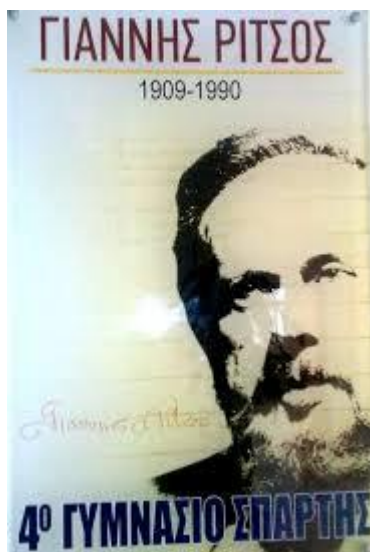# When eTwinning coincides with Computer-Based Language Learning

ΟΜΑΔΑ ΑΝΑΠΤΥΞΗΣ

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ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ

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1.Συνοπτική περιγραφή της ανοιχτής εκπαιδευτικής πρακτικής

From the first kind of computer-based language teaching up to the most prolific tool of all, the concept of tool is quite central to teaching and ELT in particular. However, the match between technology and methodology has raised critical questions concerning its integration (Slaouti, 2005 & Phillips, 1985). In this paper, an original writing lesson had been created, integrating the use of a blog (in an eTwinning project). The specific teaching practice in an EFL language room aims at supporting production and communication with peers or others beyond the classroom, and in this way act as a stimulus for collaborative endeavors. A wide range of language students have a positive attitude toward using computers for writing in the language classroom such as the feeling of personal empowerment or the enhancement of learning opportunities (Warschauer, 1996). The existence of such activities however involves writing with guidance and feedback, on topics of personal interest (Michalakelli, 2007); teachers enhance student motivation by helping students gain knowledge and skill about using computers, giving them ample opportunity to use electronic communication, and carefully (Warschauer, 1996).

2.Σχεδιασμός της ανοιχτής εκπαιδευτικής πρακτικής

2.1 Στοιχεία σχεδιασμού

Rationale for the use of technology

The most important element however remains the use of computers as a writing stimulus: students tend to be more motivated to write for real reasons and where there is real audience or readership. In such situations, the students/writers will try to address this readership appropriately, attractively or persuasively as each time the need is perceived (Cunningham, 2012). Moreover, Cunningham (2012) makes notice of the significance of the way the learning environment is structured in terms of school organisation, the curriculum and their role in Computer Assisted Language Learning.

Finally, Zeiss and Isabelli-Garcia (2005) have concluded in their study that CMC is likely to be more effective with topics dealing with current events, closely followed by those treating daily life and educational systems. Additionally, their study showed that students participating in CMC with target-language counterparts were better informed about the culture. Thus, blogs enable students look at cultural diversity by dealing with the same story from different points of view *(Czubocha, 2003)*.

2.2 Διδακτικοί στόχοι

Aims and objectives

Formulating objectives is one of Anson's (1989) specific professional procedures for curriculum development. Moreover, students are often discouraged by the contents and form of ELT course books as for example their texts are prepared for a given audience. So the principal aims of this blogging-writing lesson is for students to be involved in problem solving, judge the information they come up and enhance their critical thinking skills; in this way they can become more independent and more successful at school (Czubocha, 2003). Michalakelli (2007) also agrees to the basic aim of engaging students in a dynamic, interactive process by involving them into real-life, meaningful activities and Slaouti (2005) also agrees. Furthermore, pair work[i] is a central method of work since students are expected to work in tandem in order to perform the writing activities assigned to them. Last but not least, it is essential that the topic selected is in accordance with the students' interests and aims at activating the relevant schemata Michalakelli (2007).

3. Εφαρμογή της ανοιχτής εκπαιδευτικής πρακτικής

3.1 Περιβάλλον – πλαίσιο

- ### *Teaching context*

In the specific technology-based lesson, the participants are students of the first (1st) grade of Junior High School. Their level is A2 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference, Council of Europe). Their class is advanced and the school is an experimental one, which means that they can be taught in different ways than from their public English textbooks. Nevertheless, their number in total (26 students) and their relatively small classroom prohibit them from participating in a variety of teaching activities, for example working in groups instead of peer work.

