

## Learning Community Approach in the Primary Education: Learning about Bullying through a Foreign Language

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**Abstract:** Bullying constitutes a social phenomenon that takes place mainly in the school environment all over the world. Schools and the authorities of several countries have been trying to give an end to this situation training teachers and informing thoroughly students about it. The aim of this paper is to delve into the learning community approach that aided the students of the sixth grade of the Greek state high school to raise students' awareness about bullying in the EFL class and develop their four language skills in English as a foreign language. This pilot project, following the principles of the Learning Community approach, has been piloted with a class of 20 Greek-speaking children (aged 12 years old) who had been learning English for 3 years at school. It was initiated with the purpose to provide insights into developing students' knowledge in Bullying since it has become the matter of concern around the world because of the various factors that cause it and the consequences it has on children while English was the language of instruction. The sixth grade students developed their own multimodal material and shared it for informing the students of the fourth primary school grade about bullying in the FL lesson. For the estimation of the feasibility of this project, we have used two basic tools a) a pre- and a post- test about the language and the theme knowledge assessment and b) journals kept by the teacher throughout the project. The findings showed a significant improvement of the students' skills in FL, as well as their improvement in the specific vocabulary of the thematic area of "bullying/victimization" in the target language while it became obvious that the students enjoyed the whole process of developing materials in the foreign language especially about a social phenomenon.

**Keywords:** learning communities; foreign language; content-based learning; bullying; social awareness

## **Introduction**

The school and the classroom are important agents for the socialization of a child. In the school, the child develops social skills and builds relationships with people outside the family environment. But there are cases of children who have difficulty in adapting to school. These difficulties relate to behavioral problems which affect the interpersonal relationships of student and school performance. The behavioral problems usually occur in the following forms: bullying against peers, the student's reluctance to cooperate with the teacher and aggressive behavior towards him, lack of interest and concentration during the course, disobedience to the rules of the school, and impulsivity. To manage a problematic behavior of a student there must be the creation and implementation of a program of prevention and treatment of such problem behaviors at school, the cooperation of school with qualified staff competent social agents, qualified personnel shall be the school counselor, school social worker and school psychologist who will be the link between the school, family and other social structures and services to better fit the student at school (Leka & Katsafarea, 2010).

According to Olweus (2009), bullying is defined as the behavior in which one or more children attacking one or more children mainly in schools, in order to hurt the physical and mental health of them. Bullying differs from school conflicts in matters of the fact that the child, who receives bullying, feels powerless to defend himself from the aggressive attackers. The aggressive operations targeted to a particular person, is repetitive and stationary in their incidence.

### **Defining the participants**

Students who bully are usually characterized as active children. Generally they have an aggressive behavior and a tendency not to obey the rules. When bullying is perceived by school personnel, the perpetrators do not take responsibility for their actions, because they have no empathy for their victims (Sinanidis, 2008). Children-bullies show no particular enthusiasm for learning therefore grades in school courses is low (Pentarvani, 2008). A characteristic of these children is the physical conformation which allows them to intimidate (Lintels, 2008) and difficult to control their emotions (Olweus, 2009) fact that resorts to such aggressive actions to stimulate the interest of other people (Lintels, 2008). On the other hand, students who excel in school lessons are popular at school and create teams which guide to bullying episodes, this kind of bullies are called smart bullies (Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan, 2007).

Students bullied usually feel uncomfortable considering that they are in danger at school. Not easily express their feelings and not share their thoughts. They hesitate to protect themselves (Sinanidis, 2008) because they do not have the necessary physical or mental strength (Spyropoulos, 2009). There are also cases of students who try to repel the aggression of action and break into tears. They do not usually seek for help from an elder as they believe that they will suffer more aggressive actions by the perpetrator (Sinanidis, 2008). During the school breaks, they are observed to be in walking distance to a teacher. During the course they speak quietly while their odds in the lessons are likely to experience sudden or gradual decrease. But there are

students - victims who in their negative behavior do not allow peers to attend the course with the effect of creating aggressiveness in the classroom (Olweus, 2009).

