

Reaffirming the Teacher Role within the Context of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Case Study and Relevant Issues

Ourania KATSARA

Tutor of English for Specific Purposes

University of Patras, Greece

Email: okatsara@upatras.gr

Abstract

The issue of quality teaching has been the subject of educational research, but there is not much empirical support noted in research findings on the connection of quality teaching and the teachers' abilities. Quality teaching is also discussed in terms of culturally responsive pedagogy indicating that this teaching approach underscores the learner-centered approach. The main argument of this article is that emphasis is placed on the role of the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process, suggesting that the Greek teacher role is reaffirmed within the context of culturally responsive pedagogy. In addition, the article describes and explains how cultural variables are determining factors in designing appropriate syllabi for Greek university students and in choosing appropriate teaching methodology techniques for effective teaching in university settings. Specifically, the reason why the dimension of instructional clarity is important in relation to teaching any Greek national cohort is illustrated. Some examples of lesson plans are also presented explaining in detail the materials used, the learning environment and classroom management in relation to a course on English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) taught in the first term. A number of activities done in class during this course are described offering some key pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Quality teaching, instructional clarity, culturally responsive pedagogy, Greek students, English for General Academic Purposes

This paper was first published in 2015 in English Language Teaching World Online (ELTWO Journal), Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore.

Introduction

The quality of teaching in educational practices cannot be overemphasised (Banks et al, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). The concept of quality teaching is grounded in different assumptions. According to Kennedy (2008), these differences can be seen in three perspectives: teacher's cognitive resources, their performance and their effect. However, empirical support for each of the above is weak (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Kersting, Givvin, Sotelo & Stigler, 2010; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). This is an indicator that teacher quality is a complicated concept. Lewis, Romi, Qui & Katz (2005) stated that it is not easy to decide what and how to measure it.

Stronge (2007) identified four dimensions that characterise teacher effectiveness: instructional delivery, student assessment, learning environment and personal qualities. Each of these dimensions sheds light on an aspect of the teacher's professional qualifications and responsibilities without being mutually exclusive (Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2010, p. 340).

A central argument is that teacher-centred or learner-centred approaches are culturally driven. Hofstede (1986, 1996) has developed the cultural dimensions theory, which is a framework for cross-cultural communication describing the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members and how these values relate to behaviour. Specifically, the cultural dimensions in Hofstede's work (1986) are analysed as follows. Power distance refers to the degree of inequality which is accepted among people with and without power. Uncertainty avoidance relates to the degree of anxiety that society members feel when they engage in uncertain or unknown situations. Masculinity represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. In contrast, femininity stands for preference for cooperation, modesty, and caring for the weak. Finally, individualism refers to the strength of the ties people have with others within the community. According to Hofstede's work (1986, 1996), the Greeks score high in power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity while they score somewhat low in individualism. These scores imply that Greek students expect the teacher to be the expert in a teacher- centered classroom, prefer explicit instruction and get frustrated with the concept of independent learning. The teacher's academic reputation and students' priority on getting high achievement scores are the prevailing factors. In addition, Greek students exhibit high collectivism, which indicates that students often form subgroups in class. Maintenance of "face" is also important in avoiding disagreements.

Some of these cultural variables identified by Hofstede's analysis are confirmed in surveys undertaken by Katsara (2002, 2010) in relation to Greek students' academic behaviour both in British and Greek universities. Specifically, uncertainty avoidance was clearly identified by Katsara in 2002, who indicated that Greeks require specific information about the different educational system and study methods when studying in UK universities. It was found that the use of a culture-specific designed website providing students with specific pre- arrival information about academic and social issues in the host country and explaining these

differences in relation to the Greek culture was evaluated positively by the participants.

In addition, Greek students' concerns in a Greek university setting were related to misunderstandings of study methods and assessment. Students noted that getting information directly from the tutor or via a site specially designed for the English course offered at the university could be the best support strategy to help them adjust to the new academic environment (Katsara, 2010). The main implication is that in both British and Greek university settings, Greek students turn apprehensive towards situations which they perceive as unclear, while the role of the teacher appears important in facilitating the learning process.

The above surveys show that the role of culture is crucial in the teaching situation and it would be valuable to take it into account in lesson planning. This indicates that Greek teachers perhaps need to consider students' needs placing emphasis on cultural variables. However, more research is needed in order to gather sufficient evidence identifying certain parameters that need to be researched further. Katsara (2014) found that Greek students proved willing to self-assess their exam-taking techniques and they recognised that they were not properly trained to deal with exam papers. Students reported that they were not confident to employ certain strategies when dealing with exam questions implying that they need specific instruction on how to apply these techniques. This case study shows that Greek learners' self-assessment identified that for Greeks, culturally responsive pedagogy means employing formative assessment within the teaching practice. More research on students' reaction on the use of formative assessment in relation to other aspects of learning could be useful. This is also noted by McSweeney (2002), who criticised Hofstede's model, stating that: "...Hofstede's claims are unbalanced, because there is too great a desire to 'prove' his a priori convictions rather than evaluate the adequacy of his 'findings' "(p.112). Greek students' reaction to a teaching approach which is based on Hofstede's analysis would be useful in identifying the extent to which Hofstede's analysis is adequate and appropriate to be implemented within the curriculum.

