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Where do Critical Pedagogy and Language Needs Analysis Meet? English as an Additional Language for Adult Refugees and Migrants in Greece: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Background. Language classes organized for adult refugees and migrants are heterogeneous. Students in these educational settings differ across a number of various aspects, including language competences, educational background and levels of literacy. Seen through the Critical Pedagogy lens language is considered not simply as a means to express or communicate, but as a product constructed by the ways language learners recognise themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their potentialities for the future.

Purpose. The purpose of our study is to unfold and identify the language needs of a specific group of migrants learners learning English as an additional language in Greece, where English is not the dominant language. We will try to focus and analyse language needs through the critical pedagogy lens and thus make the whole procedure an empowerment tools for the adult refugees and migrants.

Method. As a case study, this study follows a qualitative research design. This small-scale study focuses on a specific target group of language learners and their needs and attitudes towards learning. Class observations, field notes, interviews with the participants and questionnaires with open-ended questions were used as main methodological tools.

Results. The present article examines the needs of a group of immigrant adult learners attending English language classes at a non-formal educational setting located in Greece. The participants come from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and the majority of them speak Greek fluently since they have resided in Greece for a long time. A focal point throughout the process was students' greater involvement in the learning procedure and decision-making processes regarding the content and the presentation of the educational material.

Conclusion. Although the systematic needs analysis revealed that the reasons for participation and competence levels among participants varied a lot, a common goal for everyone was achieving oral fluency in the target language. Moreover, the results of this attempt were expressed n terms of learners' contributions, willingness to share their stories, even to talk about difficulties they met and caring about their classmates' stories. Thus, we suggest that the incorporation of personal experience in the learning process, not only functions as a link between students and language but also a process for team bonding and motivation.

KEYWORDS

needs analysis, adult refugees, migrants, critical pedagogy, L2 English, Greece

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to language education for refugees and migrants, there is a vital need for courses to be relevant to the needs and lives of specific groups of learners (Malicka, Gilabert Guerrero & Norris, 2019) and for language programmes to take into consideration learners' present knowledge, lacks and

available resources (Nation & Macalister, 2009). These parameters should be taken into careful account, if language courses addressed to migrant populations are aimed at supporting learners' integration (Little, 2008). A starting point to meet this purpose in language classes is a design which considers three main variables: learners' needs analysis; environment analysis; and the application of language curriculum/ material design principles (Nation & Macalister, 2009). A successful needs analysis will ensure that the course will be appropriately designed for the participants (Serafini, Lake, & Long, 2015), will not be inefficient or inadequate (Long, 2005) and that learners' motivation will increase (Van Avermaet & Gysen, 2008). A needs analysis design for this study follows the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) and focuses on the domains where language is used or/and is desired to be used by the participants (Little, 2008). This is in an attempt to actively engage learners' in the decision-making procedure. Moreover, in an educational context shaped by critical literacy pedagogy, teachers must constantly teach a dual curriculum: a curriculum that empowers students to make sense of their everyday life; and a curriculum which enables students to obtain the tools for mobility valued in the dominant culture (Macalister & Nation, 2019).

There is limited research in the Greek context regarding the language needs analysis of adult refugees and migrants, especially after the 2015 refugee crisis (Androulakis et al., 2017; Mouti et al., 2021). Furthermore, the multilingual needs of migrants who are either residing temporarily or permanently settled in Greece, and use either lingua francas (mainly English) or their mother tongue to communicate with other non-Greeks (Mouti et al., 2021, p. 232), identified also in the Italian context by Bianco and Ortiz Cobo (2019, p. 12), seem to explain the migrants interest and desire to learn English as an additional language.

In the Greek context, as presented in the Eurobarometer Special Surveys (2014)[3], English is considered the most widely known language (L2). Among the three most widely known languages in Greece, English comes first (51% while in EU27 this percentage is much lower at 38%). More details on the Greek EFL context can be found in Angouri et al. (2010) but also in Sifakis (2009) for ELF (English as Lingua Franca). Tsagari (2016) offers the assessment orientations of EFL teachers in Greece and Cyprus, whileMouti et al (2019) offers information on test-taking strategies in L2 language assessment in Greece and Cyprus. In an exploratory study which attempted to look into the language education offered to refugees and migrants in Greece, Kantzou et al (2017) mentioned that there is an identified call for courses in languages other than Modern Greek ,at least amongs the population awaiting resettlement. English seems to be one of the languages offered in the framework of formal and non-formal language education for refugees and migrants in Greece.

