

**Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Students in Open and/or
Online Learning Environments: A Research Symposium**

**Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) in multilingual contexts: A
Mixed-Methods Case Study**

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Abstract

This paper describes a mixed-methods case study (through intervention) conducted in a digital multilingual elementary classroom that aimed to explore strategies for facilitating remote lesson engagement and establishing inclusive pedagogy under emergency situations. The principle aim of this study was to explore to what extent the task-based language teaching (TBLT) method grounded on the migrant students' needs analysis, and was supported by computer-assisted language learning (CALL) features that contribute to active lesson participation during emergencies, and their effect on migrant students' social inclusion in a formal educational context. By employing qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry, there was an attempt to provide multilingual lesson strategies implementing digital learning projects. Data was collected using observation of the actual teaching procedure, the in-depth content analysis of the learning outcome, and a survey on educators' views regarding the emergency remote teaching procedure. Results established the most critical factors required for differentiated multilingual distance education. Overall, this mixed-methods case study strengthens the idea that the public school may operate as a mechanism for empowering the socioeconomically vulnerable population of society. This study also adds to our understanding of students' capacity on detecting their errors

and shortcomings and how they evaluate themselves, a process that increases their autonomous and critical learning ability.

Keywords: multilingual education, language-diverse classroom, emergency remote teaching (ERT), social inclusion.

Introduction

Classrooms of refugees and migrants are characterized by significant heterogeneity regarding goals and communicative needs. Several reports have shown that task-based language teaching (TBLT) provides students with sources of meaningful content, optimal circumstances for communicative practices in the second language (L2), and positive input to create even greater incentives for language usage (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). The purposes of this mixed-methods' case study were twofold: 1) to examine whether TBLT activities grounded on the school curriculum, supported by computer-assisted language learning (CALL), feature enhance migrant students' Greek language learning under emergency situations; and 2) to define the crucial factors that affect migrant students' active lesson participation remotely. Hodges et al. (2020) suggest a specific term for the instruction provided in such urgent conditions: emergency remote teaching (ERT). The three-month lockdown in Greece in March 2020, because of COVID-19, was a unique opportunity for the present study to determine the effectiveness of ERT on novice elementary students.

A strong relationship between CALL and TBLT has been reported in Greek primary education (Manousou, 2004; Pozidis et al., 2015; Psallidas & Manousou, 2016; Papadela, 2019; Papanikolaou & Manousou, 2019). However, very little was found in the literature on the interaction of TBLT, CALL, and second-language acquisition (SLA) (e.g., Chappelle, 2001). In reviewing the Greek literature, no data was found on the association between TBLT, CALL, and SLA applied remotely in Greek primary education, as in Greece, no distance education school is aimed at primary school students (Manousou, 2004; Miminou & Spanaka, 2016; Fakoulas, 2020). In accordance with the symposium's subject on Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Students in Online Learning Environments, this study aims to answer:

- How may effective Greek language lessons under emergency remote teaching be achieved?
 - a) How will TBLT activities, grounded on the school curriculum supported by CALL features, enhance migrant students' Greek language learning under emergency situations?
 - b) What are the crucial factors that affect migrant students' active lesson participation remotely?

Literature Review

ERT in Multilingual Contexts

Regarding the importance of ERT, due to emergencies, Di Pietro et al. (2020) claim that it plays a vital role in encouraging children to continue studying as a result of the deterioration in educational institutions triggered by the closing of schools and universities. However, they notice that physical school closing and distance education may have a detrimental impact on students' performance across four main channels: reduced time spent studying, anxiety signs, a shift in the way students communicate, and loss of enthusiasm for learning. Yi and Jang (2020) argue that, despite the possible sustained effect of the pandemic and remote teaching on students and instructors, the teachers should implement quality education (e.g., translingual and interactive pedagogies) to provide some promising benefits.

Remote Learning, CALL, and SLA

Distance, remote, or online learning is already one of the most widely recognized methods of providing a curriculum for many fields of education (Wakil et al., 2019). Niari et al. (2017) underline the need to implement and apply distance learning approaches and frameworks at all stages of collaborative learning. Thomas and Reinders (2010) argue that given the high level of task-based approaches, this is an intriguing inclusion, in that TBLT is focusing on enhancing real-world, authentic tasks in target languages at a period when 1.5 billion people worldwide have access to international forms of technology-based interaction, from laptops to smartphones. However, as SLA theory has traditionally ignored CALL, the TBLT method usually focuses mainly on face-to-face classroom study (Chappelle, 2003; Thomas, & Reinders, 2010).