The current article is an example of how the concept of power can enhance culturally responsive pedagogy in the Greek context. Specifically, the article will describe some lesson plans embracing the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy and this procedure could be used as a hypothesis needed to be researched further. Hofstede's cultural variables and Gay's (2002) principles of culturally responsive pedagogy will be used to explain the reasons why certain teaching methodologies were selected. A university course on English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) offered in the first term will be described and the activities practised in class by students will be presented. The connection between quality teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy will be discussed by placing emphasis on the teacher's abilities. In the Greek context, the role of a teacher as facilitator of learning will be put forward. In this sense, the main argument is that the hypothetically preferable teaching method is one that reconciles the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, which privileges the learner-centred approach with the teacher-centred nature of a Greek classroom.

Literature Review

In order to contextualise the main argument of the paper, the following sections offer a literature review of (a) the complexity of instructional delivery and (b) the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy and its connection to learning approaches.

The complexity of instructional delivery

Within the teaching context, instructional delivery is very important. Instructional delivery includes "the myriad teacher responsibilities that provide the connection between the curriculum and the student" (Stronge, Ward & Grant, 2010, p. 340). The subcomponents of instructional delivery are: instructional differentiation, instructional focus on learning, instructional clarity, instructional complexity, expectations for student learning, the use of technology and questioning (Stronge et al, 2010, pp. 340-341).

In this sense the difference between teacher-centered instruction and learner-centered instruction is a crucial basis when any teaching situation is being analyzed. Weimer (2002) indicated that there are five variables which differentiate the two approaches, namely (a) the goal of the teacher, (b) the role of the teacher, (c) students' motivational orientation, (d) assessment, (e) student interaction. Weimer (2002) argued that these variables can be used to clarify the main assumptions of each approach. In teacher-centered approaches, students work to meet the objectives set by the teacher where the teacher plans the activities implemented to help students meet those objectives. Classroom interaction is under the teacher's control. Under this basis, extrinsic motivators such as grades or other rewards are the teachers' tools to motivate learners. Thus, objective assessments are used by teachers to determine grades. In contrast, learner-centered approaches regard teachers as facilitators while students work to carry out a process to develop a response to the central question presented by the teacher. Teachers choose questions that motivate students; assessment is open-ended where students examine their own learning and focus attention on their learning needs. Collaborative learning is essential in allowing students to make decisions regarding with whom they work and how they do so.

The main implication is that the concept of power appears to play an important role in shaping teacher-student relationships. Freire (1993) stated that power sharing entails students being given a voice in the selection of the content in class, while the teachers must position themselves alongside the learner placing attention on the learning process. This relationship indicates that students themselves provide more information for teachers (Sysoyev, 1999). It is argued that two kinds of information can be provided by students. The first reflects students' "possession," that is, their current level in their L2 in English for specific purpose (ESP) learning, motivation and preferred methods of learning. The second indicates what learners want to achieve, traditionally called "ESP needs" (Sysoyev, 2000). This dual form of information corresponds to the two levels of knowledge presented in Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The first stage involves what learners can do by themselves. The second stage involves their potential and what the learners can

accomplish with the help of a more competent person. Vygotsky argues that the mediator is the teacher who helps students achieve what they cannot do by themselves.

The above discussion indicates that there is a need to scrutinize the roles of both the teachers and the learners in any learning situation in order to provide a more accurate definition of instructional delivery.

Culturally responsive pedagogy and its connection to learning approaches

The trend for teachers to use their students' language and culture as resources and not view them as barriers in learning was initiated in the 1970s in response to increasing classroom diversity in the United States (Santamaria, 2009). Researchers encouraged teachers to critically question their own understanding of diversity in order to meet the needs of their students appropriately (Aragon, 1973). Researchers such as Forbes (1973), Banks (1975) and Gay (1975) indicated that there was a need for schools to change existing curriculum practices by incorporating cultural and linguistic diversity in all content areas in order to make academic tasks into frames of reference for all students (Gay, 1975, p. 181). Research findings showed that socio-culturally centred teaching resulted in varying degrees of improved student achievement (Gay, 2000). It was suggested that student ethnic identities, home languages and cultural backgrounds should be taken into account in order to design interactive teaching strategies (Ladson-Billings, 2001). The socio-cultural foundation of this approach implies that culturally responsive teaching practices are student-centred, where the teacher responds to the needs of the students within the context of a particular setting (Levin, Hammer & Coffey, 2009).

On this basis, culturally responsive pedagogy uses students' cultural orientations, background experiences and ethnic identities as channels to facilitate teaching and learning (Gay, 2000). Gay (2000) identified six phases which a teacher needs to take into account in order to become culturally responsive.

