

***STUDENTS' VOICES IN
LANGUAGE COURSES
IN TERTIARY EDUCATION:
GIVING POWER TO STUDENTS***

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on teaching and learning practices in language courses in Tertiary Education, through which the students take the subject position (Fairclough, 1989). It takes into account the point that European Values must be substantially incorporated into Education. It also emphasises the fact that all students' cultures can be utilised in language courses. Moreover, it strongly agrees with the statement that language can transform society and can be transformed by it (Stamou, 2014). It specifically advances that students in environments that renounce traditional methods of teaching/learning (which are connected to the Colonial Era and the related power of the dominant groups), become researchers, designers, self-reflectors, decision-makers, re-designers, and creators of their multimodal texts, through processes which make their voices heard and consequently incorporate their identities in their texts. In these teaching and learning practices, students' interests, concerns, beliefs, and goals along with their imagination and creativity, are integral components to express their voices. These practices aim to convince students that as creators of texts, they are the ones who have the power to act as social actors (the students as principals, authors, and animators, Goffman 1981, cited in Fairclough, 2004). The main outcomes of these practices are related to the realisation that all cultures include socially constructed norms of behaviour, values, representations of the social and natural world, and language varieties. All the aforementioned are equally valuable and can be used in texts, based on the text creator's social goal. Moreover, the students realised that the language and the other semiotic modes are pools from which the users draw the elements needed, in order to create the message they want to convey. Finally, students' language-communication skills were improved through the analysis, re-design and re-creation of their texts. The practices included in this work were implemented in: 1. The Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I-Foundation, (addressed to African Students), 2. The English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (English for Specific Purposes), (addressed to audiences with a large percentage of Greek-Cypriot students). All the above-mentioned practices were evaluated both by the student-participants and the language instructors. The theories/approaches that this study was drawn upon are: Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), (Halliday, 1978), Genre Theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014), Critical Literacy (Baynham, 2002; Freire 1974), Multiliteracies (Cazden, et al., 1996), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 2004; 2001; 1989), Classroom Discourse (Duff, 2010; Ioannidou, 2014) and Classroom Ethnography (Cazden, 1988; Hammersley, 1990; Hymes 1989).

Keywords: *students' voices, students' power, language courses, Tertiary Education*

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to present teaching and learning practices that incorporate students' voices, making them the subject position (Fairclough, 1989) and principals, authors, and animators (Goffman, 1981, cited in Fairclough, 2004) of their texts, in language courses in Tertiary Education. More specifically, these student-centred practices originate from the Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I - Foundation (Greek as a Second Language), and the English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (English for

Specific Purposes), of the Cyprus University of Technology's Language Centre.

Research questions:

1. How can students' voices be effectively incorporated into the lessons?
2. What happens when students obtain power in the lessons?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Traditional teaching

Traditional teaching is a term that describes teacher-oriented practices through which students are taught while just listening to the teacher (Tularam & Machisella, 2018). This approach is analysed in two pillars: the emphasis on curricula and books and the teacher functioning as an authority and the dominant source of knowledge (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). The aforementioned suggests that teachers talk more than students (Rashty, 1999, cited in Khalaf & Zin, 2018). In reference to this, Flanders (1970) suggested 'the rule of two-thirds', according to which two-thirds of the classroom time is allocated to dialogue, with the teacher speaking for about two-thirds of the time and about two-thirds of the teacher's talk being direct. Moreover, and strictly connected to the 'rule of two-thirds' is the presence of the IRF/E model (Initiation, Response, Feedback/Evaluation) (Cazden, 1988; Walsh, 2011), where the teacher asks a question, the students answer, and the teacher evaluates their answer, regarding language learning, traditional approaches with emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001). Further, traditional teaching is based on the disintegration of language into sentences, where the teacher focuses on grammar and syntax and students are given the task of reproducing the instructional content (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). Another characteristic of the traditional language learning approach is the exclusive incorporation of the target language's culture, ignoring the learners' culture (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001).

