Implementing tutorials within the context of an English for General Academic Purposes course at the University of Patras: A Preliminary study

Article · February 2018

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Implementing tutorials within the context of an English for General Academic Purposes course at the University of Patras: A Preliminary study

Ourania KATSARA

This article discusses an initial survey on the implementation of tutorials within the context of an English for General Academic Purposes course (EGAP) in order to explore students' perceptions of successful tutors using the model INSPIRE developed by Lepper and Wooleverton (2002). Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1986) are also used in order to exemplify Greek students' culturally oriented learning behaviour within the tutorial learning context. Specifically, these dimensions explain that cultural orientations are inclinations describing the effects of a society's culture on its members' values and how these values are linked to their behaviour. Interviews with 29 students indicated that, despite students' culturally teacher-centred learning background, they would be in favour of participating in tutorials in order to benefit from the tutor's facilitator role. Specifically, it was found that students seemed to prefer the tutor to be their guide in their studies helping them engage in self-assessment of their performance. Their overall experience of attending interviews on the use of tutoring appeared to be positive, triggering their willingness to attend future tutorials with more specific enquiries. The main initial finding of the survey indicates that Greeks' cultural orientations seem to change in specific learning settings, for example in tutorials. A set of preliminary implications, which could be used to establish the parameters for further research, are also offered.

Key words: tutoring, Greek students, Higher Education, English for General Academic Purposes, culturally -oriented learning

1. Introduction

Understanding fully students' needs has become necessary because, according to Scott (1999), effective education depends partly on teachers being able to establish a two-way learning dialogue. Large classes might prevent classroom teachers from using appropriate teaching strategies while student diversity makes it harder for teachers to understand both their students' knowledge base at point of entry and their performance skills during learning. According to Sander (2005), supported and targeted teaching is achieved when teachers are familiar with students' conceptions and perceptions of teaching and learning. Maunder and Harrop (2003) suggest that personal tutoring

systems and teaching students in small tutorial groups could help teachers gather information about students' learning profiles. In this sense, feedback appears to play a very important role. Murphy and Cornell (2010) argue that the two-way communication process between tutors and learners is crucial in understanding students' perceptions and utilization of feedback. They note that feedback is a key issue when it comes to motivating and encouraging students. In the light of the research above, this article discusses an initial survey undertaken at the University of Patras regarding students' opinions of tutorial sessions and their usefulness.

2. Literature review

In order to contextualise the main argument of the study, this section offers a critical literature review on the use of tutoring in Greek higher education and on the framework of developing approaches to understand learning across different cultures.

2.1 Models of tutoring and tutors' characteristics

Studies regarding the effects of tutoring in colleges have shown that tutoring has generated positive results (House and Wohlt 1990). The Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois (2009) has found that one-to-one tutoring increased student achievement, especially for students at risk for academic failure. However, a study carried out by Norton and Crowley (1995) indicated that students in tutoring develop more sophisticated ideas about how to approach learning but no significant differences resulted as overall academic achievement. This controversy over the effectiveness of tutoring is related to differences in targeted student outcomes (Hock et al., 2001). The different foci of tutoring models can determine the efficacy of the tutoring sessions. If, for example, completing homework is a valued outcome, then assignment-assistance tutoring might be effective. Similarly, if the valued outcomes of tutoring are to increase literacy skills and content knowledge, then instructional tutoring could be effective.

Gardner, Jewel, and Mccarthy (1996) state that tutoring serves as an alternative approach to increasing the effectiveness of the traditional lecture styles of teaching and learning. According to survey findings reported by researchers in the centre for prevention Research and Development in University of Illinois (2009), the best performing tutoring programmes should have some qualities. These qualities include, among others, training of tutors on effective instructional strategies, tracking the progress of students in order to adjust their content and strategies to improve tutoring sessions and identifying structured principles of learning which follow a systematic approach. In this sense, during a tutorial session, the learning process indicates that student engagement is important. Topping (1996) argues that the tutoring process gives the student the chance to interact with the material and concepts to be learned. An essential aspect is to explore the concept of critical thinking and approach used in learning and not just receiving a correct answer.