- The first "validating" phase is where teachers are validating and affirming. A variety of strategies which correspond to learning differences should be used as well as participatory strategies including individual and cooperative activities. Teachers should encourage students to challenge existing social and power structures.
- The second "comprehensive" phase implies that teachers should set high and maintain expectations enabling students to be responsible for their own learning as well as for that of others. The teacher should create an academic community of learners.
- The third "multidimensional" phase indicates that teachers should encourage students to be responsive to information presented by asking them to participate in the design of a curriculum. Appropriate instructional strategies and performance assessments are essential. Students should also be encouraged to be responsible for their own cultural socialisation.

- The fourth "empowering" phase entails fostering students' faith to become successful learners and better human beings. By designing syllabi that support high levels of achievement, teachers should illustrate to students what is expected of them.
- The fifth "transformative" phase involves teachers defying traditional teaching practices. The teacher's role is to help learners develop a social consciousness that combats injustices.
- The sixth "emancipatory" phase involves creating a situation where teachers must encourage learners to voice their own thinking and become active participants in their own learning. In this sense the teacher must liberate students by encouraging them to question the "absolute authority" of their own instruction.

A number of studies in the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy discussed below show ways where the teacher is using Gay's principles in the learning situation.

Eisenclas and Trevaskes (2007) discussed teaching within an intercultural communication context in an Australian university. They proposed a shift of focus away from "teachers as instructors" to "students as investigators," suggesting various activities to enhance students' development of skills. One activity involved a weekly database search asking students to select a journal paper relevant to each weekly topic. Students thus developed a portfolio of readings (custom-made textbook). This activity reflects the "comprehensive" phase where the students are responsible for their own learning.

Along similar lines, Haines (2007) discussed a project where students were invited to write free-form essays on diversity at George Mason University. These open-ended essays would be a direct way to let students formulate their own thinking about diversity. The essays provided snapshots of diversity on campus. This activity proved to be useful because it provided opportunities for the students to sharpen their thinking in relation to diversity. This activity reflects the fifth "transformative" phase where the learners are developing a social consciousness.

Cooperative learning in a Japanese university was analysed by Fukumura (2011), where investigation undertaken by students was encouraged. This (investigation) included a survey that involved a group project implemented in a university English as a foreign language class that focused on intercultural communication. Students surveyed their classmates by interviewing them on a selected topic in the field of intercultural communication. This activity helped them begin to shift from "knowledge consumers" to "knowledge producers". The value of cooperation was also appreciated. This activity reflects the third "multidimensional" phase, where the learners are being encouraged to be responsive to the information presented to them.

It is implied that the importance of student perceptions, decisions and actions should be taken into consideration. This could be framed as existentialism, which dictates that the

teacher's role is to help students define their existence by exposing them to a variety of paths that they may follow in life in an environment in which students can choose their individual way (Sadker & Zittleman, 2006).

However, there is evidence in the literature indicating that teachers may not be properly trained to implement learner-centred policies. Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf and Moni (2006) found that teachers in Thai secondary schools reported that although they had positive attitudes towards the learner-centered approach, readiness of the teachers, students' receptiveness to the approach and availability of resources were the most important factors that impede educators to adapt this policy.

This gap between intent and practice and between knowledge and outcomes might also be attributed to different cultural models of teaching and learning. Huda (2013) argued that Bangladesh teachers remain at the centre of all classroom activities determining the process of learning. This survey indicates that co-operative learning or group work among others appears not to be culturally appropriate since the cultural pattern of the country places high importance on seniority and superiority. However, findings in a survey undertaken by Kingston and Forland (2004), showed that it is the teacher's pedagogical approach that might most influence students' learning behaviour. The majority of the international students in the survey's sample pointed out that in the UK, the teaching styles are more open and expressed their frustration that in their home countries, they were not encouraged to express their opinions freely at university.

Evidence in the above literature review suggests that even though there are ways to implement culturally responsive practices in the learning situation, different national cohorts might have different perceptions on teaching methodologies. Although the context in which learning takes place is important, the learners' learning styles might point the way to the appropriate teaching method. This indicates that the role of the teacher and the way the lesson is taught might be equally important in the learning situation. Bax (2003) seems to be in favour of these findings when he argues that first priority should be placed on the learning context, including learner variables, before other priorities such as teaching approach and language focus. He further asserts that after looking at and analyzing the learning context, one should take account of individuals (learning styles, strategies), classroom culture (group motivation, school environment), local culture (regional differences, status of teachers and students in the community) and national culture (politics, religion). Only then would one deal with a teaching approach (methodology, materials, methods) to accomplish those aims, and finally consider a language focus (lexis, phonology, grammar) (Bax, 2003, p.287).

In light of Hofstede's analysis and the argument put forward by Bax (2003), the following sections describe ways where the Greek learners are taught in a teacher-centred classroom with the caveat that the teacher acts as a facilitator rather than the authority in the learning context.

Description of the EGAP course and the teaching approach chosen

The following sections offer a description of the English for General Academic Purposes course offered in the university. An overview of the English courses taught throughout the year is offered and class activities, the teaching approach and Greek students' attitudes towards the usefulness of the courses are also analysed.

