«Learning in the Traces of Greek Culture»: A CLIL Project for Raising Cultural Awareness and Developing L2 Skills

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Abstract: In response to the new demands of education in Greece, including a significant percentage of multilingual and multicultural student populations, the need of teaching Greek as a Second language (GL2) has been mandatory for the sake of immigrant students' inclusion in the dominant society. This pilot project, following the Content and Language Integrated Learning (C.L.I.L) approach, has been piloted with a class of 30 immigrant children (aged 11 years old) of Albanian origin, who had been attending a Greek primary school for 3 years. It was initiated with the purpose to provide insights into developing students' skills in GL2 and aspects of Greek culture and history. The mini syllabus was developed on the basis of criteria for developing sustainable CLIL teaching as suggested by Coyle's 4 Cs framework (2007) and was designed around ten units with famous Greek ancient monuments being at the core. For the estimation of the feasibility of this project, there have been used three basic tools a) a pre- and a post- test about the language and the content knowledge assessment, b) journals kept by the teacher and c) portfolios kept by the students throughout the project. The findings showed a significant improvement of the students' skills in GL2, as well as their enhancement of content knowledge.

Keywords: CLIL, second language, culture cultural awareness language skills

Introduction

The European Union has indicated a great interest in promoting multilingualism in the current society, and launched numerous actions to support and maintain linguistic diversity in European context (European Commission, 2003)Typically, the Action Plan "Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity 2004-2006" makes an extensive reference to different areas of language education such as the extension of the benefits arising from language learning to all citizens as a lifelong activity, the need to upgrade the quality language teaching at all levels and of course the need for a European environment that encourages learning. Within this wider promotion of multilingualism, the Content and Language

Integrated Learning (CLIL) is proposed as an educational approach with the purpose «to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism in Europe "(Järvinen, 2007:254). Therefore, introducing the CLIL approach at all educational levels has been recorded as one of the priorities of EU in acknowledgement of its considerable beneficial aspects which are reported in its Action Plan for Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity (European Commission, 2003: 8, in Griva, Chostelidou & Panteli, 2014).

CLIL is a dual focused educational approach, a pedagogical tool of promoting the learning of both a foreign/second language and other curricular content at the same time (Coyle in Marsh 2002). In other words, teaching in a CLIL framework requires a dual focus approach, which implies on the one hand gaining knowledge related to a subject area (eg geography, history, maths, religion, etc.) and on the other hand, students' overall skills development in a second/foreign language.

According to Eurydice (2006: 8), CLIL presents "a special approach to teaching in that the non-language subject is not taught in a foreign language but with and through a foreign language" . CLIL is a learning approach applicable to all sectors of education, which can be realized in various ways, from a few hours per week to courses which a duration of several months (Coyle, 2007). The specific approach has been practiced across many countries in various models distinguished between total/partial immersion to language showers and crosscurricular projects.

A number of studies have indicated that CLIL is an effective educational practice for students to develop L2/FL (Griva et al, 2014a ,Griva et al, 2014b, Griva & Kasvikis, in press, Stoller, 2004; Linares & Whitaker, 2007; Mehisto and Asser, 2008)and gain knowledge in various subject areas. Specifically, significant advantages have been brought about in the field of the cultural awareness development (Christ, 2002; Korosidou & Griva, 2013, 2014; Pavlou & Ioannou, 2008;Judith, 2010) as students have the opportunity to come in touch with cultural elements and participated in culture-based topic projects.

The involvement of students in a CLIL class, in which the CLIL approach is applied, implies a substantial increase in exposure of students to the target language, as the CLIL environment tends to multiply the hours spent in the target language as compared to traditional methods of teaching languages (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2007). Also, learning the language through content gives a real opportunity for students to develop academic skills and critical thinking, benefits which are related to language skills development and the students' academic performance and school success (Troncale, 2002). Thus, it has been revealed that students who participate in CLIL classes show a significant improvement in content knowledge of a particular school lesson (Grabe & Stoller, 1997, Stoller, 2004, Serra, 2007).

