VISUAL ARTS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: A SMALL SCALE ACTION RESEARCH IN GREEK PRIMARY EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This article presents an action research study exploring how visual arts can enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in Greek primary education, what kind of teaching approach can support student engagement and participation in EFL lessons and how visual arts integration can improve teaching practices. The action research was carried out at an inner-city public primary school in Athens, Greece, with 21 students aged 11-12 years, attending Grade 6. The research aims were informed by a literature review about visual arts integration.

This article describes the context of EFL learning in Greek primary education and the design of the action research, which consisted of four phases - planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. It covers the implementation of the lesson unit, 'Painting Sounds', which involved learning about and creating soundscapes and presents the main findings. Research found that integrating the visual arts into EFL learning increased student participation and engagement in EFL lessons. In addition, the co-equal, cognitive approach allowed for a broad and balanced visual arts and EFL curriculum, and supported the achievement of learning objectives in both disciplines. Moreover, implementing an action research study led to increased knowledge about visual arts integration in EFL classrooms and improved teaching practices due to its planned structure and continuous reflection.

Finally, the article discusses the limitations of this study regarding its validity and trustworthiness and the generalisability and representativeness of its results. It concludes that adopting a co-equal, cognitive visual arts integration approach can engage children in decision-making and higher-order thinking processes and deepen their understanding in both disciplines. However, it necessitates a shift in teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards visual arts integration.

European Commission

INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this study was to improve our teaching practices in terms of both personal and professional development by becoming familiar with teaching approaches that could enhance our pedagogical skills. There was also an inherent interest in instigating student engagement and motivation by promoting authentic learning and connecting the teaching and learning process with students' everyday experience. Drawing on previous teaching experience, personal interest in the visual arts and the emphasis placed on the concept of interdisciplinarity by the Greek national curriculum, a decision was made to investigate the integration of visual arts into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning. Updating our knowledge of recent advances in pedagogy and practices regarding interdisciplinarity and integrated learning, and applying changes in instruction and delivery of lessons was necessary. Adopting the role of teacher-researcher was also necessary in order to explore ways that the theory of visual arts integration could be translated into practice in an EFL classroom.

This paper presents an action research study carried out at an inner-city public primary school in Athens, Greece, with Grade 6 students, involving an experimental lesson unit entitled 'Painting Sounds'. The objective of the study was to determine how visual arts can enhance EFL learning in Greek primary education, what kind of visual arts integration approach can be used to make students' learning experience more meaningful and authentic and how visual arts integration can improve teaching practices. This paper also discusses the theory underpinning the study and the context of teaching EFL in Greek primary schools. Furthermore, it describes the action research design, the implementation of the lessons and discusses the outcomes and experiences gained by undertaking the role of teacher-researcher.

VISUAL ARTS INTEGRATION

Scholars such as Lajevic (2013) and Silverstein & Layne (2010) view arts integration as a dynamic process that merges visual arts with another discipline by opening up space for constructing and demonstrating knowledge through an art form. Lajevic also supports the idea that a visual arts integration approach presents knowledge as a unified totality where the borders between the different school subjects are diminished. This implies that specific and balanced objectives for both integrated domains need to be coordinated so that students deepen their understanding in both. So, in this study visual arts integration is understood as an approach that seeks to make connections between visual arts and EFL to help students acquire knowledge and understanding in both.

Educational research has shown the importance of visual arts integration with other core curricular subjects. It seems that establishing connections, applications and relationships across disciplines can stimulate the learning process (Bautista et al., 2015). In particular, artmaking and the interpretation of artworks may enhance students' active participation, decision-making and critical thinking skills (Scheinfeld, 2004; Smilan & Miraglia, 2009) as these activities expose students to situations involving problem solving and inventiveness (Bautista et al., 2015). Such kinds of situations may facilitate new ways of thinking (Lajevic, 2013) and allow students to acquire a deeper understanding of themselves and the world by making meaningful connections to their own experiences (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). Moreover, visual arts integration 'encourages and strengthens inner sensory imaging and emotional engagement' (Scheinfeld, 2004, p.4), which enables the extension of long-term retention of content (Rinne et al., 2011; Hartle et al., 2014).