In line with this assumption, Lepper and Woolverton (2002) identified in their survey seven characteristics of the most successful tutors, which they identified by descriptors that spell out the acronym INSPIRE. This model describes the characteristics and behaviours of expert tutors and the results for tutees. More specifically, under "Intelligent", it was indicated that the best tutors have both command of their subject matter (content knowledge) and of understanding of how students learn and how best to teach them (pedagogical content knowledge). Under "Nurturant", the best tutors establish rapport with tutees being supportive with their efforts. Under "Socratic", the best tutors provide almost no facts, solutions or explanations but try to elicit these from tutees through questions. Under "Progressive", the best tutors engage tutees in 'deliberate practice' by moving from easier to progressively more challenging cycles of diagnosis and thus repeating the problem -

solving process many times. Under "indirect"', the best tutors avoid judgmental atmosphere by providing feedback by implication and subsequent questioning. Under "Reflective", the best tutors ask students to reflect on their own thinking. Finally, under "Encouraging", the best tutors use a variety of strategies to motivate students and boost their confidence. This model means that the best tutoring involves student self-analysis where tutees are engaged in constant thinking gaining confidence in their abilities.

2.1.1. Tutoring in Greek institutions

There is little research on the use of one-to-one tutorials in the Greek public educational system. In Greece, education is very important and Greek parents invest a huge amount of money on private tutoring for their children. According to an article featured in Kathimerini newspaper (2011), research published in 2011 by the Network of Experts in the Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE), indicated that Greek families invest 952 million euros a year on tutoring either at home or cramming schools. However, in the public sectors, to the best of my knowledge, there is little research on the implementation of tutoring in Greek institutions.

One of the few studies on tutoring available in the literature is a study conducted by Doukakis and Koutroumpa (2013) which involved a pilot implementation of an e-tutoring programme on students of secondary education. This study involved a programme where students informed the e-tutor of the materials of the morning course on which they wished to be supported and the e-tutor tried to support these students with appropriate presentations, targeted questions, tasks and exercises. The results showed that students were very satisfied with the provision of this help from the pilot e-tutoring programme. It was also found that only 6 out of 10 students thought that this programme helped them control their progress. The researchers argued that this finding indicates that the rest of the students considered this tool useful in overcoming their daily learning problems and not their overall improvement in learning. Another survey undertaken by Valkanos, Papavasiliou-Alexiou, and Fragoulis (2009) indicated that Open University Greek postgraduate students reported that within the context of distance learning, the use of tutorials could be useful and they wish their education to be more autonomous. Students reported that they wish the instructor to have concrete and multi-dimensional characteristics so that they are effective in their work. They also noted that team work during these tutorials is useful since it creates motives for learning and strengthens the discovery of new ways of learning. However, the Open University survey discusses the distance learning instructor and not the campus-based instructor. There is a need, therefore to carry out more research in order to identify students' opinions about the effectiveness of tutorials within the context of campus-based instruction.

There is also some evidence that tutoring services are available in the Hellenic American Centre. According to Kourbani and Papantoniou (2007), students submit their work through blackboard, a computer programme and receive their tutors' feedback electronically. Students are also entitled to send an email in case they need an onsite visit. After completion of the onsite session, tutors receive feedback through blackboard. However, there is no published research on the usefulness of this service and whether certain issues are persistent throughout the course.

2.2. Framework of developing approaches to understand different cultures

There is an ongoing area of work among intercultural and communications scholars in relation to the development of approaches to understand and compare cultures. One of the frameworks receiving the most attention is the model proposed by Hofstede (1986). Hofstede (1991, p. 5) states that culture is a 'collective phenomenon'; it is learned, not inherited. This means that culture could be described as a repository of values, customs, and achievements, which one generation leaves as a

'testament' to its descendants. Hofstede (1986, 1996, 2001) and Hofstede et al. (2010) analyzed 70 countries and identified and validated six dimensions of culture, that is power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, femininity vs. masculinity, short term normative orientation vs. long term orientations, indulgence vs restraint. These dimensions as described below can be applied to differentiate classroom cultures and help to understand learning and teaching approaches:

- Power distance is a dimension which refers to the degree of inequality which is accepted among people with and without power.
- Uncertainty avoidance relates to the degree of anxiety that society members feel when they engage in uncertain situations.
- Individualism refers to the strength of the bonds among the community members.
- Masculinity represents a tendency in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. On the contrary, femininity stands for a tendency for collaboration, modesty, and caring for the weak.
- Long term orientation describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the present and future challenges. Societies, which score high on this dimension are encouraging effort and persistence in education as a means to prepare for the future. In contrast, societies, which score low on this dimension, prefer to maintain traditions and norms placing value on fulfilling social obligations while viewing societal change with suspicion.
- Indulgence describes the extent to which people control their desires and impulses based on the way they were raised. Cultures which have weak control are called indulgent while cultures which have strong control are called restraint. People in societies characterized by a high score indulgence are willing to realize their impulses in relation to enjoying life tending to be optimistic. On the other hand, societies with a low score on indulgence tend to be pessimistic. People in these societies perceive that their actions are restrained by social norms (Hofstede et al. 2010).