Overview of the English courses offered in the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises

English language is a compulsory subject in the university curriculum for the first two semesters and the grades obtained count when calculating the final degree. The English for General Academic purposes (EGAP) course is a weekly three-hour session taught in the first term. At the end of term students need to sit in exams. A bank of materials, both authentic and house-made (Katsara, 2008, 2010), are used in the EGAP class. The value of this is also indicated by Johns (1981), who claimed that no textbook can fulfil the demands of a specific situation. Students participate in weekly class activities and are assigned a number of points for each task. Group work comprises 15% of the points allocated to the course. In this way, students are motivated to do the tasks. Group work activities are linked to additional tutorial sessions in the teacher's office. In both cases tutor involvement is essential.

Greek learners' attitude towards the English course

The university law in Greece affects students' attitude towards attending an English course in the university. According to this law, every department makes its own decisions concerning the number of courses offered within its curriculum. If the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tutor belongs to a specific department, according to law, it is his/her responsibility to teach and hold the examinations for the course the way he/she thinks it is appropriate. However, there are ESP tutors who do not belong to a specific department but to the whole university. Any department interested in English courses to be incorporated into their curriculum makes an application to the university and an ESP tutor is sent to do the teaching. In this case, each department decides on the way the course will be delivered and in some cases exemptions from attending the course are permissible for students who are holders of the Cambridge proficiency certificate. This is the case because in Greece holders of this certificate can teach in the private sector and are thus considered experts. The ESP tutor is not responsible for this decision, and unfortunately, there are some departments in Greece, which have followed this lead. As a result, students often feel that the course is not useful, and they have no motivation to attend it since Greek universities do not award certificates in specialised English. In addition, according to university law, it is not compulsory to attend classes and students who do attend do not have to sign any registers.

Class activities

Class activities involve reading, writing in an academic context, and speaking Part I

(participating in seminars) which are taught in the first term. The reading component of the course covers issues related to the development of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, reading for specific information, reading to locate main ideas. The writing component of the course covers the generic aspects of academic writing such as use of evidence and argument, reference to other authors and sources, general organisational patterns, academic style and neutrality of tone. Teaching involves written group activities based on materials given from textbooks and academic journals. Students are thus trained to deal with information from various academic sources in order to express their points of view. This enables students to recognise implicit meaning in various texts triggering critical thinking. The use of role plays is included making the lesson more motivating.

Listening and speaking part II (oral presentations) are implemented and practised in the English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course in the spring term. Emphasis is placed upon students' further professional and academic needs. The main objective of this course is to develop students' written and oral skills in the ESP domain. Class activities involve activities in relation to writing business documents such as company memos, press releases, corporate blogs and business reports. Additionally, training on presenting reports and graphs, making deals, dealing with staff reaction, addressing concerns, making public statements, and debating is offered. Students practice these skills by participating in group activities and completing tasks from exercises in their textbook.

Teaching approach

The teaching approach chosen embraces Hofstede's analysis of Greek learners. Students' preference to work in groups reflects the low score in individualism while aspiration to get high scores reflects masculinity. These preferences are also shown in Katsara's survey on class motivation carried out in 2008. It was found that it would be useful to promote both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to attend the English course. The survey showed that both types of motivation can be in progress when students engage in a role play group activity because on the one hand they find it interesting (intrinsic), and on the other, because they want to improve their speaking skills in order to gain marks from in-class activities (extrinsic) on the other.

However, the role of the teacher is important since students get stressed if asked to work independently reflecting power distance. The need for clear instructions on how to deal with learning tasks is very important for them reflecting uncertainty avoidance. It is implied therefore that the role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning process. Instructional clarity appears to be the key tool when designing effective lesson plans.

In addition, this process encourages autonomy. This is indicated by Antic (2007), who argued that since teachers cannot provide their students with all the knowledge and skills they would like to have, the best way is to provide learners with strategies on how to learn by themselves. The first step in autonomy is to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Under this basis, the suggested plan is that Greek learners could use the

knowledge and skills they already possess in order to make sense of the new information. This reflects Vygotsky's work (1978), which viewed teaching as leading through task-oriented interactions. Students do as much as they can on their own and then the teacher intervenes to provide assistance to complete the task. By using this approach, the major concern is to maximize learning. In this way the second "comprehensive" phase is fulfilled since teachers set high expectations and students are responsible for their progress. The main principle is that what is important is to discover how someone acquires the competence to perform. This reflects the "validating" phase since the use of group work enables students to challenge power structures within a classroom setting. In addition, this approach indicates that participatory strategies correspond to students' learning needs. The teaching and learning situation reflects work by Rogoff, Matusov and White (1996). Similar to Lave and Wenger's community of practice they proposed a "community of learners" model, where learning is about transforming the nature of one's participation in a collaborative endeavour. A learner moves from observer to participant to leader of collaborative activity. The teacher discovers new ways to teach and new ways to change his/her roles accordingly. This model reflects the fifth "transformative" phase where the teacher helps the students understand how to deal with inequities.

