

A New Teaching Era: Pedagogical Arguments in Language Teaching and Learning



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Book of Abstracts

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Keynote Speakers

A revised L2 English learning pyramid: The importance of extramural English for informal learning and formal instruction

Pia Sundqvist¹

¹University of Oslo, Department of Teacher Education and School Research

pia.sundqvist@ils.uio.no

In this talk, I will focus on research on informal foreign/second language (L2) learning with a focus on English as a target language and using the concept of extramural English (EE, Sundqvist, 2011). This type of research takes an interest in learners' self-initiated engagement with L2 English outside the walls of the classroom through activities such as listening to music, playing digital games, reading, and watching videos. Many (but not all) young people are frequently involved in such EE activities and their engagement encompasses at least three distinct, yet interrelated, dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional/affective engagement (Fredricks et al., 2016; Sundqvist & Uztosun, 2023). Research amongst young and teenage learners have shown positive relations between EE and various aspects of L2 English proficiency, such as vocabulary knowledge, writing, speaking, and comprehension (Zhang et al., 2021). However, in comparison, young learners (age 6–12) are clearly under-researched. In my presentation, I will focus on findings from EE research among mainly young but also teenage learners in contexts such as Belgium (e.g., De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017; Puimège & Peters, 2019), Scandinavia (e.g., Hannibal Jensen, 2017; Sundqvist, 2019; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012), Spain (e.g., Soto-Corominas et al., 2024), and Greece (e.g., Rothoni, 2017), and discuss the pedagogical implications. In many contexts, it appears that EE has replaced classroom activities as the starting point for, and foundation of, learning English, which I view as a structural change. I will illustrate this change by use of a revised version of the L2 English learning pyramid (first introduced in Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Finally, I will argue that informal learning of English through engagement in EE constitutes an important individual difference variable that should never be overlooked in any studies that aim to measure L2 English proficiency or development (Sundqvist, 2024).

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Exploring multi-s in language and literacy learning: The role of bodies, spaces, and [digital] stuff

Stavroula Kontovourki¹

¹University of Cyprus, Department of Education

kontovourki.stavroula@ucy.ac.cy

In recent years, language education has gradually broadened its scope to acknowledge the role of multimodality in teaching and learning, especially in a rapidly changing communication landscape. Researchers and educators have thus drawn on a multiliteracies perspective to facilitate language teaching and learning that foregrounds children's and youth's engagement in meaning-making practices, which combine multiple semiotic resources and means (e.g., Burke & Hardware, 2015; Kim et al., 2020). In these attempts, the expansion of language teaching and learning adheres not only to instructional materials (e.g., utilizing multimodal texts like picturebooks or learning with technologies), but also to learning processes to promote learners' active engagement with those materials and with one another. A similar trend is noticed in literacy education, hence extending the meaning of text beyond language and scaffolding learners as they critically examine and transform diverse materials and contexts (e.g. New London Group, 1996; also, Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2023; Mills, 2008). Drawing on these ideas and revisiting them from a sociomaterial perspective, this presentation has a twofold purpose: to present teaching practices for language learning that are embodied, arts-informed, and digitally-infused; and, to draw connections between language and literacy education to suggest ways in which each discipline may inform the other. Accordingly, I provide an overview of research on language pedagogies that implicate bodies, artifacts, and (non)digital spaces in teaching and learning, and offer examples of literacy practices that may apply to language learning classrooms. I thus invite the audience to contemplate the pedagogical potentials that emerge as we expand our theoretical lenses and blur disciplinary boundaries.

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Development of young learners' critical thinking: Enhancing motivation and language production

Katia Balaganskaya

Trinity Private School, Limassol, Cyprus

katyabalaganskaya@gmail.com

Critical thinking is a set of skills and habits of mind, including the ability to identify a problem, make assumptions, analyse ideas, and reason critically. This skill can and should be developed (Hughes, 2014). Critical thinking is one of the five 21st-century skills that boost motivation and improve learning outcomes (Dummett & Hughes, 2019).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Piaget (in Pinter, 2012) introduced the discussion about the age of criticality, arguing that children could perform abstract thinking, analysis, and logic by the age of 12. However, today's observations of young learners suggest they can demonstrate these skills earlier.

This presentation aims to provide evidence of the connection between critical thinking and young learners' motivation and language production. This will be illustrated through a small-scale classroom investigation and demonstration of hands-on learning activities. Additionally, the following questions will be addressed:

What is the minimal age at which learners can engage in critical thinking?

What learning conditions are necessary for the development of criticality?

Which activities can help implement the critical thinking approach?

Adaptation techniques for engaging activities based on storybooks, young learners' coursebook materials, and creative writing tasks will be showcased to foster learners' critical thinking. Piloting these activities has provided evidence of increased language skills, including vocabulary, writing, speaking, and overall motivation.

The English language curriculum should consistently aim to develop learners' thinking habits. Regardless of age, critical thinking is involved not only in higher-order levels of cognition but across all six levels of LOTS (lower-order thinking Skills) and HOTS (higher-order thinking Skills) (Hughes, 2014). Teachers can help young learners engage their criticality while creating, analysing, evaluating, as well as remembering, understanding, and applying. Therefore, raising teachers' awareness of the importance of creating a learning environment that supports critical thinking from an early age is paramount.