Introducing CLIL can also be advantageous in terms of a) promoting intercultural knowledge and understanding, and helping students understand

people with different cultural backgrounds, b) improving language competence and oral and intercultural communication skills (Gimeno, et al., 2013; Christ, 2002 by Paul II., John S. &., 2008).

The CLIL approach can be adopted in different types of schools and with different learners and can be applied to all educational levels, from primary to high education (Holmes, 2005; Dulton-Puffer, 2011). Nevertheless, while CLIL instruction can be undertaken in any language, English is the most popular target language in the European context, given its role as a European and international lingua franca (Juan-Garau, 2008). CLIL as an educational approach is widespread in Europe and in a large educational spectrum. However, it could be argued that the linguistic, cultural and educational local context determine the type of CLIL as an enforcement action in a country. For example the Italian regions neighbouring German-speaking countries such as Austria and Switzerland apply CLIL in German in an attempt to dominate and maintain friendly relations and mobility between these countries. In other cases, it may be taught through CLIL, the language of origin and cultural heritage such as a CLIL in Greek language in some parts of Germany-where there is a high percentage of Greek immigrants- or CLIL in Welsh in Great Britain (Eurydice, 2006).

The proposed project

Rationale and the objectives of the project

Having considered the advantageous outcomes of CLIL approach indicated in previous international studies (Stoller, 2004; Linares& Whitaker 2007; Mehisto and Asser, 2008), as well as implementations at national level (Griva et al, 2014a ,Griva et al, 2014b, Griva & Kasvikis, in press), we designed and implemented a pilot CLIL project. Furthermore, the limited number of studies carried out as well as projects implemented in Greece with GL2 as a medium of instruction was another reason for launching the project.

The pilot project was aimed to develop students' competence in Greek as a second language (GL2) and enhance cultural awareness of the "Greek past" though knowing of Monuments and Historic Sites in Greece.
 More specifically, the CLIL project was introduced to serve the dual aim of:
        -Enhancing immigrant students' learning experience by exploiting the synergies between two subjects (GL2 and culture) and developing both target language skills and (inter)cultural awareness and historic understanding.
         - Measuring the feasibility of the project in students' skills development in GL2 and their content-knowledge enhancement in relation to aspects of the Greek culture.

Sample

The sample of this pilot intervention consisted of 30 immigrant students of Albanian origin, who had been attending a Greek primary school in Larissa (a

city in Central Greece) and had been learning Greek as a second language (GL2). It is worth mentioning that these students were placed in the A2 level of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) and they took part in this four-month programme (March – June 2014) with the permission of their parents. Fifteen (15) students, involved in the experimental group, were taught GL2 and aspects of history and culture through CLIL approach. The control group (15 students) attended a different classroom of the same school and followed the regular program with lessons being conducted in the traditional way.

Design of the project
The design of the pilot project was based on the principles of Coyle's 4Cs framework(2007), a useful pedagogic framework, which accounts for the "interrelationship between content (subject), communication (language), cognition (thinking) and culture" (Costa & D'Angelo, 2011: 6).

This CLIL module was designed in the form of a topic-based mini-syllabus incorporating a variety of activities and games, such as role play, constructions, puzzles, dramatisations, e-games etc. In fact, studies have indicated that games in the language class enhance students' communicative skills and provide opportunities for holistic language development (Griva & Semoglou, 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2009, Papadopoulos et al., 2012).
In this framework, the expected learning outcomes involved the development of the students':
  i) Cognitive skills, through guiding students into knowledge-based activities where they were involved in problems solving and decision making situations.
  ii) Communication skills, through their participation in game activities, in dramatizations and in discussion activities where students were asked to express their views on a topic in group activities using the target language in authentic situations.
  iii) Cultural sensitivity and awareness, through engaging students in content-based activities that enhanced historical and cultural understanding (Korosidou & Griva, 2014).
The topics of the project were selected on the basis of including a variety of periods in which the monuments were built and considering the impact of those monuments on the life of their era. Students throughout the intervention, learnt about the Greek monuments, their construction, their role in the life of that era and their echoes in Modern Greek reality. The mini syllabus was designed around ten units encompassing some of the famous monuments in Greece.