The purpose of our study is to unfold and identify the language needs of a specific group of migrants learners learning English as an additional language in Greece, where English is not the dominant language. We will try to focus and analyse language needs through the critical pedagogy lens and thus make the whole procedure an empowerment tools for the adult refugees and migrants.

The rationale for this study is based mainly upon the question of the quality and content of English language programmes for migrants in formal or non-formal settings. In a context where motivation cannot be characterised as instrumental but as integrative, since English is an additional language for the majority of migrants residing in Greece, and they have already experienced the host language learning, parameters such as diverse linguistic repertoires and previous knowledge, identity and critical consciousness awareness tend to be neglected for the sake of grammar and vocabulary instruction leading courses to traditional ESL standards. On the other hand, as Mouti et al. (2022) state "the language needs of the refugees have to do not only with the host country language but also with the language of a destination host country (e.g. English or German)", especially in Greece and Italy who share a double role both as host and transition countries.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Needs Analysis and English as an Additional Language

Language teaching has to reflect learners' experiences and language biographies in particular. In this way, learners are encouraged to build up on their own language learning skills and they are not treated as inexperienced learners (Corder, 2012). Cook (2001) states that in adult learner classes, very little is under the teacher's control. Learners make deliberate choices, they follow idiosyncratic strategies. They add things, in order to suit their needs creating complex meanings even with a little grammar. The purpose is to support learners to draw on their existing competences and experience but at the same to further develop these competences and to support their becoming autonomous learners. In other words, the aim is their being able to manage their own learning (Little, 2008). Another fact about adult learner groups is that, by nature, they present high levels of heterogeneity, simply because of the fact that they are adults and they share several characteristics, i.e. age, gender, educational background, profession etc. (Corder, 2012). Regarding linguistic heterogeneity, it is much higher among

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf

immigrant learners because they have extremely different linguistic biographies, depending on the status of their first language(s) in the country of origin, the other languages they have used during their migration and the language contacts in the host society (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008). Therefore, language programmes that affirm the value of all languages, all cultures and all ethnicities devoid of the implication that the language of the host community or any other language is superior to learners' mother tongue are of utmost importance (Little, 2008). On the contrary, the wealth of participants' linguistic repertoires can be seen as a useful tool for learners and educators alike which can promote effective learning and empowerment. For this reason, it is generally suggested that small groups and differentiated course systems are more effective than standardised programmes given the heterogeneity of target groups (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008).

It cannot be assumed that the completion of a language programme will lead to participants' complete integration in a host country as this is a long-lasting process. However, learning an additional language, English, in the case of this study, is believed to move beyond integration and give access to everyday interactions with locals, and access to equal opportunities. English in Greece although it is not the dominant language, is a language of power/ a lingua franca and there are a great number of Greeks or people residing in Greece who speak English fluently. Parks (2010, as cited in Warriner, 2016) states that improving one's English is ideologically identified with maximising one's capital, competing to become a valued worker in the new economy and it is clear that linguistic practicality, communicative efficiency, social mobility and economic advancement have all become increasingly associated with large languages, thus interfering with the maintenance of smaller ones (Edwards, 2002).

Moreover, it is often found that neoliberal discourse equates English language learning to improved educational, social and employment opportunities (Warriner, 2016). Graddol (2006, as cited in Wilton, 2009, p. 46) describes English as one of the basic skills, stating that "its function and place in the curriculum is no longer that of 'foreign language' and this is bringing about profound changes in the person who is learning English, their motives for learning it and their needs as learners". Therefore, English language acquisition is regarded as an unquestionable, qualification in modern societies for everybody. It is widely believed and argued that the user of English can, through effort and hard work, be transformed into a better form of human capital through increasing his/her formal or measurable competence in English. This view dominates not only the English language teaching universe, but it also "circulates in public portrayals of what kinds of skills, competencies, and trajectories immigrants need, want, and should develop for themselves" (Warriner, 2016, p. 496). Therefore, the choice of adult migrants learning English cannot be examined separately from its implications on their identity. The concept of international posture thus considerably broadens the external reference group from a specific geographic and ethnolinguistic community to a non-specific global community of English language users (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009).

