



CHAPTER

1

THE LANGUAGE LEARNING LANDSCAPE IN MODERN CLASSROOMS

Introduction to the modern language teaching classrooms

The contemporary educational setting is widely acknowledged as a multifaceted composition that is significantly influenced by cognitive, emotional, and social elements (Argyriou, Giotopoulou & Pappa, 2016; Papadopoulos & Rapti, 2021). The efficacy and caliber of education imparted are indicative of the manner in which the multifaceted aspects of the classroom are addressed. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the teacher to not only acknowledge and embrace these aspects but also evince a pragmatic concern towards them.

Just like in any other educational setting, it is imperative for language teachers to give due consideration to the unique characteristics and needs of each child. Each individual child exhibits unique characteristics and traits. Each individual possesses unique characteristics, interests, talents, and inclinations, as well as distinct approaches to learning, motivations, expectations, and perspectives on the learning process. The teacher must take into account the multifaceted nature of the classroom to facilitate efficient instruction for all children, as stated by Papadopoulou (2018).

Furthermore, it is imperative that each educator fosters and prioritizes the student's role in the pedagogical experience. According to Charalambous (2000) and Mavropoulos (2013), the primary function of schools is to cater to the unique needs of every student and facilitate the cultivation of a well-rounded and sound character. Simultaneously, while upholding the principle of equitable opportunities, it is imperative that each child is provided with assistance that aligns with their individual needs and competencies (Flouris, 2005). The promotion of social justice principles is facilitated by ensuring that every child has an inherent right to participate in a high-quality education, as posited by Winter and O' Raw (2010) and Ainscow and Miles (2009).

It is crucial to note that instructors of contemporary and diverse language courses must adhere to psycho-pedagogical principles and depend on them. These principles dictate that the school's function should not be restricted to imparting knowledge. The school in question should be converted into a “welfare” institution, prioritizing the holistic development of the child (Papadopoulos, 2020). This can be accomplished by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to language instruction and implementing activities aimed at broadening children's understanding of language and other related contexts.

In the contemporary multidimensional educational setting, it is imperative to foster a culture of collaboration between educators and children. Collaborative work can have a positive impact on children's development, making it beneficial for them to engage in team activities. This process fosters the development of relationships characterized by mutual comprehension and acceptance. According to Panteliadou (2011), children engage in the exchange of ideas, information, and opinions, utilizing language as a means of communication and transmission of meanings and messages.

Language teaching in multidimensional classes

The notion of a multidimensional or mixed classroom is a complex concept that defies precise definition due to the inherent heterogeneity

of the group. This course comprises of a group of children with diverse profiles and varying skill sets (Koutselini, 2006; Coplan & Goldie, 2011), who are motivated to enhance their language and communication abilities and techniques (Papadopoulos & Rapti, 2021).

In contemporary multicultural societies, individuals from diverse nations possess unique cultural and civilizational traits, as well as distinct literary backgrounds in their respective languages (Papadopoulos, 2020). The attributes of this phenomenon of multiculturalism are also evident in the domain of education, as posited by Babalis and Maniatis (2013). It is noteworthy that contemporary classrooms often comprise pupils from diverse nationalities, as indicated by Hatzidaki (2020). The aforementioned individuals are minors who are either descendants of immigrants, refugees, repatriates, or members of a distinct cultural community (e.g. Roma). The children exhibit variations in cultural heritage, language, religious affiliation, and mindset, as noted by Martin and Nakayama (2007) and Baros and Michaleli (2009). The harmonious cohabitation between individuals belonging to the subordinate social group and those of the dominant social group can be challenging at times. Frequently, these minors are subjected to marginalization due to the perception that their distinctiveness is a hindrance. Conversely, the educational setting can be likened to a musical composition featuring a variety of linguistic harmonies, thereby necessitating that the instructor not only acknowledge the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their pupils but also actively encourage and leverage this heterogeneity (Papadopoulos, 2020; Tsokalidou, 2017).

Apart from this form of heterogeneity, a learning environment may comprise pupils possessing varying aptitudes and proficiencies. Certain children exhibit exceptional skills and abilities that distinguish them from their peers. The aforementioned individuals (Geisler, Hessler, Gardner & Lovelace, 2009; Rock, Gregg, Ellis, & Gable, 2008) are considered to possess exceptional abilities. As per the findings of Delisle and Lewis (2003), children who are gifted exhibit exceptional abilities and have the potential to demonstrate outstanding performance across a diverse range of domains. In re-