According to Hofstede (1986, 1996, 2001) and Hofstede at al. (2010) the Greeks score high in power distance (60), uncertainty avoidance (100) and masculinity (57) while their score is low in individualism (35) and intermediate in long term orientation (45). Greeks show no vivid tendency to either indulgence or restraint (50). These scores imply that Greek students expect the teacher to be the expert in a teacher-centered classroom, prefer explicit instruction and get stressed with the concept of independent learning. The teacher's academic reputation and students' priority on getting high achievement scores are predominating issues. In addition, Greek students exhibit high collectivism, which illustrates that students often form subgroups in class. Maintenance of 'face' is also important in avoiding discord. Finally, Greeks seem to expect their academic efforts to produce immediate results while they tend to change plans to suit their needs.

Despite the merits of Hofstede's model, scholars reviewed and criticized his work. McSweeney's (2002, p. 112) review stated: '...Hofstede's claims are unbalanced, because there is too great a desire to 'prove' his a priori convictions rather than evaluate the adequacy of his 'findings'. This is reflected in a survey (Katsara, 2014), where it was found that Greek students' self-assessment report indicated that 38.23% of them were not confident to use certain strategies when dealing with exam questions implying that they need specific instruction on how to apply these techniques. This case study shows that for some Greeks employing formative assessment within the teaching practice is useful. Therefore, it is implied that some Greek students indicate that their voice could be useful to teacher practice. This finding highlights some limitations in Hofstede's model including lack of empirical evidence from educational settings (Signorini, Wiesemes, and Murphy, 2009). Signorini, Wiessemes and Murphy (2009) suggested that a new approach of researching culture could be to

start examining micro-cultures, for example one specific learning setting in HE in combination with individuals' relevant experience.

3. Research method

3.1. Purpose of the study

Based on the literature review, the main implication is that limited research in Greek higher education settings in combination with arguments put forward by McSweeney (2002) and Signorini, Wiessemes and Murphy (2009) indicate that there is a need for more research in relation to the impact of culture in learning within one -to one traditional university tutoring. This research could improve our understanding of the nature and importance of tutorials in Greek universities and of the role of culture within teaching and learning reflecting the argument put forward by Miles and Huberman (1994) who argue that qualitative research is needed in order to provide more information about something already known.

More specifically, the semi-structured interview questions were developed using open-ended questions around four themes which were drawn from surveys in the literature (Alexander, 2004; Murphy and Cornell, 2010). This was decided in order to address "dependability" (Lincoln and Cuba 1985). This concept refers to whether or not the results of the study are consistent over time and across researchers. In this way, Lincoln and Cuba (1985) note that qualitative research is evaluated by trustworthiness. The questions used in the interviews are offered in Appendix A.

3.2. Research Setting: Overview of the EGAP course and learning approach

The EGAP course is taught during the first term offering a three-hour teaching session every week. Students are given a course-book while extra photocopies are distributed in class in order to facilitate class activities. The content of the course aims to train students produce academic pieces of writing. Paraphrasing techniques, summary writing, structure of different types of paragraph, essay writing, cohesion and coherence in academic writing, and referencing styles are taught. Students participate in weekly group work activities, which comprise 15% of the points allocated to the course. Every class is divided into two parts. During the first part, the tutor teaches and explains a skill on academic writing, for example how to synthesise literature sources offering an individual point of view. Exercises from the book are used to explain the skill. Then additional exercises are given to students in order to help them practice this skill. For example, a variety of academic vocabulary use exercises are done in class in order to help students paraphrase and produce a short academic text reflecting their academic voice. After completion of these exercises, students are given a new group task in order to practice on the skill of the week. The tutor moves from table to table assisting students complete the task. At the end of the weekly three- hour session, students are invited to book for an individual tutorial session should they need more clarification or explanation on the taught concept.

