual teaching. To that the majority of the participants (67%), answered that they did not consider themselves sufficiently trained, while only two of them (33%) considered that they had the necessary training in order to implement bilingual teaching (Table 7).
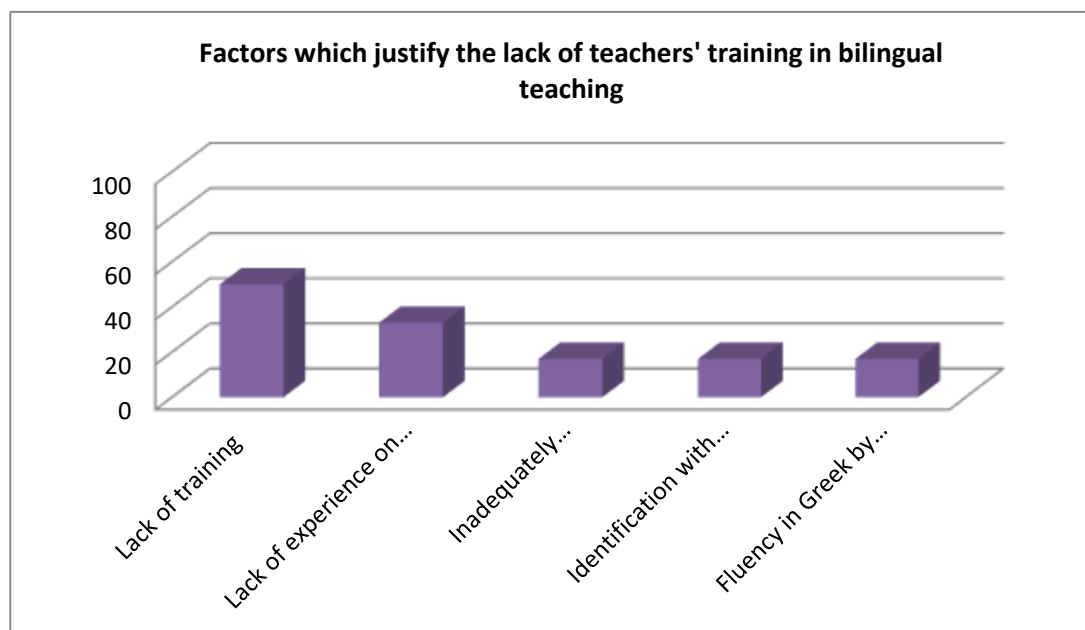
Table 8

Justifying their answer, half of the teachers stated that they did not consider themselves sufficiently trained, because they had not attended many training programs and seminars on bilingual education, while two teachers (33%) stated that they do not have the necessary work experience on bilingual teaching. A small percentage (17%), reports that undergraduate studies do not provide teachers with the necessary knowledge on bilingual teaching. Zoi (6) mentioned that "[u]nfortunately, undergraduate studies offer little to no specialization on the subject of bilingual teaching". Regarding teachers who consider themselves adequately trained, it is worth noting that one teacher (17%) justifies this view by identifying the needs or requirements of bilingual teaching with those of monolingual teaching, in other words they argue that once a teacher is able to teach a class of monolingual students, he/she is equally capable of teaching bilingual students. Gianna mentions that, "I do not consider it extremely difficult, because these students are aware of the Greek language, it is not that we are going to teach them Greek from scratch". Finally, a small percentage (17%) of the participants, attributes their adequate training to the fact that their students already know the Greek language to a more or to a lesser extent (Table 8).
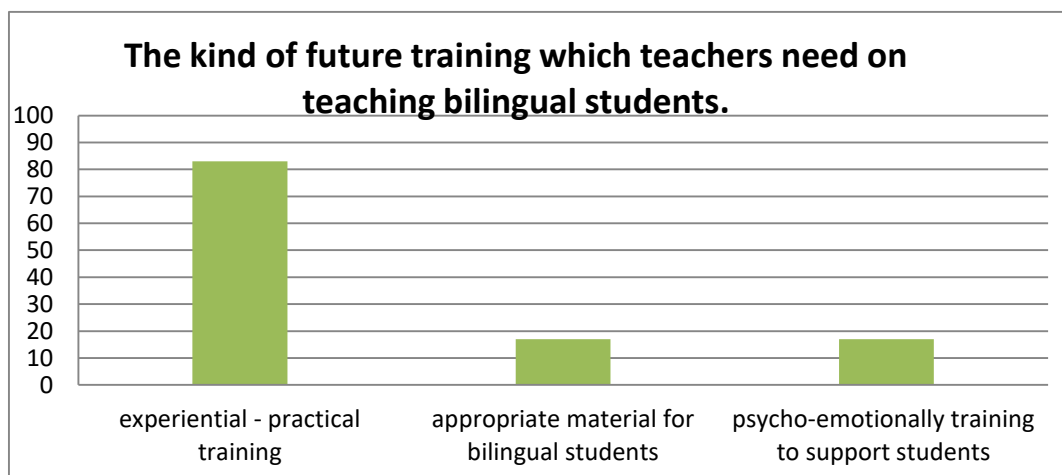
Table 9