Some examples of lesson plans

This section describes the procedures for teaching EGAP to Greek students. The types of materials involve a combination of house-made materials (Katsara, 2008, 2010) and published materials available in the market.

Description of house-made materials

The main purpose of Katsara's book is to help students develop their reading efficiency and improve their ability to express themselves in oral and written form. In particular, it tries to familiarise students with the language used in British newspapers. The book is intended for students at the intermediate or advanced level who need to get into the swing of using the language that describes the rich tapestry of events in the everyday context. The book consists of 30 units, where students have the chance to deal with authentic articles published in British newspapers. Each unit includes a variety of exercises so that students can practice using the language read and spoken every day. These exercises are designed to make students comprehend articles, which trigger critical thinking and participation in class discussions. The language sections of each unit aim at helping students enrich their vocabulary and polish up their writing skills. Grammar exercises are also included to help learners comprehend some tricky grammar points. The book is written as a classroom workbook, but teachers may also find it useful as supplementary material in cases where English for General Academic Purposes is taught. The book can be used by the teacher as a source of ideas on which to base a lesson on certain study skills. It can be used selectively in accordance with the syllabus proposed and it can serve both as a basis for revision and as means for practicing new skills.

Explanation of procedures during the teaching situation

1. Example A: activities-excerpted from *Every Day English*, Unit 24 (R. Katsara, 2010): using *The art of working in a team*, an article published in *The Guardian* (H. Swain, 2008). The exercise outline offers the following activities: (a) comprehension questions using the true/false format, (b) summarising activities where students are asked to complete sentences using their own words as much as possible, (c) vocabulary bank activities where students are asked to find words in the article which are synonyms with a set of words given, (d) students are also asked to offer antonyms, (e) morphological exercises where students are asked to fill in a box with suitable derivatives, (f) gap filling exercises are also given for extra vocabulary enrichment, (g) match up words and expressions/collocations, (h) grammar exercises, (i) extended summary writing, (j) speaking activities.

Procedure: The first stage involves the teacher asking students to read the article by themselves. A 7- minute limit is set by the teacher to read it. Then the exercises are done in class. This specific outline reflects cultural variables. The time limit is important because students need to get into the habit of reading quickly. Uncertainty avoidance implies structured learning and precise objectives. In addition, the exercises are done in class because students need exact instructions on how to deal with exercises.

For exercises on extended summary writing and speaking activities students are asked to work in groups and choose their own partners. This reflects collectivism in Hofstede's terms. In addition, students learn to respect what each other says and value what each student brings into the classroom community. Students also feel a sense of belonging by creating and maintaining a classroom community. In this way students' choice in the classroom gives them a sense of power and reinforces the need for freedom. However, this freedom is limited by asking them to choose a different partner each week. This minimises ghettoism and ensures that all students do their share in a task. This strategy reflects the fourth "empowering" phase where the teachers are encouraging students to learn and succeed academically in an environment that supports information exchange and respect for differences. In addition, this restriction is a useful strategy to foster group cohesion. Katsara (2008) found that students reported an unequal contribution by group members. It was suggested that teachers should teach students the real meaning of unequal contribution in group work. Michaelson, Fink and Knight (1997) indicated that teachers should require students to make a concrete decision in order to apply or solve a problem. In this way everyone in the group participates in completing the task

The extended summary writing activity involves students working on a task to explain the concept of team work by relating examples. Their task is to write a concept summary (Hall, 1997). Students are given a copy of the unit "Talking about Ideas" from a book written by Mc Carthy and O'dell (2008) entitled *Academic Vocabulary in Use*. Exercises from this book are completed. This is important because the activity involves opportunities for both analysis and synthesis reflecting uncertainty avoidance. The unit is divided into two sections.

The first section analyses ways in which some nouns are used in relation to talking about ideas. Their meaning is explained offering an example sentence where this noun is used. The second section offers a number of exercises where students are asked to (a) replace the words in bold with words offered in section one of the unit, (b) change the words in bold from singular to plural and vice versa by making any other necessary changes to each sentence, (c) match the beginnings of each sentence with the most appropriate endings. This second section is thus offering opportunities for students to synthesise what they have learned in section one of the unit. Greeks (like most students from many other cultural groups) feel secure in situations where any misunderstanding is dissolved. Then students are assigned to work in groups using information from *The Guardian* article and what they practised in McCarthy and O'dell's book. In this way tasks are challenging but at the same time within students' capabilities. Activities, therefore, are well implemented in the syllabus.

During student work, the teacher moves from table to table and acts as a consultant asking students to become responsible for their own progress. This reflects power distance because Greeks feel that the teacher is a key figure in any educational setting.

2. Example B: The speaking activity involves the use of seminar practice in the classroom. Materials consist of a pack of selected texts from various additional sources. The exercises outline is divided into three parts. Students are asked to work in small groups and (a) select appropriate points from a text or an article, (b) present in class, (c) take part in a seminar.