In the case of visual arts and EFL integration, it seems that the visual arts have the potential to enhance language learning with the introduction of advanced concepts and ideas (McArdle & Wright, 2014). This happens because the visual arts are equivalent to written and oral speech as a communication system, as they employ distinct symbols which are used to express different ways of meaning, understanding and knowing (McArdle & Wright, 2014; McArdle & Tan, 2012). They can also provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge and meaning by allowing them to make strong connections between images and verbal language, through the involvement of all the senses (McArdle & Wright, 2014; McArdle & Tan, 2012; Poldberg et al., 2013). According to Read (2015), making connections and seeing relationships between English, their native language, visual arts, culture, and themselves can enable students to develop creative and critical thinking skills, through the exploration of 'big ideas', which are issues of paramount, universal importance that exceed the limits of specific disciplines (Chi, 2017; Bautista et al., 2015). Eubanks (1997) also suggests that artmaking can enhance written language by helping students contemplate, expand and organise their thoughts and ideas before they start writing them, while art criticism activities can improve oral communication, reading and writing skills. In addition, encouraging reflection on students' choices and ideas during artmaking activities may enhance language development and contribute to learner autonomy which is essential in EFL learning in order to achieve long-lasting linguistic goals (Eubanks, 1997; Read, 2015; Elizondo & Garita, 2013). Finally, integrating the visual arts and EFL can contribute to the creation of a harmonious and safe learning environment where all answers can be acceptable. It may also assist in building their self-esteem and confidence when speaking English (Chi, 2017; Read, 2015).

Bresler (1995) identified four distinct approaches of arts integration regarding the content, objectives, pedagogies and resources used by teachers. The 'subservient approach' supports learning in other disciplines without including the acquisition of artistic skills, or development of critical thinking and aesthetic awareness. Teachers who endorse this approach use visual arts activities i.e. colouring, craft-making, cutting and pasting, as an 'extra' to their curriculum in order to motivate students and make learning more interesting. The visual arts are viewed, therefore, as a means of enlivening lessons in other disciplines. The 'affective approach' aims to create a relaxing atmosphere, where artmaking is viewed as self-expression, with little guidance from the teacher. Students may also be presented with works of art, solely with the aim of exploring their reactions and preferences. The 'social integration approach' appraises the social function of visual arts and seeks to create a connection between the school as a community and the students' families in order to improve the quality of interaction between them. In this performance-based approach the visual arts are seen as part of social events organised by the school during which students are usually asked to take part in festive performances, some of which may be familiar to the audience. Finally, the 'co-equal, cognitive approach' equally addresses standards from visual arts and other disciplines. This implies that artistic knowledge and skills are incorporated into another school subject alongside competencies in the visual arts in order to provide students with opportunities to develop their cognitive and creative skills and aesthetic knowledge (Van Duinen & Mawdsley Sherwood, 2019; Robinson, 2013). However, balancing learning in the arts and non-arts content areas seems to require specific knowledge about the disciplines to be merged and promotes creative thinking, critical assessment and reflection.

THE GREEK CONTEXT

English as a Foreign Language is a compulsory subject in Greek primary education for all six grades. The approach for EFL learning adopted by the national curriculum (NC) (2003) and the Common Framework (CF) for Languages (2016) puts an emphasis on the use of the English language for communication purposes. Both NC and CF stress the importance of literacy, multilingualism and multiculturalism in order to develop learners' cultural and social awareness. This approach is supported by the EFL coursebooks which combine text, audio and image in order to produce meaning and enhance student interaction and learning in class (Tzotzou, 2018). So, primary school students are expected not only to be able to produce grammatically correct chunks of language, but also to recognise the situation these are used in and choose the appropriate vocabulary or syntactic structure.

However, the teaching hours offered in Greek state schools for EFL learning are considered insufficient to bring all students to independent user level (Dendrinos et al., 2013, p.15). Therefore, it is quite common for learners to attend evening classes at private institutions (frontistiria) with the aim of acquiring a certificate of language proficiency. This seems to create certain issues in school EFL classes as students may have substantially different knowledge and communication skills in English. Some parents and children disparage EFL learning at state schools, which makes these students less motivated or committed to EFL learning at school (Angouri et al, 2010; Dendrinos et al, 2013).