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Sustainable change in preschool practices – with fiction and literacy perspectives as tools

Ulla Damber¹, Lena Randevåg²

¹Mid Sweden University, Department of Education

²Mid Sweden University, Department of Education

Ulla.damber@miun.se, Lena.randevag@miun.se

Our presentation describes development work in preschools where growing language awareness, language development and emergent literacy were targeted. The tools used were children's fiction and literacy perspectives. This research builds on a three-year development project in so called vulnerable areas in Swedish urban, multilingual and multicultural settings. Fieldnotes from coaching sessions, observations in three targeted preschools, written narratives from the principals and interviews with staff at the preschools provided empirical material that constituted the basis for reflexive thematic analysis. The development work at the preschools is still on-going and literacy perspectives with the view of literacy as participating in a social and cultural arena proved highly successful in enhancing children's curiosity and interest in emergent literacy development. The major themes, which were found through reflective thematic analysis, will be elaborated during the presentation after a short presentation of our view of projects as form for school development, as many projects leave very few long-lasting effects after the closure of a project. Our interpretation of literacy and how such a perspective may be fruitful in multilingual settings will be elaborated on. Activities in the practices will be presented and commented on, where picture books and read-alouds were used as a context for thematic work. One theme regards how trustful cooperation with parents was established and how children's literature in the children's mother tongues was distributed to be read at home. The preschool also turned out to be an important way for guardians to get acquainted with the Swedish society. Another theme encompasses ways of enabling all children's participation, also children with special educational needs. The last theme concerns how leadership and joint responsibility was built up and distributed, as all personnel were involved, also personnel without a formal preschool teacher education, something we interpret as a success factor for the sustainability of the development work.

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From Principle-Based to Mindset-Sustaining Language Learning Classrooms: Negotiating a Sustainability Mindset in German-as-a-Foreign-Language Instruction

Julia Edeleva¹

¹Braunschweig University of Technology

y.edelewa@tu-braunschweig.de

The theoretical advances in classroom language learning over the past thirty years demarcated the post-method era in the history of foreign language teaching. Teaching methodology shifted from so-called macro-methods (cf. Grammar-Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching) to post-method principles as broad guidelines “derived from currently available theoretical, empirical and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 teaching and learning” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Post-method principles readily acknowledge the importance of context in classroom practice design and empower instructors to become self-developers rather than consumers of off-the-peg methodological solutions. Despite obvious advantages and considerable methodological flexibility, those principles are often process-oriented and give rise to fragmented goals and outcomes that do not assemble into holistic learning opportunities. The purpose of the current contribution is to reconceptualize a language learning classroom as a mindset-sustaining rather than a skill-developing venue. I will showcase how a sustainability mindset as specific ways of thinking that correspond to mental models and shape behaviors in the face of global challenges can be harnessed through L2 instruction. I will start by reviewing the concept of a sustainability mindset and its elements as “value, knowledge, and competency” and discuss specific strategies that it is shaped by (cf. time orientation, focus of response, prevailing logic, problem consideration, life orientation as in Kassel et al., 2018). I will then discuss how adopting a mind-sustaining framework transforms micro-level instructional design and causes us to reconsider the essential question of what language is as the subject matter and a vehicle in a language learning classroom.

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To translate or not to translate: Finding an effective word card design to learn academic abstract nouns

Katherine Marie Handal Gabriele¹

¹LCC International University, Department of English Language and Literature

khandalgabrie@lcc.lt

Acquiring academic, abstract words in English increases students' accuracy and fluency; therefore, English language teachers try to find the perfect vocabulary learning technique. Despite many studies on word cards and academic vocabulary, the most effective design for learning abstract academic nouns remains unclear. Consequently, this study aimed to discover which of four word-card designs yielded the highest meaning recall and sentence-level production of academic, abstract nouns from the New Academic Word List (Browne et al., 2013). The four word-card designs were 1) translation-based design (the control design), 2) picture plus English definition, 3) sentence plus English definition, 4) picture, sentence, plus English definition. A quantitative, experimental, and within-subject research design which compared the four different word-card designs was conducted. The procedure was inspired from the studies conducted by Dizon (2016), Farley et al. (2012), and Laufer and Shmueli (1997). Participants were 17 native Russian speakers and 10 non-Russian speakers studying at an English-medium university in Lithuania. In class, as a whole group activity, participants learned 40 words using Quizlet; then they studied the words individually. The data was derived from a self-report test of the adapted Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (Rott et al., 2002). The test scores showed significant vocabulary gain over time, but no significant differences among or between the conditions related to the word-card design. The presence or absence of L1 did not influence scores significantly. Such findings indicate that for academic, abstract nouns, the students' trial and error heuristic can determine the word-card design selection and that teachers should not be concerned about including the students' L1 on word cards.

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Continuous professional development of EFL teachers in Cyprus

Agathi Gavrielidou and Sviatlana Karpava

University of Cyprus, Department of English Studies

agavri01@ucy.ac.cy, karpava.sviatlana@ucy.ac.cy

This study investigated the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of EFL teachers in Cyprus, focusing on the factors influencing participation, the impact of COVID-19, differences between private and public sector teachers, and the opportunities and challenges faced by these educators as well as insights for designing effective, locally tailored professional development programs. CPD is viewed as a critical, long-term activity that aids instructors in adapting to changing professional demands by keeping them updated through exposure to professional development programmes (Howell 2019; Suliman et al. 2020).

Methodologically, the research employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather data from EFL teachers about their CPD experiences. The findings indicated that both internal and external factors significantly affect CPD participation. Key external factors included geographical access to resources and CPD infrastructure, while internal factors related to personal motivation and teaching approaches. The COVID-19 pandemic has notably increased technological awareness and reshaped CPD implementation, emphasizing the need for digital integration in professional development.

The results revealed minor differences between private and public sector teachers in their CPD preferences, with private sector teachers showing a stronger preference for workshop based and tailored CPD initiatives. Despite these differences, both groups recognized the importance of continuous learning and teacher involvement in CPD planning and execution.