Criticism of traditional teaching

Traditional Pedagogy was strongly criticised by theorists and researchers. As a 'treatment' to the Traditional Pedagogy, Freire, through his Critical Theory (1974) suggested Problem Posing Education, stating that teaching must not be limited to exchanging ideas, between teacher and students. Students must not be considered as 'empty pots' which must be filled by the teacher, but both parties, as equals, must conduct a critical dialogue, to realise that there are not any 'neutral' words, since the 'reading of the world' precedes the 'reading of the word'. In Critical Theory, contextualisation plays a crucial role and according to Freire's approach, the aim of education should be Critical Consciousness. Recently, Tularam & Machisella (2018) emphasised the concern that traditional teaching may not facilitate the acquisition of valuable learning skills by students, while Khalaf & Zin (2018) pointed out that traditional learning 'creates' active and non-active learners, due to the inconsistency of learners' active engagement. In addition, Ioannidou (2014) decried the existence of three distinct but interconnected discourse processes in traditional classroom activity, which show the asymmetry between teacher and students' interpersonal relationship:

1. Regulative discourse process (linked to the hierarchical relations of the participants).
2. Instructional discourse process (involving the transmission of the content knowledge, which is usually transmitted by the teacher).
3. Evaluative/formative process (teacher assesses the construction and acquisition of knowledge/content).

These discourse processes constitute teaching practices wherein the teacher leads, asks questions, organises the teaching process and evaluates students' contributions. In contrast to the teacher's role, students are expected to read, write, and answer the teacher's questions, performing specific language acts such as describing, narrating, arguing, and explaining.

Traditional Pedagogy was also criticised for its role in promoting the naturalisation and universalisation of mainstream literacy practices (Street, 1984, as cited in Baynham, 2002). Similarly, Charalambopoulos & Hadjisavvides (1997) expressed reservations about Traditional Pedagogy, emphasising that language learning should not focus solely on the language system, but on the power of language in specific social contexts. Likewise, in light of the Genre Theory, Cope & Kalantzis (2014) argued that traditional grammar originates from a distinctively modern logico-scientific culture and epistemological framework rooted in logical-scientific thinking. It was founded on the notion that the world can be described through facts, rules, and regularities. Despite the criticism of Traditional Pedagogy, it is worth mentioning that the movement Back to Basics claims that the downturn of the education level can be faced through the reintroduction of traditional teaching methods, leading to high levels of literacy (Baynham, 2002).

Recent insights

A variation of post-structuralist theories and approaches drew -either directly or indirectly- from Freire (1974), thus shaping new perceptions of education. In contrast to Traditional Pedagogy, Progressivism suggests new terms and concepts such as writing as a process, students as active learners, students' interests incorporation in language learning, emphasis on the learning process rather than the curriculum, use of authentic texts, teacher as a facilitator, and students texts' ownership (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). Consequently, Progressivism transferred the attention from teachers and curriculum domination to students' discourses, cultures, and interests and the process of learning.

Moreover, Halliday through his Systemic Functional Grammar (1978, 1994) considered language as a semiotic system and a conventionalised coding system, which is organised in sets of choices. In this context, Halliday (1978) suggested 3 meta-functions of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual) and stressed the fact that meanings are made in a specific socio-cultural context. Based on Halliday's theory, students can realise the power of language and its social function when they analyse and produce texts. Particularly, students can realise the communication and social occasion of a text and its characteristics, and how the reality is being constructed (ideational meta-function). Moreover, students can understand and express the interpersonal relationships between the creator of meaning and the recipient, which represent their social roles (interpersonal meta-function). Finally, students can understand texts and organise their texts, focusing on the way the language is organised and used (textual meta-function).

Drawing from Halliday, the Genre Theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014) views Genre as a term that describes the relationship between the social goal of a text and its language structure. Thus, the Genre Theory posits that education should acknowledge and emphasise the dynamic social context of a text-in-use. This is especially the case since texts are constructed in reasonably predictable ways following patterns of social interaction in a particular culture. Furthermore, genres are perceived as textual interventions in society and essential components for its existence.

Based on Freire's and Halliday's theory, Fairclough (2004; 2001; 1989), introduces Socio-cultural critical discourse analysis, a tool that allows teachers and learners to explore, understand and utilise the ideological nature of language. In this context, through Critical Discourse Analysis, it is argued that language can transform society and can be transformed by it (Stamou, 2014).

