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"My Country in Europe": A Content-based Project for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners

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***Abstract*—The present paper outlines the process of introducing a pilot EFL (English as a Foreign Language) project, which integrates content and language learning. It aimed at developing young learners' language skills in English, through integrating English language learning with the subject of Geography. The project was piloted in two fifth grade (5th) classrooms of a Greek primary school. The results of the intervention project indicated the positive effects of the project on students' oral and written skills and their attitude towards foreign language learning.**

***Index Terms*—foreign language learning, content-based learning, project, young learners**

I. Introduction

This paper outlines the design and implementation of an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) project, which integrates content and language learning. Young learners are involved in a number of activities with the aim to enhance students' foreign language skills through another subject- Geography. Over the last years, an interest has spread to EFL classrooms around the world regarding Content Based Instruction (CBI), which "refers to the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills" (Brinton et al, 1989, p. 2). CBI integrates foreign language with content learning, putting great emphasis on learning about something rather than learning about language. In such a context, where learners' needs and interests are put in the center of the learning process, learners are provided with a variety of opportunities for stimulating motivation and expressing themselves creatively while learning English at the same time.

Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis (1983) provides a rationale for CBI (Cummins, 1994), where language teaching is integrated with content. A number of benefits seem to accrue to foreign language learning by implementing CBI. Firstly, language learning becomes more interesting, motivating and meaningful. Secondly, students gain knowledge in various subjects, develop their cognitive and study skills, and become more independent learners. In addition, students are engaged in meaningful communication with classmates (Met, 1991; Griva, Semoglou & Geladari, 2010). However, CBI alone does not guarantee success. Factors such as students' needs in content area classes as well as their needs in language skills instruction are among the most important (Grabe & Stoller, 1997).

One of the approaches that can be integrated into CBI is the project approach, as one of its primary goals is to foster independent learning. Studies in the EFL field have highlighted the advantages of learning a foreign language through a project (Beckett, 2005; Gu, 2002). It is often stated that Project Based Learning (PBL) is clearly an instructional method centered on the learner, which allows an in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about (Erdem, 2002). A review on the existing literature on EFL project-based instruction indicates that it connects the development of skills and content knowledge with language (Beckett & Slater, 2005). Working on a project allows the integration of skills (Fried-Booth, 2002) and provides students with opportunities to communicate, therefore enabling them to develop their communicative competence. It is often observed that incorporating project work in the foreign language classroom results in increased self-esteem (Stoller, 2006) and autonomy (Skehan, 1998) on the part of the students. Learners develop their cooperative skills (Coleman, 1992) and have increased engagement and enjoyment (Lee, 2002) due to the fact that learning becomes a meaningful experience which stems from their interests. Responsibility for learning and evaluation of the learning process and learning outcomes moves from teacher to student, who needs to adopt an active role, to be critical and able to cooperate, while the role of the teacher during project work is that of the coordinator and advisor and, at the same time, of the one responsible for creating the optimum opportunities for successful language learning (Clark, 2006; Levy, 1997).

II. The Study

A. Rationale and Purpose of the Study

The basic purpose of this study was to implement a Content Based Language Teaching project in order to teach EFL to young learners. Moreover, an attempt was made to evaluate the outcomes of foreign language learning through the specific project implemented in a state primary school in Northen Greece. Recent studies have highlighted the advantages of foreign language learning at early stages (Edelenbos et al., 2006; Edelenbos & de Jong, 2004; Johnstone, 2002). EFL research underlines the benefits in children's linguistic, cognitive and emotional development, since the use of their cognitive strategies (Moon, 2005) as well their metacognitive skills (Nikolov, 2009) are enhanced.

More precisely, the present project aimed at:

- developing students' basic reading, listening, writing, speaking skills and improve their vocabulary by using English as a foreign language for communicative purposes in authentic situations;
- providing students with ample opportunities to learn about Europe through a cross curricular project and to develop their intercultural skills;
- enhancing students' sensitivity regarding cultural differences in the European context as well as human and children's rights;
- stimulating their motivation for EFL learning by enhancing their involvement in experiential learning activities.

B. Sample

The intervention was piloted on a small scale, in two fifth (5^{th}) grade primary school classrooms in northern Greece. In Greece, English as a FL is taught as a compulsory subject in the primary school curriculum from the 3rd grade onwards.

