

The Implementation of the Proposed Teaching Methods in the Curricula of Language Courses during the Use of Online Teaching in the Period of Covid-19: Opinions and Attitudes of Greek Teachers

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Abstract

Because of the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences, distance education and, in particular, "Online Education" (OE) was used in the educational systems of many countries, as in Greece. The main objective of this application was to keep students in touch with the educational reality, but also with the teaching and learning process. On this basis, the purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes and opinions of Greek Primary Education teachers and Secondary Education teachers' philologists regarding the implementation of the proposed methods of teaching language courses in the use of OE. Seven hundred and thirty-four teachers constituted the sample of the study. A structured questionnaire was used to carry out the research and collect the data and the main findings of the research can be summarized as follows: the teachers' attitudes and opinions regarding the correlation of the proposed teaching methods in the Curriculum - such as the possibility for all students to produce

various types of spoken and written language and the units designed for the cultivation of literacy to have the form of an action plan (project), etc. - with the use of OE are approximately neutral, namely neither positive nor negative.

Keywords: teaching methods, curricula, language courses, Online Education, Greek Teachers

1. Introduction

In March 2020, due to the covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face teaching in primary and secondary schools was suspended. This development led to the need to continue the educational process in the form of emergency distance education in the form of Distance Education (DE), in the form of Online Education (OE). This form of education was identified as urgent because it was a forced solution, created by the need of the coronavirus pandemic (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Mandrikas et al., 2022; Manousou et al., 2020; Lionarakis et al., 2020; Whittle et al., 2020).

The transition to emergency OE has raised concerns among scholars, as well as many questions, regarding the implications of this didactic application on the educational and teaching process (Cardullo et al., 2021; Donham et al., 2022; Onyema et al. 2020; Whittle et al., 2020). Therefore, there has been a strong research interest in studying methodological and teaching practices related to the applicative effectiveness of OE as they emerged through the attitudes and opinions of teachers who utilized OE during the pandemic period (Kiernan, 2020; Mouzakis et al., 2021; Stambekova et al., 2022; Tzimiris et al., 2023).

In this context from relevant research (Anastasiadis, 2020; Abidah et al., 2020; Bates, 2020; Donham et al., 2022; Fykaris, 2021; Jimoyiannis & Koukis, 2023; Kim & Asbury, 2020; Kougiourouki & Masali, 2022; Kesim, 2019; Lionarakis & Manousou, 2020; Phillips et al., 2021; Reich et al., 2020; Temelli et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020) found the interest of scholars in the pedagogical and instructional dimension of OE.

All of the above, combined with the fact that no researches investigating the impact of OE on the Curricula of language courses are found in the literature review, the present study attempts to investigate the attitudes and opinions of Greek Primary Education teachers and Secondary Education philologists teachers regarding the implementation of the proposed teaching methods in the Curricula of language courses when using OE.

2. Literature review

From the relevant literature, which refers to the process of OE (Anastasiadis, 2020; Bergdahl & Nouri, 2020), the lack of pedagogical dimension, regarding the design of urgent OE, but also the case of reduced teacher-student interaction in the context of OE, as well as the existence of reduced motivation for active participation in the learning process. Also, from the relevant studies, the tendency of "schoolification" of OE is noted (Anastasiadis, 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020; Tengler et al., 2020).

In a study, referring to the pedagogical and teaching dimension of OE, teachers stated the lack of quality in OE (Kocoglu & Tekdal, 2020), because passive monitoring of students was followed during the learning process. In contrast, they suggested participatory discussion and student interaction in appropriately designed interactive environments, as well as appropriately designed preparation and review activities, and authentic problem solving in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes (Batzani, 2021; Marangaki, 2021).

From studies (Anastasiades, 2020; Giovannella et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020; Tsani, 2021), it is also found that teachers do not perceive OE as a new teaching method, but as a supportive teaching intervention to face-to-face teaching. In addition, it was found that OE was not as effective compared to face-to-face teaching, mainly due to limited communication and interaction both between students and between teacher and students (Adarkwah, 2021; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020; Xafakos et al., 2022).

In a research by Mouzakis and his colleagues (2021), teachers point out that there are several disadvantages with the use of OE in teaching practice. More specifically, they point out that, during the teaching practice, the limited possibilities of interactivity and contact with students, combined with the feelings of anxiety they have due to social distancing, reduced the active participation of students in the teaching process. Typically, they report that, in many cases, this is limited to face-to-face teaching, due to technical issues preventing adequate transmission of audio or video during OE and, more generally, the lack of appropriate educational material for OE.