Critical Pedagogy and Language Learning

L2 learners will master L2 communication, if they are stimulated and prepared to think critically towards L2 cultural values, in order to be exposed to deeper layers of culture and linguistic knowledge, in such a way that social and cultural empathy can be developed. In this sense, working along with learners', the educator's role is not to fill learners with knowledge but to engage them in meaningful dialogue and to develop a relationship with them, in order to provide both parts with a new way of thinking and thus, acting (Freire, 1973). Taking into account that neither theoretical knowledge nor the educator's authority is the core of any evolving dialogue (Pessoa & Freitas, 2012), discussing critical issues becomes a meaningful and empowering procedure. A critical pedagogical approach can provide learners with skills to learn and communicate with success in a L2 (Forcelini, 2016). According to the critical pedagogy approach, the construction of the self within or against mainstream conceptual views is achieved through critical pedagogic practices aimed at building up tolerance towards distinct cultural views, developing social and political awareness, and cultivating moral practices aligned with social and political integrity. According to Hinchey (2004), the focus of the critical classroom is not on rote learning but on encouraging learners to question, realise and examine the existing conditions in the world around them and their positioning in them ,as well as to develop a skeptical position on their surroundings and the relations of power underlying them. That is why modern SLA (Second Language Acquisition) teaching techniques (i.e. Task-Based Teaching, Negotiation for Meaning etc.) have been criticized as being rationalist activities since they are devoted to the transfer of information without any reference to the social context (Okazaki, 2005).

By implementing critical pedagogic practices, educators and learners become partners, as learners are encouraged to express their ideas and, thus, channels are created where teachers and students can learn from each other's ideas and experiences and develop conclusions together (Forcelini, 2016). Language is not just a means of communication but it is connected "with considerations of equal and full participation and access to symbolic, material and cultural resources" (Gounari, 2014, p. 262). A critical approach to pedagogy needs to "aim at transformation, a way of shifting pedagogical relations to give students more curricular control, and ways of engaging with difference not merely in terms of inclusivity and issues but also at the level of desire" (Pennycook, 1999, p. 341). The basic point in the theory of critical pedagogy is that by gaining one's voice and resisting unjust reproduction in their own self-interest, students start to become active agents for social change (Okazaki, 2005).

As yet there is not much empirical research that explicitly examines language learners' evolving perspectives during a critical content-based course.

This paper documents how the actual needs of migrant students could be identified and recorded, in order for them to be used to design tailor-made educational material for English as an additional language. Language is not simply a means of expression or communication but also a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways in which language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future (Norton & Toohey, 2004). In this vein, the students who participated in our study were able to work in groups and reveal and express their needs lacks, wants and preferences with the aim of contributing to material development, to integrate their personal stories and beliefs and to gain the power of deciding what they will be taught and how. The special element of our study in the Greek context is the fact that English is not the language of the host country, and that this is a case study implemented in Greece about English as an additional language for migrants, setting the role of Greece as a transition country more strongly than its role as a destination country for refugees and migrants.

METHOD

Research

The aim was to explore the meaning which individuals or groups of people give to social realities (Creswell, 2014). As a case study through action-research, this study follows a qualitative research design. Qualitative research strategies and tools were adopted, in order to collect specific data.

More specifically, the following research tools were implemented: (1) Class observations, (2) Field notes, (3) Interviews with the participants and, finally, (4) Questionnaires with open-ended questions, in order to gain access to participants' demographic data. To this end, this small-scale study focuses on a specific target group of language learners and their needs and attitudes towards learning.