Twenty-two (22) Greek-speaking students (mean age=10.85 years-old) participated in this study, 8 boys and 14 girls. The students, who attended a different classroom of the same school, were assigned to two groups. Twelve (12) students composed the control group and ten (10) students composed the experimental group .

Both groups were taught English as a foreign language by the same teacher-researcher for a long time before the intervention. The experimental group participated in the CBI project, while the control group was taught English in a conventional way, in the PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) framework. Each group was taught English 3 hours per week. The students represented a wide range of ability levels (Table I, II). Each student is represented by a number from 1 to 12 for the control group and from 1 to 10 for the experimental group as shown below.

TABLE I
STUDENT DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE LEVEL (CONTROL GROUP)

Language Level	Frequency	Student	Rate %
High	3	students: 2, 7, 11	25,00
Medium	8	students: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12	66,66
Low	1	student: 9	10,00
Very low	0	-	0,00
Total	12	12	100,00

TABLE II.
STUDENT DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE LEVEL (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

Level	Frequency	Student	Rate %
High	2	students: 1, 7	20,00
Medium	4	students: 2, 3, 5, 6	40,00
Low	3	students: 4, 8, 10	30,00
Very low	1	student: 9	10,00
Total	10	10	100,00

C. Project Procedure

Approximately the same number of sessions (38-40) was spent on teaching English as a foreign language to the two groups (experimental and control). As already mentioned, the control group was taught English in a PPP framework.

In the control group, planning and teaching was the responsibility of the teacher, always done in advance, while emphasis was placed on using the correct forms during written and oral activities. On the contrary, teacher's role during project based learning was different (Levy, 1997). Lesson planning for the experimental group was not teacher directed, in the sense that the project was conducted in cooperation with the students, according to their needs and interests. Therefore, planning and teaching was an ongoing process which was coordinated and facilitated but not directed by the teacher, based on the principles of the project approach. It is worth mentioning that the students have never worked on a project before, so the teacher explained to them the basic principles of project work during a teaching session at the beginning of the project. Students were made aware of the need to work both individually and in groups in order to accomplish inquiry based activities, which included collecting, analyzing, synthesizing and reporting data both orally and in writing. The students of the experimental group were provided with opportunities to interact, to investigate and use resources, to answer questions, and to learn more autonomously. Thus, the focus was on successful communication rather than correctness of the language in a game-based context (Hadfield, 1990).

The stages of the project

Many scholars focused on the stages of project work, in an attempt to sequence project procedures and activities. The following stages were used in order for the specific CBI project work to be successfully implemented (Stoller, 1997):

Stage 1: Speculating on a topic

The students of the experimental group discussed with the teacher and agreed on the topic of the project: "*My country in Europe",* which was based on the content of the subject-area of Geography. Then, the students elected a coordinator for the project. A supportive atmosphere was created, in order to arouse interest and enable students to engage in individual and cooperative tasks during the following project stages.

Stage 2: Structuring the project

At this stage the participants were asked to draw on their previous experiences regarding the project's topic and think of what they would like to learn about it. Then, they set their goals and decided on the ways they could achieve them. The participants formed two groups, each consisting of 5 students. It is mentioned that the teacher knew her students well enough before the implementation of the project and was aware of their needs, their strengths and weaknesses as well as of their social relationships with classmates. The participants assigned roles and activities, decided on their methodology, and designed their research process, thinking of the inquiries they need to make and the ways they can gather and analyze information. Each group member was allocated certain responsibilities, so that everyone could contribute to the final outcome of the project.

Stage 3: Conducting research

At this stage the groups gathered information from a variety of sources and critically processed it. They worked cooperatively in order to organize, categorize and synthesize information gathered from the Internet, magazines, encyclopedias and the school library. They were asked to take notes, summarize and extract key information from texts. The teacher regularly checked the progress of the students' work with the members of each group, providing feedback when needed. At the end of this stage the final products of the project were produced.

The students, in cooperation with the teacher, decided to group the activities into 5 broad subject areas, each one consisting of several subsections. The subject areas were the following:

1) The European countries (geographical features, languages, currency, population, flags)

2) The climate in the European countries (weather, clothes, natural disasters)

3) The sights in Europe (10 European sights of interest)

4) European customs and traditions (festivities, myths and legends, traditional costumes, traditional music and songs, food)

5) Children of the world (children's rights, school life, everyday routine).