Other relevant and contemporary studies have also found that both the teachers' views and the problems they may face regarding their role and functionality during OE play a regulatory factor in the effective implementation of OE (Adu - Gyamfi et. al., 2019; Fykaris, 2021). Also, it was observed that, many times, teachers during OE apply the same teaching tools and teaching methodology as they do in face-to-face teaching (Adu - Gyamfi, et. al., 2019; Fykaris, 2021).

Regarding the role of the teacher, in the context of OE, relevant research shows that some teachers faced difficulties in the use of digital media and did not have the corresponding readiness for OE (Kocoglu & Tekdal, 2020; Batzani, 2021). Limited computer skills and lack of preparation time resulted in teachers not being able to achieve interaction with their students and finding it difficult to actively engage them in the learning process (Hebebcı et al. 2020; Batzani, 2021). It is, however, important that OE takes into account students' data in their participation in the learning process of tele-educational nature, and also to evaluate the degree of utilization of OE in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes (Kesim, 2019; Fykaris, 2021).

For the pedagogical, didactic and social use of OE it is suggested (Hodges et al. 2021; Malama, 2021) that instructional design should be based on targeted strategies. In the context of this planning, the existing needs of both the students and the educational process itself are placed at the centre, but also the specific personal and social characteristics of students, the socio-economic characteristics of their families and the students' potential to use digital teaching tools are explored (Malama, 2021). In addition, it is suggested to implement pedagogical practices that enhance collaboration and interaction, combined with the use of educationally appropriate technology, in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes. The process is enhanced by formulating clear objectives, organizing an adequate communication framework, and providing access to educational materials through flexible student management (Hodges et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020; Morgan, 2020).

The above bibliographic data, reinforce the need to explore the attitudes and opinions of Greek Teachers on the issue under study, which is presented in detail below.

3. Method

3.1 The aim of study

3.2 The main purpose of the research presented in this article is to investigate the attitudes and opinions of Greek teachers of Primary Education and teachers' philologists of Secondary Education regarding the implementation of the proposed teaching methods in the curricula of language courses through the use of OE.

3.3 Research questions

The research questions of this study are formulated as follows:

1st research question: to what extent do the research subjects consider that OE utilizes evidence from students' experience in language teaching?

2nd research question: to what extent do the research subjects consider that OE can achieve the principle of methodology in language teaching, according to which all students are given the opportunity to produce different types of spoken and written language addressed to a real audience?

3rd research question: to what extent do the research subjects consider that OE can achieve the principle of methodology in language teaching according to which: “the teacher has the role of a coordinator and equal interlocutor in the teaching and conducting of language activities”?

4th research question: to what extent do the research subjects consider that OE can achieve the principle of methodology in language teaching according to which: “the modules designed for the cultivation of literacy take the form of a project that utilises and enriches the students' literacy knowledge”?

3.4 Research Population and Sample

The population of the research consists of all teachers and teachers of literature (philologists) in Primary and Secondary Education throughout Greece. The research was conducted from the beginning of May to the end of June 2021. The sample of the research was drawn from teachers and philologist in schools - primary schools, secondary schools, high schools - all over Greece. The research sample consists of 734 teachers. Of the 734 teachers, 381 (51.9%) are Primary Education teachers and 358 (48.1%) are Secondary Education teachers of literature (philologists).

The sample was selected by "cluster random sampling" (Cohen et al., 2000) from a list of all primary and secondary schools in the whole country. More specifically, 1,000 school units (primary schools, secondary schools, high schools) were randomly selected from the total list of school units. Then, from these 1,000 school units, a sample of 734 teachers was drawn up

and asked to complete the research questionnaire.

In order to ensure that the sample teachers completed the questionnaire, the researcher provided the following incentives to the survey subjects to encourage participation: (i) the questionnaire - sent electronically to the sample teachers - was accompanied by a letter of explanation (ii) after the questionnaire was sent electronically, the researcher personally telephoned each sample teacher (iii) the researcher informed each teacher during the telephone call that it would take 5-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire (iv) the researcher informed each teacher during the telephone contact that the completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous (v) after 15 days from the initial mailing of the questionnaire, the researcher made a second telephone contact with the teachers who had not completed the online questionnaire.

3.5 Time period for the implementation of the research

The research was conducted from the beginning of May to the end of June 2021. The sample of the research was drawn from teachers and teachers' philologists in schools - primary and secondary schools - all over Greece.