a) Minoan Palace
The students were informed about the Minoan era and its chronological borders; also the parts of that the Minoan Palace were analyzed and constituted special stimulus for the students' further research. Special attention was paid to the operations of the Minoan Palace and its role in the daily local people's life till the decline of the Minoan Civilisation through multi-sensory activities.

b) White Tower of Thessaloniki
The students were placed in the era of the construction of the White Tower in the Ottoman's empire, while they were engaged in inquiry and game-based activities regarding the chronological borders of the empire. Moreover, students were motivated to investigate the importance of the tower for the city of Thessaloniki from its construction as a fortifies tower in the 15th century, Catering Guard of Janissaries and a prison death row to the present as an important museum.

c) Ancient Theatre of Larissa
The Ancient Theatre of Larissa constituted an important stimulus for the students in matters of developing their investigating skills, the target language and their intercultural awareness. They were given opportunities to realize its position in the Roman era while special emphasis was given to its role and significance in the daily life of the local people as a place of theatrical performances, assemblies, and roman arena. Finally, students constructed a craft of the theatre made of paper for the better understanding of the parts of it.

d) Philippi
The students participated in multisensory activities regarding the archaeological site of Philippi. They discovered the parts that this site consists of underlining the significance of them - a fortification wall, a theatre and several buildings- in the spotlight of the acne in the Hellenistic period and the expansion of Christianity through the teachings of St. Paul.

e) The Royal Tombs of Vergina
The Royal Tombs of Vergina became a subject of major 'investigation' from the part of the students. They took on the responsibility to 'discover' virtually the tombs and present their findings in the classroom. They dealt with the excavations of the tombs from the archaeologist Manolis Andronikos and the findings of the discoveries in way that was more than motivating for them through e-presentations, games and dramatizations.

 f) Parthenon
Students were introduced into the Greek Mythology and the folklores about the Gods of Mount Olympus and their unique powers to lead people and their actions. Parthenon, as a gift for the Goddess Athena, constituted a stimulus for the 'Mythological trip', while its significance on people's life as a temple and treasury was especially noted.

g) The navel of the earth
Regarding the topic of "The navel of the earth", the students were engaged in inquiry activities as for the myths and the legends about this monument and its position in the broader context of the archaeological place of Delphi. Digital presentations, e-games, pictures limerick poems written by the students and collage about the site supported and led the knowledge gaining of the students and their historic awareness.

h) The Lion Gate
The Lion Gate was taken as a symbol for the general context of the Mycenaean era in which students were placed. Special emphasis was given to the representation of the lionesses which was an emblem of the Mycenaean kings and a symbol of their power to both subjects and foreigners and to the construction of this massive and imposing monument.

i) The palace of the Grand Magister
The students were placed in the 14th century when Rhodes was under the Knights authority. They 'investigated' the historic knowledge about the Palace of the Grand Magister which was built by the Knights and it functioned as a palace – during the Knights ages – headquarter and fortress – during the Ottoman's Empire. The continuous reconstructions of the palace were also a basic 'area'of inquiry-based activities for students to participate actively.

j) Theatre of Dodona
The theatre of Dodona constitutes the last thematic area of the project. The limited information about its origins, its stated reconstructions and its role in the local life were the major points around which the games and interactive activities were designed.

Implementation
The project included 30 intervention sessions focused on the thematic areas of the monuments in Greece. An attempt was made to create a pleasant and creative learning environment, where students actually could develop personal and interpersonal skills (Papadopoulos, 2014). Thus, students had the chance to come into contact with a variety of stimuli, get acquainted with the historical and cultural wealth through the Greek monuments and express their own creativity. In such a context, opportunities were provided for collaboration, interaction, communication and problem solving.
The project was carried out through three stages:

  a) *Pre-stage,*
The focus of this stage was stressed on activating students' background knowledge and introducing the topic of the 'monuments' in a multisensory learning environment. There was used multimodal educational material to initiate discussion, such as power point slides, videos and pictures of the monuments. Meanwhile, the students expressed their queries and they did not hesitate to interact and participate in initial discussions about the monuments. In addition, the students were introduced to multimodal texts related to each monument, while coming across the necessary vocabulary.