A cross curricular approach was used during the study of the issues related to each subject area of the project. Foreign language learning was integrated with the specific subject matter (Geography) on the basis of the CBI principles. The students managed to create and present the following products:

- A European morphological map;
- The European flags;
- Posters with pictures, photographs and comments related to the topic of the above mentioned subject areas;
- Crafts made of plasticine (e.g. The Eiffel Tower made of plasticine);
- Short written reports, e mails (exchange e mails with children attending a multicultural school), postcards, brochures;
- A tourist guide;
- An English-Greek dictionary project.

Stage 4: Evaluation

At this final stage the students organized an end of the school year event, where they displayed the final products of the project in the school and the wider community, making their school-mates, teachers and parents aware of their work. Moreover, both the students and the teacher-researcher assessed the project products and speculated on the process followed, the experiences and the knowledge gained, the attitudes adopted, as well as on whether the initial goals were achieved. The teacher praised the students for their good work and helped them identify their errors, so that students can avoid them in a future project. The aim was to reflect on language and content mastered and the activities used (Stoller, 2002) and identify whether the teaching methods used motivated the students to learn and develop their language skills and learning strategies.

III. Evaluation of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of the EFL Project

Evaluation Instruments

In order to evaluate the achievement of the goals set and the impact of the intervention on the development of students' language skills in EFL, a tripartite study was conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, based on the ontological assumption that human beings, and consequently research participants are active agents, capable of assessing situations (Harre´, 1993). The use of more than two methods to collect data allowed the triangulation of research findings and assured research validity (see Bird et al, 1999). Data was collected by means of:

a) A pretest and posttest. The test consisted of two parts. In the first part a text was given to the students (text length: approximately 100 words) and four (4) open ended questions, to which students were asked to respond freely. The

students had the opportunity to listen to and read the text before they answered the questions in written form. In the second part of the test they were asked to summarize the text orally. The test was administered to both the control and the experimental group, before and after the experiment was conducted, to assess the improvement of students' writing and oral communication skills.

b) A teacher-researcher journal, which was kept once a week during the implementation of the project in order to record and reflect on the impact of the intervention on the learners, the teaching and the learning outcomes.

c) Interviews conducted with the students of the experimental group to record their interest and the degree of their satisfaction the project, the difficulties they encountered, and their views on content based language learning.

Moreover, a collection of work samples (writings, completed worksheets, drawings, collages) created during the project was taken into account for the analysis, in order to get a complete picture of children's progress.

IV. Results

A. Pre-test and Post-test

The statistical package SPSS for Windows was used for the analysis of the data collected from the pre- and posttest. The pretest was distributed in the end of January, while the posttest in the beginning of June.

First part of the pre- and posttest

The analysis of the data collected from the first part of the pre- and posttest was made on the basis of the following five (5) criteria:

1) Length of the produced texts (number of words);
2) Students' communicative competence (1-10 assessment scale);
3) Inappropriate pragmatic and/ or semantic use of words;
4) Syntactically inaccurate and/ or elliptical phrases produced;
5) Spelling mistakes.

The results for each one of the aforementioned criteria are shown in the following tables.

1) Length of produced texts

TABLE III.
PRETEST DATA ON LENGTH OF PRODUCED TEXT (NUMBER OF WORDS) IN THE WRITTEN QUESTIONS (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

Student	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Total number of words
Student 1	62	27	27	23	139
Student 2	17	17	12	19	65
Student 3	19	14	12	13	58
Student 4	17	20	14	12	63
Student 5	24	33	22	17	96
Student 6	21	21	7	10	59
Student 7	20	21	19	11	71
Student 8	10	22	10	8	50
Student 9	27	11	10	10	58
Student 10	19	10	10	14	53

TABLE IV.
POSTTEST DATA ON LENGTH OF PRODUCED TEXTS (NUMBER OF WORDS) IN THE WRITTEN QUESTIONS (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

Student	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Total number of words
Student 1	44	41	18	29	132
Student 2	20	14	16	14	65
Student 3	25	23	8	16	73
Student 4	18	16	8	14	56
Student 5	21	20	10	12	63
Student 6	36	18	18	11	83
Student 7	30	21	17	14	82
Student 8	22	13	7	13	55
Student 9	15	8	8	10	41
Student 10	25	19	12	26	82

TABLE V.
PRETEST DATA ON LENGTH OF PRODUCED TEXT (NUMBER OF WORDS) IN THE WRITTEN QUESTIONS (CONTROL GROUP)