To address this issue, the CF (2016) suggests that EFL classes should be grouped according to language proficiency. This, however, contradicts the age-graded policy adopted by the Greek Ministry of Education. The CF also recommends that teachers should produce original teaching material to increase student motivation and participation. This is quite a demanding and challenging task for English language teachers who have not received such pre-service training and rely on state-provided materials and coursebooks.

On the other hand, the integration of EFL with other school subjects, namely the visual arts, music and drama education, that has been promoted by the NC (2003), could transform the learning process from the passive consumption of fragmented knowledge to a participatory process where students learn how to learn. To this end, the EFL coursebooks for all grades include visual arts activities in order to cultivate creativity and create a positive learning environment. The visual arts activities mainly support new vocabulary and grammar learning and include colouring-in pages, cutting and pasting, collage-making or the description of artworks. For instance, students are instructed to use hand puppets to act out a song or to colour-in, cut and glue the parts of a caterpillar in order to learn the numbers in English (Fig.1). Considering that visual arts integration is a tool for teaching and learning that goes beyond the completion of art-making and the interpretation of artworks, the following section explores the importance of visual arts integration and EFL learning and identifies relevant teaching approaches.

Considering the visual arts activities suggested by the primary school EFL coursebooks, it seems they are rather unbalanced as they appear to prioritise EFL learning rather than specific artistic skills or knowledge. Following the subservient and/or social integration approach, they include art-making and art interpretation related either to seasonal festive themes and school celebrations or to the content of the lesson to be taught in order to create a light-hearted and enjoyable atmosphere. So, in this study, the co-equal, cognitive approach was adopted because it equally addresses visual arts and EFL learning standards. This implies that artistic knowledge and skills were incorporated into EFL learning in order

to provide students with opportunities to acquire a deep understanding in both disciplines and develop cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills (Van Duinen & Mawdsley Sherwood, 2019).

Figure 1*: 2nd Grade Teacher's book, p.24*
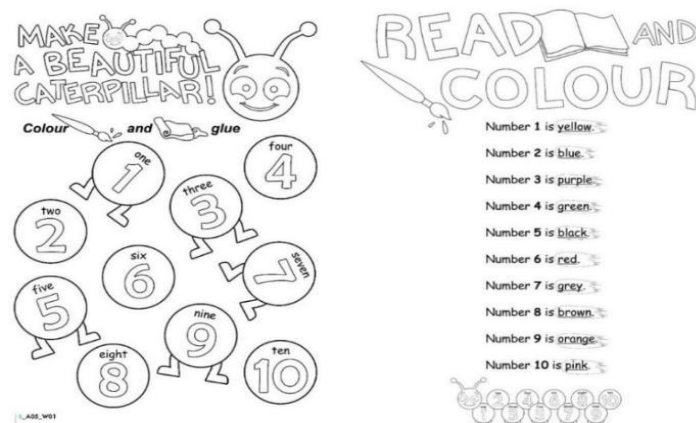
METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to put into practice theories regarding visual arts integration in order to examine their applicability in the EFL classroom and their influence on teaching practices and students' learning. In particular, it aimed to answer three main questions: How can visual arts enhance EFL learning in Greek primary education? What kind of visual arts integration approach can be used to make students' learning experience meaningful and authentic? How can visual arts integration improve teaching practices? The study was informed by action research design as it involved a small-scale intervention in a real classroom setting, aimed at improving the educational process and outcome that stemmed from the need to change our own practices (Elliot, 1991; Cohen et al., 2018). Following Kemmis et al's model (2014), one cycle of action research was designed and implemented.