For this procedure, students are asked to work in groups and make an impromptu presentation on a subject they have not prepared. Each group is given a pack of texts and asked to read them and synthesise the information. This idea was suggested by Alan Greaves, of the University of Liverpool. Students are expected to have read the texts in 30 minutes. Then they have 10 minutes each to present in class. The next step is to take part in a seminar where all students participate. At the end of the seminar they should reach an agreement on the topic under discussion. A list of useful expressions for discussions is given to each student (expressing agreement/disagreement, interruptions, clarifications, rephrasing, giving opinions etc). This approach reflects the "multidimensional" since teachers include a variety of materials into their repertoire of instructional strategies enabling students to think independently and select appropriate information.

Another variation of this activity includes giving groups of students texts in advance and asking them to be ready to present the main idea. However, who will present in class is only revealed when all students have arrived at the seminar. A short discussion follows and every week one group writes up revision notes based on these seminars. These notes are marked and students are assigned points for the quality of these notes. Feedback is presented in class. This idea was suggested by Chris Megone, of the University of Leeds.

The procedure for the seminars culturally corresponds to the Greek students' needs. Students strive to do well and not lose face reflecting collectivism and masculinity in Hofstede's analysis. The suggested group work encourages students to share their cultural

knowledge reflecting the sixth "emancipatory" phase since they are encouraged to voice their own thinking. Their different backgrounds are the group's greatest asset since their knowledge of the world is very important when taking part in discussions. The teacher's behaviour is also in accordance with Hofstede's cultural characteristics. Students are assigned marks for their performance while the teacher's feedback is presented in class. This can be useful for teachers to shape their teaching accordingly, reflecting thus the importance attached to power distance in the Greek context.

An interesting aspect of this procedure refers to the suggested follow-up activity, where students are invited to come to the teacher's office for a tutorial regarding class activities. At the end of term, a report on students' performance is presented by the teacher on the aforementioned activities, and students are free to ask for further clarifications during that session. This is important because, during this process, the students' main mistakes identified from the activities are summarized, making clear all the relevant points. Since students are contributing to feedback collection, this session reflects Greeks' high score on uncertainty avoidance and it minimises power distance. This procedure also enhances an aspect of autonomy in the learning process. The opportunity for dialogue is an important tool used in any teaching process since it provides opportunities for students to explore what they can do by themselves and their potential for autonomous work and encourages them to accomplish more with the help of a skilled mediator (Vygotsky, 1978). It is also a great opportunity for the teacher to implement metacognitive strategies in the syllabus. The main implication is that this procedure paves the way for students to engage in an appropriate self-assessment regarding their performance.

Classroom management during the teaching situation

During the teaching situation an emerging issue was that I had to fight the tendency to fall back on traditional teaching practices. Gay's (2000) sixth "emancipatory" phase involves the case of liberating students to question "the absolute authority" of my instruction. It was not easy to apply this principle in class because Greek teachers' perceptions of an ideal teaching approach imply that the teacher is the guru, one who imparts knowledge to students and maintains control in class. This is also indicated by Giannikas (2013), who argued that in the Greek educational system language educators are reluctant to abandon their teacher-centred teaching approaches because they have not been trained to apply classroom management techniques that could support a student-centred environment. In addition, Tzakosta (2010) in her survey found that 70.2% of the students reported that there are no rules on appropriate class behaviour implemented in the Greek state senior high school EFL classrooms. This is also reflected in research findings reported by Ausbrooks, Jones & Tijerina (2011), who found that students expressed desires for their tutors to become aware of behaviours and to take actions to enforce guidelines. These findings indicate that the use of rules in classroom management is essential. Katsara (2012) argued that regarding the Greek case, rules should be clear making these students realise that they need to comply with prescribed norms. Therefore, a useful idea might involve the creation of a web site which offers comprehensive,

specific and relevant information for the English courses. My site available in the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises at University of Patras at http://www.deapt.upatras.gr/English_website/index.html is an example of such an instrument.

Pedagogical Implications and future research

The main implication of culturally responsive pedagogy for Greeks means finding ways to improve communication between learners and teachers. Reshaping the syllabus should involve the creation of inquiry-based syllabus where students hypothesize, experiment with new ideas and receive feedback (Darling-Hammond & Young, 1997). In this sense, the role of the teacher appears to be reinforcing for allowing student voice in the teaching situation. This is in line with the suggestions made by Leal, Tribe & de Holanda (2013), who found that lecturers think that it is important to allow students to voice their opinion related to any issue regarding their educational experience. The important issue, therefore, seems to be the appropriate blending of these roles implying that care is needed when defining the role of the teacher in culturally responsive practices. This was indicated by Leal, Tribe & de Holanda (2013), who found that some lecturers showed little awareness of what listening to students really mean.

