

# Vocabulary acquisition and the effects of using drama: A case study in the Greek diaspora

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Language learning, technology and the arts: the power to engage.  
A professional development for complementary school teachers.  
Goldsmiths, University of London, 29<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2016

# Research Project:

Santander Scholarship Awards, Open University

- ▶ **Aim:** Investigate and evaluate the effects of employing drama for the teaching of Greek vocabulary to a group of early years (English) children.
- ▶ **School:** Greek school of the Diaspora, London area
- ▶ **Participants:** 8 children attending Key Stage 1, Level B
  - ▶ One girl with severe language difficulties (aged 7)
  - ▶ One boy with attention deficit disorder (ADD) (aged 7)
  - ▶ One girl joined the class in March, without any working knowledge of Greek (aged 8)
- ▶ **Methods:** Observation (eight lessons, four interventions) & Interviews (pre- and post-, with children)
- ▶ Children had different levels → background knowledge and written and oral command of Greek language

# Research Findings:

► Four Interventions (mid - May until June 2015):

1. Weather
2. Jobs/ Professions
3. Farm Animals
4. Jungle Animals

# Research Findings: 1. Weather

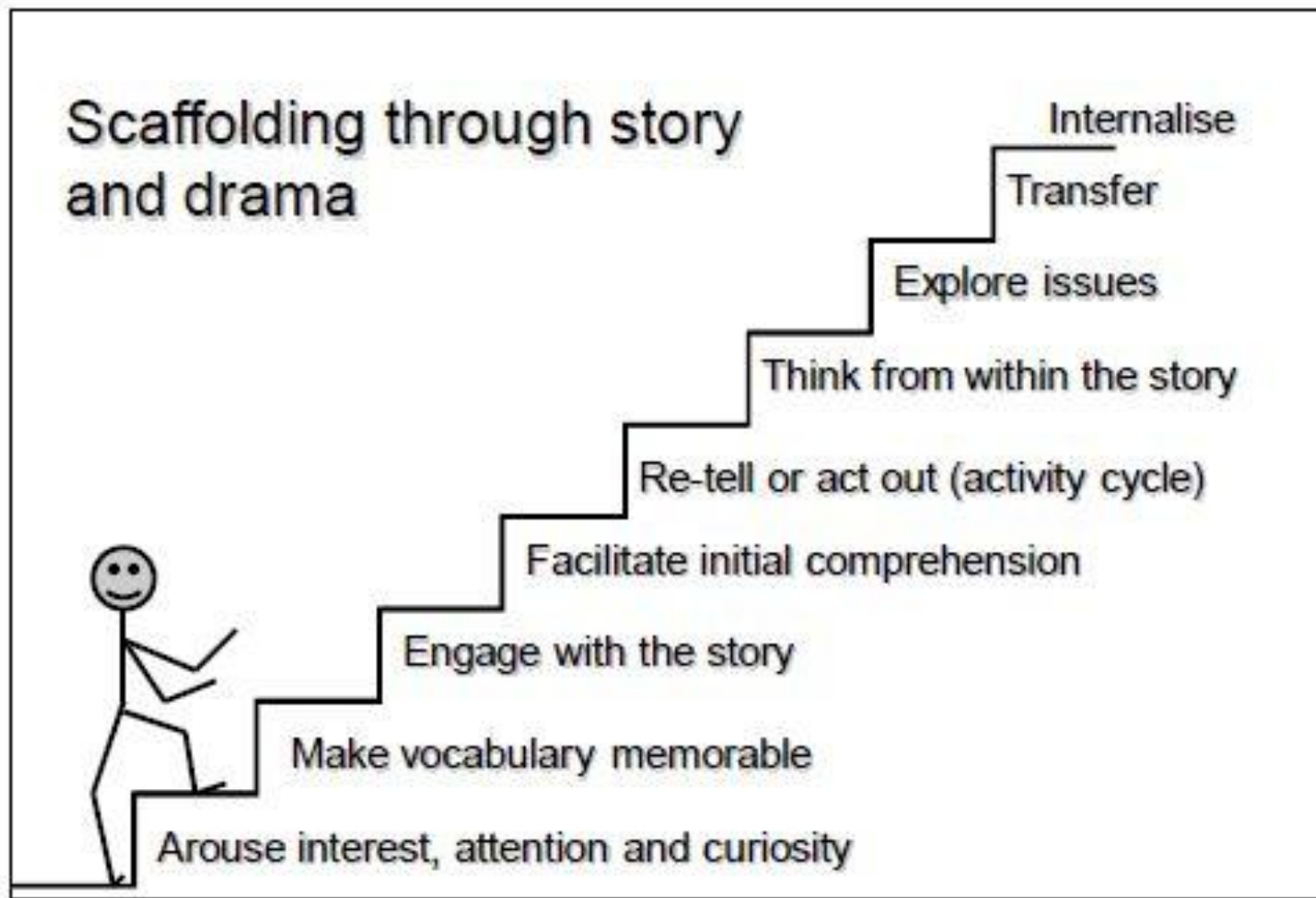
