THE DESIGN AND CREATION OF AN ELECTRONIC LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR GREEK AS FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE

Giannis Spantidakis *University of Crete*

Vasilia Kourtis-Kazoullis *University of the Aegean*

ispantid@edc.uoc.gr; kazoullis@rhodes.aegean.gr
This paper outlines an electronic language learning environment that was created for the teaching/learning of Greek as a second or foreign language. It was designed to enable the teaching and learning of the Greek language and history among pupils (K-12) who attend various forms of Greek-language education worldwide.
1. THE CENTER FOR INTERCULTURAL AND MIGRATION STUDIES (E.DIA.M.M.E.)
The Center for Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.)

- It was created by The Center for Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.)

- Affiliated to the Department of Primary Education, University of Crete - Established 1996

- Mission:
  - To investigate and pursue educational issues among Greeks in the Diaspora and immigrant students in Greece
  - To provide pre- and in-service training to teachers of Greek as a Second/Foreign language both in Greece and abroad
  - To produce educational material (in printed and digital form) for the teaching of the Greek language, history and culture in the Diaspora
‘Greek-language Intercultural Education in the Diaspora’

• 1997 -2008 “Pedia Omogenon” programme
• Dozens of textbooks and CDs were produced for students age 6-18, levels A1 to C1

• 2011-2013: “Greek-language Intercultural Education in the Diaspora” (EU-funded)

• Emphasis on on-line learning of Greek

• European Union-funded programme
2. THE ELECTRONIC LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (ELLE)
Electronic Language Learning Environment (ELLE)

- was created for the purposes of Greek language and history learning among pupils (K-12),
- mainly but not exclusively of Greek-origin, who attend various forms of Greek-language education worldwide.
- combines language learning with language use
Teachers and Students:

• (i) can take part in **interactive and multimodal** learning tasks.

• (ii) become part of a **community of learning** through global learning networks
3. PEDAGOGICAL ORIENTATIONS IN COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL)
Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Pedagogical Orientations

We can distinguish between three distinct orientations in CALL:

1. the first orientation deals with the creation and use of ICT as tutorial tools (Tutorial CALL);
2. the second involves Computer-mediated communication (CMC) CALL or Social computing CALL and
3. the third involves the use of computers as Socio-cognitive tools.
4. THE ENVIRONMENT: THEORY AND PRACTICE
Theoretical Basis

This web-based environment is based on a combination of pedagogical orientations (Skourtou, Kourtis-Kazoullis and Cummins 2006) and language learning theories.
Theoretical Basis

The environment combines the following frameworks:

A. Combined Dynamic Model of Language Learning (CDMLL) (Spantidakis 2010)

A. The Combined Dynamic Model of Language Learning (CDMLL)

The Combined Dynamic Model of Language Learning (CDMLL) (Spantidakis 2013) combines three orientations of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

1. The environment is designed to function as a Tutorial tool (Tutorial CALL) for the teaching/learning of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

2. It also functions as a Socio-cultural tool, i.e. Computer Mediated Communication CALL (CMC CALL) or social computing CALL by providing Communities of Learning.

3. It is used as a Socio-cognitive tool that enables learners to acquire the necessary skills in order to comprehend and produce communicative texts.
Combined Dynamic Model of Language Learning (CDMLL)

- Negotiation/Socio-Cognitive Apprenticeship
- Tutor - CALL
- SOCIAL COMPUTING
- Scaffolding
- SOCIO-COGNITIVE TOOLS
- Language learning
- Language use

Spantidakis 2010
The Environment and Tutorial CALL

• Specifically, as a tutorial tool, the environment focuses on teaching vocabulary and morphosyntactic phenomena, the use of Greek in various communicative situations and verbal acts.

• It also provides various types of activities (e.g. chose the correct answer, multiple-choice, matching, filling in the gap, true /false, classification, etc.).

• The learner is provided with the following options. He/she can choose from a variety of activities that are graded by range of difficulty (easier, more difficult or at the same level).

• The learner can choose to listen to the pronunciation of a word or text and in his/her first language, can repeat an activity or can leave it for later.
The Environment and Tutorial CALL

- The can save the activity in his/her e-portfolio, can read the instructions that the teacher has written and can navigate through the environment. In order to learn how to pronounce a word, the learner has the ability to view the videos as many times as he/she wants and can record with his/her own voice.