3.3. Participants

Twenty-nine (29) students participated in the interviews. They were undergraduates from the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises (58.62%) and the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Management. (41.37%). The students' profile regarding gender and year of attendance is offered in appendix B.

3.4. Instrument

The interviews were based on an interview guide proposed by Patton (1990). It is argued that the interview guide provides a framework within which the interviewer develops questions, sequences them making a decision on what kind of information to investigate further. A semi-structured approach was adopted for this survey. The interviews had a structured overall framework but the researcher had the flexibility to change the order of questions. In this way, the interview sessions were using scope for more personalised responses (McDonough and McDonough, 1997).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Data Collection

After the commencement of the spring term in 2013, an announcement was made and all students were invited to come to my office to attend an interview. Students were given two weeks to come to my office or email me and book an appointment for these interviews. At the end of these two weeks 23 students had arranged to participate. However, after this two-week period, six more students contacted me and expressed their desire to participate in these discussions. A schedule was planned and students were informed about the date and the time the interviews would take place.

Ethical issues were discussed at the beginning of the conversations/interviews. Participants were informed about ethical matters regarding confidentiality, anonymity and that these discussions would be recorded. They were also informed that the main aim of these interviews on tutorials was to identify issues to be explored in more depth in a future project. These sessions lasted between twenty (20) to forty-five (45) minutes.

4.2. Data analysis

Patton (1990) argued that case analysis combined with cross case analysis is a simple way to analyze interviews. By case analysis, a case study for each person interviewed is written while cross case analysis involves grouping together answers from different people to common questions by analysing different angles and perspectives of the issues raised. In this study, the actual words used by students in each part of the interview were used (case study). Next, the data was organised in terms of similar patterns and other emerging patterns (cross-case). The next stage involved coding and categorising the primary patterns in the data, a process that Patton (1990) refers to as content analysis. Direct quotations from students were also used to provide further context for the analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that analytic induction is beneficial where meanings are inferred from the collection of data rather than being imposed from other sources or theories. In addition, Lawrence, Lightfoot and Davis (1997) state that the role of the researcher is to combine the retrieved data with narrative that allows the reader to connect with the research by revealing the data in story form from the participants' perspective. The stories are vivid descriptions of people willing to share their experiences.

5. Results

Nearly half of the students (48.27%) were attending the course regularly, at least 8 weeks out of the total 13 of a full academic semester (31.03% of the students studying at the Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises and 17.24% of them studying at the Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Management). The majority of students who chose to attend the interviews were first year students (64.28 %). A full report on students' answers in the

interviews is offered in Appendix C. Students' responses in the interview questions are offered and discussed below.

5.1. Q1: Reasons why students chose to attend the interviews

Most students (86,20%) reported that the reason why they decided to attend this session is because they wanted to check whether any tutorials would provide them with some relevant information about the forthcoming exams and marking criteria. They said that in the winter semester exams they expected a better mark and that they thought that their answers were dealt appropriately. A bit more than half of the students requested to see their script asking for further explanations regarding the nature of a good script (51.72%) while many of them asked for further explanation of specific marking criteria (62.06%). Comments revealed students' desire to do well getting high marks reflecting thus their high score on masculinity, which in Hofstede's analysis (1986) represents a society's tendency for achievement. Students also seemed to passively want to be told by the tutor where they went wrong, indicating that for them a useful cognitive strategy could be to operate directly on incoming information in order to enhance their comprehension (O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 44). An indicative selection of their answers includes:

Exam feedback
- I don't understand why I was given a pass mark (5) for my script in the first semester. I answered all questions and wrote the summary as requested.
- I think that I did the right thing. I used words and expressions from the original text when writing the summary. I am not sure which strategies to use when I have to paraphrase a text.
- I would like to get a model of a good script with examples of good answers.

Assessment criteria
- Can you explain in detail the assessment criteria when you mark our papers?

Study skills
- Maybe I need to think about the way I interpret exam questions.

These comments indicate that students are in favour of facilitation. According to Regmi (2012), facilitation is an interactive learning process. It is implied that tutoring strengthens student understanding. This finding is in accordance with Yam's 2010 survey, where it was found that students viewed feedback during face to face discussion with the tutor useful because it gave them the opportunity to rectify mistakes before damage is done. Greeks' concerns in the current study indicate that they seem to recognise the need for deeper self-understanding asking the tutor to repeat assessment criteria, basic concepts on summary writing and to give them specific feedback on their exam performance. This finding suggests that the characteristics "Socratic" and "Progressive" describing best tutors in the INSPIRE model are valuable traits that should be moulded by every tutor.