## ► Weather

► Lesson plan/ preparation of materials

► Lesson Plan for Weather: Aims:

1. **Read words** in relation to weather (such as: sun, wind, cloud, hot, cold, etc) in Greek.
2. **Demonstrate words** that indicate weather conditions using their body.
3. **Understand and use** the same words in small sentences.





*Figure 1: Scaffolding through story and drama*

# Drama Techniques

## Hot-seat:

Children take on roles  
eg. Weather reporter

Pantomime  
'Guess the word'

## Improvisation:

Children add to existing text/ story, or develop their own

## Dramatization:

Individual or with partner

Cypriot folk song:  
Dramatization with group (role play)

Teacher in Role:  
teacher taking the role of a character or figure from a story

## Children in Role:

Extended role play:  
creation of a scene before or after a story

...

...

# Research Findings: Summary

Interventions	Pre- Interview	Post-Interview
Lesson 1 - Weather	4 words	12 words
Lesson 2 - Jobs	3 words	14 words
Lesson 3 - House/farm animals	7 words	31 words
Lesson 4 - Jungle animals	6 words	25 words

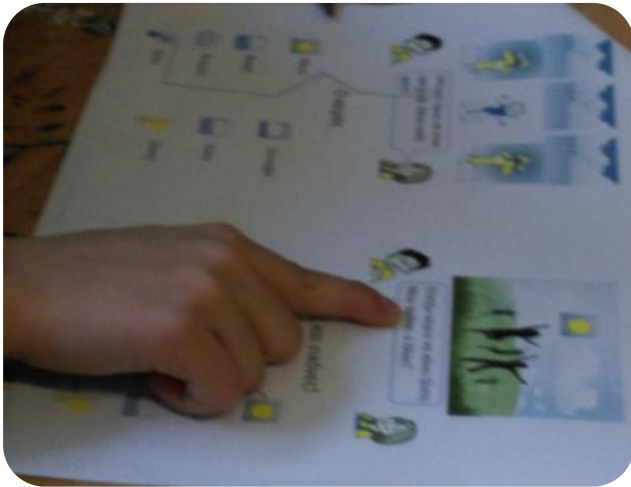
# Research Findings: individual and group work



Children  
worked in  
groups..

Teacher identified  
children's general  
knowledge of the  
new vocabulary

...and on  
their  
own.