## **Bullying Causes**

### *The family factor*

One of the major factors contributing to the shaping of a child's behavior is that of a family environment. Parents who settle their disputes by aggressive acts (Lintels, 2008) or adopt methods of harsh punishment to their children are negative models and lead the children in the event of aggressive behavior (Kritikos, 2007). There are also children who experience daily violent quarrels between the parents (Nova, 2004) and there is a lack of clear and consistent limits on children's aggressive behavior (Kritikos, 2007). Also, many parents do not show due care for the child-rearing methods or use methods non-permissible by society such as physical abuse. (Lintels, 2008) while it is truth that children bring violence towards their parents when there is an excessive force of the parents on how to dress, to manage their leisure time (Kalliotis, Kaiseroglou, Kolovos, Bampanikas, & Taoulas, 2002 ) and to do always well at school (Sugar, 2003).

### *School factor*

Phenomena of aggression could occur by the teacher and the student. More specifically, teachers who are trying to manage a dispute with their students, adopt strict penalties on students to obey him. At the same teachers do not wish to fulfill the irrational demands of students, fact which leads to the rigor of the education and bickering among themselves. Another form of aggression is the use of sarcasm or verbal attack on a student that is not a physical violence. Such acts of aggression, therefore, are negative role models for students. Regarding the interaction part of the student - teacher, the force of the teacher on a student's behavior creates difficulties in the school environment (Kalliotis et al, 2002) and the unwillingness of students to improve the school's performance (Tsakirakis, 2004) leads to a strong disapproval of the student, contributing to the event of the aggressive behavior from the part of the student (Kalliotis et al, 2002). This behavior can lead to the emergence of aggressive actions by students with low grades in their courses. Children usually participate in groups in order to attack the teacher (Tsakirakis, 2004). The indifference of the teaching staff to care about bullying phenomena among increases also or maintains the phenomenon as such behaviors are considered acceptable (Tsergas & Motta, 2000). Lastly, effects of aggressive behavior are also observed when students exhibit great effort for success in courses thus leading to engender controversy and the emergence of aggressive behavior among them (Pattakou, 2009)

### *Peer Pressure and Mass Media*

Generally, friendships play an important role in the development of each child with other children his age. These relations affect both their opinion and the behavior. Acceptance of a group of rules and behavior is a prerequisite for the integration of the

child in a group. The hard part in this piece is when the group acts in violent ways and the violent actions are needed to stay in the team (Pattakou, 2009). Participation in a group is a way for the perpetrator not to have remorse for his actions and he/she considers that all the members of the team have the same responsibility for the victim abuse. (Kalliotis et al, 2002).

Television and computer games are also involved in the event of violent behaviors because they include programs that highlight scenes of violence. Many hours of tracking these violent scenes may adversely affect the child by familiarizing it with violence while the lack of supervision by parents and the child's desire to look like the hero of a film/cartoon lead the child to adopt violent behaviors. (Pattakou, 2009)

### **Consequences of bullying victims and victimizers**

As far as the victims are concerned, the constant attacks on scare may lead to students' psychosomatic difficulties. Specifically these children feel bad about them and they tend to challenge their abilities (Tsergas & Motta, 2000). They have health problems such as headaches, stomach pain and difficulties in sleeping (Sinanidis, 2008).

Difficulties are also developed in the school and in particular, lack of attention and interest are observed during the course. As a consequence such students are characterized by the low school performance. Also, the child's refusal to attend school lessons on the pretext that they are ill or may even request a transfer to another school is a consensus (Tsergas & Motta, 2000). Moreover, his classmates do not want to have communication and relations with him but the pupil does not seek for companionship and socializing as well (Tsergas & Motta, 2000).

Moreover, bullying has also many consequences in the everyday life and the behavior of the perpetrator. This person hesitates to create friendly relationships with peers because of his aggression while his difficulties in school courses leads him to academic underachievement. There are many occasions in which the perpetrator is absent from school without a valid reason or removed from school after the school proposal for changing the school environment because of his aggressive actions (Spyropoulos, 2009).

### **The proposed project**

#### **The rationale and objectives of the project**

The present study set out to investigate the efficacy and potential advantages of implementing a program of raising students' awareness about the phenomenon of "Bullying" in the school class within the context of the learning communities. At the same time, it aimed at developing the foreign language skills of students in English

More precisely, the research set out to answer the following research questions:

- a) will the implementation of a learning community program contribute to the raise of students awareness about “Bullying” ?
- b) will the implementation of a learning community programme for the raise of students awareness about “Bullying” contribute to the students foreign language development?

### **Sample**

This experimental intervention was implemented on a sample of 40 students. The sample was divided into two groups. The first group consisted of 20 students who were students of the St’ class and acted in a learning community context producing materials for other students and with the aim of raising others’ awareness about bullying at school in using English as a language of communication.