Teachers were asked to indicate what kind of future training would help them to implement bilingual teaching more effectively. The most common answer, according to eighty-three per cent (83%) of the participants, was experiential training and practical applications. One participant (17%) expressed their need for more material which is appropriate for bilingual students, including hands-on activities for them, which they could use in the schools in which they teach. A small number of the participants also stated that they would like to be trained on how to support their students psycho-emotionally (Table 9).

3.4. Fifth Axis: Ways of implementing games in teaching bilingual students

In the fifth axis of the semi-structured interview, the application of games and their results in learning Greek as a foreign/second language, as well as the stance and attitudes of the teachers, regarding the aforementioned, were investigated. More specifically, when asked if students prefer games or a traditional approach to language teaching and learning, all teachers (100%) mentioned that students prefer games to a more traditional approach to language teaching. When asked to explain why, they mentioned (50% of the participants), that the nature of a child is inextricably linked to games and play. Two teachers (33%) mentioned that students were uninterested in learning Greek as foreign/second language when the lesson was teacher centered, whereas they became very interested when games were applied in their lessons. More particularly Gianna mentioned that, "[t]raditional teaching does not help at all, they prefer to be taught in a playful manner, through games, they see the lesson as a game and it becomes more interesting". Other reasons mentioned by one (17%) of the teachers, included the fact that they were able to 'manage' the educational process more effectively when applying games and play in their lessons, which encouraged their students to actively participate in the lesson, and to externalize their emotions. More specifically, Eleni mentioned that, "[t]he fact that they participate in games, with greater ease and interest, strengthens their self-confidence".
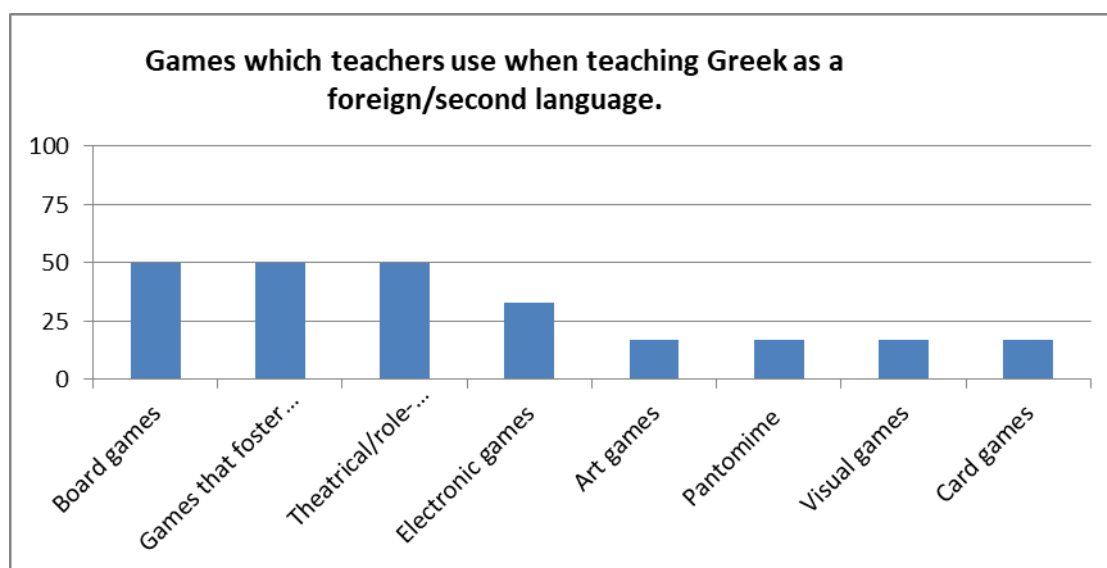
Table 10