Students' voices: exploration of the term

Although the aforementioned post-structuralist theories and approaches use different terminology, they have a common component: they all give voice to students. The term 'voices' emerged in Multiliteracies (Cazden, et al., 1996) and stresses that education must not use only genres with high social power, but also those genres that carry various cultural voices and have a multimodal nature. This approach emphasises learners' subjectivities, the experiences of both teachers and students, grammar- metalanguage and the conceptualisation of learning as a design.

Students' voices have been characterised as a revolution in education (Grion, 2017). This term is realised, in many ways but maintains its core focus on students' experiences and subjectivities. An interesting analysis of the term is the one by Cook-Sather's (2006), who states that having a voice means possessing presence, power, and agency, allowing one to express himself, be heard and counted by others, and potentially influence them. Furthermore, this term is connected with the attempt to increase students' active participation in decision-making (Bahou, 2011), thereby introducing the principles of democracy and social justice in education (Fielding, 2012, as cited in Grion, 2017). In relation to these points, Mitra (2003) underlines that increasing students' voices in schools involves encouraging students to share their views on problems and solutions.

Many theorists and researchers have recognised the significant importance of incorporating students' voices in education. However, it has been noted (Seale, 2009) that the relevant literature concerning higher education does not expand on the conceptualisation of student participation. Moreover, the related literature often fails to address the issue of power relationships between teachers and students. Apart from these concerns, students' voices are mainly seen in literature as part of four meta-cognitive activities: asking questions regarding students' experiences, understanding students' perspectives, reflecting on implications for practice, and hearing voices that were previously silent or ignored.

Utilising Students' voices in teaching and learning practices

Despite the limited research regarding the incorporation of students' voices in teaching and learning practices, some research on students' voices have been conducted. Giampapa (2010) explored how a teacher developed a multiliteracies pedagogy drawing her own and her students' identities, as well as their linguistic and cultural backgrounds leading to the development of learning opportunities for all students. She asked the students to reflect on their first language (L1) and express their feelings when using their L1 in the school environment. The results of this research highlighted the importance of incorporating the students' first languages into the school environment, in order to help construct their identities. The research findings also indicated that when students are given a voice, their dreams, desires, fears, and subject positions became more meaningful.

Another interesting study on student's voices in teaching practices was conducted by Ferguson, Hanreddy & Draxton (2011). The results revealed that students' feedback on their participation in classes and classroom climate, would be utilised by the teachers to make future changes regarding classroom climate, teaching practices, and lessons content. In addition, a relevant project (Seale, 2009) explored students' learning experiences through their voices, focusing on how educational programmes include or exclude students with different learning needs. Apart from this, the project involved students in the analysis and exploration of their voices, fostering a collaborative partnership in which students contributed to the development of material and methods that could be used to help staff create an inclusive environment for all the students.

Students' voices in multiliteracies and discourse analysis contexts

The literature review shows that discourse analysis and multiliteracies are increasingly recognised as important components in teaching and learning. Koutsogiannis et al. (2015) described a teaching practice in a language class at a primary school where students were involved in a problem-solving task concerning the content, language and functions of newspapers and weather forecasts. The students had to create a multimodal text, explain their choices, correct possible mistakes, and present their work, while the teacher supported them through questions. In another study conducted by Efthimiou (2019), Kenyan students in a Greek Language and Culture Foundation course functioned as designers, decision-makers, creators of texts, and analysts of their own texts written in Greek (which functioned as a Second Language). Specifically, considering Freire's critical theory (1974) the students created texts, incorporating social identities, ideologies, and discourses originating from the Kenyan Kikuyu tribe. Students also analysed their texts based on Fairclough's (2004: 191-193) critical discourse analysis, using the following criteria/questions: 'What social event, and what social chain of social events is the text a part of? What existential, propositional, or value assumptions are made? Is there a case of seeing any assumptions as ideological? What discourses are drawn upon in the text? To what values do authors commit themselves?'

In relation to the above, Riegenbach (1999) underlined that although discourse analysis activities are highly motivating, the complicated process language learners are involved in, might be experienced as too demanding for them.