3.5 Data collection

For the implementation of the proposed research and for data collection, was used as a research tool a structured questionnaire with "closed" type five-point Likert scale questions, which facilitate the connection with the objectives and research questions of the proposed research (Robson & McCartan, 2015) and satisfy the following two parameters: that their values are mutually exclusive and cover the whole range of possible answers. At the same time, the scale was chosen up to 5 to give more reliability with the existence of several alternative answers. The options are as follows: 1= Not at all, 2= Slightly, 3= Moderately, 4= Very, 5= Extremely. In this paper, 4 of the 23 questions of the questionnaire are analysed.

The questionnaire was constructed on the Google Forms online platform because this allows it to be shared in a short period of time with the research subjects and "allows us to have large samples of responses with relatively little additional effort" (Robson & McCartan, 2015). In addition, this ensures the anonymity of the research subjects, which is a key element of the reliability of the research. The link created corresponding to the questionnaire was emailed to the research subjects. Upon completion of the questions and submission, the questionnaire database was updated in real time to allow immediate access to the research data for further statistical processing and analysis by the researcher. At the same time, uniqueness in the completion of the questionnaire for each research subject was also ensured.

The statistical analysis, processing and interpretation of the empirical data was carried out using the statistical package. More specifically, the analysis of the questions was performed as follows:

- first, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked using the Cronbach - Alpha index.

- then an analysis of the frequencies obtained from the recordings of the answers given was carried out.
- finally, a One-way Anova test of means was performed to determine statistically significant relationships between the variables. The independent variables were considered to be gender, age, speciality, employment relationship, studies, years of educational and teaching experience. As dependent variables, the opinions and attitudes of the Greek teachers regarding the implementation of the proposed teaching methods in the Curricula of language courses during the utilization of OE in the period of the coronal period were considered as dependent variables.

3.6 Reliability of the research tool

The reliability of the questionnaire was checked by Cronbach's Alpha reliability index and it was found that it has a value of $\alpha=0.930 > 0.7$ in all variables (Table 1 and 2). Consequently, the questionnaire is considered reliable due to the satisfactory and high value of the index (4 variables - questions are analysed in this research).

Table 1. Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	689	93,9
	Excluded ^a	45	6,1
	Total	734	100,0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,930	23

3.7 Limitations of the research

A key limitation of the research is the relatively limited sample size, which means that it is not possible for the findings to be generalisable.

4. Results

4.1 Frequency analysis of data for 4 variables - research questions

The following is an analysis of data in terms of frequency for 4 variables - survey questions with tables and a description of the results.

Table 3. The frequencies with respect to the question variable (1)

Variable (1)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	59	8,1
Slightly	299	40,9
Moderately	297	40,6
Very	71	9,7
Extremely	5	0,7
Missing Value	3	
Total	734	100

In the variable - question (1): "To what extent do you consider that OE makes use of elements of students' experience in language teaching?" of the 734 teachers who completed the questionnaire (Table 3), 59 (8.1%) answered "Not at all", 299 (40.9%) answered "Slightly", 297 (40.6%) answered "Moderately", 71 (9.7%) answered "Very" and 5 (0.7%) answered "Extremely". Consequently, a fairly high percentage (81.5%) of teachers responded between "Slightly" and "Moderately".

Table 4. The frequencies with respect to the question variable (2)

Variable (2)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	112	15,3
Slightly	333	45,6
Moderately	219	30,0
Very	60	8,2
Extremely	7	1,0
Missing Value	3	
Total	734	100

In variable-question (2): 'One of the principles of the methodology in language teaching is that "all students are given the opportunity to produce different types of spoken and written discourse addressed to a real addressee". To what extent do you think that OE can achieve this principle?' of the 734 teachers who completed the questionnaire (Table 4), 112 (15.3%) answered "Not at all", 333 (45.6%) answered "Slightly", 219 (30%) answered "Moderately", 60 (8.2%) answered "Very" and 7 (1%) answered "Extremely". Consequently, a high percentage (75.6%) of teachers negatively between the statements "Slightly" and "Moderately"

Table 5. The frequencies with respect to the question variable (3)

Variable (3)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	84	11,5
Slightly	260	35,6
Moderately	253	34,6
Very	122	16,7
Extremely	12	1,6
Missing Value	3	
Total	734	100

In variable - question (3): 'One of the principles of methodology in language teaching is that "the teacher has the role of coordinator and equal interlocutor in the teaching and conducting of language activities". To what extent do you think that this principle can be achieved through OE?' of the 734 teachers who completed the questionnaire (Table 5), 84 (11.5%) answered "Not at all", 260 (35.6%) answered "Slightly", 253 (34.6%) answered "Moderately", 122 (16.7%) answered "Very" and 12 (1.6%) answered "Very much". Consequently, a high percentage (70.2%) of teachers responded between "Slightly" and "Moderately".