The procedures chosen to teach Greek students reflect "cooperative learning". Gay (2003) stated that cooperative learning involves small groups of students using a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of the group is responsible for both learning what is taught and helping other team members learn. Instruction is culturally mediated since diverse ways of understanding and presenting information is the focus. For the tutor cooperative learning means minimising my role as the only source of knowledge. Students work in groups, but with my guidance. This reflects collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. For the students, cooperative learning methods are designed to maximise participation and production, reflecting masculinity and collectivism. Cooperative learning shapes patterns of transmitting knowledge. Uncertainty avoidance for Greeks implies that students are in favour of fragmented instructions on tasks as opposed to a holistic way of presenting information. Activities that call for groups of students to exchange ideas about a topic make their experiences and knowledge a vital part of the learning knowledge. Diverse perspectives bring about the potential contribution of each individual in learning. In this way students with different abilities do their share and gain status among peers (Sharan, 2010). This is also noted by Gay (2003) who acknowledged that in culturally responsive pedagogy using multiple means to achieve common learning outcomes is essential.

Future research on Greek students' opinions on such a teaching approach would be interesting and could be used to design appropriate syllabi in the Greek context. This is also noted by (Schunk, 2004; Slavin, 2009) who argued that it is important to ensure that teachers focus on processes and procedures that facilitate effective learning from varied instructional strategies.

References

- Antic, Z. (2007). Forward in teaching English for medical purposes. *Facta Universitatis-Series: Medicine and Biology*, 14(3),141-147.
- Aragon, J. (1973). An impediment to cultural pluralism: Culturally deficient educators attempting to teach culturally different children. In M. D. Stent, W. R. Hazard, & H. N. Rivlin (Eds.), *Cultural pluralism in education: A mandate for change* (pp. 77–84). New York:Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Aushbrooks, A., Jones, S. H., & Tijerina, M. S.(2011). Now you see it, now you don't: Faculty and student perceptions of classroom incivility in a social work program. *Advances in Social Work*, 12(2), 255-275.
- Banks, J. A. (1975). Teaching ethnic studies: Key issues and concepts. *Social Studies*, 66(3), 107-113.
- Banks, J., Cochran-Smith, M., Moll, L., Richert, A., Zeichner, K., Lepage, P., Darling-Hammond, L., & Duffy, H. with McDonald, M. (2005). Teaching diverse students. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp.232-274). San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bax, S. (2003). The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 57(3), 278-287.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Youngs, P. (2002). Defining 'highly qualified teachers': What does 'scientifically-based research' actually tell us?, *Educational Researcher*, 31(9), 13-25.
- Eisenclas, S. A., & Trevaskes, S. (2007). Developing intercultural communication skills through intergroup interaction. *Intercultural Education*, 18(5),413-425.
- Fenstermacher, G.D., & Richardson, V. (2005). On making determinations of quality in teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 107(1), 181-213.
- Forbes, J. A. (1973). Teaching Native American values and cultures. In *Teaching ethnic studies:Concepts and strategies* (pp. 200–219). Washington, DC: National Councilfor the Social Studies.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Continuum
- Fukumura, K. (2011). Students' reactions to a group project in a university English-as-a-foreign-language class for cultural understanding. *Intercultural Education*, 22(4), 301-314.
- Gay, G. (1975). Cultural differences important in the education of Black children. *Momentum*, 6, 30-33.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*, New York: Teachers' College Press.

- Gay, G. (2002). Culturally responsive teaching in special education for ethnically Diverse students: Setting the stage. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(6), 613-629.
- Gay, G. (2003). Introduction: Planting seeds to harvest fruits. In G. Gay (Ed.) *Becoming multicultural educators: Personal journey toward professional agency* (pp 1-16). San Fransisco: Jossey- Bass.
- Giannikas, C. N. (2013). The benefits of management and organisation: A case study in a young learners' classroom. *CEPS Journal*, 3(3), 87-104.
- Haines, D. W. (2007). Crossing lines of difference: how students analyse diversity. *Intercultural Education*, 18(5), 397-412.
- Hall, M. (1997). Managing and motivating students' performance in the university classroom, *ASC Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference* (pp.7-12). Seattle, University of Washington.
- Huda, M., E. (2013). Cultural model of classroom instruction for ELT in Bangladesh. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(1), 67-74.
- Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10, 301-320.
- Hofstede, G. (1996). Differences and danger: Cultural profiles at nations and limits to tolerance. *Higher Education in Europe*, 21(1), 73-94.
- Johns, T. F. (1981).Some problems of a worldwide profession in ELT documents. *The ESP Teacher: Role, Development and Prospects*, British Council.
- Katsara, O. (2002). *Greek students in UK Universities: A support strategy*, PhD thesis, University of Brighton, UK. EThOS, Electronic theses online service. Retrieved from: <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.392864>
- Katsara, O.(2008). Aspects of motivation within the context of an ESP course. *ESP World Journal*, Issue 3(19), Vol.7. Retrieved from: www.esp-world.info/Articles-_19/issue_19htm.
- Katsara, O. (2010). The development of a web-site for preparing Greek students for an ESP course. In E. Panourgia, T. Dalpanagiotti, F. Perdiki, & M. Makrina (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 2nd ESP/EAP Conference: ESP/EAP Innovations in Tertiary Settings: Proposals and Implementations* (pp.188-198). Kavala, Kavala Institute of Technology.
- Katsara, O. (2012). Some ideas for effective classroom management techniques in an EAP university classroom. *TESOL Greece Newsletter, October-December, 116*, 24-26.
- Katsara, O. (2014). The need to investigate the Greek cultural perspective within the teaching practice of an ESAP class. *Asian ESP Journal*, 10(2), 88-113.
- Katsara, R. (2008). *Comprehension and vocabulary reading of the English we use and read*

everyday, Athens: Ion-Ellin Publications.