b) Task-circle

In the main stage of every session, the students were put in the center of the learning process and were given opportunities to communicate and interact with their classmates. They were involved in various inquiry-based activities and had the opportunity to investigate, collaborate interact and communicate with each other, while trying to 'solve the problem' (Coyle, 2006; Griva & Kasvikis, in press; Papadopoulos & Peiou, 2014).

Among the creations the students produced during this stage were:

- A map of Greece with points in the cities of the monuments.
- A collage of stories regarding the monuments
- A craft of the Ancient Theatre of Larissa made of paper
- A Limerick poems book

They also created their own illustrated stories related to specific monuments they were taught about, and were involved in a variety of creative activities that helped them develop their writing and speaking skills in the target language (Papadopoulos, 2014).

After the completion of the task, each group presented their work in the class to inform their classmates about their 'product'. The teacher tried to incite a creative and constructive discussion, through their presentations, with the purpose of developing students' descriptive language sub-skills.

c) Follow-up stage.

The focus of the follow up stage was on the provision of continuous feedback from the part of the teacher and reflection on the learning process from the part of the students, as well as on recycling certain specific vocabulary. For the purpose of vocabulary and structural patterns consolidation, the students were involved in a number of games, crosswords, puzzle constructions, table games etc.

The students were assessed by their teacher through their portfolios, which included reflection notes, crafts produced by them and their stories and poems. Also, students reflected on their own learning by self-assessing their performance and their learning. The students' assessment was also achieved by estimating their participation in all activities and the general learning process. In fact, their involvement in games and physical activities can be an enjoyable way of informal assessment that could be used effectively within a content-based curriculum (Griva & Semoglou, 2013; Kelner, 1993 in Korosidou & Griva, 2014).

The evaluation of the project

For the estimation of the efficacy of the CLIL project in relation to content and the target language (GL2), there was 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 culture and history, as well as their competence in GL2. Students' were asked to choose the correct answer in multiple choice activities, crosswords, matches and creative writing activities.

Furthermore, the journals kept by the teacher/researcher were used as an additional evaluation tool for each teaching session. As far as the form of the

journal is concerned, it was based on the "questions for journal keeping" of Richards & Lockhart (1994). The questions of the journals that were set by the teacher/researcher focused on the fields.

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?

Moreover, throughout this project, the students kept their portfolios for their self-assessent purposes. At the end of every unit, the students recorded their strengths and weaknesses and they kept some of their constructions and writings. Actually, studies have indicated the beneficial impact of Portfolio on students' thinking abilities and its usefulness for their future life (Papadopoulos & Peiou, 2014; Wade & Yarbrough, 1996). It has also been proved to be advantageous in the development of their communicative and organizing skills, since they understand much more about the learning process and develop meta-cognitive awareness (Brown, 2002; Young, 2002).

The results
Teacher- researcher's Journal

The qualitative analysis of the journal entries led to the creation of four typologies: a) teaching process, b) teacher's role, c) student's attitudes and d)overall evaluation of the teaching session encompassing a number of categories and subcategories (see Table 1).

Table 1. Journal Records

Typologies	Categories	Subcategories
	Techniques And activities	o Intergroup interaction
		o whole class discussion
		o brainstorming
		o teaching with
		o multimedia
Teaching Process		o differentiated activiti**es**
		o creative activities
		o inquiry-based activities

	Aids	o posters, maps
		o books
		o iinformation technologies (videos, powerpoint, e-games)
	Language of Communication	o use of mother tongue (L1)
		o use of second language (L2)
		o nonverbal communication
Teacher's Role	Provision of Assistance	o encouragement
		o instructions for the activities
		o scaffolding
		o organizing students' o work according to their interests
Student's Attitude	Students' Behavior Participation	o learning about history and culture as a pleasurable experience
		o interest in inquiry -based o activities
		o interest in group cooperation
		o active participation in crea o activities
		o participation in o experiential activities
Overall Evaluation of the teaching session	Problems Encountered	o students' difficulty in understanding certain concepts
		o students' difficulty in specific vocabulary
		o students' difficulty regarding o receptive skills
		o students' difficulty regarding o productive skills