CALL and Distance Education in Greek Primary Education

Papanikolaou and Manousou (2019) suggest that CALL facilitates originality and creativity and supports the critical thinking of students. To develop an assessment model for video, as a means for learning in distance polymorphic primary education, Papadela (2019) carried out bibliographic research, which formed the foundation of the axes and criteria of the assessment framework. She concludes that video is a rich and powerful tool, used over time, in distance education at all levels to present, transfer, and represent educational information, but also to support teaching and learning processes, as it presents the information attractively and consistently. In the same vein, Aggeli (2017) reviews the contribution of video to the achievement of the corresponding pedagogical goals, in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. She concludes that the use of video in distance learning in a second/foreign language promotes the enhancement in language teaching experience, in terms of content, materials, and pedagogical approaches by enhancing interdisciplinarity, student-centeredness, and collaboration.

Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for utilizing CALL features and web 2.0 tools on cooperative learning in face-to-face education or supplementary distance education in primary institutions. However, very little is known about collaborative education in a diverse primary educational context using web 2.0 tools.

Methods

The purpose of this mixed-methods' case study was to qualitatively explore, with a small sample, and to determine if the qualitative findings generalize to a large sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The first phase of the research is a qualitative exploration of the contribution of enrichment-related activities supported by CALL features to migrant students' active Greek language learning under emergencies. From this initial exploration, the qualitative findings have been used to develop assessment methods that have been administered to a large sample. In the quantitative phase, e-surveys have been collected from 57 educators, with active teaching experience, in multicultural Greek institutional contexts.

The Qualitative Research

The Qualitative Research Tools

Weekly observation of the teaching procedure, before the intervention, provided adequate information regarding the students' attitudes and stances concerning diversity in the teaching and learning procedure, and students' needs analysis. Intensive observation throughout five-week-long ERT, synchronous and asynchronous intervention, contributed to gathering a variety of data on the students' learning abilities and preferences. As this study realized online, a research diary is grounded on the web platforms' archives. All the assignments, the students' deliverables, their posts, peer- and self-evaluations, and their evaluation of the remote teaching procedure, constitute the main data collected for the case study, as their analysis provide critical research insights.

Figure 1

Students' Team Performance on the Writing Task on Padlet "find and write the concepts" (levels A1-A2)

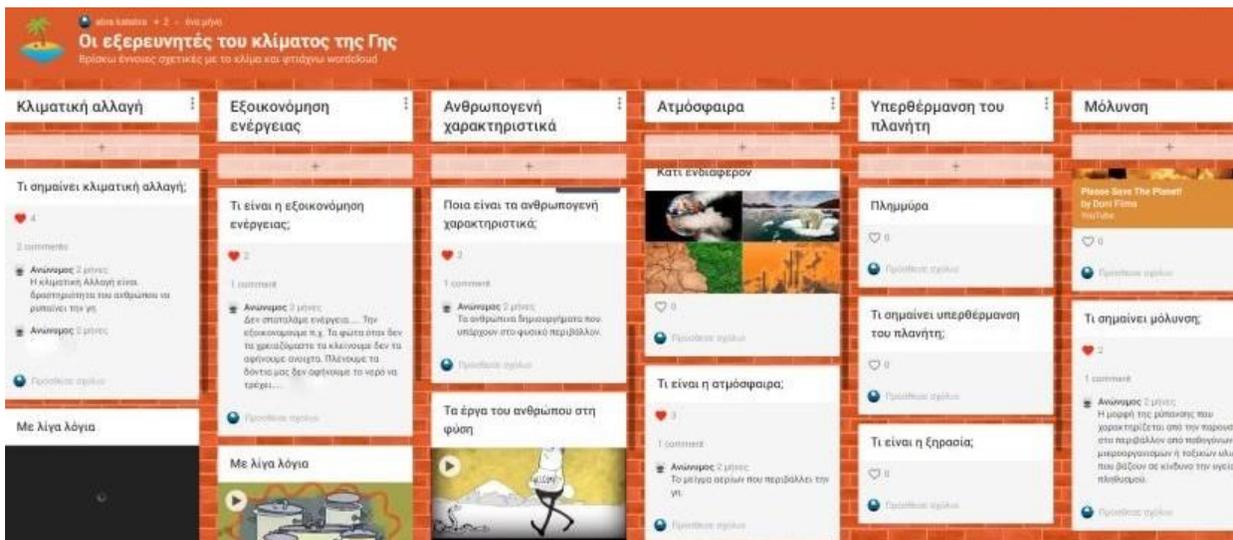


Figure 2
The Students' Posters on Padlet.



