



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



Teaching the Greek language to Adult Immigrants: Views and Teaching Practices

V. Brinia, E. Tsaprazi

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v4-i1/1655>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v4-i1/1655

Received: 21 January 2015, **Revised:** 26 February 2015, **Accepted:** 08 March 2015

Published Online: 23 March 2015

In-Text Citation: (Brinia & Tsaprazi, 2015)

To Cite this Article: Brinia, V., & Tsaprazi, E. (2015). Teaching the Greek language to Adult Immigrants: Views and Teaching Practices. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 4(1), 200–206.

Copyright: © 2015 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society (www.hrmars.com)

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen

at: <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

Vol. 4(1) 2015, Pg. 200 – 206

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARPED>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2226-6348

Teaching the Greek language to Adult Immigrants: Views and Teaching Practices

V. Brinia¹, E. Tsaprazi²

¹Deptt. of Management Science & Technology, Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece, ²Hellenic Open University, Patra, Greece
Email: vbrinia@aueb.gr

Abstract

The research examined the educational techniques employed at programmes teaching Greek as a foreign language for immigrants or refugees. These programmes are held by NGOs, the Institute of Youth and Lifelong Learning and by Vocational Training Centres (KEK) through funding. We attempted to correlate the teaching methods with the instructors' profile, in particular with regard to their qualifications in adult education, their intercultural perception and their attitude towards the adult state of learners. The research was carried out using qualitative methods and the data were drawn through semi-structured interviews with the instructors and free, non participatory observation.

The findings of the research illustrated that the majority of the instructors of the sample, whether volunteers or professionals, do not use active educational methods. Techniques such as role play, group projects, brainstorming, open and meaningful debates constitute the exception to the rule. Another significant finding was that the specialisation of the instructors with regard to adult education does not ensure the use of those techniques that fit the adult learner profile. The instructors however who demonstrated an increased intercultural perception and a non-ethnocentric approach to the language, were shown to use more active techniques, utilise previous experience and attempt to actively involve the learners in every stage of the learning process, ultimately satisfying more effectively the learners' communicative needs.

Keywords: Immigrants Multilingual Education, Techniques

Introduction

The cultural diversity is, nowadays, an integral part of most societies, as our era of globalization, is characterized by large population movements. In order for the migration to be a means of growth and not become a "problem", a system which supports for migrants from the moment they leave the country until they enter the labor market of the destination country is more than essential. Part of the support system is to provide opportunities to learn the language and history of the host country. It is one of the most important factors contributing to the smooth integration of immigrants and facilitates their lives in their new country.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the educational methods used by adult educators in programs for learning Greek as a second language to adult immigrants from countries with a lower level of economic development of Greece.

Literature

Intercultural Education

In contrast to the values and beliefs of the traditional education which characterize it as ethnocentric, intercultural education utilizes the concepts of cultural relativism that accepts cultural differences and stresses the need to respect diversity and use it in the context of the interaction between 'different' people. The inherent diversity of things in any group of learners become more "visible" to a group where language, religion and national origin, differ. However, the functionality and efficiency of a group, is not based on the similarities between the members, but the negotiation of differences, from which the group draws energy and new ideas to achieve the objectives (Douglas, 1997).

Depending on the occasional social and historical conditions, educational policies are adopted, aimed to: a) assimilation (overcome cultural differences and prevalence of 'superior' Western civilization), b) integrating (recognition of minority cultures and appearance within the mainly private life, only to the extent that you do not bring into question the basic cultural values of the host country) and c) multiculturalism (including elements of the culture of "different", the content of the education and empowerment of the particular identity of immigrants, by stating that the host society learns but is not influenced by the culture of immigrants). In all three cases, the superiority of the dominant culture is not disputed.

In this light, the process of learning in multicultural environments associated is with all three types of learning proposed by Cranton (1996, op. Ref. In Imel, 1997) aiming at: a) the conquest of the known targets, b) promote communication which allows participants to exchange ideas, feelings and information, while facilitating the acceptance of knowledge of team members and c) the involvement of learners through critical thinking, a process of empowerment where assumptions, expectations and prospects are renegotiated.

Native and Second Language

There are two theoretical approaches on whether teachers should or should not exploit the culture and language of immigrants to achieve good results in the conquest of the language of the host country. The first theoretical direction, in agreement with the policies of assimilation and integration, argues that the use of the mother tongue should be limited. It is therefore proposed to encourage immigrants to speak the language of the host society, even when they speak with their fellowmen. The aim is to achieve greater exposure to the host language, which is considered a necessary and sufficient condition in order to integrate into the host society. It is the model of "separate language skills" (Cummins, 2005, p. 135) in which one language competes with the other.