- ### *Teaching materials*

The learners have already met on-line their audience since most of them are members of an eTwinning project about bullying. Knowledge of audience is of paramount importance as it enables students to produce reader-orientated, communicative texts (Michalakelli, 2007). Secondly, learners were exposed to a model of the text-type it was asked from them to write so as to facilitate the

writing process. Furthermore, a careful selection of text-types for both reading and writing was administered, always taking into account that students can usually read language that is more advanced than the language that they can produce.

3.2 Τάξη

Επιλέξτε από την παρακάτω λίστα την τάξη στην οποία εφαρμόστηκε η ανοιχτή εκπαιδευτική πρακτική. Αν η δραστηριότητα είναι συνεργατική μπορείτε να επιλέξετε παραπάνω από μία τάξεις.

☐ **Νηπιαγωγείο**   √ <u>Α' γυμνασίου</u>

☐ **Α' δημοτικού**   ☐ **Β' γυμνασίου**

☐ **Β' δημοτικού**   ☐ **Γ' γυμνασίου**

☐ **Γ' δημοτικού**   ☐ **Α' λυκείου**

☐ **Δ' δημοτικού**   ☐ **Β' λυκείου**

☐ **Ε' δημοτικού**   ☐ **Γ' λυκείου**

☐ **ΣΤ' δημοτικού**

3.3 Διάρκεια δραστηριότητας

Προσδιορίστε παρακάτω τη διάρκεια πραγματοποίησης της ανοιχτής εκπαιδευτικής πρακτικής.

Ο1 Ώρα διδασκαλίας

Διδακτική ενότητα μίας (01) ώρας μαθητικής δραστηριότητας

☐ Άλλη: Προσδιορίστε την διάρκεια: |_____.|

| π.χ. 12 ώρες δραστηριότητας σε διάστημα ενός τριμήνου |

3.4 Αναλυτική περιγραφή της πραγματοποίησης της ανοιχτής εκπαιδευτικής πρακτικής

> ***Teaching procedure***
>
>
>
> Image 'eTwinning'

- ***Pre-writing stage***

Interactivity is one of Internet's positive aspects (Βίγκλας, 2013) as well as embracing technology to harness specific language teaching goals (Carrier, 1997). In this pre-writing stage, the initial questions activate relevant content and the task of writing appears as a continuum from a previous textbook exercise, but with a very important difference: the students are the teenagers that a psychologist seeks to talk to. Warschauer (1996) agrees with the benefit of feeling part of a community, developing thoughts and ideas, learning about different people and cultures, and students' learning from each other. Moreover, the development of students' writing skills requires the learners to be exposed to texts belonging to that particular genre. Teachers can make use of other sites embedded with audio and visual materials to enhance students' learning motivation, while paying attention to the hyperlinked material added (Yang, 2009).

- ***While-writing stage***

Writing has been especially important for the instruction of second language learners: blogging in particular can be used to help students write for a social audience, while becoming sensitive to both the benefits and risks of expressing themselves online (Warschauer, 2010). I have created the while-writing exercises in order to basically engage students in a dynamic, interactive process which reinforces an awareness of audience, purpose and intentionality by constructing real-life, meaningful activities. After all, literacy is a social practice and it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principle; it is about knowledge (Street, 2003).

Pair work seems to be more effective because it enhances the opportunities for each member to participate actively in the activities, reduces the complexity of group management and diminishes the 'aloneness factor' (Peterson, 1997). So, learners work in tandem with each other in order to perform the writing activities assigned to them. Thus, in

this writing lesson, writing was not only considered a problem-solving activity but also aimed at setting the development of the task which requires students' active involvement.

- ***Post-writing stage***

One of the main issues concerning blogs is also reflection, which includes reflective thinking and self-examination during or after teaching (Liou in Yang, 2009). The post-writing activity basically focuses on writing as a goal without ignoring the interest in grammatical accuracy. After all, reflective practices could be divided into 'in-action' and 'on-action' in a blog which is like a small 'learning community' (Yang, 2009:13), constructed by people who share mutual interests in order to collaboratively set objectives, regulations and formats. Students may be often discouraged by the contents of ELT course books as their texts are prepared for a given audience. But when students work involving problem solving, judge the information they come up or other students provide and enhance their critical thinking skills, they become more independent and more successful at school. And their teacher is extra proud of them, too!