The study concluded that effective CPD programs in Cyprus should prioritize innovative approaches, reflective practice, peer collaboration, and the integration of technology. These programs should be designed to address the unique needs of EFL teachers, considering the diverse linguistic and socio-cultural context of Cyprus. Recommendations include developing well-structured CPD initiatives, providing adequate resources, and fostering a supportive professional community to enhance teaching quality and student outcomes. Future research should explore larger, more diverse samples and consider comparative studies across different regions to generalize findings and inform policy development.

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The impact of multilingualism on second language accent categorization: Implications for language education

Georgios P. Georgiou¹

¹University of Nicosia, Department of Languages and Literature

georgiou.georg@unic.ac.cy

Previous research on accent categorization has primarily focused on the abilities of monolingual listeners to categorize first language (L1) accents (e.g., van Bezooijen & Gooskens, 1999; Diaz-Campos & Navarro-Galisteo, 2009; Gooskens, 2005; McCullough et al., 2019; Woehrling et al., 2006; Yan, 2015). This study aims to bridge a gap in the literature by investigating how listeners categorize second language (L2) accents and how their linguistic backgrounds influence this process. Ninety-eight adult Greek listeners, both bilingual and multilingual, were tested on their ability to categorize accents in a familiar (British English) and unfamiliar (Australian English) L2 accent condition. Data were gathered through an online survey and analyzed using binomial mixed-effects models and signal detection analysis. The findings showed that both bilingual and multilingual participants had low performance in categorizing the accents, likely due to their limited exposure to Australian English and the phonetic similarities between the two accents. However, despite their low accuracy in the task, multilinguals outperformed bilinguals in categorization accuracy. These findings may arise from multilinguals having a richer repository of linguistic representations and a greater necessity to use variation in their everyday lives. Additionally, their enhanced flexibility in phonetic categories, due to mastering an extra language compared to bilinguals, could play a role. This study builds on previous research, showing that exposure to language variation improves listeners' sensitivity in distinguishing non-native accents. The results highlight the need for specialized language teaching methodologies and materials that focus on accent comprehension and are tailored to learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, they stress the importance of comprehensive foreign language education that includes instruction on different dialectal pronunciations.

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The role of first language in English language learning: Young learners' perceptions through a metaphorical lens

Aretousa Giannakou

University of Nicosia, Department of Languages and Literature

giannakou.a@unic.ac.cy

There is a growing recognition of the benefits of leveraging learners' first language (L1) in second/foreign (L2) learning. However, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, has been slower to adopt this approach as a deliberate pedagogical strategy. Instead, it often relies on L1 use as a pragmatic solution or employs L2 monolingual approaches. The matter is examined from the perspective of young EFL learners attending state primary education in Greece in an attempt to explore their implicit beliefs on the role of their L1 in learning L2 English. To this end, the study used metaphor elicitation as a methodological tool to explore their perceptions in addressing the research question of how they metaphorically perceive the use of L1 in EFL learning in this educational context.

A total of 133 students aged 10–12 from two state primary schools of Greece participated in the study. They were requested to describe their L1 in learning EFL using a metaphor and then to explain it. The metaphorical representations were coded into three main categories: positive, negative, and miscellaneous or neutral. These categories were further divided thematically into subcategories based on recurring themes and analysed through thematic interpretation. More than half of the learners reported a positive view of L1 in EFL learning, while a smaller number expressed a negative view and even fewer had a neutral view. An example of a positive view is the following:

When I learn English, Greek is:

"A stool that helps me go upwards, because it helps me learn more easily the meaning of words" (P031)

Metaphor elicitation and analysis was generally proved to be an effective methodological tool to explore young learners' perceptions. The findings suggest a reevaluation of monolingual teaching approaches in L2 learning, common in English language education, in line with the pedagogy of translanguaging. The study also discusses the potential of metaphor elicitation as a research tool to obtain the views of young participants.

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Taking into account students' plurilingual repertoire: Intercomprehension and learner autonomy

Christoph Hülsmann¹

¹University of Salzburg, Language Centre
christoph.huelsmann@plus.ac.at

The presentation illustrates the advantages of intercomprehension in promoting learner autonomy within foreign language education. Learner autonomy, a concept first articulated by Holec (1981), involves learners' ability to manage their own learning processes. Nowadays, learner involvement and reflection can be seen as two non-controversial and mutually dependent principles for the development of learner autonomy. In the case of language learning autonomy, the use of the target language constitutes a third principle (Little et al. 2017). Moreover, recent studies suggest that there is also a relationship between autonomy and to the motivation of learners (Jehanghir et al. 2023). Intercomprehension, a pluralistic approach (Candelier et al., 2012), exploits the linguistic similarities among related languages to facilitate the development of competencies in new languages. The approach, as detailed in the EuroComRom model by Klein & Stegmann (2000), highlights the use of transparent lexemes and metalinguistic strategies to decode texts across related languages. This aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020), which values partial competencies and does not prioritize native-like proficiency. Using the example of an intercomprehension course on Romance languages implemented at a university's language centre, the presentation demonstrates how metacognitive resources and learner involvement can be harnessed to enable students to independently understand texts in new Romance languages. In this context, the role of English, which is generally the first foreign language learned in the repertoire of the students, will also be discussed. Finally, the presentation delineates intercomprehension from (pedagogical) translanguaging, a concept that promotes the flexible and dynamic use of language(s) within language instruction (García & Li 2014) and whose recent developments (García et al. 2021) has also been critically received (Cummins 2022).