Teachers were asked which games they usually use in teaching Greek as a foreign/second language. The teachers employed board games, games that foster critical thinking (cognitive features of the language), as well as theatrical or role-play more frequently (50%). Teachers employ electronic games, but with less frequency (33 percent), and only one teacher (17%) utilizes pantomime and art (see also Kikioni and Zafiri, 2021), such as painting, drawing, and so on, or card games (Table 10).
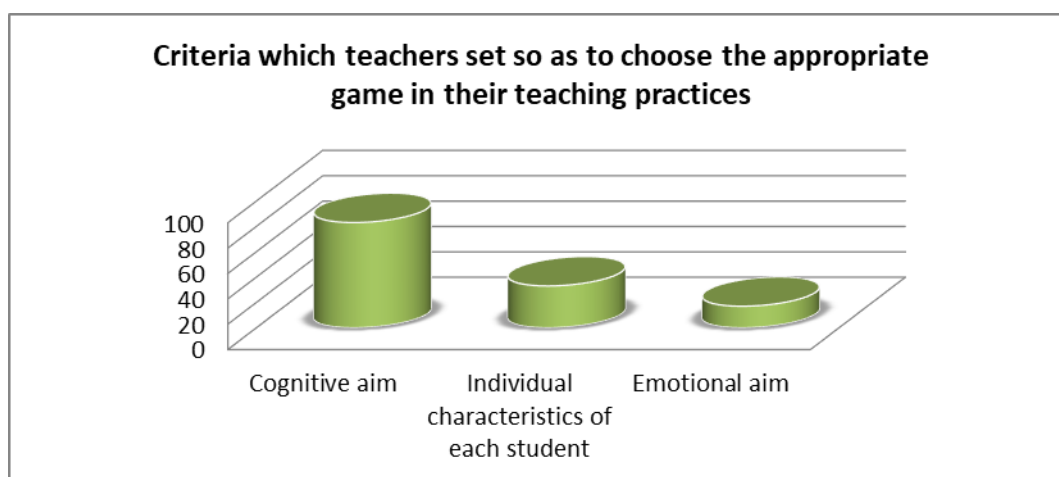

Table 11

Regarding the criteria according to which teachers choose the appropriate game in their teaching practices, most of them choose a game based on the cognitive aim which they have set and whether the game which they have chosen can help their students to achieve this aim. Two teachers (33%) choose games based on the individual characteristics of each student, e.g., gender or age, while one of them (17%) chooses a game based on the emotional aim which they want to achieve, e.g., a feeling of relaxation for students or the cultivation of their imagination (Table 11). More particularly, Anna stated that

"[c]learly based on what I want to teach each time […], I often use games to escape from a gloomy atmosphere which may have formed during the lesson, for example, if we have a little time left, at the end of the lesson, we can use up this time to play a game, which will also teach something to my students".
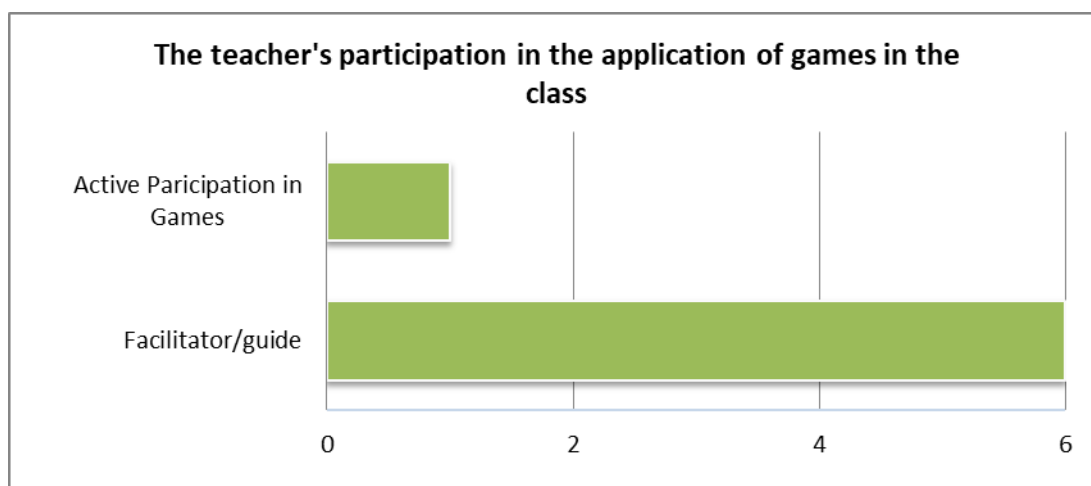