The other group comprises 20 students who were students of the D’ class and they were the students who received the English language material produced by the St’ class in the field of bullying as a school phenomenon with social extends. It is worth noting that the children of the two groups had the Greek language as their mother tongue. Lastly, the teaching intervention was implemented during the months of September 2014 – December 2014.

### **Design of the project**

This programme was designed in the form of a topic-based project in the field of Bullying fostering a learning community in the EFL class and incorporating a variety of activities and games, such as role play, constructions, puzzles, dramatisations, e-games etc. In fact, studies have indicated that games in the language class enhance students’ communicative skills and provide opportunities for holistic language development (Griva & Semoglou, 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2009, Papadopoulos et al., 2012).

In this framework, the expected learning outcomes involved the development of the students’:

Language - cognitive skills in English as a foreign language, using the language as a means of sharing information, raising public awareness and interaction within a learning community.

Emotional – social skills by using their imagination and creativity to achieve their goals; directing their own learning; developing curiosity and their feelings toward the literature; interacting with and listening to other classmates and raising awareness about the school problems, bullying/victimization.

The topics of the project were selected on the basis of including a general view about Bullying. The mini syllabus was designed around ten units encompassing some of the most important characteristics and aspects of this phenomenon.

**a) Bullying**

Defining of the word bullying; Examples of bullying at school

(Target Vocabulary: *have a hard time; make fun of sb; call sb names; throw in the towel; write nasty things about sb; tell lies about people; force people to do things they don't like; steal sb's money; hit people*)

**b) Causes of Bullying**

The relationships among students; Behaviours that create bullying

(Target Vocabulary: *peer pressure; be always acceptable; intrafamilial relationships*)

**c) Solutions to Bullying**

The role of the teacher; the role of the peers; the role of the family; the role of the psychology (Target Vocabulary: *Speak up; keep my cool; Stand up for sb; Believe in myself; Don't let bullies win; Ignore what bullies say*)

**d) Developing materials for anti-bullying purposes**

Students' materials; Students' attitudes

**e) Using materials for anti-bullying purposes**

Impact of the material; Efficacy of the material

**Implementation procedures**

The experimental intervention was applied to 6<sup>th</sup>-primary school class students attending the primary school of Larissa (Central Greece), for the development of spoken and written language of students in a foreign language and the raise of their awareness about Bullying at school through the students proactive engagement within a learning community context. The constructive learning environment, the active learning and the creative expression of students during the intervention were the main characteristics of the programme. So, students of a higher school class took on the responsibility to develop material in the foreign language to inform students of a lower school class about the phenomenon of Bullying.

*a) Pre - stage*

In the first phase, the teacher informed the students of the ST' class about the phenomenon of bullying in the foreign language. Specifically, students were offered some basic information about bullying and they were encouraged to

research more on a) the definition of bullying, b) the causes of it, c) the possible solutions to the problem and d) the relations that are developed among students. All these were the syllabus that the students of the St' class would take into consideration to develop materials for informing students of the D' class about the victimization. Both the teacher and the students discussed the content of the module with each other and all the class expressed views and ideas about the possible material that could be produced and used for the D' class students. Special emphasis was given to the language of the target thematic material so that the students of the D' class would be able to understand it.

#### *b) Task-circle*

In the second stage, students of the St' class were developing their material about bullying for the D' class students in the target language (English). More specifically, they started developing material, discussed the opinions expressed by the other classmates and they worked creatively. They used the pictures as incentives for the lessons and created posters and marketing buners for the school and the classroom of the D' class students. They also created digital games using the software of Hotpotatoes such as Matches, crosswords, questions of multiple choices. These activities were created to check the content understanding They also created constructions related to the module such as Paper crafts, stamps and paper graffiti. They recorded sound anti-bullying mottos and they taped their videos about bullying and its solutions. The material they produced aimed at helping the students of the D' class of the primary school to develop their knowledge in Bullying, so the material they produced should have been suitable for their age. Throughout this phase, students discussed the material, their digital exercises and everything they did with the teacher/researcher, they took notes and they interacted with their classmates in the target language English. After each teaching/working meeting, the students and the teacher reflected on the work done, written in their journals and orally in the discussions taken place. So, they came into continuous contact and use with English as a foreign language.