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Carnavalesque as a teacher strategy in shaping teacher-student relationships in school discourses

Bernadett Jani-Demetriou

American University of Beirut – Mediterraneo, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

bj00@aubmed.ac.cy

The relationship between teachers and students is not without its tensions. Due to the power imbalance between teacher and students, students' grievances cannot always surface explicitly. One way students can manifest conflicts is through the Bakhtinian carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1981), which typically occurs in a humorous and playful manner. The moment of carnivalesque temporarily inverts the power relations present in the classroom. The use of these carnival moments to resolve conflicts is generally associated with students rather than teachers.

In the presentation, I will introduce data from a linguistic ethnographic study, derived from video recordings of classroom sessions in a primary school in a small town in Northern Hungary. In recent years, the number of Roma students has been increasing at the school due to a merger of two school buildings aimed at eliminating segregation. This situation creates tension for both teachers and students. I argue that the linguistic ideologies accompanying these changes within the school community are reflected in the local school discourses. I will analyse teacher-student interactions from the video recorded classroom sessions in which the teacher applied carnivalesque moments to address tension. Using the carnivalesque as a teaching strategy is an important tool in education that helps maintain diversity and heteroglossia in the classroom (White 2014: 13). The examples from the video recordings will demonstrate that teachers can also initiate moments of carnivalesque, creating an egalitarian environment between themselves and the students, thus dissolving the hierarchical relationship that typically defines teacher-student roles. Thus, carnivalesque as teaching strategy is able to mitigate tensions caused by differences between groups within the class, giving students a voice to express their grievances.

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Assessing the effectiveness of a smartphone application on adult learners' acquisition of phrasal verbs in English

Andrea Kyprianou

University of Glasgow, School of Education

2346876K@student.gla.ac.uk

Language acquisition has embarked on an unprecedented era, dominated by the advent of cutting-edge immersive technologies and smartphone applications, which have significantly revolutionised and reshaped the educational landscape. The interdisciplinarity of the field is rooted in the rapid technological progress which has fundamentally transformed the field of Education, further driven by the innovations in Artificial Intelligence (AI). This mixed-methods research study aims to shed light on the potential contribution of smartphone applications to individuals' phrasal verbs knowledge at the workplace, and the degree to which they align with their professional development and career aspirations. The primary intention is to contextualise its usage within a broader investigation of how digital tools influence language acquisition, competency, professional development, linguistic self-confidence and self-efficacy. The study has adopted a smartphone application namely *"English Phrasal Verbs in Use"*, and through a snowball sampling strategy, 80 surveys were completed, with participants divided equally into experimental and control groups. Participants of the experimental group were required to interact with the application for six weeks, while the control group used worksheets and online resources. Pre- and post-intervention tests, along with self-confidence and demographic questionnaires, were developed and administered via Qualtrics. An initial indication emergent from the quantitative data analysis indicates that participants of the experimental group have enhanced their phrasal verb knowledge, thus suggesting the application's potential as an effective learning tool. The qualitative research findings emerged from semi-structured interviews conducted among 10 participants of the experimental group suggest that participants were highly engaged and interested in using the smartphone application, as they have reported noticeable improvements in their linguistic competence, particularly in their understanding and use of phrasal verbs. Interestingly, participants suggested that they would prefer a blended approach, combining the use of the application with conventional learning resources, to further enhance their learning experience and outcomes.

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Exploring the Implementation of Active Learning Pedagogy in EFL Classrooms in Cyprus

Elena Kaourani

University of Cyprus, Department of English Studies

kaourani.eleni@ucy.ac.cy

In recent years, active learning pedagogies have received considerable attention and recognition in the educational settings around the world with language classrooms making the shift from traditional to modern approaches (Vercellotti, 2018) that place learning rather than teaching at the heart of the educational process (Cattaneo, 2017). Active learning is seen as an alternative to the one-size-fits-all, traditional, teacher-centered classroom, with the latter being criticized for being inadequate to provide students with the tools to become successful global citizens with the power to overcome the challenges of the future (Brito, 2019; Kusumoto, 2018). While recent studies underline the benefits of active learning approach in the classroom, as well as the necessity for teachers to use active learning strategies as means for student engagement, achievement of deeper levels of understanding and development of essential skills, necessary for school and future life (Sewagegn and Diale, 2019; Yenen and Dursun, 2019), there is still a need to expand research to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Cyprus as no prior research has been conducted on this topic. The specific research project aims to investigate active learning in EFL classrooms of Cyprus, with the focus on private domain (Private Language Institutes). More specifically, this research includes an exploration of student, parent and teacher attitudes and perceptions towards active learning pedagogy, of the ways and the extent to which active learning strategies are adopted in the private domain EFL classrooms, shedding light on the challenges, needs and opportunities that arise regarding the use of active learning strategies. Finally, the project aims to explore the effect that active learning has on students' academic achievement identifying whether there is correlation between the students' attitudes towards active learning and their performance.

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Bilingual Family Childrearing with Selective Target Language Input through choice of Nursery and Primary Education in Cyprus

Alexander John Kakoullis

University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus

ajkakoullis1@uclan.ac.uk

This presentation reports the findings of a new study on Family Language Policy (King et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2004) in Cyprus that reveals the use of a language management strategy by multilingual families, which has not been reported in the literature: selective target language input in childcare centers/nursery schools/primary schools. This research is one of the first of its kind that collects data from bi-lingual, intermarried parents of various ethnic backgrounds in Cyprus who intend to raise their children with both heritage family languages to a proficient standard. The use of OPOL, OSOL as well as other popular language transmission methods among multilingual families are also reported in the study in comparison to the selected strategy of intended choice of education. This paper focuses on the choice of nursery and childcare centers as one of the most popular means to control the input that children of multilingual families receive in the target languages whilst physically distanced from their parents in order to ensure that they continue to have sufficient exposure to all the target languages intended by the parents through their unique language ideology (King & Fogle, 2013). The 20 parents completed a questionnaire composed of a Family Profile, contextualizing Family Data, a Language Timeline recording an average day's language exposure for their child, and a table of uncovered Family Language Strategies (FLS) where they would give their opinion on each one's usage. This was concluded by a short interview process for the parents to justify their language choices. Out of 20 bilinguals, intermarried families, 90% of all participants stated to implement explicit mono or bilingual nursery choice as part of their Family Language Policy, with a reported combined average efficiency score of 90.7% in terms of how effective and practical they believed usage of this strategy to be.