Critics of this view argue that the research so far is clear that the preservation of culture and the use of their mother tongue prevent immigrants to learn the language and culture of the host society. In contrast, confirming the value of their own culture empowers learners to achieve cognitive goals easier in the second language (Ferguson, 2006).

Educational Methods

The principles of adult education and intercultural education are that students, their goals, their needs and their everyday lives should be at the center of the educational process. The educational methods used by adult educators are responsible to practice all of the above. More specifically:

- To actively involve learners in the learning process, to activate their interest taking into account their needs and linking the subject to the situations they face in their daily lives by facilitating their communication.
- To connect their experiences and knowledge they have acquired in their native language with the new knowledge, and through the "empirical action" and the use of real situations, to lead them to the conquest of the theoretical system and the structure of language. 2
- To encourage critical thinking, allowing the learner to revise dysfunctional beliefs that prevent him to operate efficiently in the educational process.
- To seek and develop relations and to create positive atmosphere based on mutual respect and effective communication.

Noye and Piveteau (1993) refer to training methods by grouping them into three categories:

a) Knowledge is outside the learner; it is hold and transmitted by the teacher

b) The teacher builds and organizes knowledge already held by the trainee

c) the learner with the help of trainer understands the new pieces of knowledge on his own way and pace.

Methodology

Research Methods and Tools

The purpose of the research is to understand the reality in the field of adult education of immigrants in Greek language, by the perspective of trainers. The methods for the data collection are the interview and the observation.

The semi-structured interview allows in-depth and comprehensive communication, the understanding of narratives and experiences of respondents, while reducing the risk of misinterpretations and misunderstandings by the side of the researcher and the part of the respondent, too.

The observation enables the recording of behaviors and interactions in just when they are unfolding (Mason, 2003). It also enables the observation of non-verbal reactions and, therefore, further analysis and interpretation not only of the behaviors but also of the attitudes observed. Another reason for choosing the observation, was not only to increase the validity of research results and to check the data collected from the interviews, but also to identify any discrepancies between the theoretical assumptions of teachers and the teaching practice.

Sample

The institutions whose professional educators are teachers of the Greek language, history and culture to immigrants with a residence permit, and / or refugees and / or asylum seekers are the participants in this research. The aim of these programs is to improve the communication skills of learners (through knowledge of the language) and to provide explanation of the Greek

life and habits (through the course of history and culture), which will facilitate their integration into the Greek society and make their daily lives easier.

Findings

Teaching Approach

Most of the teachers said that the aim of the course is to enable students to communicate effectively. However, many of them recognize that they insist on grammar and the teaching of language structure, without connecting them to a communication activity. Some of the trainers interviewed, seems to deal almost exclusively with grammar throughout the duration of the course. Some say that the students are not interested or are bored by grammar, however they insist on it besides the objections of trainees. Some of the trainers consider grammar as a separate section in the lesson, but they try to avoid using difficult grammatical terms that confuse the learners. They give many examples and try to incorporate the rules to discussions. Often instructors recognize that vocabulary and grammatical types are not a living language. But they consider this as very important kind of knowledge, so they spend almost all the time trying to communicate it to the trainees.

Generally, most trainers focus on reading and writing. Some teachers say that students write spelling or grammar on the board. Many teachers say that they make their learners to write a lot (filling exercises, writing rules, or leaning verbs and nouns) and find that this helps the trainees to become more fluent.

The Teaching Methods

Results from the Observation

In summary, Table 1 presents the techniques which were observed during the educational process:

Method	Implementation
Lecture	It is the predominant technique used by trainers of the sample, sometimes even for long periods without being enriched with other activities
Question and answers	They are used quite often. Most times the instructor asks questions which are designed to control the knowledge of trainees.
Discussion	Discussion is used by several instructors. Sometimes it is just a relaxing break, while other times trainees are activated, they express their opinions and they participate meaningfully.
Role playing	Role playing was used by an instructor. The requirements of the method were not met and tThere was no activation of learners.
Brainstorming	The method was identifies by the trainer as brainstorming although it was not. Trainees were asked to fill in the blanks and they did not express themselves freely as there were limitation to the filling of the gaps.

Table 1: Method and its implementation

Conclusions

Theorists of adult learning (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Freire, 2006; Kokkos, 1998; Noye & Piveteau, 1993; Rogers, 1999) promote effective learning, which is achieved through the active participation of learners. From the observational data and from the interviews, these teaching techniques are not used by the majority of instructors. Methods that promote interaction between the instructor and learners or between learners themselves are not implemented. Furthermore, methods which promote the search for information and alternatives and methods which encourage learners to find solutions and to develop their critical ability (Jarvis, 2004), occur rarely in the teaching process which we observed.