Student	Question1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Total number r of words
Student 1	28	21	21	23	93
Student 2	30	32	25	28	115
Student 3	20	17	15	13	65
Student 4	16	23	9	15	63
Student 5	20	15	11	14	60
Student 6	19	22	8	11	60
Student 7	22	16	11	15	64
Student 8	20	11	8	12	51
Student 9	20	18	9	16	63
Student 10	28	15	11	12	66
Student 11	46	35	41	52	174
Student 12	34	19	9	25	87

TABLE VI.
POSTTEST DATA ON LENGTH OF PRODUCED TEXT (NUMBER OF WORDS) IN THE WRITTEN QUESTIONS (CONTROL GROUP)

Student	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Total number of words
Student 1	29	19	17	23	88
Student 2	21	21	19	24	85
Student 3	23	22	18	20	83
Student 4	23	23	9	13	68
Student 5	21	19	16	13	69
Student 6	21	20	15	14	70
Student 7	27	17	16	16	76
Student 8	28	14	11	11	64
Student 9	21	19	9	11	60
Student 10	30	27	17	19	93
Student 11	54	59	36	55	204
Student 12	27	19	18	23	87

The analysis of the data presented above led to the following results.

TABLE VII.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	71,20	10	27,071	8,561
	Posttest	73,20	10	24,818	7,848

TABLE VIII.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (CONTROL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pretest	80,08	12	34,608	9,990
	Posttest	87,25	12	38,255	11,043

It is noteworthy that there was no significant difference in either the experimental or the control group regarding the length of produced texts between the pretest and the posttest.

2) Communicative Competence

The results presented in the Tables IX, X and XI, XII indicated that there is significant difference in communicative competence for both the experimental and the control group between pretest and posttest. As far as the experimental group is concerned, the mean score was m=5,70 before the intervention while m=7,40 after the intervention (t= -7,965 df=9 $p < 0.005$). These data suggested that CBI provides students with opportunities to interact and become engaged in purposeful communication, thus improving their communicative competence. Significant difference in the communicative competence was also observed between pre-test (m= 8,08) and posttest (m=8,67) for the control group (t=-2,548 (df=11 $p <0.05$).

TABLE IX.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	5,70	10	1,767	,559
	Posttest	7,40	10	1,713	,542

TABLE X.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	-1,700	,675	,213	-2,183	-1,217	-7,965	9	,000

TABLE XI.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (CONTROL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pretest	8,08	12	,996	,288
	Posttest	8,67	12	,985	,284

TABLE XII.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (CONTROL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 2 Total	-,583	,793	,229	-1,087	-,080	-2,548	11	,027

3) Inappropriate pragmatic or semantic use of words

A significant improvement was observed regarding the correct semantic and pragmatic use of words for the experimental group in the posttest (t=4,204 (df=9 p<0.005). As presented in the tables XIII. and XIV., the mean score was m= 6,25 pragmatic and/or semantic mistakes before the intervention, while m=3.37 after the intervention. Statistically significant difference was recorded between pre- and posttest for the control group students, (t=2,972 (df=11 p< 0.05); fewer pragmatic and/or semantic mistakes were recorded in the posttest (m=1,67) compared to those in the the pretest (m=2,64).

TABLE XIII.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	6,2530	10	3,68215	1,16440
	Posttest	3,3770	10	2,51479	,79525

TABLE XIV.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	2,87600	2,16356	,68418	1,32828	4,42372	4,204	9	,002

TABLE XV.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (CONTROL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pretest	2,6475	12	1,13111	,32652
	Posttest	1,6792	12	,85327	,24632

TABLE XVI.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (CONTROL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 2 Total	,96833	1,12884	,32587	,25110	1,68557	2,972	11	,013

4) Dictation mistakes

No significant difference was revealed regarding the spelling mistakes made by the students for both the experimental and the control group. However, it is worth mentioning that the difference observed between the pre- and posttest mean of dictation mistakes for the experimental group was greater than that for the control group. As presented in the tables below, the mean score of spelling mistakes was higher (m= 4,82) before the intervention than the score after the intervention (m=3,15). As far as the control group is concerned, the mean score of spelling mistakes was higher (m= 3,16) before the intervention than the score after the intervention (m=2,93).