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Translanguaging in EFL classes: From second language acquisition theory to teaching practices

Vasiliki Lismani

Hellenic American University

vlismani@hauniv.edu

For years, students' L1 had been exiled from EFL classes based on the distorted idea about the native like L2 learner and user. However, rooted in Cummins' (1979) linguistic interdependence theory and other relevant theories, the idea of the systematic use of L1 in EFL/ESL classes has been gradually reappraised gaining ground in EFL classes (Kleyn & García, 2019; Nagy, 2018). Drawing from the epistemology of the bilingual mind, translanguaging pedagogy supports "the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning during the same lesson" (Lewis et al. 2012 in Conteh, 2018, p. 445). In such learning environment, both L1 and L2 can be equally used reinforcing each other and eventually supporting students' full linguistic repertoire (Kleyn & García, 2019, p. 224). Therefore, translanguaging can be proposed as an approach conducive to L2 education allowing students to cognitively scaffold their learning process employing their L1 linguistic as well as cultural and social repertoire to enrich their L2 educational experience. Ultimately, a translanguaging approach can help teachers and students to address the use of L1 not as a deficit in the process of L2 acquisition but as a contributor to "create a learning space where language skills are viewed primarily as communicative competences" (Nagy, 2018, p. 50).

The aim of this presentation is to introduce basic principles of translanguaging and critically evaluate its efficiency in EFL learning process. Moreover, practices proposed from the existing research on translanguaging will be discussed in terms of the opportunities offered for L2 learners to develop as emergent bilinguals mostly focusing on learners' communicative competencies rather than the development separate language skills. Finally, examples of applying such practices will be presented offering an insightful account of translanguaging in EFL classes in Greece.

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From screen to skill: A case study on digital storytelling for the enhancement of speaking skills in Greek L1 adult learners of Turkish FL

Spyroula Mavrommati

Hellenic Open University, School of Humanities, Adult Education

std159446@ac.eap.gr, spyroulama@gmail.com

This case study explores the impact of digital storytelling (DST) on the speaking skills of learners of Turkish as a foreign language (FL). With the increasing integration of technology in language education, digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool to foster language skills (Nassim 2018, Simsek 2020). This study examines how DST can improve the speaking skills of learners (Nair & Yunus, 2021), shedding light on its pedagogical benefits (Abderrahim & Navarro González 2020, Arvanitis & Krystalli 2021). DST involves crafting short, personal narratives with multimedia tools (Quah & Ng, 2022). This technique not only captivates students but also offers a platform for practicing speaking skills in a meaningful context (Robin, 2008). The case study focuses on a group of adult Greek-speaking students enrolled in a B1 CEFR-level Turkish language course implemented in the Republic of Cyprus. Over a semester, students participated in a series of DST projects, where they created and shared stories using video and voice recordings. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative assessments of speaking proficiency with qualitative analyses of student feedback and story content. Pre- and post-tests of speaking skills were conducted to measure improvement, using criteria such as fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Additionally, student reflections and interviews provided insights into their experiences and perceptions of DST as a learning tool. Results indicated a significant improvement in the speaking skills of participants. The creative aspect of story production increased student motivation and engagement, leading to more effective and sustained language practice (Sadik, 2008). In conclusion, future studies could expand on these findings by exploring the DST's enduring impact and utilization in diverse language-learning contexts (Yang, Chen, & Hung, 2022).

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Portfolios for assessment for learning in EFL: The barriers of, needs for, and pathway towards introducing portfolios

Chrysanthi Nicodemou Pasiardi

Saint Louis University

chrysnicodemou@gmail.com

Recent educational reforms in Cyprus and worldwide call for a shift from summative assessment in the form of tests and examinations to formative assessment and alternative forms of assessment to evaluate learners holistically. One such example is Cyprus' public upper-secondary schools, despite recent educational reforms that call for assessment for learning (AfL). The EFL curriculum presents several AfL tools, including portfolios. This qualitative study explored the status of portfolios in the EFL classroom, the factors influencing the adoption of portfolios in the EFL classroom, and strategies or methods for introducing portfolios. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews of EFL teachers, a focus group, and archival data were used to collect data. The results showed that portfolios were absent from the EFL classroom. Factors hindering the adoption of portfolios include the lack of a portfolio mandate and a strong recommendation from the Ministry of Education, lack of knowledge and training related to portfolios, and insufficient collegial collaboration and technological support. The methods and strategies for introducing portfolios comprise strong support from the Ministry of Education, practical teacher training and continuous professional learning, collegial collaboration, portfolio integration into the curriculum, incremental integration of portfolios, a pilot program, and a portfolio mandate. A framework for introducing the English language portfolio in Cyprus' secondary schools, named 'The ELPICS', emerged from the data analysis and can serve as a roadmap for introducing portfolios. This collaborative approach to introducing portfolios in EFL education ensures a more comprehensive and effective implementation and values the expertise and input of all stakeholders. In addition, the study offers several recommendations for various stakeholders, i.e., EFL and language teachers, policymakers, academics, teacher trainers, and researchers.