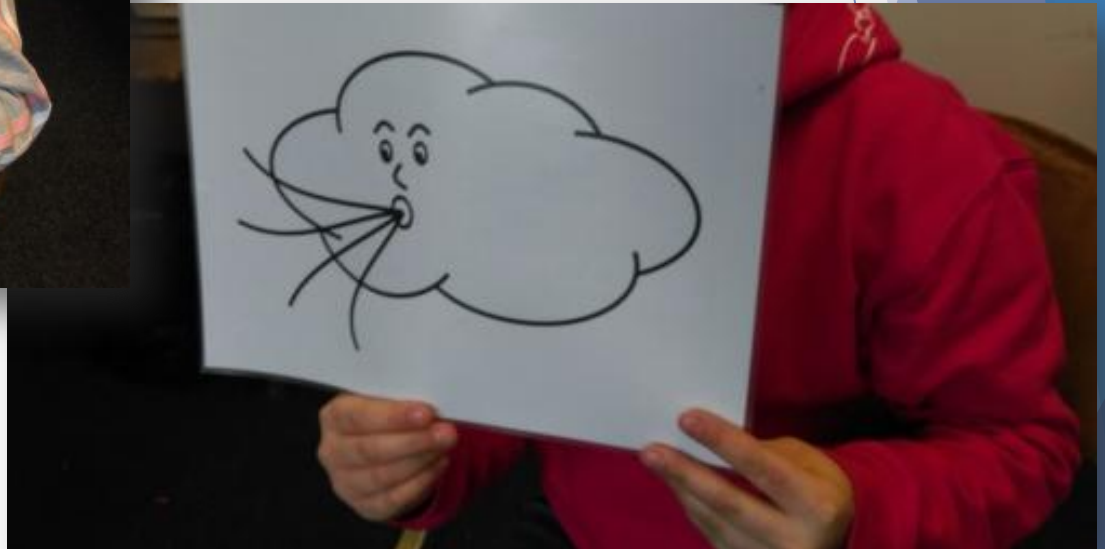




# Research Findings:

## Pantomime: guess the word

- ▶ General knowledge of the word → Having knowledge of a word and being able to readily recall it