	Learning Outcome	o use of target language for o communication
		o acquiring o content-specific vocabulary
		o social skills development
		o cognitive skills development
		o self- and peer-assessment o skills development
		o Developing content-specific knowledge
		o pleasurable learning

Results of the pre- and post- test

Specific Vocabulary

During the pre-test, the teacher distributed to each student individually a worksheet in which the student had to match the Greek content words (specific vocabulary) of the Part A' with the Albanian words of the Part B' with the same meaning. The following table, 2.1, shows the results of the correct answers of each student comparing his/her performance in the pre-test to the post- test one.

Table 2.1 Total of correct answers

	Experimental Group		Control Group	
Students	Number of words pre-test	Number of words Post test	Number of words pre-test	Number of words Post test
Student 1	7	13	9	12
Student 2	9	14	6	10
Student 3	7	12	8	9
Student 4	8	13	7	10
Student 5	8	12	7	9
Student 6	7	12	6	10
Student 7	7	14	6	10
Student 8	6	12	5	9
Student 9	8	12	7	10
Student 10	7	11	8	12
Student 11	8	14	7	10
Student 12	6	13	7	8

Student 13	6	12	6	9
Student 14	6	10	6	9
Student 15	7	12	6	10
Mean	7,13	12,4	6,73	9,8

The Table 2.2 shows the mean score and the standard deviation in the correct answers of the students of the experimental and control group. The one-way ANOVA test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in using specific vocabulary ($F_{(30)}=5.321$, $p<0.05$), when performing the task in Greek (L2).

Specifically, the students of the experimental group showed a clear increase in the number of the correct answers at the post-test (m: 12,4) comparing it to the pre-test results (m: 7,13). Regarding the control group's students, the increase was lower at the post test (m: 9,8) when compared with their pre-test one (m: 6,7).

2.2 Mean and Std. Deviation
Experimental Group and control group

	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Pre-Test	**Post-Test**	**Pre-Test**	**Post-Test**
Mean	7,13	12,40	6,73	9,80
Std. Deviation	0,915	1,121	1,032	1,082

Writing skills
Concerning the second activity, the students had to use 6 of the words of the previous exercise to create their own story entitled "My own culture". The students were assessed through the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in the sub-criteria shown on the table 3 with the results of the pre- and post- test for the experimental and control group.

As the results indicate, the students of the experimental group demonstrated a clear development in the writing skill of the target language. They developed their "text production" ability, their vocabulary and their structural correctness while it is obvious that they achieved to answer the task question better, more accurately and with more complexity at the post than in the pre-test.

Table 3. Writing Skill Development
Experimental Group

CEFR Grids for Assessing the Writing Skill	
Production	
Pre-Test	**Post-Test**
The students were able to write a series of *simple phrases and sentences linked with* *simple connectors like "and", „but" and „because".*	*The students could write straightforward connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest.*
Accuracy	
Pre-Test	**Post-Test**
The students were able to use some simple *structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.*	*The students were able to use reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations*
Range and Complexity	
Pre-Test	**Post-Test**
The students could use basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations	*The students were able to have enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express themselves with some hesitation and circumlocutions on everyday topics.*
Orthographic Control	
Pre-Test	**Post-Test**
The students could copy short sentences on everyday subjects and write with reasonable phonetic accuracy (but not necessarily fully standard spelling) short words that are in his/her oral vocabulary.	*The students could produce continuous writing, which is generally intelligible throughout. Spelling, punctuation and layout are accurate enough to be followed most of the time.*

As for the students of the control group, they maintained about the same linguistic level in the target language in most of their sub-skills of their written language. However, they managed to develop partially some of the sub-skills of the writing skill as shown in below being assessed through the CEFR Grids for the writing skills evaluation.