- In the narratives of the video the learner can view and hear communicative situations of language use.

- The environment also plays the role of the “patient” teacher and allows the learner to listen to pronunciations and texts as often as he/she needs. The learner receives immediate verbal and visual feedback after the completion of activities.

- The environment aims at providing extra learning opportunities. The learner has the opportunity to be informed about the objective of each activity and to be informed about where the specific knowledge will be useful.
The Environment and Tutorial CALL

Types of Activities

Visual and Oral Scaffolding
The Environment as a Socio-cognitive Tool

• As a Socio-cognitive tool, the environment supports learners in understanding and writing texts as additional meaning making activities.

• In levels B1 and B2, the multimedia environment supports learners in composing texts. Learners proceed from the model of knowledge telling to knowledge transforming by providing the Socio-cognitive procedural facilitations, associated with the activation of declarative and procedural knowledge.
The Environment as a Socio-cognitive Tool

• The environment supports the learner by allowing him/her to make choices at each phase (i.e. planning, organizing, recording, editing and publishing). It also supports the creation of narratives, descriptions and argumentative texts.

• The aim is to help learners manage their working memory burden, by sharing the inner cognitive load in phases or writing steps.

• The user acquires familiarity with many strategies and techniques and gains awareness about what is appropriate to apply, when and why, in relation to the communication context of each generated text.
Example: Writing Support
The Environment as a Communication / Socio-cultural Tool

- As a communication / Socio-cultural tool, the environment provides learners with the opportunity to use the target language in the context of:
  (a) the Communities of Learning and
  (b) Communicating.

- The focus on use is based on the notion that the acquisition of L2 will remain abstract and connected only to classroom activities, if learners do not have the opportunity to express themselves (using their identities and their intelligences) through that language (Blake 2011).
The Environment as a Communication / Socio-cultural Tool

• The learner uses the target language to communicate, to create texts and to collaborate with others.

• In order to motivate the learner to use the target language, an authentic audience is provided that encourages two-way communication in oral and written modes, in a synchronous and asynchronous manner.

• The Communities of Learning focus on twinning school classes which are part of a larger collaborative environment and where communication and learning takes place between learners and teachers.

• Learners communicate asynchronously with learners in the twinned class, create collaborative texts, communicate synchronously via teleconferencing and interact through educational activities.
B. Framework for Academic Language Learning

• The environment is also based on the *Framework for Academic Language Learning* (Cummins, Brown and Sayers 2008:215, adapted from Cummins 2001:25) which combines:

  • Interaction within the learning community

  • maximum identity investment and

  • Maximum cognitive engagement
(a) Theoretical Basis

Language Learning has three foci:

- **Focus on Meaning**
  - Making input comprehensible
  - Developing critical literacy

- **Focus on Language**
  - Awareness of language forms and uses
  - Critical analysis of language forms and uses

- **Focus on Use**
  - Using language to:
    - Generate new knowledge
    - Create literature and art
    - Act on social realities

(Cummins, Brown and Sayers 2008 adapted from Cummins 2001)
Pedagogical Orientation

- Cummins’ language learning framework is combined with Transformative Pedagogy.
The Environment as a Transformative tool

- In the *Communities of Learning*, sister classes communicate and collaborate in groups of two or three classes, either in the Greek Diaspora or in Greece.

- This option allows for synchronous and asynchronous communication, but more importantly, collaboration on joint-activities.

- These activities are designed so that the environment can be used in ways that made use of Transformative pedagogical orientations.
Conclusions

• The Combined Dynamic Model of Language Learning combines language learning and language use. The environment is designed to support the learner during communication, while writing texts and while acquiring language skills.

• Problems that emerge when learners communicate can be resolved as the environment can be used as a tutorial tool and as support for writing (as a Socio-cognitive tool).

• In the latter case, the environment provides the learner with the necessary Socio-cognitive procedures and necessary facilities in order to enable the learner to assess the communicative situation and to compose the text that meets his/her communicative goals in the target language.
Conclusions

• The language skills and texts acquire meaning when they are actually used in communication. Learners are motivated to acquire particular skills or produce oral and written texts when what they are learning is utilized during synchronous and asynchronous communication.

• Finally, the *Communities of Learning* creates a community of learning where the members are united in a common interest, i.e. to learn Greek.
Thank you!

Giannis & Vasilia