Table 6. The frequencies with respect to the question variable (4)

Variable (4)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	71	9,7
Slightly	262	35,9
Moderately	275	37,7
Very	106	14,5
Extremely	16	2,2
Missing Value	4	
Total	734	100

In the variable - question (4): 'one of the principles of methodology in language teaching is that "the modules designed to cultivate literacy take the form of a project that utilizes and enriches the students' literacy knowledge". To what extent do you think that OE can achieve this principle?' of the 734 teachers who completed the questionnaire (Table 6), 71 (9.7%) answered "Not at all", 262 (35.9%) answered "Slightly", 275 (37.7%) answered "Moderately", 106 (14.5%) answered "Very" and 16 (2.2%) answered "Extremely". Consequently, a high percentage (73.6%) of teachers responded between "Slightly" and "Moderately".

4.2 Means and standard deviation of variables

The table below (Table 7) presents the means and standard deviation of the variables, which is a measure of how much the values of the variable differ from their mean (a small deviation implies a high concentration of the values of the variable around the mean, while a large deviation implies a low concentration and a larger "spread").

A five - point Likert - type scale was used with the following options: 1= Not at all, 2=

Slightly, 3= Moderately, 4= Very, 5= Extremely. Thus, the closer to **1** the average of a statement, the more negatively respondents rated it and the closer to **5** the more positively respondents rated it.

Table 7. Means and standard deviation of the 4 question variables

Question variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Question (1)	731	1,00	5,00	2,5404	0,80372
Question (2)	731	1,00	5,00	2,3393	0,86789
Question (3)	731	1,00	5,00	2,6142	0,94884
Question (4)	730	1,00	5,00	2,6356	0,92153

In the variable-question (1) the mean is 2.5404 (standard deviation 0.80372), namely it is below 3 and more specifically between 3 corresponding to the answer "Moderately" and 2 corresponding to the answer "Slightly". Therefore, the attitudes and opinions (or statements) of the respondents are approximately in the middle - neutral, namely neither positive nor negative (Table 7).

In the variable - question (2) the mean is 2.3393 (standard deviation 0.86789), namely it is well above the 2 corresponding to the answer "Slightly". Consequently, the respondents' attitudes and opinions are approaching neutrality (Table 7).

In the variable-question (3) the mean is 2.6142 (standard deviation 0.94884), namely it is below 3 and more specifically between 3 corresponding to the answer "Moderately" and 2 corresponding to the answer "Slightly". Therefore, the attitudes and opinions (or statements) of the respondents are approximately in the middle - neutral, namely neither positive nor negative (Table 7).

In the variable-question (4) the mean is 2.6356 (standard deviation 0.92153), namely it is below 3 and more specifically between 3 corresponding to the answer "Moderately" and 2 corresponding to the answer "Slightly". Therefore, the attitudes and opinions (or statements) of the respondents are approximately in the middle - neutral, namely neither positive nor negative (Table 7).

4.3 Statistically significant correlations with the variable "specificity"

First, it should be mentioned that statistically significant correlations were found only with the variable "specificity". In 2 of the 4 questions (questions 2 and 4), statistically significant correlations with the variable "specificity" were found. More specifically, philologists were found to score more positively on these statements compared to teachers (Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8. Statistically significant correlations between the variables "specificity" and "question - variable 2"

Speciality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teachers	381	2,2493	,81646	,003
Philologists	350	2,4371	,91175	

The Independent Samples Test (Table 8) revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes and opinions of the two disciplines ($p=0,003<0,05$) for the question - variable (2), with the philologists rating more positively the specific statement (mean=2,4371, st.d=,91175) compared to the teachers (mean=2,2493, st.d=,81646).

Table 9. Statistically significant correlations between the variables "specificity" and "question - variable 4"

Speciality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teachers	380	2,5395	,86321	,003
Philologists	350	2,7400	,97143	

The Independent Samples Test (Table 9) revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes and opinions of the two disciplines ($p=0.003<0.05$) for variable (4), with philologists rating more positively the specific statement (mean=2.7400, st.d=.97143) compared to teachers (mean=2.5395, st.d=.86321).

