

An investigation of the intercultural and social potentials of the 4th grade English textbook

Vraka Vagia Anastasia (English state school teacher)

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

Nowadays, the intercultural and social dimension of education is widely recognized, raising voices that claim that “*if education is not intercultural, it is probably not education*” (Coulby, 2006, p. 246). Greece, as part of the European Union (EU), but also as an increasingly multicultural society, has gradually shifted its attention to a type of education promoting tolerance, equal opportunities and social justice (Paleologou, 2004). Despite the fact that research data provide solid evidence for the positive effects of *Intercultural Teaching* (IT), the English language (EL) state school environment is neglected as an area of study. The researcher explored thus the social and cultural potentials of English 4th grade (Bratsoli & Diamantidou, 2009) and whether it facilitates the implementation of an *intercultural approach* to teaching, by promoting *tolerance* for difference, *gender equality* and *global cultural understanding*. An online teachers’ questionnaire, a students’ questionnaire and an evaluation checklist revealed that Greek EL teachers are familiar with the term *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (ICC) and recognize its humanistic and equalitarian dimensions. They also identify the fourth grade textbook as a teaching manual that can foster ICC, since it comprises adequate sociocultural elements and is gender neutral.

References

- Bratsoli, A. & Diamantidou, A. (2009). *English 4th grade- Student’s book*. Αθήνα: Οργανισμός Εκδόσεων Διδακτικών Βιβλίων.
- Coulby, D. (2006). Intercultural Education: theory and practice. *Intercultural Education*, 17(3), 245-257
- Paleologou, N. (2004). Intercultural education and practice in Greece: Needs for bilingual intercultural programmes. *Intercultural Education*, 15(3), 317-329.