The decision to conduct only one action research cycle was made due to the COVID-19 educational disruptions, the small scale of this study and time constraints. The cycle consisted of four phases which included planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Planning involved the identification of lesson objectives, design of lesson plans, activities and instructions, and the preparation of teaching materials in the light of both the theory of the co-equal, cognitive approach and the guidelines and aims set by the NC (2003) about EFL learning in primary school. The phase of acting involved teaching in a real classroom setting and was based on the hypothesis that the research questions would be answered by the actions taken. Observation involved a systematic attempt to gain insight into what was going into class while teaching the planned lessons. It included taking notes on the teaching practice and recording students' participation and engagement during lessons. Finally, reflecting included an analysis of how and why things happened and whether the goals set were achieved. It also attempted to identify potential gaps between the theory of visual arts integration and practice, and changes that could be made in the future.

According to Mills (2014), teachers carry out action research for themselves in order to gather information about how they teach and how well their students learn. So, the dual role of teacher-researcher was undertaken in order to link the activities of 'action', i.e. teaching, and 'research'. This implied that a synthesis of research and practice was required in order to maintain a balance between the distinctly different roles of teacher and researcher. Although teaching and researching are both characterised by inquiry and reflection, they serve different purposes as the primary goal of research is to understand a phenomenon, while teaching is about maintaining harmony in the classroom and helping students learn (Wong, 1995). To avoid tensions created by undertaking both roles, it was necessary to thoroughly prepare and closely follow the lesson plans in order to facilitate the whole process. It was also essential to follow certain plans for collecting, analysing and interpreting data as well as for reflecting on action.

The decision about the data collection instruments was determined by the nature of the research questions and the fact that qualitative data are descriptive, narrative accounts (Mertler, 2017; Mills, 2014). So, several data gathering instruments were used. These included the lesson plans, fieldnotes and researcher diary. The lesson plans, which described the expected outcomes, learning activities and instruction methods, were used to evaluate student learning and the effectiveness of the instruction as a whole. The fieldnotes were used to record as much information about both teachers' practices and students' participation and motivation towards the lessons. On the other hand, the researcher's diary was used to describe in detail each session and thoughts, feelings, and expectations both before and after the action took place (Kemmis, 1981 cited in Elliot, 1991). Bearing in mind that being both teacher and researcher was a challenging task and that the teaching duties could limit the time available for observing the children's behaviour, an attempt was made to reflect on the researcher's diary systematically in order to record and document students' responses, ideas and participation during the lessons. Recording detailed data and systematically reflecting upon them both during the action and afterwards, offered plenty of time to contemplate on actions taken and identify any subjectivities and prejudice (Mertler, 2017). Also, reflections on the research process were written down in order to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of the lessons and further improvements. Moreover, students' EFL written assignments and art works were collected in order to assess their understanding of the new material taught and the degree to which they incorporated it into their creations. Finally, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to evaluate what they had learned and how they felt about the lesson unit (Elliot, 1991).

THE ACTION RESEARCH

The study was implemented between January and February 2021 at an inner-city public primary school in Athens with the participation of twenty-one students aged 11-12 years attending Grade 6. The lesson unit was called 'Painting Sounds' and concerned sounds and soundscapes, which are the acoustic equivalent of landscapes and represent a collection of real or constructed sounds that create an aural environment (Axelsson, 2020; Schafer, 1977 as cited in Akbari, 2014). The lesson unit was originally split into four lessons lasting 45 minutes each. However, it was ultimately delivered in nine teaching periods of 45 minutes each as the completion of the learning activities, classroom discussion, reflection and evaluation questionnaire required more time than originally thought.