The Research Site and Sample

The study took place from November 2018 to January 2019, in a solidarity school located in Thessaloniki. The foundation and beginning of the action of the school dates back to 1997, when a group of volunteer teachers started delivering Greek language lessons to migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and repatriated adults for free. It is a non-formal educational setting aiming not only to provide language lessons but also to help students develop a critical attitude towards social inequality, to counter racism and discrimination, to empower and facilitate integration in the host country and to provide students with a space where they can exchange experiences and their creativity. The school also stands by,and associates with a number of antiracist collectivities in the city sharing the same goals.

The average number of research participants is 17-20 migrants attending A2 - B1 English language classes at a solidarity school in Thessaloniki, for two hours twice a week, during the school year 2018-2019. Given the participants' irregular attendance in the classes, the number of learners participating in the needs analysis process and the interventions is specified accordingly in the needs analysis section, The attendance of any lesson was recorded. The participants came from diverse ethnic backgrounds with the majority of them coming from Albania and Russia, and some of them from Senegal, Romania, Georgia and Iran. Two of the students came from Greece. All participants gave their consent to the researcher-educator.

Data Analysis

Participants' Profile

The demographic information of the participants, as collected by the questionnaire, is presented in the table below. In order to preserve confidentiality, alias are used in lieu of participants' real names.

Regarding the demographic data of the research, it has to be clarified that the target group was highly heterogenous in almost any variable examined. Older participants tended to participate less in the process than younger, most of the times feeling insecure or resorting to Greek in order to make meaning. However, no other significant differences were found regarding the age variable. The needs analysis was conducted by the researcher-teacher herself. She performed some diagnostic assessment test, in order to measure their performance in Greek. The time of residence in Greece was not found to affect learners' performance, apart from the case of Haleh and Arash who, enrolled in the lessons later but, very quickly, became active participants in the lessons and began communicating with their classmates. In the case of the two men, both residing in Greece only for a short period (5 and 3 months respectively), the fact that they did not speak Greek nor attended Greek language lessons but were able to create meaning in English, had a significant impact on the way the lessons were conducted. It should be noted here that actual changes may occur in language and situation needs when new students enter the programme (Brown, 1995). The two students altered group dynamics in a positive way, since the rest of the participants stopped using Greek and tried to make meaning only in the target language, in order to ensure that their two classmates understood what was happening in the classroom. This was a habit that had been gradually built from the beginning of the lessons but it was fully embraced by everyone when the need for a common code of communication for all students

Table 1

Participants' Profile (N=17)

Name (Gender)	Age	Country of origin	Years in Greece	Spoken languages	Educational background	Previous English language attendance	English language learning setting
Belina (f)	28	Albania	6	Albanian, Greek, French	University graduate	3 months	Private language courses
Kevin (m)	20	Armenia	3	Armenia, Russian, Greek	University student	6 years	School/ internet
Enid (m)	38	Albania	20	Albanian, Greek, Italian	High School graduate	8 years	School
Salliou (m)	30	Senegal	10	Senegalese, French, Greek	High School graduate	3 years	School
Dimitra (f)	62	Greece	Since birth	Greek	High School graduate	2 years	Solidarity school
Adania (f)	35	Albania	20	Albanian, Greek	High School graduate	3 months	Private language courses/ internet
Festim (m)	45	Albania	20	Albanian, Greek	University graduate	1 year	Private language courses
Dazim (m)	25	Albania	9	Albanian, Greek	High School graduate	3 years	School
Samir (m)	48	Egypt	18	Arabic, Greek	University graduate	5 years	School
Stephane (m)	55	Uzbekistan	16	Russian, Greek	University graduate	4 years	School/ Solidarity school
Samuil (m)	36	Georgia	25	Georgian, Russian, Greek	High school graduate	3 years	School
Crista (f)	40	Romania	25	Romanian, Greek	University graduate	1 year	Private language courses
Popi (f)	60	Greece	Since birth	Greek, French	High School graduate	1 year	Solidarity school
Vladimir (m)	34	Georgia	13	Georgian, Russian, Greek	High School graduate	2 years	Solidarity school
Milona (f)	30	Albania	8	Albanian, Greek	High School graduate	1 year	Solidarity school
Haleh (m)	30	Iran	5 moths	Farsi, Turkish, French, Deri	Postgraduate studies	2 years	Private language courses
Arash (m)	28	Iran	3 months	Farsi, Polish	University graduate	1 year	Private language courses

was created by the arrival of the two new students. Moreover, it had been observed that the use of mother tongue between the two men in order to negotiate meaning and reach understanding, in some cases, was noticed by other participants who gradually felt more confident to do the same with classmates of the same background.