More specifically, the students developed

- Their "Production" sub-skill because of the touch and the practice they did.
- Students were able to understand and produce a text with very common words and phrases that are related to their every day life and very basic information.
- They could also pass on the relevant message in a simple & direct exchange of limited information on personal & concrete matters, although more complex messages may be compromised, leading to frequent misunderstanding.
- They could deploy basic vocabulary & structures that manage to convey a simple message.

Content knowledge

In the next activity, students were asked to perform a multiple choice exercise related to the content knowledge. The table 4 presents the Mean performance and the Standard Deviation of the answers as far as the students of the experimental and control group are concerned. The one-way ANOVA test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in content knowledge (F (30)= 6.846, p<0.05).

With the analysis of the experimental group students' answers, an increase was revealed in students' correct answers at the post- test (m: 19,4) compared to those at the pre-test (m: 9,8). An increase but not to the prior students' extend, was revealed regarding the control group students, who achieved lower marks (m: 14,4), compared to the performance of the experimental group, at the post test.

Table 4 Mean and Std. Deviation
Experimental Group and control group

	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Pre-Test	**Post-Test**	**Pre-Test**	**Post-Test**
Mean	9,80	19,47	9,60	14,53
Std. Deviation	1,080	1,240	1,500	1,410

Discussion

This topic based project aimed at developing immigrant students' competence in GL2 and raising of their cultural awareness and historic understanding. As for the language competence, the pilot CLIL project proved to help students of the experimental group develop their writing

skill and its sub-skills -"production", "accuracy", "range and complexity" and the "orthographic control". More specifically, as shown from the evaluation of the writing skills, the students used adjectives and various words to "adorn" their language, because they realized through this project how to develop their accuracy and how to use the target language in each communicative circumstance (Lo & Murphy, 2010, Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010, Zydatiß, 2007). It is worth mentioning that the CLIL students' performance in writing skills was higher than that of the control group. Actually, previous studies revealed that the students who attend CLIL classes achieve better results compared to the students who receive a traditional language instruction (Jexenflicker & Dalton Puffer, 2010 in Ruiz se Zarobe, 2010). In this intervention, the students of the experimental group seemed to have created a wide range of general and specific vocabulary and structural resources that leads to the producing of more complex and accurate texts in matters of tenses, spelling and register with high communicative characteristics in the way the messages are conveyed.

Furthermore, according to the records of the teacher's journal throughout the programme, students came into continuous communication and interaction with the teacher and their classmates in the target language as a learning community in which students with the common aim of enhancing and sharing knowledge, are willing to support the community and non members and they are valued for their various contribution establishing an environment in which learning is of major importance and as a result, the more the students get in touch and use the language, the more fluent and ready to use it they become (Eurydice, 2006). Students had the opportunity to use GL2 in various ways, while participating in interactive games. As a result through the analysis of journals' entries, it was showed that students seemed to become more and more confident to communicate in the target language, while competence in communicative skills was also revealed in many previous studies conducted with content-based FL/L2 programmes. (Hűttner & Rieder-Bűnemann, 2010, Maillat, 2010, Mewald, 2007, Moore, 2009). The students through their participation in the CLIL project became more determined and decisive to use the target language in a 'non-threatening' game-based context, in which they were taught certain aspects of history and culture. Also, they comprehended concepts, they expressed their own ideas and they stated their difficulties in the target language.

With regard to the subject area, the results of the pre- and post- test showed students' development in content knowledge. The Greek monuments constituted a source of knowledge and values for the students. They gained a wealth of knowledge about the Greek culture,

while this has been proved to have a positive effect on making immigrant students understand aspects of Modern Greek community. The students through the collaborative activities participated actively in the learning process and of course they managed to direct their own learning, which is a significant skill of the learning communities. So, this topic and game-based project at the same time could not but serve beneficially for the students' cognitive and social skills development. In other words, immigrant students proved to develop their competence in GL2, be familiarized with aspects of Greek history and culture, and enhance their motivation for the learning process.

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