

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AT THE SCHOOL SUBJECT OF MODERN GREEK LANGUAGE THROUGH DEBATE

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Abstract

This present research treats the importance of debate as a technique of skills development and more specifically communicative and metacognitive skills with students of A class of senior high school at the school subject of modern Greek language. After a brief conceptual clarification of the main motions of the research and a summary based on bibliography of similar researches, the research questions that are expressed concern, from the student's side, about how much debate contributes to communicative and metacognitive skills development by students through their participation in it, and, from teachers' side, the enlargement of their opinion about the importance of debate in the cultivation of the skills mentioned above. This research has been carried out in the school environment of an urban area high school. The sample consists of three philologists who will teach their class twice, one based on their own lesson plan and the other on the researcher's plan, and also of the students who have accepted to participate in this procedure, 59 on the first count and 50 on the second. The research questions are examined via half-structured interviews of teachers, lists of questions that were distributed and answered by students and the observation made by the recording and the transcription of the interviews. The research questions of the investigation prove the positive opinion of the teachers for the debate technique and the experimental method they used to cultivate the communicative and the metacognitive skills during their lessons. In addition, through students' participation, it is obvious that via the debate the cultivation of the skills above is facilitated taking into consideration the classes in which they participated themselves, while even international studies support these conclusions. At the same time, this research contains the comparison between the teaching methods used studying all the issues mentioned above.

Keywords: *Debate, communication skills, metacognitive skills, modern Greek language.*

1. Introduction

This present research is going to investigate, on the one hand, the opinions of teachers regarding the contribution of debate to the cultivation of the above skills and, on the other hand, how much debate contributes to communicative and metacognitive skills development by students through their participation in it. This is a very important issue regarding the upgrading of the educational process but also the skills development which, indisputably, are an inextricable part of our lives, they are present in every manifestation of our daily life, establishing our personality. Modern education, therefore, needs to be connected to authentic learning and assessment environments, in order for students to get the multidimensional benefits offered from it. Below we will briefly present the two central motions we are studying: skills (communicative and metacognitive) and debate.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Skills

As "skill" the definition that has prevailed in "the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to fulfill tasks and solve problems" (Cedefop, 2014; Tsolakidou, 2021, p. 153). In this paper we will be concerned communicative and metacognitive skills.

More specifically, communicative skills are one of the most basic human traits. "A person with communicative skills can communicate with those around him, send and receive messages, manage social situations, solve problems and transmit information" (Verouli, 2022, p. 37). This paper examines listening

skills consisting of eye contact, interest and acceptance of the speaker, active listening to the other's opinion and even free expression, teamwork and cooperation.

Regarding metacognitive skills, we can define the term "metacognition", which according to Kasimati (2020) is defined as the ability of the individual to adjust his mental activity to achieve a better understanding. We will therefore refer to skills related to argumentation and counter argumentation, critical ability, documentation, receptivity to opposing arguments, personal interpretation of arguments and decision-making to solve problems in the group.

In the end, we should also refer to the learning framework within 21st century skills because, as we know, the "21st Century Skills" have permeated all aspects of everyday life in a rapidly changing world. This is a unified, collective vision for learning, describing the skills, knowledge and expertise that people need to be successful in work and life. For this research, we took into consideration the KSAVE model (Binkley et al., 2012), the Competence-based learning from Deusto university (Sanchez & Ruiz, 2008) and the OOSA model (Smyrniou, 2021).

2.2. Debate

Debate is a dimension of oral speech and is considered a "confrontation" of arguments and persuasion. It is a collaborative and experiential form of learning that focuses on the participants' argumentation on a topic –and as with any topic, there are at least two conflicting points of view approaching it. Those two opposing sides try to defend their idea or opinion (Iman, 2017). Using debate as a learning activity requires careful research. It is considered a useful learning activity for teaching critical thinking and improving communication skills. It is an effective pedagogic mode because of the level of responsibility for learning, understanding and active participation required of all students who discuss.

The teacher has many responsibilities before, during and after the debate. Before the debate, the teacher explains the process to the students and reinforces the fact that it will be used as a learning experience and not as a test. The teacher also determines the rules and the format to be used for the debate and facilitates the choice of the topic of the debate. Another role of the teacher is to set the emotional climate and educational environment for the debate (Garrett et al., 1996). Finally, "the degree of teacher intervention, after the first applications, will gradually be limited and the active involvement of the students will be promoted in all stages of the implementation of the debate, from its organization to its completion" (Dimitriadis & Fakazi, 2009: 321).

Having taken into consideration the forms of debate, the analysis of its characteristics (roles that participate), the ways of persuasion in argumentation and the role of the teacher in it, the researcher created a teaching plan that was used in the three following lessons carried out by the teachers, while themselves, in the first teachings, they created their own plan and applied it each in their class.

3. Objectives

The purpose of the research is to investigate how debates can be a technique for developing skills in A class of senior high school students, showing their importance in the context of the school community. Thus, it will focus on demonstrating the debate as a means of multifaceted development, since not only skills are cultivated through it, but also the way of correct argumentation and persuasion that can be used in all aspects of life. So, to limit the research field to a specific research problem, the research questions we are asked to answer in this paper are the following:

- What are the opinions of the teachers regarding the use of debate and the communicative and metacognitive skills that the students acquire in the Modern Greek language course?
- To what extent does the debate contribute communicative and metacognitive skills development by the students through their participation in it?