The linguistic repertoires of most participants included more than two languages, one being their mother tongue and the second Greek. Here, it was found that in speaking and listening activities, Dimitra and Popi, the two Greek women, were less flexible and hesitant than their classmates. French was also used sometimes to give explanations both between Salliou and Haleh and by the teacher to make comparisons which proved helpful for the two participants. The variable of the time of previous formal or non formal instruction in English revealed interesting results in comparison to group observation. Although in the case of some students, the time of language learning reflected their performance, as in the cases of Kevin, Enid and Samir, the cases of Belina, Adania and Christa were a surprise. All of them actively participated and communicated using the target language, making minor mistakes and trying to overcome areas of struggle by paraphrasing or asking for help, always in English.

Regarding language use in everyday situations, the majority of the participants do not use English, while few of them who use it, practice only receptive and not productive skills.

More specifically, nine students answered that they only practice language during the lessons, and three of them answered that although they do not speak English, they use it daily to browse and find information on the internet. Two students use English daily for their studies and work and three of them use English daily: Salliou, when he does not understand Greek, and Haleh and Arash to communicate with other people since they do not speak Greek. The students' future plans varied regarding migrating to an English-speaking country Two of the students, Dazim and Kevin, the youngest in the class, stated that they plan to move to another country, namely Canada and the USA. Five of the students expressed a possibility, depending on professional and financial opportunities that may arise. The rest of the class answered that they have no intention of moving to another country.

The last data collected by the first part of the questionnaire was relevant to learners' attitudes towards English. All students expressed their positive attitudes towards English, the international prevalence of the language and its popularity were mentioned by all, stressing that it is the only way to communicate with people from other countries. Kevin identified speaking English with speaking the language of future writing "it's global, it's the language of computers and the future", a statement closely related to his everyday need for using English at school and home. Festim answered that "you can go wherever you want with English" and Adania confessed that "Sometimes I feel embarrassed when I can't speak [English]".

Needs Analysis

The self-assessment grid of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24-26) was used by the researcher-teacher as a guide, in order to identify students' level during observation and to design the second part of the questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions about student's learning preferences, in order to guide the material design.

More analytically, seven students could effectively understand and use familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases, introduce themselves and others ask and answer questions about personal details. They could interact in simple ways provided that the interaction was clear and slow. They could write short, simple texts and fill in their personal details. Six students presented a higher level of competence, being able to understand and produce more complex sentences, interact fluently in dialogues requiring exchange of information and read and understand different types of texts. Four of the students were capable of interacting in simple conversations but it was observed that they could easily manage texts of a higher difficulty with unknown vocabulary and complex grammar structures without assistance.

As a result, the target levels of the class would be A2 and B1. By considering this, the second part of the questionnaire was designed to include competencies and skills present in the two target levels according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The selection of the variables was based upon these suggestions. On a Likert scale from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), students were asked to rate the skills which were more important to them. A brief analysis of students' answers in each section follows.

Regarding the selection of their preferable skill, all students answered that speaking was the most important. Reading and listening followed in importance by the majority of students. Writing was ranked as important and four students replied that grammar skills are more important to them (Table 2).

Table 2

Most Important/Preferable Skill Selection - Ranking

Skill	Mean
Speaking	4.8
Reading	3
Listening	3.3
Writing	1.2
Grammar skills	0.6

The most popular writing exercise among the target group were to write about yourself/describe experience and write about familiar topics. Note-taking followed. Accuracy also received a high rate of answers, with seven students answering that it is important and, two very important and one most important. Learners' answers about reading activities were hard to analyse. Reading timetables and stories received the most important answers, however, reading simple texts and articles on the internet were also high in importance (Table 3).