During the first lesson, which was called 'Close your eyes and listen', the students observed sounds in the school environment. Then, they created the visual representations of the observed sounds with choice media and wrote down their descriptions in English, practicing grammar and related vocabulary (Fig. 2). The second lesson, which was titled 'The sound of silence', involved listening to a relevant story. Next, they picked out vocabulary and words that described sounds and created a sound timeline that the hero of the story heard. Then they recreated these sounds with a variety of objects found in the classroom in order to create a soundscape. These sounds were recorded and composed into a soundscape by mixing them with a digital audio editing application. During the third lesson, which was called 'Guess what!!!' (Fig 3) the students tried to guess the sounds in the visual representations they had created during the first lesson and justify their guesses in English. They also learned vocabulary that described pleasant and annoying sounds. The fourth lesson was titled 'Creating graphic scores' (Fig 4). After listening to the soundscape they had created during the second lesson, the students collaboratively sketched graphic scores i.e. sounds notation using visual symbols. This activity included discussion and practice of previously taught past tenses and the vocabulary of the story.
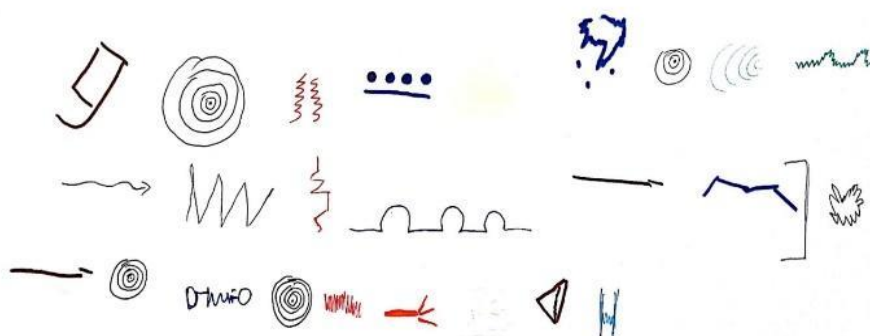
Figure 2: Melina, Visual representation of sounds, felt-tip on paper.

Figure 3: Guess what the soundscape shows!!! pencil and felt-tip on paper, by Irini

The design and implementation of the lesson unit were influenced by the Greek Government measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at schools. So, students could work only in pairs or in groups of three or four with the students in the adjacent desks as they were not allowed to change seats. Also, during the second lesson the students had limited options of objects to experiment with for the creation of the soundscape as they were not allowed to exchange them or move around the classroom. In addition, as school windows had to remain open all the time and other classes were on break in the courtyard at different times, the deep listening activity in lesson one and the recording activity in lesson two had to be implemented in teaching periods when no other class was outside, nonetheless this could not be achieved easily.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the following section, the action research findings will be presented and discussed in the light of the original questions.

A. VISUAL ARTS AND EFL INTEGRATION

Similarly to prior research studies (Read, 2015; McArdle and Tan, 2012; Scheinfeld, 2004; Smilan and Miraglia, 2009; Bautista et al, 2015; Chi, 2017; Lajevic, 2013; Duma and Silverstein, 2014), this action research confirmed that visual arts integration can enhance EFL learning. In particular, the visual arts provided a harmonious and non-threatening learning environment in which all answers were acceptable so that students participating in this study felt confident to use English during lessons. They also appeared to be more relaxed and motivated and attempted to engage in the activities, even those that were considered quite challenging, such as speaking and listening activities. Engaging in artmaking activities and using other learning materials and sources apart from coursebooks, worksheets and tests helped to make the learning process more unpredictable, exciting, amusing, appealing and satisfying.

It was also confirmed by this study that visual arts integration in EFL classrooms can encourage students' active participation, as engagement in artmaking activities, and in particular, the creation of soundscapes, graphic scores and visual representations of sounds, provided them with opportunities to practice creative thinking, decision-making and inventiveness. The interactive nature of these artmaking activities, which required the use of different senses for their completion, appeared to increase student involvement, even among those who were usually unwilling to participate in EFL lessons in the past. As a result, most students were actively engaged in the speaking and writing activities and

were able to practice previously taught grammar as well as new vocabulary without having to complete any worksheets at school or at home.

B. ARTS INTEGRATION APPROACHES AND ARTMAKING ACTIVITIES

In this study, the co-equal, cognitive approach was adopted because it equally addresses standards from visual arts and other disciplines, in this case EFL learning. It was confirmed by this study that the co-equal, cognitive approach can provide students with opportunities to construct ideas, interpret meanings and apply knowledge and skills in order to acquire a better understanding of the merged disciplines (Van Duinen & Mawdsley Sherwood, 2019; Robinson, 2013). Students participating in this study managed to acquire knowledge about both the art genre of soundscapes and English grammar and vocabulary, as distinct objectives were set for both disciplines. Also, the activities were designed to support learning in both school subjects in order to enable explorations and understanding of shared concepts between the two integrated disciplines. They were also designed to be interdependent and intertwined so that EFL learning could benefit from the visual arts learning, and vice versa.