4. Methodology

For this research, the mixed research method was chosen, which combines qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative research data were collected using the techniques of semi-structured interview, interview protocol, observation (non-participant) and field notes, while quantitative data were collected using questionnaires.

The research sample consisted of three philologists and the students of their classes, 59 on the first count and 50 on the second. The counts are the 2 teachings made in each of the three classes to observe skills that change in a different context of debate application. After each count, questionnaires were shared to the students and an interview was taken by each philologist at the end of the research. In addition, the research, due to the fact that it was carried out at the school where the master's internship

took place, with teachers and students we had already worked with, is characterized by convenience sampling.

Finally, the process of analyzing the qualitative data (interview and observation) was done by thematic analysis and its validity was ensured by the triangulation of the data while its presentation was also carried out by content analysis. On the other hand, descriptive statistics (frequency tables) were used to analyze the quantitative data, as well as the χ^2 analysis to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the concepts we are studying: debate, communicative and metacognitive skills. Data entry was done on the SPSS22 platform.

5. Conclusions

Starting from the first research question, firstly, the necessity of integrating the debate technique into teaching, the desire for students to acquire communicative skills, the exercise in argumentation and the pleasure they will get emerged from the teachers' aspirations in the first teaching that students carried out through the overall process. Also, what we call "Trapeza Thematon" (from which either independent subjects or sections of subjects that correspond to fifty percent (50%) of the written test for the subjects examined in writing in A class final exam of each type of High School are drawn at random. The remaining 50% of the written test is the responsibility of every teacher) emerges as a limiting factor for the implementation of the debate. In addition, through the first teaching in the Modern Greek Language, listening skills, free expression, cooperation, taking initiatives and speaking in public were found in the communicative skills and in the metacognitive skills the argumentation and critical skills associated with the debate.

Furthermore, the debate upgrades the educational process as its use contributes to student-centered teaching, the active role of students and experiential learning while the relationship between students and teachers develops. Furthermore, the role of the teacher evolves into that of coordinator and guide. Finally, it contributes to the smooth adaptation to school and adult life, in the social and professional arena (agreement with Hall, 2011; Kennedy, 2007).

Conclusions obtained from the comparison of the two teachings are classified into 3 categories: general, communicative and metacognitive skills. In general, the research teachers indicated that in the second instruction, the students responded better in terms of organization and timing, cooperation and participation. In communicative skills, there was a positive sign in terms of comfort in front of an audience, more comfortable eye contact, greater interest, teamwork as well as empathy. On the contrary, the feeling of stress due to time was negatively observed. Finally, in metacognitive skills, there was more organization in finding and developing arguments and counterarguments in the second teaching and better rebuttal, while in both teachings personal meaning of the arguments was made but in the first it was greater due to proximity to the subject.

Problems encountered during implementation consisted of rivalry and dogmatism, immaturity due to inexperience, team composition and dialogue. Then, there was reference to the communicative skills developed by the students during the lessons which consisted of listening skills (maintaining eye contact, interest, accepting the interlocutor) (agreement with Darby, 2007) speaking in front of an audience (agreement with Nurakhir et al., 2020; Hall, 2011), empathy (agreement with Kennedy, 2007), teamwork and time stress. In metacognitive skills we have the critical ability (agreement with Nurakhir et al., 2020; Kennedy, 2007), argumentation, for students to filter and judge the arguments while the difference in written and oral speech also emerges (agreement with Darby, 2007). Furthermore, counterargumentology (agreement with Handayani, 2016), organization in finding and developing arguments and counterarguments (agreement with Hall, 2011; Handayani, 2016) as well as the personal meaning of the topic are included.

Last conclusions concern, firstly, the comparison of the debate with the traditional teaching from which the change in the role of the student as it becomes more active, more direct participation, more active involvement and the change of feelings of the students and, consequently, gives a better feeling in in the class. In addition, the teachers' expectations for the debate include the change of the students' attitude in the Modern Greek language course, the improvement of the students' speech (and vocabulary), the avoidance of monotonous teaching and the fact that the repetition and a greater frequency of application will bring results to the debate.

Conclusions for the second research question that arise are divided, like the questionnaires, into the general ones for debate, communicative and metacognitive skills. In general, from the first to the second teaching, students understood better the steps and roles they were asked to take as participants in a debate (agreement with Nurakhir et al., 2020), but the knowledge of the above variables discouraged them from participating.

In communicative skills, the relationships between the participants were more developed within the debate (agreement with Turnposky, 2004, i.e. in Tawil, 2016), the group's common goal that satisfied members' needs and interest in an argument they did not support (agreement with Tawil, 2016). The resolution of any conflict of opinion within the group, the resolution of conflict of opinion between

opponents and the limitation of time were less developed. In addition, addressing an argument did not match the students' interests from an emotional point of view and eye contact (agreement with Shaw, 2012, cited in Nurakhir et al., 2020).

Finally, in metacognitive skills, variables related to understanding the positions of opposing team members (agreement with Nurakhir et al., 2020), time management for building arguments and team spirit under time pressure developed more. Additional variables that were developed consisted of responding to an argument they did not expect to hear, supporting an argument they did not agree with, the degree of facilitation of eliciting arguments with questions that clarified points that were not understood and the criteria for evaluation by audience-judges and feedback (agreement with Nurakhir et al., 2020). Knowledge of argument structure, decision-making about problem-solving (agreement with Nurakhir et al., 2020) and personal meaning-making were less developed.

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