Table 12

Finally, the teachers were asked about how they become involved with their students in playing games in the class. All teachers reported that their role was that of a facilitator and a guide, while one teacher (17%) reported that they actively participate in games, more particularly, Anna mentioned that "I play and I […] give instructions, and if they deviate [the students] too much from the instructions of the game then I intervene", whereas Zoi stated that " I have noticed that it is useful to let students make mistakes" (Table 12).
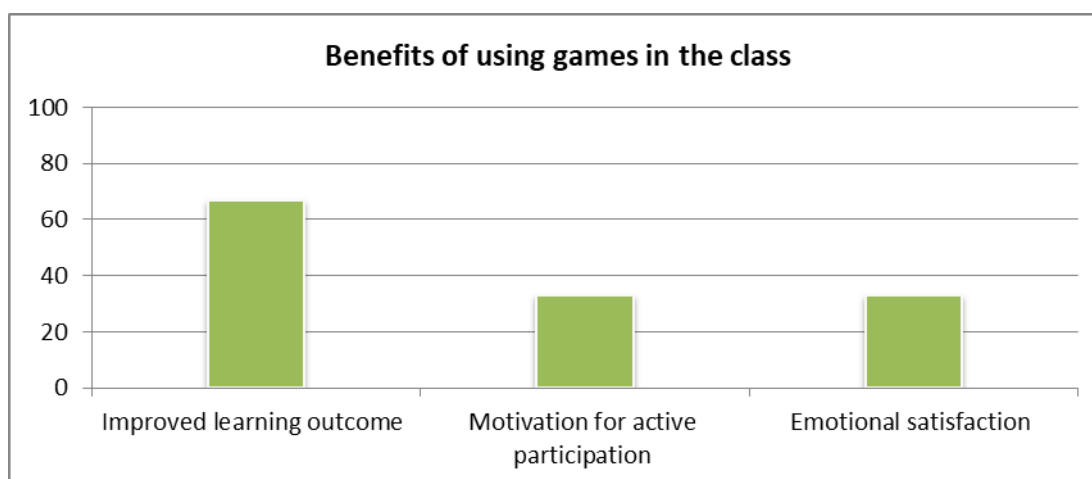
3.5. Sixth Axis: Benefits of using games

Table 13

In this part of the interview, an attempt was made to explore the benefits of using games in teaching Greek as a foreign/second language. All teachers (100%) stated that games improved the learning outcome of their students in Greek as a foreign/second language. The most frequently mentioned reason why teachers (67%) apply games in

their teaching was to avoid teaching students' specific language structures. The aforementioned teachers attributed the positive effects of games to the fact that most games do not require the use of language, for example, they often include visuals, which is very helpful for bilingual students. More particularly, Vasilis mentioned that, "[b]ilingual students, especially those who do not speak Greek well, do not think that, '[o]h! I should not say that because it may be wrong and the teacher will grade me', [...] language code is not used spontaneously". Two teachers (33%) mentioned that games provide emotional satisfaction to their students, thus providing motivation for them to participate actively in the teaching and learning process (Table 13).
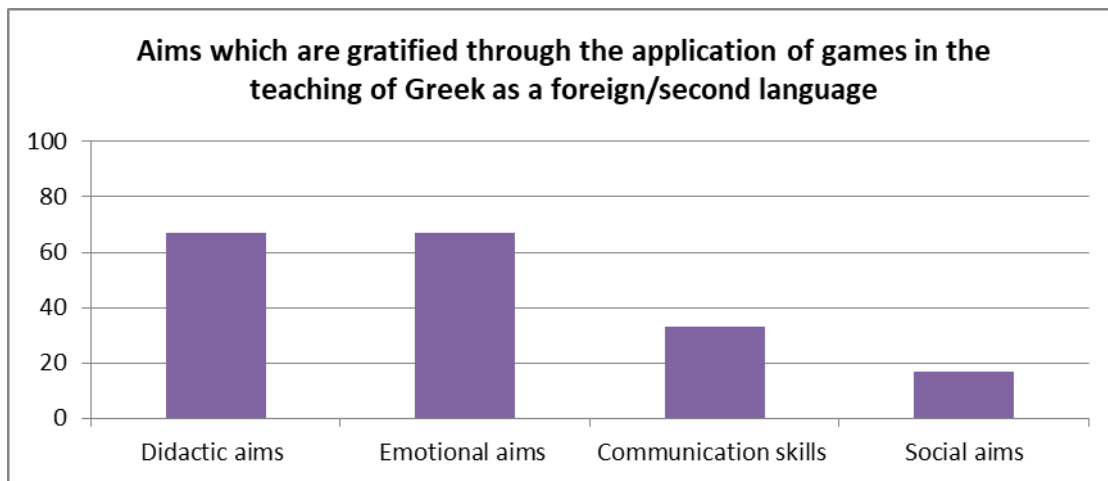
Table 14