The data also revealed that when students were provided with opportunities to imagine, perceive, explore, experiment, create art and reflect upon what they had learned in both the visual arts and EFL, they gained a more comprehensive understanding in both disciplines. For instance, Lesson 1 objectives included developing observation and narration skills and learning that sounds can be represented visually. These processes formed the basis for written and spoken EFL activities as reflection on students' creations in lessons 1 and 3. Similarly, EFL stimulated experimentation and creation in visual arts. Thus, the English text served as the incentive to enhance listening skills and develop vocabulary and to engage students in producing and recording sounds to create a soundscape and representing its graphic score (Van Duinen & Mawdsley Sherwood, 2019; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006).

Regarding the selection of artmaking activities, this was based on teachers' and students' knowledge and experience of the elements and principles of art and design or of media and techniques, lesson objectives and the availability of materials and time. So, artmaking activities included drawing activities and soundscape creation. The rationale for selecting soundscape creation was that it is a quite unusual and original artmaking activity as it is rarely introduced in the relevant literature. In addition, sounds are related to students' everyday experience as they are omnipresent and contribute to broadening their perception of the world by engaging the aural sense. Drawing activities were included in the lessons in order to enable students to better understand the concept and functions of soundscapes.

Data revealed that both soundscape creation and drawing activities increased students' engagement and facilitated the completion of EFL activities. For instance, the visual representations of sounds contributed to discussions in English about sounds and formed the basis for the following writing activity. Also, creating the soundscape in order to retell the story provided students with opportunities to practice new vocabulary and contributed to a better comprehension of the story.

C. IMPROVING TEACHING PRACTICES

One of the aims of this study was to investigate whether and how visual arts integration could improve teaching practices. This was achieved through reflections on the teaching methods and approaches used in the past and during the present study. Also, the planned structured process of teaching and researching offered a valuable framework for practicing teaching more consciously and expanding instruction repertoires. On the other hand, examination of relevant literature reviews broadened the perspectives about visual arts integration in EFL classrooms and especially about the use of the co-equal, cognitive approach. Integrating visual arts activities into EFL learning did not only increase students' motivation to participate in EFL activities, but also offered the opportunity to reappraise our teaching practices.

In order to become familiar with the language of visual arts it was essential to study terminology related to sounds and aspects of their recreation and visual representation. In addition, engaging in a practical inquiry that involved planning, action, observation and reflection allowed for relevant and suitable choices to be made, which stemmed from personal preferences, needs and competences. For instance, the limited training and specialised knowledge of visual arts led to an alternative artmaking activity being chosen, as it did not require extensive knowledge about the elements and principles of art and design, or techniques and media. Also, the selection of soundscapes as lesson unit content and artmaking activities was based on personal preferences and interests in music and sound.

What is more important, the deliberate and detailed reflection upon teaching practices was beneficial and constructive as it facilitated a process of continuous learning, bringing together theories of visual arts integration and soundscapes into practice within the context of EFL teaching and learning. Reflections also led to changes in planning, using student work data, and making necessary adjustments and revisions to initial choices and actions. Observing and monitoring student performance on an ongoing basis, on the other hand, enabled us to build knowledge on assessing and evaluating student learning and instruction.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Greek national curriculum for EFL learning in primary school promotes connections with other school subjects and especially the arts (visual arts, music and drama). However, visual arts activities, such as colouring-in pictures, cutting and pasting and simple crafts, included in the student coursebooks are fragmented and unbalanced as they lack specific learning objectives for both disciplines and do not require higher-order thinking skills for their completion.