ality, these performances surpass the anticipated outcomes, relative to the age bracket in which they are situated. According to Argyriou, Giotopoulou, and Pappas (2016), there are various types of skills that can be considered general, including creative thinking skills and mental skills. In addition to their overall aptitudes, these children can exhibit particular talents in specialized domains, including music, sports, visual arts, and others (Manolakos, 2010). It is imperative to acknowledge that every child possesses a unique cognitive style and individualized pace of processing information. According to Armstrong (2000), individuals exhibit varying learning styles and require distinct forms of stimuli. Gardner (1983) identified nine fundamental categories of intelligence, which include Linguistic-Verbal and Logical-Mathematical. The three cognitive styles under consideration are visual-spatial, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The aforementioned items are categorized as follows: 6. Music, 7. Physical-kinesthetic, 8. Physiognitive-naturalistic, and 9. Existential-philosophical. It can be observed that each child possesses a multitude of intelligences, albeit in varying degrees. The primary factor influencing the dominant one is contingent upon the interplay between the child's experiences and the environment, in addition to the provision of appropriate guidance, stimuli, and encouragement (Eissa & Mostafa, 2013). Contemporary educational institutions prioritize the cultivation of linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence over other forms of intelligence, according to Patil's research in 2015. Therefore, it is imperative for contemporary educators to cultivate a multimodal learning atmosphere in language instruction within the modern educational institution. This can be achieved through the incorporation of diverse instructional materials and the implementation of pedagogical techniques that cater to the varied learning styles of children.

Certainly, within the framework of multidimensional classrooms, children who experience learning difficulties, whether mild or severe, pose a considerable challenge to language instruction and cannot be disregarded. The children in question demonstrate a range of disorders that pertain to their capacity to generate both spoken and writ-

ten language, as well as their reading abilities (Reschly, 2005). Despite possessing the capacity to acquire knowledge, there exists a notable incongruity between the aforementioned aptitude and the academic achievements of these minors, as evidenced by Stasinou (2013) and Panteliadou (2011). Stated differently, their performance falls below anticipated levels, taking into account both their individual cognitive abilities and the collective abilities of their peer group. Triga (2010) reports that in these children, the sensory organs operate within normal parameters, their cognitive abilities are commensurate with their developmental stage, and they do not exhibit significant psychological disturbances. Nonetheless, these factors require careful deliberation from the educator and benevolent cooperation with peers.

Conversely, it is not uncommon to encounter children who face more severe challenges. These are minors who exhibit some form of struggles or disability. These children exhibit significant challenges in their ability to learn, either persistently throughout their academic career or intermittently. The aforementioned challenges arose as a result of impairments in sensory, mental, and cognitive functioning, as documented by Stasinou (2013) and McCrimmon (2015). Geisler et al. (2009) and McQuarrie et al. (2008) have reported that individuals may exhibit developmental, mental, and neuropsychiatric disorders. The category of children with special educational needs encompasses individuals with visual impairments, hearing impairments, paraplegia, chronic incurable illnesses, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other mental health conditions (Zoniou-Sideris, 2011).

The inquiry at hand pertains to the methods by which an educator can cultivate and nurture a pedagogical atmosphere that is capable of accommodating the diverse needs of children within a singular classroom setting. Recognizing the paramount significance, the educational setting ought to function as a conduit for every student and as a therapeutic remedy for the distress of each student.

The new role of the teacher in language teaching

The examination of the teacher's function in contemporary schools is being accelerated by changes in the organization of modern society, the advancement of technology, and pedagogical research. The contemporary educator is responsible for new duties and assumes new responsibilities (Dermitzakis & Ioannidis, 2004). A teacher who has shed the old traits that put him at the center of the educational process is necessary for the successful administration of multidimensional classrooms (Flouris, 2005). They are no longer the source of information and its broadcaster without any dialogue. They are expected to collaborate with kids, engage in conversation, and learn new things as a group (Benson, 2004). As a result, the communicative method to teaching languages is encouraged, where the instructor must consider the needs, interests, and preferences of the students. The focus on mistakes as a horrible component in the classroom should be avoided as they should instead encourage dialogue and the useful use of language.

Numerous things contribute to the quality of educational work. A further specific factor for efficient language instruction in multidimensional classrooms is the teacher's degree of training and scientific competence, as well as their level of familiarity with and involvement in pedagogical issues (Yfanti & Vozaitis, 2009). The character of a contemporary teacher gets more multifaceted the more varied the character of a modern classroom is.

Each educator addresses the children/learners in a different manner. However, all instructors have the same objective of facilitating children's learning and growth via the creation of a supportive atmosphere, open communication, and teamwork that will make the teaching process enjoyable and innovative.

Teachers utilize a variety of teaching techniques and teaching tactics in an effort to achieve this. We may see a teacher asking questions, narrating, writing, leading, and more in a language-learning classroom. Children will sometimes stay silent while observing, pay-

ing close attention, copying, and monitoring what the instructor says. This type of instruction is distinguished by the instructor giving a protracted monologue without any input from the children and is separated into narrative, demonstrative, descriptive, and explanatory methods based on the didactic goal. Due to its cheap cost and emphasis on developing children's emotions, this approach promotes education for all kids, regardless of socioeconomic class (Giannopoulou, 2011). However, in this method of instruction, only the instructor is involved, speaking with the children in a single direction, and addressing all children in the same manner without taking into consideration the unique needs and features of each kid.

There are other situations as well when youngsters are actively involved and crucial. Their connection with the instructor changes to one of equality and mutual benefit, and they are encouraged to communicate and voice their opinions. Children do not just copy the lesson plan and attempt to internalize it. Under the teacher's direction, the kids themselves create the content via their interactive involvement. Dialectical and exploratory approaches make up these so-called child-centered approaches. These methods of instruction provide fruitful outcomes because they “unlock” children and encourage group engagement, which is a means of learning. It is not appropriate for every teaching point since certain curriculum topics need a different approach to instruction. However, they improve the relationships between teachers and children by illustrating the Copernican wave in the development of the New Education in the educational process.

