

Teaching English

To Sixth Grade Greek Primary School Students through Culture and Through the Avoidance of Stereotypes and Prejudice

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Abstract. One of the major factors which influence the effective learning and teaching of foreign languages is the incorporation of the teaching of culture in the foreign classroom. Teaching a foreign language is not only the teaching of new vocabulary, or expressions, or even grammar and syntactic structures but also those cultural elements which are inter-wined with the foreign language and which aid in the avoidance of stereotypes.

Stereotyping is usually accompanied by ignorance, perhaps even fear. Ignorance can be eliminated through teaching respect for the 'other', the 'different'. Foreign language teaching can become an effective tool in overcoming prejudice towards the 'other', the 'different', this is carried out through teaching respect for diversity and in this way eliminating ignorance of the 'other', the 'different'.

This paper has a two - fold aim: firstly to conduct a qualitative research on the new sixth grade textbook which is used in all primary schools in Greece for the teaching of English as a foreign language, as to whether these books incorporate cultural elements of English speaking countries or cultural elements of other language groups and countries. Secondly, if these new textbooks not only enhance and enrich language competence but also cultural competence which can lead to the respect of the 'other', the 'different', thus encouraging communicative competence. The sixth grade was chosen as it is the school year in which students finish primary school, are pre - teenagers and have a clear picture of the basic concepts of life, society, culture, etc.

Being culturally aware means first and foremost an understanding of yourself and then an awareness and an understanding of the 'other', the 'different'. In this research I will examine whether the language and contents of sixth grade English primary school books are instrumental in helping students gain insights into the aforementioned perspectives.

Research findings so far have shown that the sixth grade textbooks do enhance effective language learning, they also incorporate some cultural elements of both other countries and English speaking counties, communicative competence is also encouraged through the use of these books. Nevertheless, sixth grade course books only partly cater for the need for effective and unbiased cultural competence, stereotypes and prejudice.