Table 3

Writing and Reading Activities-Preference Ranking

Writing	Mean
Write about yourself/describe experience	4.2
Write about familiar topics	3.8
Note-taking	3.3
Use correct grammar and vocabulary	2.8
Write simple letters/emails	3.1
Reading	Mean
Reading timetables	4.4
Reading stories	3.4
Reading simple texts and articles on the internet	4
Reading simple everyday material	3.1

As far as speaking skills are concerned, the most popular skills were simple everyday dialogues about oneself and dealing with situations while travelling. Describing background and education was ranked as important by five participants. Expressing hopes and ambitions was selected by only two participants and ranked as less important, while formal dialogues received the greatest number of least important answers. Most answers about listening activities included listening to dialogues and four students ranked listening to songs as important (Table 4).

Table 4

Speaking and Listening Activities-Preference Ranking

Speaking	Mean
simple everyday dialogues about oneself	4.5
deal with situations while travelling	4.3
Expressing hopes and ambitions	3
formal dialogues give reasons for my choices	2.5

Listening	Mean
listening to dialogues	4
listening to songs	3.7
listening to simple information	2
listening to the news	1.4

Regarding grammar instruction, explicit presentation of grammar rules was chosen as most important by only two students and, very important by three. Seeing grammar rules in text was the most popular answer and learn grammar rules by heart the least (Table 5).

Table 5

Grammar Instruction-Preference Ranking

Grammar Instruction	Mean
Clear presentation of grammar rules/theory	1.6
Grammar exercises	2.3
See grammar in texts	4.1
Learn grammar rules by heart	0.4

At the end of the questionnaire, a grid was provided so that learners could complete their own ideas on content selection. Although their answers varied, the majority of learners answered travelling and attending job interviews (which presented some inconsistency with their previous answers regarding formal interactions with people they do not know). Other answers included shopping for clothes, talking about sports, serving customers in a shop and going to the doctor. All suggested categories were covered throughout the school year, as tailor-made educational material was developed to address their needs and preferences.

The interviews conducted with the participants, provided similar results as those elicited through the questionnaire. Specifically, Stephane attributes lack of communication to lack of target vocabulary, understands what he already possesses, and asks for more conversations in the classroom:

> "to talk to each other more, we understand a bit but it is quite difficult to speak"

Dimitra's answer was also based on what she believes that she lacks and what she wants:

> "It is easy when I read slowly from a text, I understand, but I can't manage oral skills, I can't make meaning in this fast pace [...] when you speak, I understand. I can't understand my classmates because they have a different accent"

Other students also mentioned improvement of oral skills, becoming specific to what exactly they want:

> "To speak dialogues" (Festim),

> "I would like more dialogues to be able to speak with others, we need conversation" (Enid).

Participants also have added other topics as well, mainly focused on everyday interactions. Enid said:

> "talking about everyday things, what we do, where we work.... There are a lot of things but mainly these...".

Adania became more specific and expressed her desire regarding content and functions stating that she wants to learn how to book a room or order food at a restaurant. She also made her intentions clear, "since I want to sit English language exams I want more grammar".

DISCUSSION

The main goal of this study was to explore learners' needs and interpret them into those choices that would effectively guide the curriculum design and provide learners with the best learning outcomes. Before the Needs Analysis process, however, two main characteristics were already known about the participants: the first being that they are adults; and the second that they are migrants. As a result, the design of the educational material would be insufficient, if these two characteristics were not taken into consideration. According to Berwick (1989), material designs can be based on different educational values that underpin language programme planning. They can be based on an organised body of knowledge, on specific competencies, on social activities and finally, on cognitive or learning processes, on feelings and attitudes and on the needs and interests of the learners. Moreover, although the design of this study focuses mainly

on the latter, involving the systematic assessment of learners' language needs and their participation in the planning process, it should also be mentioned that the design was also an attempt to include learners' feelings and attitudes, while adopting a humanistic approach in language learning with a view to bringing development of the person through language (Berwick, 1989).