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Revisiting the benefits of incorporating the students' L1 in L2 Grammar instruction: Attitudes of EFL teachers and young learners in Cyprus

Anastasios Pliatsikas and Sviatlana Karpava

University of Cyprus, Department of English Studies

anastasispliatsikas@gmail.com, karpava.sviatlana@ucy.ac.cy

The role of the students' mother tongue in the L2 classroom has been heavily discussed in Second Language Acquisition literature. On the one hand, it is believed that L1 use deprives students of more L2 exposure (Kartika-Ningsih & Rose, 2018) yet others support that using the students' L1 is a form of utilizing their prior knowledge (Hall & Cook 2012) and therefore disregarding that knowledge may be counter-productive when it comes to L2 instruction. Some argue that the positive influence of judicious L1 use has been more or less established and that the academic focus has shifted to the search of effective ways in which L1 use can maximize L2 learning (Copland & Neokleous, 2010) yet the need for concrete guidelines regarding the use of L1 remains (Tsagari & Diakou, 2015). The present study examined the views and attitudes of EFL teachers and young learners in Cyprus regarding L1 use in class and its effect on grammar instruction and comprehension. During the intervention phase, EFL students were taught by using two different instruction methods, one with a combination of English and Greek and one solely in English. After that, all the students had to complete three sets of tasks and at the end of the intervention they were given a questionnaire to elicit their views on L1 use in class. The teachers' attitudes were elicited through semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the data showed that the grammar instruction with a combination of English and Greek was more effective for the students' learning process than the instruction in English alone. The teachers' attitudes ranged from neutral to negative although all the teachers admitted using the L1 in their lessons. Finally, young students expressed a preference for L1 use with the older groups appearing more confident in an all-English classroom.

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Russian HL Writing Proficiency and Teaching Strategies

Alla Peeters-Podgaevskaja

University of Amsterdam, Slavic Languages and Cultures

A.V.Peeters-Podgaevskaja@uva.nl

The acquisition of writing skills is a long-lasting and effortful process. Besides gaining a profound and automatized knowledge of orthographic rules and punctuation marks, a language user needs to know how to construct a text in accordance with different genres, and which syntactic means are necessary to achieve a certain degree of cohesion and coherence within a given text. Although the quantity of publications on writing development in second language learning is overwhelming, the focus is mostly on English, German or Spanish as an L2 (for references see Hinkel 2011). Significantly fewer studies analyze written skills in heritage Russian, whereby the main interest is the population of bilingual college students (e.g., Bermel & Kagan 2000, Kisselev & Alsufieva 2017). Little attention is paid to bilingual children aged from 10 to 16.

This presentation will focus on the development of written skills (morphosyntax and text structure and cohesion) in Dutch-Russian school children attending Russian classes for more than six years. By using the same (type of) task, three measure moments will be discussed: the age of 10 (an overall comparison of HL competence and text complexity with Russian-speaking children), the age of 12 (the dynamics of the Russian HL literacy development within the same participants' group) and the age of 15-16 (the overall literacy competence and text complexity in HL Russian).

In the conclusion, I will share my personal experience of how different tasks (individual or collaborative, free or guided) and teacher's feedback approaches (individual-oriented and group-oriented) can contribute to the overall improvement of writing literacy in Russian HL learners.

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Intercultural education in FLT in Croatian compulsory school – a curriculum analysis

Ana Petravić

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education, Croatia

ana.petravic@ufzg.hr

The Recommendation of the Council of the European Union (2018) defines multilingual competence and cultural awareness and expression as two of the eight key competences for lifelong learning. In line with this, the focus of the recent educational policy recommendations of the Council of Europe is set on the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education into national education systems (CM/Rec (2022)1). Regarding the intercultural competence the FLT should integrate students' source culture and culture(s) of the target languages, as well as other cultures, in order to foster knowledge, skills and attitudes as three dimensions needed for the development of intercultural communicative competence (Byram 1997, 2009, Caspari 2019, Petravić 2016). The fundamental prerequisite for the implementation of such language teaching is how foreign language curricula define FLT general educational goals as well as the desired learning outcomes in language and intercultural education (Beacco et al. 2016, Candelier et al. 2012, Council of Europe 2001, 2018).

To get an insight into the role of intercultural education within foreign language curricula in compulsory education in Croatia, a comparative analysis of curricula for English, French, German and Italian (grades 1-8; Ministry of Science and Education, Republic of Croatia, 2019) was conducted, encompassing subject goals, subject domains, learning outcomes, and methodological suggestions for teachers. The results obtained show different concepts of intercultural competence in curricula for different foreign languages. While one group of curricula takes all three dimensions of the intercultural competence into account, the other group is focussed primarily on cultural knowledge. This finding raises a question which consequences emerge from these different goals, learning outcomes and teaching methodology for the foreign language students. To overcome the differences in foreign language curricula, a development of national education standards modelled on those existing e.g. in Austria and Germany is recommended.

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“English will take care of itself”: Reported practices of multilingual families in five non-English countries

Natalia Ringblom¹, Anna Ritter², Sviatlana Karpava³

Natalia Meir⁴ and Anastassia Zabrodskaia⁵

Umeå University, Sweden¹, University of Koblenz, Germany², University of Cyprus³
Bar-Ilan University, Israel⁴, Tallinn University, Baltic Film, Media and Arts School⁵

English is spreading all over the world and serves as a common contact language globally, not just in professional and educational settings but also in close social relationships (Pietikäinen 2021). English is frequently chosen as a communication medium between speakers of different native languages (Seidlhofer 2004). Yet, research on the role of English in the family domain of immigrant families in non-English-speaking countries is scarce. This study aims to fill this gap.