Above all, instructors often use mixed approaches in a regular classroom, which are defined by the teacher and children working together to educate (Tileston, 2005). They indicate the phase of instruction that occurs between teacher-centered and child-centered approaches. They are characterised by the dominance of the instructor in the educational process even though they are mostly based on discussion. We may see questions and replies, elicitation, and encouragement in such situations.

How a classroom with a significant degree of variety in learning preferences, language and cultural backgrounds, and emotional states can cooperate is the issue that has to be addressed. It is often attempted to encourage a more collaborative and team-based teaching and learning atmosphere, which may aid in learning. Under the teacher's direction, the kids work together to accomplish a shared objective. They may take part in the instructional process and feel emotionally invested and productive as a result. Small child groups often work together to complete learning and teaching tasks with the help of the participating kids (Matsagouras, 2000b). As a result, all language-using youngsters benefit in different ways (McGroarty, 1993), as they use the language more intricately, are exposed to others, communicate by using the same words and phrases over and over and over again etc. In these techniques, it has been found that the less proficient speakers who enrich their own speech with phrases, words, independent sentences, and brief speech units during group discussions with more proficient speakers helps the group as a whole communicate more effectively in the target language. As a result, learning is improved since there are now options for more natural language mistake correction, and because self-correction via repetition is encouraged. The outcomes of this procedure are automatically shown. The language children are not particularly concerned with self-correction, but it comes naturally as part of fulfilling the group's objective (Hatzidaki, 2013). As a consequence, the language-learning youngster's abilities or self-esteem are unaffected, and instead, the child cooperates and actively contributes to the team's best outcome (Hatzidaki, 2013).

“Communication” in the modern language classrooms

In order to interact, humans use a mix of verbal and non-verbal communication techniques, such as facial expressions, body language, and others (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p. 158). When it comes to the instructor and the children, communication is crucial in the

classroom. In these situations, it is seen as essential, symmetrical, or complimentary, and is distinguished by the strength of the bond between the participants and the curriculum.

When teaching a language course, communication is very crucial. Teachers' interactions with one another foster a symmetrical connection that is crucial for cooperation and the most efficient transfer of information to pupils. Communication between the instructor and the children takes on a complimentary quality since the teacher is enjoined to aid the children's comprehension and education (Bikos, 2011).

In a multilingual or multicultural classroom, communication plays an even more crucial role. In these situations, the instructor is expected to do more than just impart information; they must also help the children improve their communication skills so that they may effectively learn as a small social group. Being able to communicate with indigenous children, learning about the culture and way of life of the country in which they will live, adopting the mentality of the social whole, and integrating into the social whole that will eventually be their permanent residence all help children from different countries and cultures develop their personalities and characters (Papadopoulou, 2008).

Techniques for its growth have been developed in response to the critical demand for communication in language education at the school. Communication abilities are initially a patchwork of linguistic competence and speech perception (Chomsky, 1965; Fromkin, Hyams & Rodman, 2011).

In a variety of settings and via a variety of techniques, communication may be enhanced. The contact and communication are the main objectives of the communicative language instruction method (Richards & Rodgers, 1999). Children connect with each other, share perspectives, information, and ideas utilizing their linguistic resources, and take part in activities that include them in the educational process (Charalambopoulos, 1999). Task-based teaching and learning, also known as an activity-centered teaching method, is an-

other innovative teaching and learning strategy that has developed throughout the course of teaching languages. It is employed in a variety of classroom settings because it encourages students to interact with one another. While this method is seen to be the solution to the demand for real communication in the classroom, it also aids in the development of their language abilities.

In addition, the variety of contemporary classrooms increases the necessity for creating a multimodal and multisensory teaching and learning environment that can embrace each kid and their struggles. Children are at the core of this setting, and instruction must be planned, carried out, and evaluated while taking into consideration the variety of children's learning styles (Beeland, 2002; Kennewell, 2004). The utilization of the "games" as a teaching tool is not only essential but also a priority in this direction. Children may explore, integrate prior experiences and knowledge with new ones, and engage and communicate in a welcoming and secure learning atmosphere by taking part in play-oriented activities like songs, board games, computer games, etc. (Papadopoulou, 2018). Parallel to this, a number of worldwide educational initiatives have emerged in recent years that emphasize the didactic use of fairy tales and stories in language teaching and learning initiatives. Fairy stories may help keep children's attention when they are learning a language, making it an enjoyable pastime rather than a "forced" grammatical exercise (Ellis & Brewster, 1991). Children will utilize the target language to communicate with their peers as a result of being inspired by fairy tales, while also improving their receptive abilities by listening to the story. Additionally, they may relate to the heroes and gain empathy and abilities that will speed up the process of socialization.

It follows that communication is essential to children's learning and knowledge acquisition, regardless of the language education situation. But are these techniques and strategies sufficient to meet the demands of the many kids and fill their "pain-gaps"?