Also, regarding the aims that are met through the application of games in the teaching of Greek to bilingual students, it seems that the majority of teachers (67%) use games to gratify a didactic or an emotional aim, more particularly, Gianna mentioned that "I want games to be freer, something like a reward". Eleni mentioned that "[...] regarding the cognitive aims, they assimilate the new knowledge in an easier and more fun way [...] they participate with pleasure and with a greater sense of security, therefore their self-esteem increases", communication skills are also achieved (33%), though less frequently. One teacher (17%) also reported that the use of games helps students achieve their social aims (Table 14).

3.6. Seventh Axis: The training of teachers in the utilization of games in teaching

Table 15

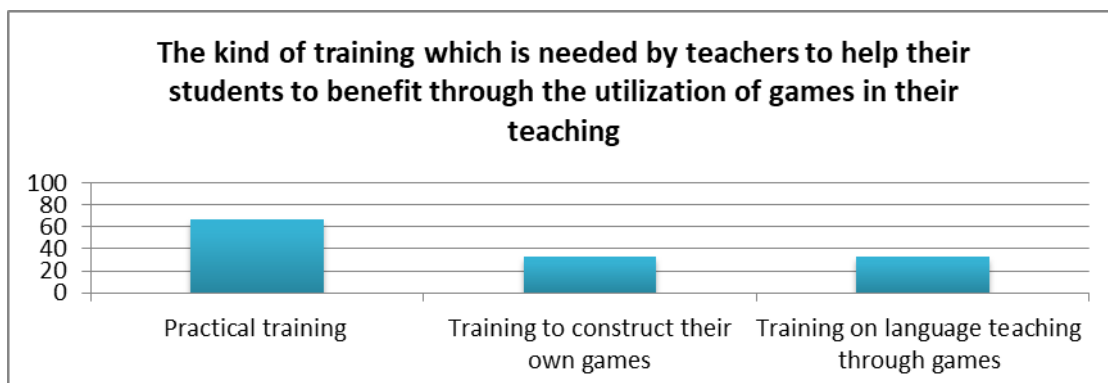Finally, the teachers were asked about the type of training that would help them make the most of the benefits of games and play. Practical training was mentioned by four participants (67%), while two participants (33%) expressed their desire to be trained, to construct their own games (see also Kikioni and Zafiri, 2021), or to choose the appropriate game for each occasion, more particularly Eleni mentioned that "[i]t would be important to provide ideas and suggestions for the creation of games by the teacher himself/herself [...]" (Table 15). Finally, the participants mentioned a desire for training on language teaching through games, in order to teach bilingual students. Dimitra mentioned that "[t]raining in teaching methods/approaches and techniques for Greek as a foreign /second language, and other teaching practices in a multicultural environment, would be very helpful".

4. DISCUSSION

What follows are the answers to the research questions which were posed. These answers were based on the results presented in the previous section. Similar findings from previous research and pre-existing literature are also presented.

4.1. How do teachers perceive the benefits of games and play in teaching Greek as a foreign/second language in bilingual classes?

All the teachers who participated in this research reported that the students prefer the application of games and play in their teaching compared to traditional methods and approaches to teaching. This is confirmed based on the literature, according to which through the use of games students' interest in learning a language increases, they become more willing to participate and more easily acquire new knowledge (Tuan et al. 2010). A reason which teachers gave for the aforementioned stance was that it is in the nature of the child to play, and games are a part of that. Play is an activity which is pervasive throughout a child's life. Play activities exist in all the environments in which the child/young student lives and works, and play is the most effective means of teaching language during the time one is a child. In addition to the aforementioned, by nature children/students are active and cannot remain inactive for long, so this physical need is met through play. After all, children/young students like to participate, in games and play, because of their nature as children.