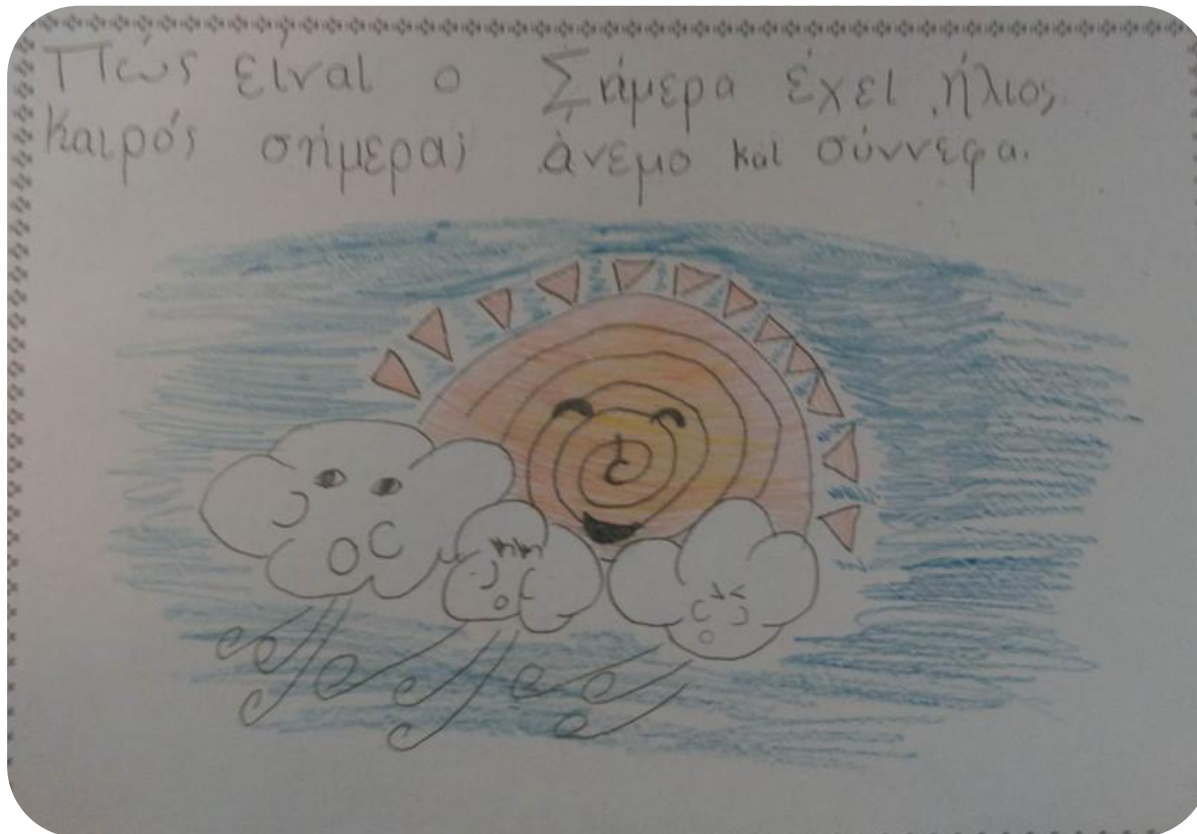


*“Acting out the words helped me memorise them” (girl, 7yrs old)*

# Research Findings:

## Improvisation, Dialogue with partner; **Writing**

- ▶ Transfer new knowledge and use it in writing
- ▶ Having knowledge of a word → being able to recall it → applying it in appropriate situations.



Example of  
vocabulary use  
in written  
sentences

# Research Findings:

## Improvisation, Dialogue with partner

- ▶ Children added words and sentences to the existing text, and were also allowed to add scenes if they wanted to
- ▶ Applying word appropriately → Knowledge of a word's meaning and its relationship to other words