Employing a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis, our research focuses on 50 multilingual families across Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Israel, and Sweden. We aim to explore the role of English as a third language (L3) in multilingual families and determine whether there are differences and similarities in the reported practices of English as L3 within the families in the five countries. The study aims to answer the following research question: What is the impact of English on the family language practices of multilingual families, and what are its effects on the heritage language and the majority language?

The comparative analysis addresses parental beliefs and practices, revealing variations in the respective countries. The findings, analyzed thematically, highlight the importance of English L3 in the context of the majority language and a heritage language. They show that while multilingual families take actions to support the heritage language, the English seems to be developing on its own without any actions taken by the parents (cf. Lising 2022). The exposure to social media may be part of the explanation, where not only the English-speaking culture is transferred to the children but also the language. The study underscores the evolving role of English in multilingual families, emphasizing the need for continued exploration of the impact of English on family language policies. The status of English as L2 or L3 is also problematized.

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Using AI tools to enhance TESOL students' engagement in the classroom

Andry Sophocleous

Ayios Dometios Middle School, Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

sophocleous.andry.1@ucy.ac.cy

School studies refer to student disengagement, the need for deeper learning and enhanced cognitive engagement. Suggestions include making learning more enjoyable, socially relevant, and more student-centered (Reschly et al., 2020; Mehta and Fine, 2019; Stobaugh, 2019; Shernoff, 2013). AI has recently conceived a very promising arena for offering various benefits in education, including foreign language learning. Currently, there are numerous educational tools that educators can now employ to enrich their teaching materials, bring the Target Culture closer to students, and enhance students' engagement and enjoyment in the L2. This study follows a preliminary study that examined the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement of 26 students from 3 different grades (aged 15-17) and specialist areas of study from a vocational state school in Nicosia. The results of the preliminary study indicated rather negative feedback as regards students' engagement and views regarding the material used in their English classes. The feedback employed from students was used to improve the teaching material of the pre-existing curriculum with a 6-week follow-up intervention where AI educational tools were employed in an attempt to make students' learning more enjoyable and increase their interest, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

More specifically, numerous activities were designed based on the feedback received from the preliminary study with the use of AI tools that included writing prompts, simulated conversations, language games, and blended learning, where AI and traditional teaching methods co-existed in the classroom. Following the intervention students shared their views regarding the tools used in informal focus group interviews. We briefly consider the results of the preliminary study and how it shaped the current study, the AI tools used in the intervention period, and examples from activities completed in class that encouraged the use of higher order thinking skills.

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“Lexicon-semantics-phonology interface: Acquisition of cognates and false friends in second and third language by L1 Cypriot Greek speakers”

Marina Spania

University of Cyprus, Department of English Studies

Spania.marina@ucy.ac.cy

Previous research on second (L2) (Janke & Kolokonte, 2015; Rogers et al., 2015) and third (L3) language acquisition (Vanhove & Berthele, 2015; Otwinowska & Szewczyk, 2017; García et al., 2020; Otwinowska et al., 2020; Lago et al., 2020; Marecka et al., 2021) showed that cognates have a positive effect on lexicon acquisition in L2/L3, thus, it is important to raise awareness about the presence of cognates and false friends during the process of L2 and L3 acquisition. This study aims to demonstrate that L2/L3 lexicon acquisition is positively influenced by the knowledge of cognates, where L1 is Cypriot Greek (CG) and Standard Modern Greek (SMG), L2 English and L3 Spanish and Turkish. This can provide further evidence in support of L2 and L3 models and theories such as the Input Processing Hypothesis (VanPatten & Williams, 2014), Skill Acquisition Theory, Cumulative Enhancement Model, Typological Primacy Model (Rothman et al., 2019), and the Linguistic Proximity Model (Westergaard, 2021). Following a mixed-methods approach, the researcher aims to examine L2/L3 lexicon acquisition by Greek Cypriot university students and test the above-mentioned models. In particular, the research design will include pre-tests and post-tests and the intervention period, with a focus on the cross-linguistic interference and potential positive and negative effects of cognates and false friends on L2/L3 lexicon acquisition. Based on the previous research, it is expected that cognates will facilitate L2/L3 lexicon acquisition, whereas false friends might lead to negative effect/transfer (Janke & Kolokonte, 2015; Rogers et al., 2015; Vanhove & Berthele, 2015; Otwinowska & Szewczyk, 2017; García et al., 2020; Otwinowska et al., 2020; Lago et al., 2020; Marecka et al., 2021). This study aims to provide more evidence regarding the significance of cognates and false friends in L2/L3 lexicon acquisition in the context of bilingual Cyprus. The significance of this study is both in terms of theoretical and practical implementation as it aims to provide additional information and data regarding L2 and L3 acquisition models and theories as well as teaching methodology in the L3 classroom based on the knowledge and awareness about cognates and false friends.

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Wordless picturebooks as a tool for supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students: A case-study in a primary school in Cyprus

Maria Vrikki¹, Marina Rodosthenous-Balafa¹ & Anastasia Soteriadou²

¹ University of Nicosia, Department of Education

² Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

vrikki.m@unic.ac.cy, rodosthenous.m@unic.ac.cy, evosmos2211@gmail.com

The increase of *culturally and linguistically diverse* (CLD) students in classrooms worldwide makes the identification of innovative pedagogical approaches and materials imperative. While research has highlighted some practices that are effective in supporting CLD students, such as differentiated instruction and collaborative learning (Carbonneau et al., 2022), more empirical evidence is required on a range of practices. This paper aims to examine the potential of *wordless picturebooks* (WPs), as pedagogical tool for teaching CLD students. While the unique affordances of WPs are documented in the literature for the general student population (e.g. promotion of critical literacy skills and visual literacy skills) (e.g. Lasley & Haas, 2017; Honaker & Miller, 2023), more evidence is required on their affordances for the CLD student population specifically.