As presented earlier, despite acknowledging the pivotal role of students' voices in educational practices, their effective integration in language learning remains markedly restricted. Furthermore, in the majority of instances where students' voices are heard, the emphasis tends to centre around their experiential narratives, personal viewpoints, and perceptions of instructional sessions. Consequently, scholarly inquiry and practical application of pedagogical approaches grounded in students' voices, particularly concerning the ideological

dimensions inherent in language, are notably lacking in comprehensive representation within higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in the current project was shaped by the necessity of placing students at the centre of education (Freire, 1974) and amplifying their voices. The main challenge faced by the authors was how to integrate their students' voices into teaching and learning practices while ensuring that students retained ownership of their texts. Thus, the concept of students' voices was realised not merely as a way to convey experiences, perceptions, opinions, and evaluations related to learning and class characteristics, but also as a means through which students' values and ideologies could be consciously incorporated into their texts, functioning as sources of learning.

These considerations led to the classification of the current research as action research (Paraskevopoulos, 1993), since it constituted a small-scale study aimed at addressing a real-world problem. Additionally, both instructors and students participated in the research as equal stakeholders. After thoroughly examining various research methods and models, and with a focus on safeguarding students' ownership of their texts, the authors concluded that the most suitable approach was to assign students a project that maintained their role as decision-makers (Sullivan, 2006). Furthermore, the project was designed to be engaging and challenging, fostering students' creativity.

Before the semester began, the instructors decided on the theoretical approaches that would be implemented and the structure of the project. Each instructor was responsible for guiding and giving feedback to her students. However, throughout the semester the two instructors held regular meetings to coordinate and evaluate the process of the project, so that there would be consistency between the two courses.

The participants

The teaching and learning practices included in this work were implemented in:

1. The Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I-Foundation, which was designed for two African students, from Kenya, aged 18-20, who belonged to the Kikuyu tribe. The course aimed to prepare the foreign students to learn the Greek language so they could study Nursing in Greek the following year.

2. The English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (ESP). This course targeted audiences with a large percentage of Greek-Cypriot students. The group consisted of 18 first-year undergraduate students aged 18-20, studying for a Bachelor's degree in Multimedia and Graphic Arts. The aim of the course was to assist students to improve their English and gain the required skills that will be needed in their field of study. The two groups were purposely chosen because the instructors wanted to research how the same theoretical approaches could be used in those two different courses having the same result: giving voice to students.

Linking theory to practise

Preparing the students

During the first two weeks of the semester, the instructors observed their students, in class, and kept detailed field notes (Hammersley, 1990; Hymes, 1989). They then designed the intervening project based on both their field notes and the results of the needs analysis of their students, which was conducted through a diagnostic test. The second step was to present the project's design to the students and inform them about its implementation, along with its core components (Halliday's SFG, Fairclough's CDA, Critical Literacy). The third step involved the exploration of students' perceptions about: language learning processes and their own 'weaknesses' in language use and other semiotic modes. This was conducted through a questionnaire consisting of five open-ended questions. These questions were asked and answered in the language each group of students comprehended better, as the content would have been too difficult to answer in a foreign or second language.

The Greek Foundation students' questionnaire was in English, and the English for Specific Purposes students' questionnaire was in Greek. The fourth step was a critical dialogue

(Freire, 1974) between the instructors and the students, regarding ideological representations of the social world, identities, socio-cultural structures, the active role of learners, and the power of language.

Implementing the project

During the fourth week of the semester, the instructors assigned project to the students. The task was to create a text in any genre and of any text type, using any semiotic mode/modes (written, audio-visual, etc.). The only requirement was that the text ideologically represent a concept/ value of high importance in their socio-cultural context and specify its goal.

After the students had developed the initial design of their text, and while the students, with the assistance of the instructors were exploring components of SFG (Halliday, 1978), CDA (Fairclough 2004; 2001; 1989), Multiliteracies (Cazden et al., 1996), Critical Literacy (Baynham, 2002), and Genre Theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014), they were simultaneously modifying and improving their text. During these processes, students worked in environ-

Translated version

Note: The instructor translated the student's work without any interventions (e.g., grammatical and syntactical mistakes).