Second part of the pre- and posttest

The analysis of the data collected for the second part of the pre- and posttest was made on the basis of the following five (5) criteria:

1) Length of the orally produced texts (number of words)
2) Students' overall communicative competence (1-10 assessment scale)
3) Inappropriate pragmatic and/ or semantic use of words
4) Syntactically inaccurate and/ or elliptical phrases produced
5) Pronunciation (1-10 assessment scale).

The processing of the data collected from the transcriptions led to the results presented in the following tables for each of the above mentioned criteria.

1) Length of the orally produced texts (number of words)

TABLE XVII.
PRE- AND POSTTEST DATA ON LENGTH (NUMBER OF WORDS) OF THE ORALLY PRODUCED TEXT (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

Student	Pretest	Posttest
Student1	60	74
Student 2	28	47
Student 3	25	41
Student 4	28	43
Student 5	27	44
Student 6	33	42
Student 7	11	47
Student 8	30	35
Student 9	23	42
Student 10	29	30

TABLE XVIII.
PRE- AND POSTTEST DATA ON LENGTH (NUMBER OF WORDS) OF THE ORALLY PRODUCED TEXT (CONTROL GROUP)

Student	Pretest	Posttest
Student 1	49	77
Student 2	60	87
Student 3	32	38
Student 4	23	25
Student 5	27	39
Student 6	27	26
Student 7	69	47
Student 8	26	39
Student 9	39	26
Student 10	74	54
Student 11	32	57
Student 12	24	40

The results presented in the Table XIX. and XX. show the statistically significant difference observed for the experimental group in relation to the length of their orally produced texts between the pretest and the posttest.

TABLE XIX.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	29,40	10	12,285	3,885
	Posttest	44,50	10	11,597	3,667

TABLE XX.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	-15,100	9,492	3,002	-21,890	-8,310	-5,031	9	,001

Statistically significant difference was revealed between pretest and posttest for the students of the experimental group, t=-5,031 (df=9 p< 0.005); however no statistically significant difference was revealed between pretest (m=40,17) and posttest (m=46,25) for the students of the control group.

2) Overall communicative competence

Significant difference was observed between two paired groups (t test for paired groups) regarding the overall communicative competence for both the experimental and the control group. As shown in the tables below (Table XXI., XXII.) the overall communicative competence of the experimental group was improved, t=-7,746 (df=9 p<0.005). Significant difference was also observed for the control group (Table XXIII. and XIV.), t=-4.180 (df=11 p< 0.005).

TABLE XXI.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	-2,000	,816	,258	-2,584	-1,416	-7,746	9	,000

TABLE XXII.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (CONTROL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 2 Total	-,750	,622	,179	-1,145	-,355	-4,180	11	,002

TABLE XXIII.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	5,20	10	1,549	,490
	Posttest	7,20	10	1,229	,389

TABLE XXIV.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (CONTROL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pretest	6,83	12	1,337	,386
	Posttest	7,58	12	1,564	,452

Concerning the experimental group, a greater improvement was recorded in relation to their communicative ability, since they performed better in the post-test (m=7,20) compared to their performance in the pre-test (m=5,20). (Table XXIV.). It is indicated that, although there was a greater difference in the pretest between the mean of the experimental and the control group, the difference did not remain the same after the intervention. It is indicated that the students of experimental group made a greater improvement of their overall communicative competence after the implementation of the intervention.

3) Inappropriate pragmatic and/ or semantic use of words

The results shown in the tables below are related to the inappropriate pragmatic and/ or semantic use of words of the two groups in the pretest and the posttest.

TABLE XXV.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	10,45	10	6,745	2,133
	Posttest	4,3730	10	2,49910	,79028

TABLE XXVI.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	6,07700	6,53666	2,06707	1,40095	10,75305	2,940	9	,016

Significant difference was observed between pretest and posttest for the experimental group (Table XXVI.), t=-2,940 (df=9 p< 0.05), since there was a greater number of mistakes (m=10,450 in relation to the pragmatic and/ or semantic use of words before the intervention than those (m= 4,37) after the intervention (Table XXV.).

No significant difference was observed between pretest and posttest for the control group (Table XXVIII.). It is therefore indicated that there was greater improvement between pre- and posttest for the experiment group in comparison with the control group (Table XXV. and XXVII.).