It is widely accepted that people enroll in language course with the aspiration of being able to communicate using the target language in various interactions (Nunan, 2004, Richards, 2001, Spratt, 1999), and that students needs and interests are reported to be communicative and functional in nature (Alalou, 2001). The target group of this study was no exception. Students, from the very beginning of the research, expressed their desire to acquire language for communicative purposes. Although the systematic needs analysis revealed that the reasons for participation and participants' competence levels varied a lot, achieving oral fluency in the target language was a common goal for everyone.

Regarding content, travelling and job seeking were the most popular topics suggested by the participants throughout not only in the Needs Analysis process but also during discussions inside and outside classroom. Harlow et al. (1980) and Alalou and Chamberlain (1999) (as cited in Alalou, 2001), found that many students view travel as the most likely opportunity to practice language skills. This correlates with their need for acquiring both speaking and listening skills. In the same way, job-related vocabulary and interactions constituted a chance for communication in the target language with a functional and practical value for participants.

It can be argued that learners' involvement in the designing and decision-making process was achieved, albeit through a lot of effort, negotiation and time spent in the learning setting. It was unrealistic to expect learners to be able to express their needs and preferences from the beginning of the lessons was unrealistic. However, after explaining the need for their involvement and experiencing the realization of their suggestions in practice, a lot of the participants felt free to express their preferences, their difficulties and what they would like to do next in the lessons.

An important factor which contributed to this end, was the gradual building of a relationship of trust between the participants and the teacher, but also among the participants. It was observed that after the completion of the first month of lessons, learners began to express their difficulties and inquiries in an assertive way, rather than insecurely as they had done in the beginning. To this end, it can be stated that learner autonomy for this particular group was achieved and the start was made during the needs analysis procedure.

Furthermore, placing learners' personal experience in the centre of the design proved to be a practice which radically changed classroom and group dynamics. Albeit hesitant in the beginning, since participants' response to such an initiative was unpredictable, it was found that it encouraged participation. Frequent times sharing with others even challenging experiences, had a positive effect on participants. It is believed that during this process, learners' diversity and wealth of experience were used as a resource and not as an obstacle to overcome and learning took place in a more even way (Arnold, 2011).

Last but not least, non-formal educational settings can be considered as more suitable contexts for the implementation of innovative teaching methods in comparison with formal educational settings, where the educators probably are more oriented towards a specific syllabus. In this vein, such educational contexts can be considered as 'safe spaces', where the learners can navigate through their multilingual and multicultural identities (Mattheoudakis, Chatzidaki and Maligkoudi, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The results of this attempt were learners' contribution and willingness to share their stories, even talk about difficulties they encountered and to care about their classmates' stories. To this end, the incorporation of personal experience in the learning process, not only functioned as a link between individuals and language but also resulted in team bonding and motivation. Moreover, it was vital, from the beginning of the research that possible gaps in the assessment and interpretation of learners' needs, created by diverse perceptions or inadequate interpretation of learners' subjected needs, would be filled by building a strong rapport with the participants. Although not measurable, considerable effort and time was spent in order to create a supportive learning environment, based on mutual trust where learners would feel free to express their likes and dislikes regarding the process, share their difficulties with their classmates and the teacher and make their own suggestions. In the end, it was found that learners were willing to participate in this process and set their own goals along with the teacher and the educational setting could be considered as a site of negotiation.

The entire Language Needs Analysis field as a procedure implemented in the language classroom is probably a prerequisite or an essential element in the attempt of applying transformative pedagogy principles in the foreign/second language classroom. Language Needs Analysis brings the learners' personal needs and identity profiles to the fore. A learner-centered framework leads to the development

of tailor-made courses, meeting the expectations of the relevant groups. Adopting the design and development of the materials and teaching approach to the specific group's needs and providing the opportunities for cooperative language learning through autonomy is where language learning and transformative pedagogy could meet and evolve.

DECLARATION OF COMPETITING INTEREST

None declared.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Christina Maligkoudi: Conceptualization; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Anna Mouti: Conceptualization; Methodology; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Eleni Triantafyllou: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition.

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