Scenario

- 1 Leonidas: Good morning. How are you?
- 2 Spartacus: Good morning. I'm fine. How are you?
- 3 L: I am fine too. I would like a big arrow and ten small arrows.
I have a symbolic mission.
- 4 I must kill the king of England.
- 5 S: I am sorry, my son. Today I don't have any big arrows.
Take the small arrows behind
- 6 the cupboard.
- 7 L: Can I take your bow?
- 8 S: Of course, but you must bring me his dead body after hunting.
- 9 L: Sure. I am the best hunter all around Greece.
- 10 S: Be careful, my son. Don't become arrogant.
- 11 L: I don't say why. I am good. I killed a giant from Persia.
- 12 S: I know that you are brave but
- 13 L: Ok my father. I understood. See you.
- 14 S: See you.

Participant 1's text functioned as a learning resource on two levels. Firstly, it conveyed the values and the ideological representations on which the text was built. Secondly, it demonstrated the power of language encompassing the writer's choices regarding vocabulary, grammar, syntax, language acts, implicatures, etc.

Values and ideologies

Through his text, Participant 1 articulated specific values and ideologies of his tribe/community. Specifically, he created a character, a Kikuyu young adult, named Leonidas, who has specific duties and obligations towards his father and his tribe/community. He is tasked with killing the king of England (line 4 and 8) calling this mission 'symbolic' (line 3). However, he needs to borrow his father's arrows (line 3) and his bow (line 7). His father allows him to use his weapons, under one condition: to bring him the king's dead body (line 8). Thus, the power of the father emerges and subsequently the brave action depends on three parameters: Leonidas's bravery, his father's arrows and bow, and his father's permission and condition (he asks for proof: the king's dead body).

The writer certifies Leonidas's bravery using four arguments: Even though big arrows are not available, he will actualize the symbolic mission using small arrows (line 5). Moreover, he states that he is the best hunter in Greece (line 9) and above all, he had already killed a giant from Persia in the past (line 11). Additionally, his father recognises his bravery (line 12). Another interesting element in this text is the choice of names: The Kikuyu father is named Spartacus, while his son is named Leonidas (lines 1 and 2). Associating this with the specific historical persons, the writer's implicatures can be easily understood. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the young adult must kill the king of England. This duty is strictly connected with the Colonial Era in Africa and people's desire for freedom. In line 10, the

father advises his son to be careful and not to become arrogant. At this point the value of humility emerges and in lines 9 and 13 the value of a son's obedience and discipline to his father evident.

The lesson focused on the ideological representation of the ideal Kikuyu young adult, who is characterised by bravery, self-confidence, strength, courage, initiative, determination, obedience, discipline, and respect, acting in a way that protects his tribe/community and his family. Jim explained the importance of these values in the Kikuyu tribe, associating them with the contemporary daily life of a Kikuyu young adult. Then, students decided to conduct interviews with Cypriot young adults, exploring the question how young adults in Cyprus express respect to their parents. Through this process, the similarities and differences between the two socio-cultural contexts emerged. Moreover, it was understood that values and ideologies are positioned in specific socio-cultural contexts and can be interpreted only in those contexts.

It is worth mentioning that the target language (Greek as L2) was mainly used. However, at some points, students used English to communicate effectively. Later, with the instructor's assistance, English was translated into Greek.

The power of language

In the following lessons, Participant's 1 text functioned as a source for language learning, starting with correcting the grammatical mistakes of this text. The students worked together, while the instructor took on the role of an effective communicator. Following specific descriptors of the CEFR B1 level the lessons focused on language elements, drawing from Halliday's SFG. More specifically, the instructor and the students explored and analysed the interpersonal function of the text and how the social roles were built, by the student-writer. At this point, greetings and language acts between the two socio-cultural contexts (the Kikuyu tribe and Cyprus) were explored, focusing on the similarities and differences. The language elements (e.g. honorific plural, grammatical cases of nouns, active voice verbs' endings, personal pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions) used in the text were emphasised during the lesson, using three languages interchangeably: Swahili, Kikuyu and Greek.

Later, the students started creating their multimodal presentation, which compared the contemporary social position of men and women in the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya and Cyprus. They focused on socially constructed values, identities, and ideologies, and on the fact that these can only be interpreted in their socio-cultural contexts. Unexpectedly, this process revealed important differences in the norms of an academic presentations between the Kikuyu tribe and Cyprus: a Kikuyu student is not allowed to make eye contact with the instructor, should speak in a lower voice when addressing the instructor, and should not interrupt the instructor with questions.