TABLE XXVII.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (CONTROL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pretest	6,0692	12	3,42988	,99012
	Posttest	5,0917	12	3,70624	1,06990

TABLE XXVIII.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (CONTROL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 2 Total	,97750	3,19828	,92326	-1,05459	3,00959	1,059	11	,312

4) Syntactically inaccurate and/ or elliptical phrases produced

Tables XXIX. and XXX. present the results from the analysis of the data collected regarding the syntactically inaccurate or elliptical phrases that the students of each group, experimental and control, produced. Tables XXX. and XXXII. indicate that there was statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest for both the experimental and the control group.

TABLE XXIX.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	11,6630	10	7,54816	2,38694
	Posttest	3,2200	10	2,36182	,74687

TABLE XXX.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	8,44300	7,68667	2,43074	2,94428	13,94172	3,473	9	,007

Concerning the experimental group, statistical differences (t=3,473 (df=9 p<0.05) were produced between the pretest results (m=11.66) in relation to syntactically inaccurate and/ or elliptical phrases and those produced after the project (m=3,22). Regarding the control group, statistical differences (*t=4,461 df=11 p<0.005*) were revealed between the pretest results (m=4,01) in relation to syntactically inaccurate and/ or elliptical phrases and those produced after the project (m=1,86).

TABLE XXXI.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (CONTROL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Pretest	4,0138	12	1,92433	,55551
	Posttest	1,8642	12	1,40468	,40550

TABLE XXXII.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (CONTROL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 2 Total	2,14958	1,66935	,48190	1,08893	3,21024	4,461	11	,001

5) Pronunciation

The results of t test for paired groups are presented in the following tables XXXIII., XXXIV. for the experimental group and 11.3, 11.4 for the control group.

TABLE XXXIII.
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	6,80	10	1,229	,389
	Posttest	8,20	10	1,033	,327

TABLE XXXIV.
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRE- AND POSTTEST (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Total	-1,400	,699	,221	-1,900	-,900	-6,332	9	,000

As indicated in the tables above, there was a considerable improvement between pretest (m=6,80) and posttest (m=8,20) in the pronunciation of the experimental group (t=-6,332 (df=9 p<0.005) (Tables XXXIII., XXXIV.). It is also indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest for the control group, regarding their pronunciation in English as a foreign language.

B. Teacher-researcher Journal

The teacher-researcher kept ten (10) journal records during the project. The qualitative analysis of the researcher journal records led to the creation of four typologies, and several categories and subcategories under each typology (Table XXXV.).

A) Teaching Process, where the following categories are included:

1) Goals, 2) Techniques, 3) Teaching aids, 4) Classwork

B) Teacher's role, where the following categories are included:

1) Communication in class, 2) Ways to provide students with help

C) Student's Attitude, where the following categories are included:

1) Students' attitude toward the project 2) Participation in project 3) Difficulties faced during the project

D) Overall assessment of the intervention, where the following categories are included:

1) Problems faced during the project, 2) Learning outcomes, 3) Broader development of values and attitudes, 4) Possible changes to improve the teaching/ learning process.

TABLE XXXV.
JOURNAL RECORDS: TYPOLOGIES, CATEGORIES, SUBCATEGORIES AND FREQUENCIES

Typologies	Categories	Subcategories	Frequency
A) Teaching Process	*1.Goals*	i. development of linguistic skills	10
		ii. development of cognitive skills and strategies	10
		iii. development of social emotional skills and strategies	8
		iv. time management (completion of tasks, activities)	6
		v. students' understanding of learning goals	5
	2. Techniques	i. narration	2
		ii. dialogue	3
		iii. discussion	7
		iv. brainstorming	4
		v. teaching with multimedia	8
		vi. experiential learning (role plays, drama)	9
		vii. inquiry-learning activities	9
	3.Teaching aids	i. objects	6
		ii. posters	4
		iii. books	3
		iv. projector	7
		v. pictures	7
		vi. drawings	8
		vii. computer	8
		viii. various materials (paper, plasticine, colorful cardboard)	9