3.5 Ρόλος του διδάσκοντα

Επιλέξτε από την παρακάτω λίστα τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά του ρόλου του διδάσκοντα. Υπάρχει η δυνατότητα πολλαπλών επιλογών.

☐ Διδακτικός   ☐ Προπονητικός

√ <u>Ενθαρρυντικός</u>   ☐ Διαχειριστικός

√ <u>Υποστηρικτικός</u>   ☐ Μέντωρ

√ <u>Συμβουλευτικός</u>   ☐ Υποκινητικός

√ <u>Διευκολυντικός</u>   ☐ Κριτικός

☐ Συντονιστικός   ☐ Επιμελητής περιεχομένου (curator)

☐ Ηγετικός   √ <u>Τεχνική υποστήριξη</u>

√ <u>Διαμεσολαβητικός</u>   ☐ Άλλος ρόλος: ._____.

√ <u>Εποπτικός</u>

4. Πηγές Ψηφιακού Εκπαιδευτικού Περιεχόμενου που αξιοποιήθηκαν

References (Αναφορές)
• **Padlet.com** • **Voki.com** • **Prezi.com** • **Etwinning.com** • **Etwinning.gr** • **Blogspot.com** • **E-yliko.gr** • **helleniccomserve.com**

5. Στοιχεία τεκμηρίωσης και επέκτασης της ανοιχτής εκπαιδευτικής πρακτικής

5.1 Αποτελέσματα - Αντίκτυπος

Eastment (1996) claims that it is only when one communicates with groups, that the Internet reveals its power. A blog allows people to exchange information without space or time constraints and broaden their knowledge while meeting their personal needs and interests at the same time (Yang, 2009). Furthermore, it is interactive in the sense that readers respond with comments and/or challenge each other's viewpoints (Yang, 2009) and that is why Slaouti (2005) refers to the significant aspect of (software) evaluation which involves appropriateness for the type of learners taught or what teacher intervention should be.

Motivation is another significant aspect of blogging, since it involves students wanting to communicate with non-native speakers in other parts of the world, as well with their classmates and their teacher (Warschauer, 1996). The need for communication is followed by the aspect of personal empowerment, overcoming isolation, and making it less threatening to contact people. Particularly Mitsikopoulou (2007: 243) in her study claims that parents in Greece regard English language learning and ICT literacies as an important part of the knowledge and cultural capital they want to give to their children.

The third motivational factor indicates (according to Warschauer, 1996) that students think that computers can help them learn better and faster, become more creative, and write better essays. In fact, English language learning and ICT literacies hold a prominent position in this discourse due to their offering opportunities for communication and employment, both at a local and at a European

level (Mitsikopoulou (2007). Finally, a fourth factor, *achievement*, includes both the perceived instrumental benefits as well as the intrinsic satisfaction of accomplishment (Warschauer, 1996:09).

5.2 Σχέση με άλλες ανοιχτές εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές

Writers' experiences of the use of tools may also be related to a phenomenon of orientation to the act of writing (Chandler, 1993). There is an underlying continuum (Chandler claims) having discoverers at one end and planners at the other. Nevertheless, effective instructional approaches that emphasize writing for meaningful social purposes can only be enhanced by thoughtful use of these particular tools (Warschauer, 2010).

5.3 Αξιοποίηση, Γενίκευση, Επεκτασιμότητα

It was essential that the topic selected was in accordance with the students' interests and aims at activating the relevant schemata which would determine the content of the texts that are going to be produced. The learning of a foreign language can certainly trigger learners' personal interest for wishing to explore the target language (Vlachos, 2006). Barnett and Jordan (1991) agree professing the importance of choosing or making materials that fit together. Moreover, Vlachos (2006) proposes creating a project as a technique that can be used to integrate NBLT in a topic-based work.

The production and understanding of English are considered to be prerequisites of the communication and not just for the completion of the teacher's activities (Vlachos, 2006). In this context, Cunningham (2012) refers specifically to the writing process by outlining both guided and free writing. The latter may be favoured due to the writer's freedom to experiment and think without committing to paper; the former includes modifying or correcting various texts in order to address redundancy or other grammatical errors (Cunningham, 2012). In the specific blog-writing lesson, both writing processes were included.

6.Πρόσθετο υλικό που αξιοποιήθηκε

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