Katsara, R. (2010). *Everyday English*. 2nd unpublished edition of the book.

Kennedy, M. M. (2008). Sorting out Teacher Quality, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(1), 59-63.

Kersting, N. B., Givvin, K. B., Sotelo, F. L., & Stigler, J. W. (2010). Teachers' analyses of classroom video predict student learning of mathematics: Further explorations of a novel measure of teacher knowledge. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 172-181.

Kingston, E., & Forland, H. (2004). Bridging the gap in expectations between international students and academic staff- home the teachers feed me with knowledge, but in the UK they help me pick up at the spoon to feed myself. *Proceedings of the European Conference on Educational Research Post Graduate and New Researcher Pre-Conference, University of Crete*. Retrieved from <http://www.educol.ac.uk/documents/00003751.htm>.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lave, J., Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Leal, S. R., Tribe, J., & de Holanda, L. A. (2013). Lecturers' perceptions on the student voice on quality in tourism education in Brazil. *Turismo em Analise*, 24(2), 459-478.

Levin, D. M., Hammer, D., & Coffey, J. (2009). Novice teachers' attention to student thinking. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60, 142-153.

Lewis, R., Romi, S., Qui, X., & Katz, Y. J. (2005). Teachers' classroom discipline and student misbehaviour in man Relations Australia. China and Israel, *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 21(6), 729-741.

McCarthy, M., O'Dell, F. (2008) *Academic vocabulary in use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Michaelson. L.K., Fink. L. D., & Knight, A. (1997). Designing effective groups activities: Lessons for classroom teaching faculty development. In D., Dezure (Ed.), *To improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional and Organisational Development*, Vol, 16(pp. 373-398). Stillwater, OK: New Forums.

McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith – a failure of analysis. *Human Relations*, 55 (1), 89-118.

Nonkukhetkhong, K., Baldauf, B. J., & Moni, K. (2006). Learner-centredness in teaching English as a foreign Language, *Proceedings of the 26th Thailand TESOL International Conference*, Chiang Mai, Thailand, January, 19-21. Retrieved from: http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv.php?pid=UQ:8562&dsID=K_B_MThaiTESOLO

6.pdf

- Rogoff, B., Matusov, E., & White, C. (1996). Participation in a community of learners. In P.R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *Education and human development*, (pp. 388-411). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Sadker, D. M., & Zittleman, K. R. (2006). *Teachers, schools and society: A brief introduction to education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Santamaria, L. J. (2009). Culturally responsive differentiated instruction: Narrowing the gaps between best pedagogical practices benefiting all learners. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 214-247
- Schunk, D. H. (2004). *Learning theories: An educational perspective* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Seidel, T., & Shavelson, R. J. (2007). Teaching effectiveness research in the past decade: The role of theory and research design in disentangling meta-analysis results. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(4), 454-499.
- Sharan, Y. (2010). Cooperative learning: A diversified pedagogy for diverse classrooms. *European Intercultural Education*, 21(3), 195-203.
- Slavin, R. E. (2009). *Educational psychology: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Stronge, J., H. (2007). *Qualities of effective teachers* (2nd ed.) Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Stronge, J., H., Ward, T., J. & Grant, L., W. (2011). What makes teachers good? A cross- case analysis of the connection between teacher effectiveness and student achievement, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(4), 339-355.
- Swain, H. (2008, June 5). Successful seminars, *Times Higher Education Supplement*. Retrieved from: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/402211.article>
- Swain, H. (2008, June, 10). How to be a student: The art of working in a team, *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/jun/10/students.news>
- Sysoyev, P. V. (1999) Principles of teaching English for Specific Purposes in Russia. *English for Specific Purposes-Russia*, 11, 13-15.
- Sysoyev, P. V. (2000). Developing and English for Specific Purposes course using a learner centered approach: A Russian experience. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(3), 18-23. Available electronically from: iteslj.org/Techniques/Sysoyev.ESP.htm.
- Tzakosta, D. (2010). Discipline in the Greek state senior high school EFL classroom. *Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning*, 1(1), 48-63.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development (M. Lopez-Morillas, Trans.). In M. Cole, V. J. Steiner., S. Scribner & E. Souberman (Eds.) *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes* (pp. 79-91). Cambridge,

MA: Harvard University press.

Wayne, A. J., & Youngs, P. (2003). Teacher Characteristics and Student Achievement Gains: A: Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 73 (1) 89-122

Weimer, M. (2002). *Student-centered teaching. Five key changes to practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.