		ix. photos	4
		x. photocopies	4
		xi. maps	4
	4.Classwork	i. pair work	6
		ii. group work	8
		iii. working individually	2
		iv. cooperation between teacher-class	5
B) Teacher's Role	*5. Communication in class*	i. use of mother tongue (L1)	3
		ii. use of second language (L2)	10
		iii. nonverbal communication (facial expressions, gestures, immitation)	7
		iv. use of visual aids to convey meaning	8
		v. use of L1 to give instructions/ clarifications	7
	6. Ways to provide students with help	i. encouragement	7
		ii. instructions for the activities	7
		iii. decreasing anxiety	7
		iv. reminding initial goals	6
		v. organizing students' work	3
		vi. tasks directed by students' interests	8
		vii. differentiated activities (according to students' needs)	6
		viii. focus in creativity	6
		ix. differentiation in feedback	7
C) Student's Attitude	*7. Students' attitude toward the project*	i. learning as a pleasurable experience	8
		ii. interest for experiential learning activities	8
		iii. interest for inquiry learning activities	5
		iv. active participation during teamwork	7
		v. taking responsibility	7
		vi. taking initiative	7
		vii. development of management skills	8
	8. Participation in the project	i. participation in creative activities (handicrafts)	9
		ii. participation in role plays, drama	9
		iii. participation in inquiry learning activities	5
		iii. participation in information processing	5
		iv. participation in presentations	9
	9. Difficulties faced during the project	i. difficulty in understanding inquiry learning activities	4
		ii. difficulty during pair work/ group work	2
		iii. difficulty when working individually	3
		iv. difficulty in listening comprehension	4
		v. difficulty in reading comprehension	2
		vi. difficulty in speaking	2
		vii. difficulty in writing	5
		viii. difficulty in processing information	5
D) Overall evaluation of the intervention	*10. Problems encountered during the project*	i. class management by the teacher	2
		ii. noise during group work	3
		iii. cooperation problems among students	3
		iv. allocation of time by the students	4
		v. students being indifferent	3
	11. Learning Outcome	i. use of second language for communication	9
		ii. vocabulary consolidation	9
		iii. acquiring new vocabulary	10
		iv. social skills development	9
		v. inquiry skills development	5
		vi. self-assessment skills development	5
		vii. use of new technologies during learning	10
		viii. pleasure and enjoyment	9
	12.Broader development of values and attitudes	i. interactive activities	8
		ii. assisting each other	7
		iii. cooperation	9
		iv. self confidence	6
		v. taking responsibility for learning	6
		vi. positive attitude toward second language	7
		vii. self-acting in learning (using dictionaries, reading maps, etc)	9
		viii. accepting and respecting difference (cultural, linguistic, religious)	7

		ix. development of social sensitivity	3
	13. Suggestions for the improvement of the teaching/ learning process	i. discussing cooperation problems during group work	4
		ii. decreasing competition among students	6
		iii. better processing of information by students	4
		iv. using second language more often	4

C. Students' Interviews

The interviews were conducted with the students of the experimental group in their mother tongue at the end of the intervention, to record their attitudes towards the project. It is noted that each student could give more than one answers for each of the following categories.

1st Question

In the first question "*What did you like most about the project?"* most students (90%) answered that they liked cooperating with their classmates, dealing with topics of their interest (80%) and creative activities (80%). Students said that *"I liked working in a group. We sometimes had problems…but it was nice and fun working with others and doing things together"* (student 1), *"I liked working in a group. When you cooperate with others you learn more and you are not alone"* (student 9), *"I liked learning new things that I was interested in…I know about these topics really well now"* (student 3).

In addition, some students (30%) referred to the pleasure and enjoyment they derived during project work. They said that: *"I liked everything about the project..It was not like having a class. We learned a lot but it was so much fun"* (student 2), «*..I liked the role plays…At first I didn't know how to communicate in English but then I learned"* (student 9).

2nd Question

Most students, despite the fact that they liked working in a group, seemed to encounter difficulties with cooperating in the group (40%) (see 1st Question). A student noted that: "*..It was difficult to cooperate with others..We sometimes had problems because some students didn't do what they had to or missed the deadlines.."* (student 3).

Some other students said that: *"It was difficult for me to write sentences and texts.. but I learned how I can do it"* (student 8), *"It was difficult for me to learn how to find information for various topics..."* (student 6), *"..I had difficulties in finding information and organizing it in order to present it.."* (student 4), *"..It was difficult for me to write summaries and then to present my work in class"* (student 5).

3rd Question

In the 3rd question "*What would you like to do in another/ different way?*", students were asked to report what they would like to do in another or different way in the project process. The majority of them (80%) expressed their enjoyment and satisfaction with the project. It is worth mentioning that two students did not give any specific answer to that question, since they could not think of an alternative way.