Other reasons mentioned were the experiential nature of games, the creativity, the ability the student himself/herself has to control his/her language learning 'destiny' through games and play, the ability of students to externalize their emotions, as well as to boost their self-confidence. All this is mentioned in the pre-existing literature, in which, for example, Uberman (1998) stated that games help to strengthen students' self-confidence. In general, games allow for the self-regulation of students' learning. Also, with games students can express their emotions and develop their creativity.

Regarding the language lesson, all the teachers who participated in the research believed that games and play improved the learning outcome in the teaching of Greek as a foreign/second language. This is confirmed by pre-existing research, which shows the value of using games to improve students' performance in approaching a foreign/second language, in areas such as the grammar of the target language and motivating students

to learn it (Shu-yun 2005). The teachers mentioned, amongst other things, that the students are relieved of the stress of the assessment and evaluation and that they are not afraid to make mistakes. In general, games allow students to make mistakes and to learn from them without being discouraged. Also, their anxiety decreases, as they forget that they are still within the strict realm of a classroom.

In addition, the teachers stressed that games help their students to learn the Greek language as a foreign/second language, as it includes visuals, something which is considered beneficial for bilingual students. Research has shown that visuals can help bilingual students in areas such as foreign/second language pronunciation (Chun et al. 2012). Finally, the teachers argued that games provide emotional satisfaction to students and motivation to become actively involved in the educational process. Alincak (2016) states that games provide motivation for more participation and also attracts the attention of students in the language learning process, while Harvey and Bright (1985, qtd. in Griva & Semoglou 2013) subscribe to the emotional satisfaction provided by games.

4.2. How are games and play applied in the teaching of Greek as a foreign/second language?

Initially, teachers were asked what kind of games they usually use in their teaching during the lesson. It turned out that, for the most part, they utilize board games, cognitive games, theatrical games, and role-playing games. Based on previous research, board games are suitable for learning a foreign/second language (see Gerovasiliou and Zafiri 2017). Among other things, board games provide opportunities for the recapitulation of newly acquired knowledge and an enhancement of students' motivation in language learning. In addition, theatrical and role-playing games enhance students' linguistic and emotional development, as well as their critical thinking skills. Finally, knowledge-games are suitable for teaching a foreign/second language, as they motivate students and also help them to form a positive attitude towards the language and its learning, through fun, beneficial, and competitive games.

To a lesser extent, electronic games, pantomime, art games, as well as various card games are utilized. Indeed, previous research has shown that the use of electronic games can enhance students' performance in learning a foreign/second language (Anderson et al. 2008). Pantomime games can help students memorize and recite words more easily and, this is done, through the relieving of stress, the lack of a competitive climate in the class, and by helping students to develop higher-order thinking skills. Also, card games enhance skills, such as the production of students' writing skills, while they (the card games) also offer them a pleasant learning environment. Finally, art games can develop students' communicative skills, they can enhance their language skills, but they can also help them to develop an understanding and a respect for other cultures. In particular, visual games can enhance students' oral speech production, but also in the development of their vocabulary.

The teachers were then asked about the criteria according to which they choose the appropriate game or games for their teaching. It turned out that most teachers chose the game which they intended to apply, according to the cognitive aims which they had initially set, and whether the game in question can help students to achieve this aim.

This finding is consistent with pre-existing research, according to which games are considered successful if they meet the cognitive aims set by the teacher (Can et al 2006). Also, some teachers have suggested that they choose the games which they will use based on their students' individual characteristics, such as gender or age. Gender stereotypes also affect the choice of games made by the teachers, while teachers' perceptions on the choice of games differentiate their utilization depending on the age of their students, their interests, etc.

Teachers choose games which they will use in order to make students feel more relaxed or to encourage them to cultivate their imagination. Indeed, pre-existing literature agrees with the notion that through games young students cultivate their imagination (Gamberini et al. 2008). More specifically, through their application within the classroom environment, students feel more relaxed and ready to participate. Furthermore, the teachers were asked about their involvement (or the role they play) when they apply games in their class. All the teachers mentioned that their role was that of a facilitator and a guide. This finding is consistent with pre-existing literature, in which games contribute to students' self-action, as they can play a leading role in the teaching process, with the teacher performing the role of facilitator (Orlick 2006, qtd. in Griva 2013).