#### *c) Post-stage*

In the last phase, the students of the St' class helped the teachers inform students about Bullying in English while helping the students of the D' class when needed. Throughout a teaching hour of this intervention, the students of D' class were involved in text analysis activities, board and physical game-based activities, discussions about bullying, while the D' class students dealt with the digital exercises and educational games that the students of the St' class developed for this purpose. In the last part of the teaching process the students worked on their PCs noting the things that they enjoyed or created difficulties to them. The students who helped the teacher of course, kept their journals after their lesson in order to discuss their notes with their classmates and their teachers for the sake of reflection and self-assessment.

### **The proposed approach of “Learning communities”**

This study was based on the learning community approach which receives students as active participants of the learning process. The forerunner of this approach dates back to the 1920s when the philosopher and education theorist Alexander Meiklejohn introduced an experimental programme at the University of Wisconsin (Smith, 2001) while the idea was given emphasis during the 1960s and 1980s with the aim of humanizing the learning environment and enhancing students development.

A learning community is a community of learners who are armed with the common aim of enhancing and sharing their knowledge, they are willing to support the community and non members and they are valued for their various contributions establishing an environment in which learning is of major importance (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2014). This approach “criticizes” the traditional forms of communication between the teacher and the student (Roth, 1998, in Pringle, 2002) seeing the change of the teacher’s role into facilitator and colleague for the knowledge acquisition.

The members of the learning communities have the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize their own learning that includes the effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence equips them with awareness of their learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This type of teaching and learning helps students and equip them with such necessary abilities. In fact, the processes followed in a learning community approach are in accordance with the goal of the European Commission to develop the stances, perceptions, behaviours and skills that will allow the European citizens to live peacefully in a multi-linguistic and multicultural community (Candelier, 2000).

In learning communities, the teachers have the opportunity to use many activities for the students that help them realize the importance of sharing knowledge and act so (Bielaczyc & Collins, 2009).. Such activities are team projects, group presentations, in-class and online discussions, and collective problem solving and they enhance students attitude positively towards to knowledge sharing. The students that have a positive attitude to sharing knowledge with others can most possibly carry this behavior to their workplace (Majid & Chitra, 2013) and it will lead to effective learning (Yuen & Majid, 2007). In learning community’s environments, the members interact in a peaceful and constructive environment and there is much trust and teamwork feeling that can lead to the development of sharing knowledge tendency (Chen et al. 2008). They also appreciate the diverse ideas and viewpoints that must exist in the learning community while they feel the sense of satisfaction thanks to their contribution to member’s learning (Majid & Wey, 2009; So & Brush, 2008; Bullard & Felder, 2007). Lastly, learning communities seem to have an important impact on the development of this principle of sharing knowledge with all the benefits it brings about.

Learning communities approach help the teacher create an interesting lesson full of activities that are produced through the cooperation of students. Students' dealing with various texts enriches the teaching process with new elements such as inquiry, critical thinking, and creativity while the involvement and the interest of the children is enhanced. In order to response to the demands of this era, learning communities lead the teacher turn into a facilitator of the knowledge and put behind his/her past identity as the source and transformer of the knowledge (Dendrinou & Karava, 2013). In such an environment, the teacher feels free to foster an environment of investigation, action and reflection underlining the importance of the communication and interaction among the members. This could not happen in cases of traditional teachings.

## **Evaluation of the experimental intervention**

### **Evaluating tools**

Regarding the evaluation of the effect of the intervention on Bullying promotion and the development of spoken and written language skills of students in the foreign language and the fulfillment of the targets set there used the following three methodological tools:

a) A pre- and post- content and language test before and after the implementation of the intervention.

A pre-test was distributed to all students of the St' class before the implementation of the intervention. The test focused on identifying the prior-knowledge of students in Bullying and their skill of speaking and writing in a foreign language. The post test was distributed to students after the completion of the experimental intervention (December 2014). It should be noted and emphasized that the two tools focused on the same skills and knowledge, so that the results that were to be collected, give the most accurate possible information on the effectiveness of the intervention (Stocking, 1999). The initial and final assessment tested the language proficiency of students and their theme knowledge about bullying.

b) Keeping the journal of the teacher and researcher during the whole intervention.