Most trainers follow the structural approach, which focuses on the transmission of knowledge about the structure of language and ignores how to use proper communication skills (Mitsis & Mitsi, 2007; Chatziefstathiou, 2010). In four of the five sections of the observation, education in language is perceived as the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. But even the fifth trainer who adopts a more communicative approach (Chatziefstathiou, 2010), does not use active techniques, because he states that he is not convinced of their effectiveness and that the learner participation be limited to a minimum. Therefore, techniques that utilize the experience of the trainee and they favor the trainees' activation (such as brainstorming, working in groups, case study, role-playing the game, etc.) are almost completely absent.

From the interview data it can be concluded that many teachers, especially the category of volunteers, are not even aware of the participatory techniques. There is confusion as to what is working in teams and what is role-playing. There is also more ignorance about the specifications and requirements of these techniques, their objectives serve their selection criteria. Many teachers say that they do not use participatory techniques for various 'objective' reasons (lack of time, tests, training habits of students).

Lecture was the dominant educational method. The monologues of the instructor, often for long periods, copying from the blackboard, the constant repetition of standard phrases, completing exercises, correction of errors without negotiation and learner participation and short answers to questions are the main activities which take most of the time in educational practice. Sometimes instructors referred to the ineffectiveness of their efforts, but attribute it to factors such related to the effort or the potential of learners and not the attitude of the trainer and the adoptive teaching practice (Frangoudaki, 2001).

The educational processes which were observed did not meet the conditions that would enable learners to express themselves. The trainer has been the dominant figure and he controls the course of the discussion which takes place between him and the student. The other students rarely get involved, especially those who are considered weak.

Discussion

Effective education of adult immigrants in the Greek language is a highly demanding task for the success of which need to combine theoretical and practical approaches of adult education, intercultural education and the communicative approach to language learning. Although the limited sample does not permit generalization of the results and findings associated with specific instructors, but it seems that there is a need for training or retraining of teachers working in programs for learning Greek as a second language.

The content and methods of training should be such in order to enable teachers to understand the elements that shape their attitude towards learners and to reconsider entrenched perceptions that affect their practice. An experiential approach can lead them to recognize and put aside their prejudices and their educational 'habits', to take account of the diversity of needs, goals, experiences and educational preferences of learners and to identify failures and contradictions in their teaching practice. As mentioned by Androussou and Magos (2001), the aim of education should be to link theory with practice through a reflective approach to everyday educational reality in order to lead the trainers to uncover interactions, strategies and rules, which would allow them to adopt a more consistent, efficient and creative educational practice.

References

- Brookfield, S. (1986). *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Chatziefstathiou, E. (2010). Implementation of active educational techniques for teaching Greek as a second language (foreign) to vulnerable social groups. An application of Kolb's learning cycle. *Adult education*, 20, 5-11 [in Greek].
- Cross, P. (1981). *Adults as Learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cummins, J. (2005). A proposal for action: Strategies for recognizing heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 585-592.
- Douglas, T. (1995). *Survival in groups: the basics of group membership*. McGraw-Hill International.
- Ferguson, G. (2006). *Language Planning and Education* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press http://web.ebscohost.com/ehostebookviewer/ebook/nlebk_169611_AN?sid=2fe359fc-ae79-4b1a-a319-5a0a91165f47@sessionmgr114&vid=7&hid=119
- Freire, P. (2005). *Teachers As Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach With New Commentary by Peter McLaren*, Joe L. Kincheloe. Westview Press.
- Imel, S. (1997). *Adult Learning in groups*. World of Education. <http://library.educationworld.net/a1/a1-6.html> (19/12/2013).
- Jarvis, P. (1995). *Adult and continuing education: Theory and practice*. Psychology Press.
- Kokkos, A., Lionarakis, A. *Open and Long Distance Learning*, Patra, Hellenic Open University.
- Mitsis, N., & Mitsi, A. (2007). Teaching of a language. Volos Thessalia University, http://isocrates.minedu.gov.gr/content_files/tsigganopaidis/EPIMORFOSI.pdf (28/2/2015).
- Mason, J., & Davies, K. (2009). Coming to our senses? A critical approach to sensory methodology. *Qualitative research*, 9(5), 587-603.
- Noye, D., & Piveteau (1993). *A reference manual for instructors*, Athens, Metehmio.
- Rogers, A. (1999). *Adult education*. Athens, Metehmio.
- Fraggoudaki, A. (2001). Social inequality in education. *Cultural differences and social inequalities*, Issue A'. Patra, Hellenic Open University.