4th Question

In the question "What did you learn in the foreign language that was new?", most students (70%) reported that they learned new vocabulary when asked what they think they have learned at the end of the project. Five out of ten students (50%) mentioned that they developed their writing skills. Specifically, they said: *"I learned a lot of new words.. I really improved my English.."*, (student 7), *" I learned new vocabulary.. and I really wanted to learn more.."*(student 2), *" I learned how to write sentences and texts. I was not used to writing texts in English during previous courses.."* (student 2).

Some students also referred to the positive impact of the project on the development of their speaking skills; specifically a student reported: *"I learned how to communicate in English..how to give directions, how to answer questions.."* (student 5).

5th Question

In the last question, students were asked if they would like to participate in a project in the future. All students were enthusiastic about participating in a project again, and they mentioned various reasons for their positive replies. Most of them (80%) referred to the fact that learning was a pleasurable process when working on a project. Moreover, students said that language learning through a project helped them learn new things (60%) and learn how to cooperate in a group (40%). Some (20%) also mentioned that they were able to improve their English. *"Learning English through using a textbook is more difficult…..working on this project is easier and more fun.."* (student 7) *.."I would like to participate in a project again. There are no textbooks, it is more fun..and we can work in groups"* (student 2). *"I would like to participate in a project next year in order to learn more new things.."* (student 8).

V. Discussion

This paper aimed at presenting the design and implementation as well as the evaluation of the feasibility of a content-based project aiming to develop young learners' skills in English as a foreign language.

The general overview of the data illustrated that students favor the integration of content and language. Consistent with other studies the results seem to confirm that Content-based projects help to foster students' positive attitudes

towards language learning (Lasagabaster & Sierra 2009), since they seem to motivate students to learn the target language in real-life settings (Infante et al. 2009; Naves, 2009). In the specific project, it was indicated that working on a project was a pleasurable learning experience which included several benefits regarding language learning, stimulated learners and helped them create positive attitudes to foreign language learning.

The journal records and the interviews conducted with the experimental group led to the conclusion that the participants experienced learning in an enjoyable way, as they used the foreign language for authentic communication, by combining learning with having fun. It was revealed that the students of the experimental group showed continuous enthusiasm and interest in the learning process from the beginning to the end of the intervention. Their motivation was stimulated and resulted in making them feel more confident and use the English language for purposeful communication in a relaxed learning context. The learners had the opportunity to interact and cooperate in order to achieve common goals, as well as to share ideas and learn from one another by working in a group (Krechevsky & Stork, 2000).

In the existing literature it is often stated that Content Based Instruction and Project Based Learning can enhance the development of skills in the foreign language, as there is often considerable improvement observed in all four skills and especially regarding students' communicative competence, their listening comprehension and speaking skills (Fried-Booth, 2002), as well as their management skills (Gardner, 1995; Coleman, 1992). The results of this study support the aforementioned observations. More specifically, the results of the pre- and posttest for the experimental group indicated students' progress concerning both their ability in reading and writing and their communicative competence (improvement in length of orally produced texts, improvement of their pronunciation and less syntax or pragmatic/ syntactic mistakes). In addition, there was significant improvement in all students' writing skills. Students avoided mistakes and were able to convey meaning after the end of the intervention. In comparison with the control group, it was observed that the students of the experimental group made a greater progress compared to the control group. In addition, the experimental group had the opportunity to access authentic material, to use both oral and written speech purposefully, always dealing with topics of their interest.

The students who participated in the project felt that they enjoyed learning through a project, and they were proud of their contribution to the final outcomes of the project as well as of their work and learning in the field of the foreign language. They were given stimuli and opportunities for creative thinking and participation in a game-based context, where students realized that learning a foreign language can be more than a boring process. In addition, they were involved in metacognitive strategies strategies, such as making inquiries, managing their time, planning and evaluating their learning. Even hesitant students gradually had active participation in group activities and felt more self-confident and positive towards foreign language learning.

Nevertheless, the students encountered some difficulties due to the fact that they were not familiar with 'project' work. During the first sessions the students often felt confused in relation to identifying and processing specific information; even when collecting it, it was difficult for them to summarize or synthesize it. The teacher assisted the students by illustrating ways and providing them with examples for critical processing of information. In addition, students were not used to working in groups before the implementation of CBI project; however, they gradually learned how to listen to their classmates' views and how to cooperate, assigning different roles.

Concluding, it is noted that the specific EFL project was a small scale project; therefore it is considered necessary to implement it across more primary schools in order to better examine its effectiveness and to validate the positive impact of CBI and PBL in learning English as a foreign language.

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