Journal constituted a research data collection tool by the teacher - researcher because it is a very effective tool to assess experimental and educational interventions that are organized by teachers (Altrichter et al., 1993). The process of keeping of journal happened at the end of each instruction. Regarding the structure of the journal, it was based on "questions to guide the reflection journal entries" of Richards & Lockhart (1994: 16 -17). As journal questions used by the teacher - researcher there were based in three areas a) questions related to the teaching, b ) questions related to students and c ) a general evaluation of the teaching. The journal applied in this intervention included 6 questions as

A. Questions about teaching

- 1 ) What goals did I have? Did I fulfill them?
- 2 ) What teaching aids are used? How effective were they? And
- 3) What were the forms of communication among students and between students and me?

B. Question about students

- 1) What was the attitude of the children at the beginning, during and at the end of the activity (positive, negative, indifferent, asking for clarification or assistance)? How did I respond to them?

C. Questions evaluative

- 1 ) What went well, what did not? What is a possible explanation? and
- 2 ) What could I change? Why?

**Results****Teachers'/ researcher's journal**

According to the analysis of journal records, during the intervention it became obvious that students had a most positive attitude towards the intervention and they tried to achieve their goals set by the researcher. To be specific, the students enjoyed the language learning development project within the context of the learning community. They developed interpersonal skills and better interaction while they worked in a constructive learning environment where sharing knowledge is of utmost importance. The journal entries indicated much of whole class discussion and multimedia use while the differentiated and inquiry-based activities seemed to have helped both the students and the teacher as well. There were no behavioral problems during the intervention and all the students tried to help each other to the benefit of the language. They also used various sources for their tasks such as websites, DVDs, posters and many educational materials like papers, scissors and pens. The continuous feedback and reflection seemed to come in very handy for them since each advice was a new help for the students and they worked better after it.

Of course it was confirmed that through the implementation of a learning community project with the students active involvement students have the opportunity not only to understand the language by using it in circumstances with "meaning" and to acquire simultaneously by learning the language, language skills (Huyen, 2003) but they were helped to gain knowledge related to a theme and especially to bullying theme in this intervention. Also, it is particularly important that students understand how they can use the language to help their classmates and to produce their own work and gain knowledge and learning effortlessly. So it could be argued that the learning context achieved its goal.

Based on the above mentioned detailed description of students' participation and involvement, there have been created the following tables showing the dual focus of

the implementation with the categories and subcategories that the students with the teacher and the social worker developed through the intervention.

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>	
<b>Subject "Bullying"</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<i>...what is bullying?</i>	
	<b>Causes</b>	<i>...where can it take place?</i>	
		<i>...who are involved?</i>	
		<i>...what creates bullying?</i>	
		<i>...are the families to blame?</i>	
	<b>Consequences</b>	<i>...are the school/teachers to blame?</i>	
		<i>...are the peers to blame?</i>	
		<i>...are the mass media to blame?</i>	
		<i>...school performance...</i>	
		<i>...psychological effects</i>	
	<b>Solutions</b>	<i>...vandalism &amp; crimes</i>	
		<i>...the school's role</i>	
		<i>...the family's role</i>	
		<i>...the peer's role</i>	
		<i>...the role of the society</i>	
	<b>Language "English"</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<i>...about the causes of a problem</i>
			<i>...about the solutions of a problem</i>
		<b>Listening</b>	<i>...classmates experiences and problems</i>
			<i>...teacher's viewpoints about bullying occasions</i>
		<b>Writing</b>	<i>...songs about aggressive behaviour/bullying</i>
<i>...descriptions about people</i>			
<i>...descriptions about situations</i>			
			<i>...letters/emails expressing an opinion</i>
			<i>...letter/emails recommending</i>

		<i>solutions</i>
	<b>Reading</b>	<i>...leaflets</i>
		<i>...relevant texts</i>
		<i>...websites</i>
		<i>...letters/emails</i>

### Pre- and Post- Test

During the pre-test, the teacher distributed to each student individually a worksheet in which the student had to complete multiple choice content and language at the same time, exercises in the target language as well as a creative writing task.

The following table shows the mean performance and the standard deviation of the correct answers as far as the students are concerned comparing his/her performance in the pre-test to the post-test one. From the analysis of the students' answers, an improvement in their correct answers was revealed at the post-test (mean score: 8,4) compared to those at the pre-test (mean score: 5,6).

**Table. Comparative Analysis pre- and post- tests**

Pre-Test		Post-Test	
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
5,6	0,51	8,4	0,66

The Creative Writing activity was the completion of a sentence in the foreign language (English) by students. The teacher showed a sentence to students in the foreign language and they had to write a possible continuation. The following table shows the average and standard deviation of the students' text production in the pre- and post- test. As it has been obvious, the performance of the students in the post-test (m=1,4) was significantly higher than the one in the pre-test (m=3,2).