This study focused on the exploration of the connection between EFL and visual arts education to help students acquire knowledge and understanding in both. The results confirmed that visual arts integration can enhance EFL learning as children can be engaged in decision-making and thinking processes that enable them to build stories and create soundscapes while making meaningful connections to their own life-experiences. In addition, integrating visual arts activities into the EFL classroom, appeared to increase student motivation and engagement by providing a harmonious and non-threatening atmosphere, enabling them to develop their self-confidence in using English as a foreign language and in participating in activities that were usually considered quite demanding. It was also shown that student involvement can also be enhanced by the implementation of a variety of learning activities that require the use of diverse modalities, such as the

visual, aural and kinesthetic, for their completion (Rinne et al, 2011; Posner & Patoine, 2009; Duma & Silverstein, 2014), rather than traditional worksheets and tests, as well as by the unpredictability, excitement and satisfaction offered by visual arts integration.

Moreover, using alternative artmaking activities like soundscape creation and lesson content that is relevant to students' everyday experience has the potential to broaden their perception of the world. Choosing a quite unusual and original artmaking activity such as creating soundscape compositions, graphic scores and visual representations of sounds, can be beneficial to EFL learning as it is a viable alternative to the painting and drawing activities that are usually suggested by the relevant literature. Learning about and creating soundscapes can also broaden students' perspectives about visual arts genres and give them opportunities to experiment with sounds, make sense of their own and others' lived experiences and enhance their awareness of their interaction with their school and living environment.

Adopting the co-equal, cognitive approach facilitated learning and practicing English language vocabulary and grammar as well as the acquisition of knowledge related to the visual arts and specifically, soundscape composition and its visual representation. The co-equal use of the visual arts and EFL instruction can extend student understanding by connecting students to the learning content in a concrete way, because they are provided with opportunities to imagine, perceive, explore, experiment, create art and reflect upon what they learned in both visual arts and EFL. On the other hand, adopting and implementing the co-equal, cognitive approach necessitates a shift in teachers' attitudes and beliefs about visual arts integration and the nature of visual arts education and EFL learning. It also entails knowledge about creative processes, arts integration theory, and the art forms and techniques to be taught. Therefore, it is essential that the teachers feel comfortable engaging in artistic processes and confident in their capacities to support arts-based learning activities (Krakaur, 2017). This involves making mindful pedagogical choices to facilitate the creative processes during visual arts instruction.

Regarding the research method, it offered the opportunity to reappraise our own teaching practices by getting involved in a practical inquiry that entailed planning, action, observation and reflection, therefore engaging in a process of self-improvement. However, there were certain limitations related to its validity and trustworthiness. According to Kemmis (1980), these limitations stem from the nature of the action research itself. Moreover, the lack of specialised scientific knowledge related to conducting action research raised issues of subjectivity and bias (Mertler, 2017). Taking into consideration these issues, an attempt was made to enhance the rigor of this study by using multiple data collection instruments i.e. lesson plans, fieldnotes during lessons, student portfolio, evaluation questionnaire and a detailed researcher diary. There was also an attempt made to engage in a systematic reflection-process in order to evaluate the content of the lessons, the strategies, the procedures and the actions that were taken during the research, as well as to identify the underlying assumptions behind the decisions that were made. As regards the trustworthiness of the study, it was established through the triangulation of data. Comparing and contrasting the data collected by different sources contributed to avoiding to some extent, a one-sided, biased and subjective analysis (Elliot, 1991). Following Mertler's (2017) suggestions, apart from the detailed recording of data, an attempt was made to reflect upon them both during the action and afterwards, as this provided sufficient time for contemplation on actions and decisions taken and identification of subjectivities and prejudices.

Another limitation of this research concerned the generalisability and representativeness of the results as it involved a small-scale study, implemented in a specific context (Elliot, 1991; Mertler, 2017; Denscombe, 2003). This implied that the outcomes of this study might not be applicable to other contexts or be of use to other teachers. However, as this study aimed to solve everyday problems (Mills, 2014) regarding EFL teaching and was carefully planned and implemented (Lomax, 1995), its findings can be transferable which means that its readers may find connections to their own practices or experiences. So, this study can be of value to other EFL teachers facing similar problems by offering them ideas, suggestions and insights, as well as to everyone working in primary education in Greece, as it provides evidence that the co-equal arts integration approach is realistic and viable.

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