The present study employs a case-study design to examine the views and experiences of primary school students in engaging with WPs. It focuses on the experience of a single class of Grade 4 students (aged 9-10) from a school in rural Nicosia, Cyprus, which had a high percentage of CLD students (39% had a different home language). The classroom teacher, who was trained in using WPs as part of a previous project, had completed 6 lessons focusing on a different WPs around topics of tolerance, empathy and inclusion. Questionnaire and interview data were collected from all students and analyzed mainly qualitatively. A thematic analysis revealed a range of interesting themes. Students' answers referred to the cognitive benefits, and specifically enhanced noticing, of working with WPs. They also referred to the theme of inclusivity, since students noticed how WPs were more comprehensible to their CLD peers. This work is promising in showing the potential of WPs as a tool for CLD-related pedagogies and can serve as a basis for training teachers in using them in their instruction.

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In the webs of the Internet – the informal exposure to English among a new generation of Polish EFL users and its impact on language proficiency

Agata Wolanin

University of the National Education Commission, Institute of English Studies, Krakow, Poland

agata.wolanin@uken.krakow.pl

The new generation of language users engages in a variety of different types of extramural activities outside the formal education context. Although the impact of the informal exposure to English on the EFL learners' language development has been widely researched in recent years (see, e.g., De Wilde et al. 2020, Hannibal Jensen 2017, Kuppens 2010, Muñoz & Cadierno 2021, Sundqvist 2009, Sylven & Sundqvist 2012), the research into extramural English exposure in the Polish context is scarce. Poland seen still as a rather monolingual country, with high language distance from English, offers an interesting ground for research into informal exposure to English. The aim of the paper is, therefore, twofold: first, to bridge the research gap and explore the linguistic landscape of the informal English use among proficient EFL users in Poland; and second, to examine the impact of the informal exposure to English on the EFL students' receptive vocabulary. In this paper, the results of a pilot study will be presented. The study involved 120 young adults (aged 20-25) who agreed to fill in the questionnaire and complete the vocabulary size test. The questionnaire inquired about the participants' engagement in different types of extramural English activities, their home environment, language use and contact, as well as literacy. Moreover, 10 participants volunteered to take part in the qualitative stage of data collection, by completing a language journal and participating in an interview. The collected data allowed to get a closer look at the unique linguistic landscape of the new generation of EFL users in the Polish context. The participants engage with a wide range of different types of extramural activities, predominantly with the use of new media, such as YouTube, streaming platforms and social media. Although the participants reported spending much time on social media, there was no correlation between their time spent there and their vocabulary size. It was, however, observed that the participants' exposure to YouTube, gaming and their habits of reading online have an effect on the size of their receptive vocabulary. The findings also showed that the participants' language preference in their extramural activities influences their receptive vocabulary.

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Innovations in Assessment: Implications for Teaching

Akis Panayi

British Council, Cyprus

contact@cy.britishcouncil.org

The role of assessment in language learning has increasingly focused on integrating curriculum, its delivery and assessment, to foster a comprehensive, unified approach to learning. How innovations in assessment impact on teaching and learning, therefore, are an important consideration. This session will look at recent innovations in assessment; including alternative assessment and formative approaches; alignment and washback; test use; and the use of artificial intelligence and consider how they may impact on teaching and learning.

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Empowering Learners and Promoting Intercommunal Understanding: Modern Pedagogical Tools for Teaching Turkish and Greek in Cyprus

Chryso Pelekani

University of Cyprus, Language Center

pelekanichryso@gmail.com

In Cyprus, fostering intercommunal understanding between Greek and Turkish Cypriots is essential for building a cohesive and peaceful society. Language education plays a crucial role in bridging cultural divides, and modern pedagogical tools—such as interactive applications and digital resources—are invaluable for creating inclusive, engaging learning experiences that foster mutual respect. (Pelekani, 2009). Integrating technology into Turkish language education, for example, significantly enhances student motivation and positive attitudes toward learning. Technology has redefined language classrooms, particularly by making grammar and cultural learning more accessible and enjoyable through digital tools like games and multimedia (Pelekani, 2016). Such tools encourage active participation and facilitate intercultural communication, allowing students from different linguistic backgrounds to connect. Research has shown that using technology in this way fosters collaboration and builds a dynamic, supportive learning environment (Pelekani, Georgiou, & Vesioğlu, 2016). One of the most effective initiatives in this area is the implementation of bicomunal projects that bring Greek and Turkish Cypriot students together for joint activities, such as cultural exchanges and community projects. These programs enable students to practice language skills in meaningful, real-world settings, promoting empathy and understanding across cultural divides. Studies indicate that these bicomunal efforts are instrumental in reducing stereotypes and enhancing cross-cultural friendships, which is essential for social cohesion in Cyprus (Pelekani, 2012). Moreover, contemporary educational philosophies advocate for learner-centered approaches, which include methods like project-based learning and gamified lessons that engage students and allow them to take ownership of their learning process (Pelekani, 2012). These methods nurture critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing students to navigate a multicultural society with a better understanding of diverse perspectives (Pelekani, Georgiou, & Vesioğlu, 2016). The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how the integration of modern educational tools and collaborative bicomunal projects within Greek and Turkish language teaching can not only improve linguistic skills but also contribute to a more unified Cypriot society. By fostering cultural awareness and mutual respect, educators play a key role in promoting a peaceful, harmonious society in which cultural diversity is both respected and valued.

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