5. Discussion

For the four research questions of the present research regarding the attitudes and opinions of the research subjects regarding the correlation of the proposed teaching methods in the Language Curriculum with the use of OE, it is found that the attitudes and opinions (or statements) of the respondents are approximately neutral, namely neither positive nor negative. At the same time, in 2 of the 4 questions (2nd and 4th question), the philologists rate more positively the specific statements compared to the teachers (Tables 8 and 9).

More briefly, in question (1), a fairly high percentage (81.5%) of teachers answered between the statements "Slightly" and "Moderately" (Tables 3 and 7). In question (2), a high percentage (75.6%) of teachers answered negatively between the statements "Slightly" and "Moderately" (Tables 4 and 7). In question (3), a high percentage (70.2%) of teachers responded between the statements "Slightly" and "Moderately" (Tables 5 and 7). Finally, in question (4), a high percentage (73.6%) of teachers responded between the statements "Slightly" and "Moderately" (Tables 6 and 7).

For the above four questions - variables, no research has been identified that directly concerns the correlation between the proposed teaching methods in the Language Curriculum and the use of OE, which confirms the originality of the present research. However, we can indirectly relate them to the data of more general studies (Adu - Gyamfi, et. al., 2019;

Anastasiades, 2020; Bergdahl & Nouri, 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020; Di Pietro et al., 2020; Fykaris, 2021; Kocoglu & Tekdal, 2020; Mouzakis et al., 2021; Tengler et al., 2020) in which lecturers report that they often misunderstand their role in the use of OE, in the sense that, they are not clear how they should act in relation to the proposed teaching methods in the Curriculum, so that they are not able to interact - to a large extent - with students, not making use - to a large extent - of elements from their own experience, lacking the pedagogical dimension and preparation during OE, unable to teach oral and written skills, unable to implement action plans due to time constraints, etc.

Although, as research data show, there is difficulty in effectively utilizing the proposed teaching methods in the language curriculum when using OE, it is suggested that the teacher should make all the necessary changes, adaptations in tools, techniques and methods in terms of flexibility and accessibility, in order for students to gain positive learning experiences in the context of OE (Anastasiadis, 2020; Camacho et al., 2020). Teachers need time, resources, training and logistical support in order to adapt the proposed teaching methods in the language curriculum to the needs of OE and to have a role of coordinator and equal interlocutor during the teaching and conducting of language activities (Anastasiadis, 2020; Valsamaki, 2021; Zhao et al., 2020).

From these neutral results it is clear that the effective implementation of the proposed teaching principles and methods in the curriculum depends on the judgment and acumen of the teacher to use OE, emphasizing the pedagogical and teaching dimension rather than the technological one. It is worth noting that the transition from face-to-face teaching to OE, namely supported learning through digital and online technologies, is a process that presents significant difficulties, particularly for the teacher. A new educational context is being created that requires teachers to possess instructional design skills (Goodyear, 2015; Jimoyiannis, 2020) in order to effectively connect the physical classroom space and the digital - online learning space and, by extension, to engage all students in creative, exploratory and collaborative learning experiences (Jimoyiannis, 2020, p. 5). Characteristically, the teacher, with the assistance of digital media, it is necessary to exploit the possibilities provided by distance learning environments, in order to facilitate the students' path towards learning and the cultivation of cognitive and social skills that are decisive for their development and progress (Lionarakis, 2006; Malama, 2021).

In conclusion, a recent study (Anastasiadis, 2020) suggests that those responsible for educational policy planning should plan future actions after the use of OE during the period of the coronal period. More specifically, it is suggested that it is necessary to move from the extraordinary utilization of OE, where emphasis was placed on technological infrastructure, to the utilization of OE where the focus is necessary to concentrate on the pedagogical and teaching context. This fact requires teacher training (Anastasiadis, 2020; Hayashi et al, 2020; Vlachopoulos, 2020): a) in the methods and basic principles of DE, focusing on the student-centred approach, the exploration and discovery of knowledge, b) in the pedagogical use of asynchronous DE environments, such as the design of specialised educational material and c) in the cultivation of appropriate skills for the use of modern DE environments.

6. Conclusions

Teachers' attitudes and opinions regarding the correlation of the proposed teaching methods in the Curriculum - such as the role of the teacher as a facilitator and equal interlocutor, the use of elements from students' experience, the possibility for all students to produce different types of oral and written discourse and that the units designed for the cultivation of literacy take the form of a project that exploits and enriches students' literacy knowledge- with the use of OE are approximately neutral, namely neither positive nor negative. However, it is found that two of the proposed methods, such as the possibility for all students to produce various types of oral and written discourse and the units designed to cultivate literacy in the form of a project, are more positively rated by philologists than by teachers.

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