Finally, some teachers reported that they found it very normal for students to produce language errors when playing games. Pre-existing research has shown that students' errors can provide information about any linguistic misunderstandings they may have (Hesketh 1997). Thus, by giving students the opportunity to reflect on their errors, they can develop more appropriate and correct mental models and, thus, prevent possible future errors.

4.3. What is the perception of teachers about their training in terms of students' bilingual education?

Teachers were asked if they had received the necessary training to implement their teaching of bilingual students. Some of the reasons which they propose to support this view are the lack of adequate attendance of training programs and seminars on teaching bilingual students, the lack of necessary work experience in this field, as well as the belief that undergraduate studies do not provide teachers with the necessary knowledge on bilingual education. These findings are in line with pre-existing research, in which teachers claimed that they have insufficient training on bilingual education before and after their graduation from the university and highlighted the need for the establishment of seminars, concerning bilingual education, by the State (Kastanitis 2019). In addition, it can be said that teachers have obscure perceptions about what constitutes bilingualism, intercultural education, and how the culture of the foreign students, themselves, can be utilized by the officials who formulate the National Curriculum.

4.4. Is there a need for additional training to get the most out of games?

The teachers were asked about the type of training that would help them make the most out of the benefits which are offered by the application of games. The majority stated that they would like practical training. More specifically, they would like their training, among other things, to allow them to have the ability to choose the ideal game

for every occasion. Pre-existing research agrees on the aforementioned, as teachers expressed the view that they need more training, but also a greater need for practical training and support, while they also expressed their difficulty in finding the right game, on their own, each time they needed it (Karageorgakis 2018). Research has also shown that teachers consider seminars as a significant disadvantage and argue that more practical training and workshops should be established (Erdem et al. 2018).

The teachers also expressed their opinion that they would like a form of training which would allow them to create games on their own. In general, teachers believe that in this way, they can better adapt them to the aims they set each time, as well as to the students' abilities and interests, while also believing that this is how they develop their creativity. Finally, some teachers expressed their desire for training, which will allow them to combine the benefits of language and play, in the case of bilingual students. As previous research shows, using a game-based language approach provides more learning opportunities by creating an enjoyable learning environment that enhances both teacher-student-student interaction (Aldabbus 2008).

5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As aforementioned, this research was a small-scale research, which did not allow for general conclusions to be drawn. In addition, all participants in this research utilized games in their teaching, so it was expected that they would have a positive stance towards the use of games and play. Research, therefore, with a much larger sample could lead to safer and / or different conclusions. In addition, it would be interesting to consider the views of teachers who prefer the traditional way of teaching (a more teacher centered approach) and reject the application of games in their teaching practices. Finally, research, which will take into account teachers who have dealt exclusively with monolingual students would be interesting because it would shed light into what teachers with monolingual students do in their teaching practices.

At a practical level of implementation, we suggest that the government, and in particular, the makers of educational policies and programs, take into account the needs and wants expressed by teachers and provide them with the appropriate training. The teachers themselves, should take into account the preferences of their students, when implementing games in their classes. We also suggest that they should not only use a variety of game types, but they should also differentiate them based on factors such as age, gender, language level, and the learning needs of their students.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Small-scale research was conducted in order to probe into the views of teachers who teach Greek language classes of bilingual students and their stance on the use of games. For the purposes of this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The results of the research showed that all the teachers, who participated in the research, are positive on the use of games in their lessons, and more particularly in teaching Greek as a foreign or second language to students whose mother tongue is different to Greek. The reason why these teachers believe that games aid in second or foreign language learning, in this case Greek as a second or foreign language, is because gamification has more benefits than a traditional mode of teaching, especially where oracy skills are concerned. They utilize a variety of games, mainly board games, cognitive games,

theatrical plays and role-play, because they want to encourage students to self-act and to improvise when they use their foreign/second language, whereas their role (the teacher's role) during the lesson is that of a facilitator. Finally, the majority of the teachers' who participated in the research, consider themselves as insufficiently trained on teaching bilingual students, they also pointed-out that they would like a more experiential and practical mode of training, so as to indulge more effectively in both teaching bilingual students and in the exploitation of the benefits of games. Given that the research was a small-scale research, it would be more appropriate to extend it to a larger sample as conclusions drawn from a larger sample can be generalized.

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