(1 = correct completion 2= correct completion with minimal errors 3 = correct completion with a sufficient number of errors 4 = incorrect completion (due to the meaning, many errors etc.).

**Table . Mean and Std. Deviation**

Mean (Pre-test)	Std. Deviation (Pre test)	Mean (Post-test)	Std. Deviation (Post-test)
3,2	0,79	1,4	0,51

The qualitative analysis of the students' text production led to the creation of five typologies: a) production, b) task achievement, c) accuracy, d) range and complexity and e) orthographic control encompassing a number of subcategories of language skills that were developed through this intervention, as shown in the following table.

<b>Typologies</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
<i>Production</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Connected and organized text</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Subsidiary details</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Reasons &amp; Examples</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Text comprehension</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Length of the text</i></li> </ul>
<i>Task Achievement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Register adoption</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Precision in the writing</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Relevance in the writing</i></li> </ul>
<i>Accuracy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Structural control</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Lexical control</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Errors frequency</i></li> </ul>
<i>Range and Complexity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Lexical repertoire</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Structural repertoire</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Miscollocation frequency</i></li> </ul>
<i>Orthographic Control</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Layout and Paragraphing</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Spelling</i></li> <li>◆ <i>Appropriate Punctuation</i></li> </ul>

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

This learning community project aimed at developing EFL learners' competence in English as a foreign language and raising the students' awareness about the phenomenon of bullying at school.

As for the foreign language development of students, this project proved to help students develop their four language skills in English through their proactive participation in the learning process. Students were turned into active members of the school community fostering a learning community at their classroom to their and their classmates benefit. Their continuous contact with the foreign language and their continuous developing material helped them to develop their language and meta-language skills in EFL. Indeed, surveys carried out have shown that learning communities' programmes can exert a positive influence on

the language development of students (Papadopoulos & Griva 2014, Papadopoulos, 2014). Moreover, students' engagement in multisensory activities within this context enhanced their learning which is perceived as a cognitive, psycho-dynamic, cultural and social process (Illeris, 2001). Language within this meaningful and communicative context is developed and appreciated (Dervisaj, 2006) and the learning environment of this specific intervention achieved its special objective. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that creativity and interdisciplinarity which were to a fair extent obvious in this programme helped the students to process and express themselves freely on various issues (Cone et al, 1998; Tzifas, 2006), thus using and improving their target language.

Regarding the content knowledge of this programme, it could be realised from the comparison of pre- and post- tests that this intervention was highly successful in this domain as well. Students seemed to have gained much of knowledge concerning the problem of bullying, its causes and repercussions through this thematic project with English to be the language of instruction and communication (Jexenflicker & Dalton Puffer, 2010 in Ruiz se Zarobe, 2010). A most important proof of their knowledge gain was the successful development of material that was used for informing other students about bullying. Students were able to recognise examples of bullying, realise causes and effects of it and of course analysing the relations developed among students either in the school or outside it. The creative writing task was not only an evidence of language development but "map" of students' beliefs before and after this educational programme.

As far as the journal recordings are concerned, it could be supported that this project succeeded in motivating students to develop their language skills and their knowledge in a specific subject. Within this learning community context, students established learning and experience paths (Mustard, 2006). The analysis of journal recordings suggests that the participants of this project entertained themselves while learning and developing materials for other students. Their participation in experiential and playful activities offered them many opportunities for learning while the continuous feedback and reflection promoted and boosted the language learning and knowledge gaining (Papadopoulos & Peiou, 2014). Students participated with much of joy and willingness to offer and to share knowledge and useful material for the sake of advancing human knowledge. The researcher through the journal keeping realised that the social interaction of students within this learning community programme helped students construct better their learning while the interpersonal knowledge becomes a personal matter (Vygotsky, 1978).

As a result, there is a circular process of learning from members to the person (Elliniadou et al. 2008) and from person to the members. Students' attitudes during the intervention confirmed once again that students enjoyed the procedure and managed to develop their learning. They stressed that ultimately the learning of the English language is a very easy and fun trip as long as boring methods are not applied. Of course, the higher interest, the enthusiasm and

appetite of all students facilitated the smooth flow of the intervention and of course its success.

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