During the creation of the slides, students self-reflected on their work, contemplating the social objectives of their presentation, which aimed to promote understanding, equality and respect among cultures and language variations, and stressing the role of the so-

cio-cultural context (interculturalism). Subsequently, the students improved their work by making changes to their slides, guided by enquiries such as: What is the social objective of this presentation? What are the characteristics/profile of the audience? What are the norms for effective body language during a presentation? How can the goal be achieved through choices on semiotic modes, vocabulary, syntax, etc.

2. English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (ESP)

The English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts 1 Course was designed for first year undergraduate Greek-Cypriot students, studying Multimedia and Graphic Arts. After students formed groups of three, they produced videos using the target language (English as a Foreign Language) to raise awareness on a sociocultural issue of their choice. The students were asked to create a video, rather than a written text, because, as Multimedia and Graphic Arts students, they found the idea of creating a video more interesting as it was related to their field of study. This task provided them with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge on video production; from storyboarding (which is a graphic representation of how a video will unfold, shot by shot, including notes about what is happening in the scene and what is being said in the script during that shot) to video editing (which is the manipulation and arrangement of video shots, incorporation of audio, music, words, sounds, subtitles, lighting, etc.).

The students presented various sociocultural topics, such as the causes of smoking, excessive use of technology (social media), lack of interpersonal communication and domestic violence related to addiction (alcohol and drugs). They were given the power to choose the topic that they wanted to raise awareness about, and during the discussion they proposed solutions and strategies to address each specific problem.

Values and Ideologies

A group of students created a video aimed at addressing the sociocultural issue of domestic violence stemming from alcohol addiction. Specifically, the video portrays the struggles of a young married couple, where the husband is grappling with alcohol addiction, leading to aggressive behaviour directed towards his wife and teenage son. The video, lasting approximately 3 minutes, explores various alcohol-related issues, primarily focusing on domestic violence, and illustrates how it impacts the wife and teenage son.

The video begins with the father sitting on a sofa, drinking alcohol, and listening to music, while the wife is busy cleaning the house. When the father requests food and is dissatisfied with what his wife serves, he throws the food on the floor and physically assaults her due to his dissatisfaction. Later, when the son emerges from his room and asks for money, his father's aggression escalates as he yells and strikes the son. Despite the mother's attempts to intervene and calm the situation, matters only worsened. The distraught son eventually leaves, prompting the wife to enter her son's bedroom to tidy up. The video concludes by revealing the heartbroken wife discovering drugs in her son's room.

In summary, this specific video provides a poignant depiction of how alcohol addiction can lead to domestic violence, ultimately pushing the teenage boy into seeking solace in the destructive embrace of drugs. Through the video, the students effectively portrayed the social and cultural aspects linked to alcohol addiction. They conveyed the importance of values such as respect and love within a family, emphasising the role of parents as positive role models for their children. Furthermore, they highlighted that alcoholism brings forth a range of issues that do not only affect the alcoholic individual but also all members of the family. Additionally, the video shed light on the fact that sometimes, vulnerable teenagers may turn to substances (e.g. drugs) in search of help and happiness.

After the video presentation, a class discussion ensued, focusing on the themes that emerged from the video. Various solutions were proposed to address this problem, including suggestions for stricter government rules and regulations to mitigate the issues associated with excessive alcohol consumption. Despite the presence of government legislation in the students' culture (Cyprus) that restricts underage drinking (those under the age of 18), it was noted that these laws are not stringent enough. This lax enforcement leads to young individuals consuming alcohol at an early age, potentially leading to addiction. This misconception that underage drinking goes unpunished, can encourage excessive alcohol consumption without fear of legal repercussions.

In conclusion, students recognized the importance of raising awareness about alcohol consumption and advocated for stricter fines for excessive drinking. Regarding domestic violence, the students agreed that there is an urgent need to raise awareness about this issue. One student informed the group about the recent opening of the Women's House in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. This crisis centre provides comprehensive support services to domestic violence victims 24/7. Lastly, the students discussed how drugs have become readily available often requiring only a small amount of money. Consequently, many teenagers who face challenges like abuse or social difficulties turn to drugs in search of happiness. One student shared information about a free helpline that can be called to report abuse against women and children.