The Target Group

Eighteen children, aged 11–12 with a mixed ethnic background, attend the fifth grade of the selected Greek primary school in downtown Athens. In a total of eighteen students in the classroom, there are six with a migrant background, while the rest of them are of Greek origin. According to the records, and a several-month interaction with the students in the class, three out of six students with a migrant background are of level A1-A2 in Greek-language proficiency (Council of Europe, n.d.). Thus, the separated Greek language virtual class was aimed at them, considering their needs analysis and their mutual proficiency in Greek. The rest of the students with a migrant background would also be assigned the tasks concerning their estimated B1-B2 proficiency in the Greek language.

Quantitative Research

To explore the educators' beliefs, opinions, and practices regarding the 2020 ERT, because of COVID-19, an e-survey has been designed by the researcher and it has been forwarded via e-mail to elementary schools of the Attica region. The e-survey comprised a combination of 31 close-ended (multiple choice, check all that apply, and ratings scale questions) and open-ended questions, and it has been completed by 57 educators working in a great range of posts in multilingual classrooms of public elementary schools of the Attica region.

Results

The Qualitative Research

Students' Attendance and Accessibility

Regarding the students' attendance on the remote courses, many problems emerged sporadically due to the COVID-19 situation and the students' first acquaintance with distance learning methods, as the project was inextricably linked with the teleconferences. Via WebEx, the teacher shared her screen to show students how they could use the suggested web 2.0 tools (Padlet and Canva) to complete their group's assigned tasks, along with further clarification for the task-based procedure. The next step was attempting to guide the students on the telephone. The researcher decided then to create four asynchronous videos with step-by-step instructions.

The Students' Evaluation of the ERT Procedure

According to the last evaluation of the course, the students commented that they did not expect the distance learning to be that way, because they believed that the book material would continue to be followed. However, they liked the task-based project concerning the climate, feeling proud of their effort, without providing the researcher with any proposal for changes.

Quantitative Research

The major problems the educators dealt with concerned the poor or no Internet connection in their students' houses, the lack of a suitable device, and the knowledge on handling the required online platforms. The educators claimed, at a rate of 31.6%, that they overcame these problems, while 61.2% did not overcome them in their entirety, nor a part of them.

Concerning the problems their students, with refugee or migrant backgrounds, encountered on the ERT procedure, these extend to a great range, with most popular among them being linguistic barriers (75.4%) and inability in understanding the instructions on the platform tasks (63.2%). Other issues concern the psychological situation of these students during curfew, such as lack of interest in the lessons and assignments (31.6%), refusing to take part in the remote assignments (22.8%), and/or even expressing signs of sadness and grief (21.1%).

Data from the section, concerned with the synchronous remote teaching procedure, shows great declination on the bilingual students' participation rate in asynchronous against the synchronous form of distance education. No significant increase was noted in the bilingual students' participation rate in the remote teaching procedure (15.4%). Contrariwise, it either marked a decrease of 40.4% or remained stable at a rate of 42.1%. Most of the responses concerned connection disabilities, while a smaller rate refers to psychological issues.

With regard to the educators' efforts on providing interesting lessons that correspond to their students with migrant and refugee background needs, the majority of those who responded to this item stated that they used a variety of multimedia (images, videos, presentations, etc.). These educators stated that they managed to overcome, to a great extent, the problems that emerged in their communication with their bilingual students.

The most striking result to emerge from the data is that most educators (61.4%) believe that the students with refugee or migrant backgrounds are excluded from the ERT procedure, as it has been applied during the particular period in Greece. They also believe, at a great rate, (64.9%), that the migrant and refugee children lack equal opportunities, compared with their native schoolmates.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research has identified many issues on the connection between the asynchronous attendance, but mainly synchronous, of elementary students with migrant and refugee backgrounds and native students. The results show that the ERT, as it was applied in the March 2020 lockdown because of COVID-19, excluded, at a great rate, the participation of this vulnerable student population. Initial observations suggest that ERT also contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities in education (Di Pietro et al., 2020). However, another major finding was that the educators, who were more flexible on the communication methods applied and those who have taken into consideration their students' linguistic needs and interests, finally managed to overcome many of the emerged issues.

With regard to the TBLT method applied, it is obviously linked to the bilingual students' needs and interests and connected to real-life activities. Its remote application also increases their autonomous and critical learning abilities, enhancing their computer skills, while practicing their second language.

Overall, this mixed-methods case study strengthens the idea that the public school may operate as a mechanism for empowering the socioeconomically vulnerable population of society. Continued efforts are needed to make distance education more accessible to every student in need. A key policy priority should also be to plan for comprehensive training of the educators regarding SLA on distance education to prevent the vulnerable student population from the exclusion of such a crucial educational procedure.

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