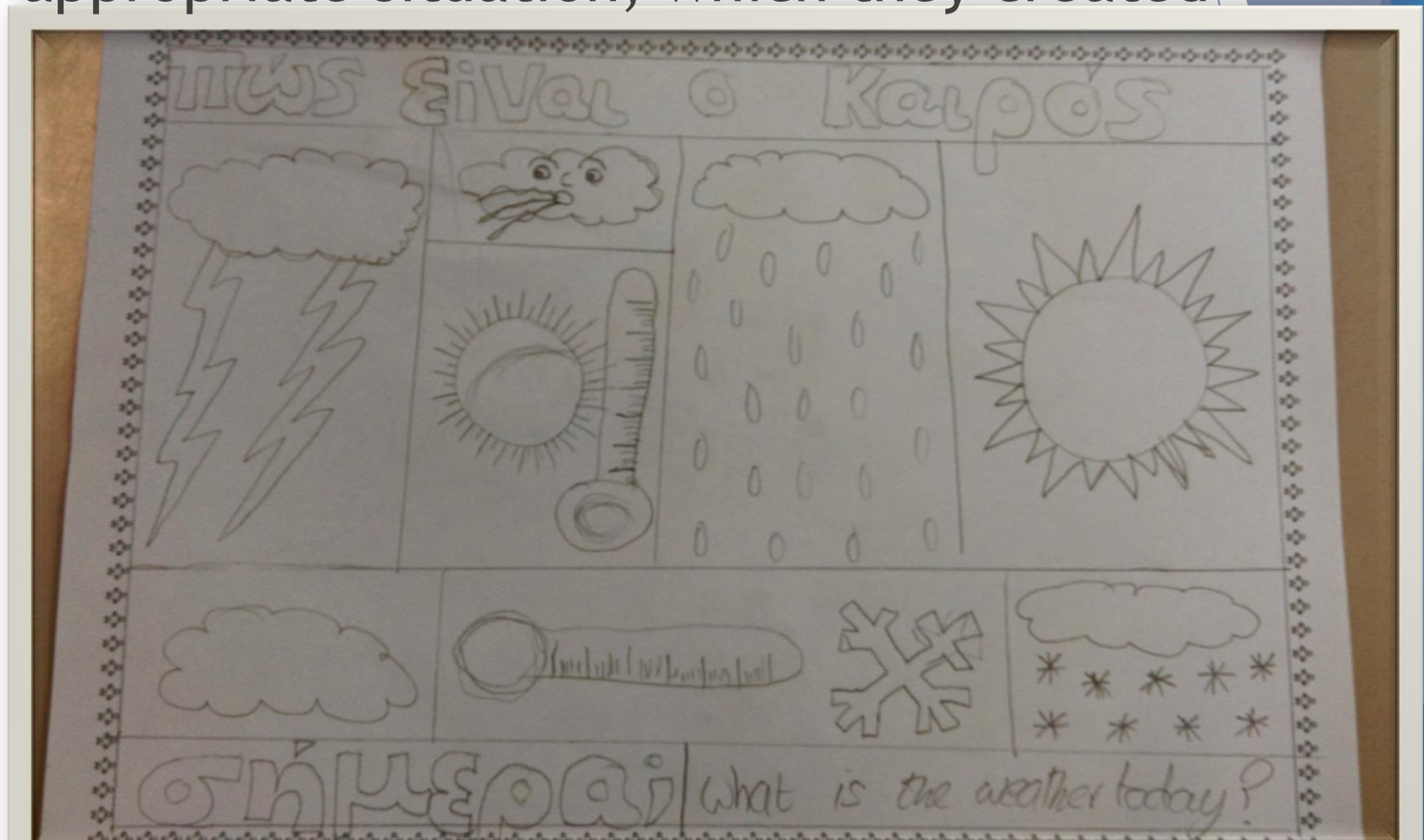


Example of  
vocabulary  
use in  
sentence

# Research Findings:

## Hot-seat: Weather Reporter

- Children selected words and applied them in an appropriate situation, which they created

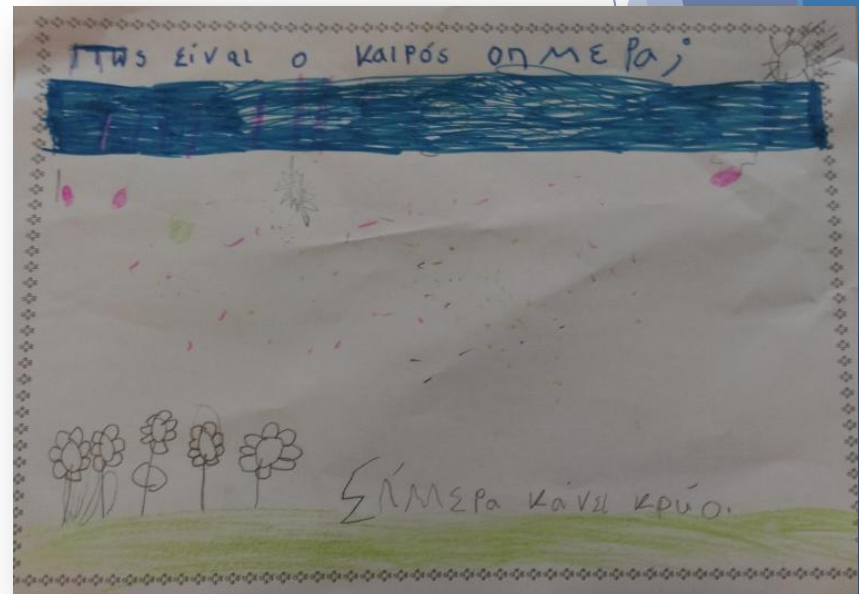




# Research Findings:

## Writing in Role: Using new words in sentences

- ▶ At the end of each intervention all children were asked to individually use the new vocabulary in sentences.
- ▶ An increase was noted in children's ability to remember and recall these words without any help, something that they usually found challenging.



# Reflections



Make useful contributions to the teaching community  
Empower teacher's confidence  
Share materials, guide and support  
Allow all children to participate and learn

*Bridge the gap between research and practice*

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*Thank you for your attention!*

*Comments and feedback ? 😊*

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