The power of language

The spoken and written language (subtitles) used in the video functioned as sources for language learning. That is, spoken and written language was discussed in terms of vocabulary, syntax, and grammar usage. In addition, regarding spoken language, feedback was given on pronunciation and non-verbal communication (body language). Similarly, regarding written language, feedback was given on the use of punctuation, and capitalization. The comments and the feedback given to students were based on the CEFR B1 level descriptors. The instructor and the group of students explored and analysed the function of the text, spoken and written language, and how the social roles and the 'actors' were created. At this point, emphasis was placed on the language and images used, so that the result would not be offensive (e.g.: racist, inappropriate) in any way.

During this process, the instructor functioned as an effective communicator and helped in the correction of students' oral and written grammatical mistakes. Furthermore, a part

of the lesson focused on the interpersonal function of the texts. Thus, students had to choose verbal and nonverbal elements, along with music, acts and video techniques (such as zooming in/out, lighting up or darkening a scene, etc.) that were appropriate and helped in conveying the meaning they wished.

An extract from the written language used in the video is presented below.

‘Domestic Violence causes far more pain than visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return. Silence hides violence. Stop domestic violence today.’

Through their language choices (statements), the students conveyed their perspectives on domestic violence by choosing the appropriate language elements such as verbs, nouns, use of active and passive voice, etc. The students chose to start their text with the words ‘Domestic Violence’ which was the issue they wanted to raise awareness about and emphasise when they were given the power and voice to express their concerns about a sociocultural issue.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As it has been presented in the theoretical section of the current study, the majority of cases where students’ voices were utilised focused on students’ experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding learning processes (Mitra, 2003; Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011; Seale, 2009). Especially in language learning there is a limited presence of students’ voices as factors in shaping teaching and learning practices (Koutsogiannis et al., 2015). Even more limited is the utilisation of language values and ideological representations of students’ texts, as learning resources (Efthimiou, 2019).

Considering the above, through the aforementioned teaching and learning practices implemented by the authors of this study and their students (in the Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course - Foundation and the English for Specific Purposes Course for Multimedia and Graphic Arts), students’ voices (their interests, opinions, values, concerns, language skills, and ideological representations for the social world) were heard and dominated in the classes. This was achieved by giving the students the subject position (Fairclough, 1989). The initiative presented in this paper aims to link theory with practice (Seale, 2009), offering suggestions on how students’ voices in tertiary education can shape lessons and function as learning sources.

The teaching and learning practices described above brought students’ voices to the lesson in the following ways. Firstly, the project content was based on their communicative needs and perceptions. Secondly, students chose the values, perceptions, experiences, and ideologies they wanted to set as pillars of their texts. Thirdly, students chose the topic of their text, its text type, its genre/s, and its mode/s, creating a text which incorporated their interests, their worries, etc. Furthermore, they chose the elements they wanted to use such as vocabulary, syntax, language acts, etc. Moreover, their texts revealed students’ weaknesses and strengths and functioned as new sources for the following lessons, based

on which students conducted self-reflection and improvements of their texts. Finally, their texts functioned as means, through which they -as social actors- established a social goal.

Summarising what happened when students obtained power in the lesson

Students and instructors' roles became interchangeable since the lesson was neither based on the ERF/E model nor on 'test questions' set by the instructor (Cazden, 1988; Walsh, 2011). On the contrary, students transferred knowledge to their instructors and their classmates for instance, the social position of a young adult in Kikuyu tribe. In this context, the role of the instructors was to promote understanding, respect, and equality among people, cultures and languages, to encourage students to express their ideological representation of the social world and to offer a scaffold to the students for language improvement.

Thus, participants concluded that all societies include socially constructed norms of behaviour, values, representations of the social and natural world, and language varieties. Moreover, the creator of a text is the one who has power and as a social actor can cause changes or reproductions in society (Stamou, 2014). As Participant 1, a student from Kenya, said 'Talking about the way you 'read the world' sometimes you help people to see one more dimension of it'.

In conclusion, it can certainly be argued that the students' voices were effectively heard through the utilisation of the same teaching and learning approaches, despite differences in the subjects studied and the diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the participating students.

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