This result suggests that the tutor could provide question-based feedback where students could be asked to reply to the tutor's questions in relation to how they interpreted the exam questions. Additional tutor questions could be related to asking the student to identify examples of good or bad answers in their script. Students' answers would provide the opportunity to the tutor to ask further questions as to why their approach to answering the exam question was appropriate or inappropriate. This technique could be useful since it embraces a humanistic learning approach, which according to Jarvis (2002, p.80) assumes that "learning is a recovery of or remembering (of)

that which we already know. Some believe that this inner knowledge is lost in the plethora of what we are told we should know".

The main difference among students who shared the same enquiries regarding marking criteria is that those students who attended weekly classes realised that they did not revise properly the material for the examination and that had they done some work independently they would have been given a better mark. They also mentioned that all the skills needed to answer the examination questions were taught and practiced throughout the winter semester while group work activities in class were useful (31.03%). Some students noted that it was their fault why their performance was not as expected (21.13%). They reported that they would like to attend a tutorial session in order to ask for any strategy which could enhance autonomous study and individual or group effort. These comments show that the students who attend classes regularly might need extra training on working without the tutor's help. This finding reflects the high Greek score on power distance in Hofstede's analysis (1986) where it is shown that Greeks might get stressed with the concept of independent learning. Some of their responses were:

Study independence
- I acknowledge your teaching help throughout the semester. I did not practice enough on my own before the exam.
- Is there any way to improve my independent study in combination with your tutoring?

Learning resources
- Can you suggest any exercises to practice with one of my classmates? My friend is hard working and we get on well together.
- Some words do not mean exactly the same and I can't use them as synonyms in paraphrasing. Can you give us a list of words that should not be used as synonyms of others? This could help us understand the importance of accuracy in paraphrasing. For example, salary and wages do not mean exactly the same.

The students who did not attend classes regularly (51.52%) did not appear to acknowledge their responsibility for failing the course since they simply asked for exam feedback. This behaviour might be attributed to a general Greek mentality that foreign languages cannot be taught properly at public sector institutions and quality language teaching can only be provided at private centres (Katsara, 2007).

5.2. Q2: Nature of the relationship between students with the tutor

All students reported that they expect the teacher to guide them academically. This finding reflects Greek cultural perspectives in learning where the students expect the teacher to be the guru in the teaching situation (Hofstede, 1986). The main similarities among students' comments involved the notion of respect integrated in the teacher-student relationship. Almost half of the student population (48.27%) reported that what the tutor needs to understand is that students have different needs, concerns and interests. They mentioned that in this way the tutor shows respect for their learning. At the same time, they indicated that students themselves should respect the tutor and his/her work in an endeavour to impart knowledge to learners. This finding reflects the characteristic "Intelligent" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model where the tutor's command on how best to teach them seems to be of vital importance.

The findings of this study show some disagreement with Hofstede's analysis (1986) which dictates that Greeks do not feel comfortable to question the teacher's authority. Greek students seem to criticise the tutor's teaching methodology and the level and choice of tasks done in class. In some

cases, this criticism was the result of the students' ignorance of the difference between various study modes such as seminars, lectures, classes, labs, tutorials etc. Many students mentioned that at university settings they expect their teachers to explain more in a lecture while students should be permitted to interrupt them asking for clarifications (65.51%) In analysing data, it was found that students' understanding seemed to have a link with the year of attendance. Older students attending the 4th or 5th year of study seemed to recognise the study modes offered at university. They reported that as the years of attendance go by, they figured out the code of their teachers' behaviour (13.79%). Nevertheless, they still mentioned that teaching could be improved if teachers changed the structure of their lectures.

This distinction between Hofstede's claims and the findings of this study reflects the argument put forward by Signorini, Wiessemes and Murphy (2009) who suggested that culture could be seen as a set of micro-cultures (for example one specific learning setting) that needs to be examined with individuals' relevant experience. Therefore, Greek students' learning behaviour in specific learning settings, for example seminars, lectures, classes, tutorials, labs etc. should be researched in Greek HE.

Comments included:

Study modes
- I think that the content of lectures should be more specific and our teachers should allow us to ask questions during their teaching.
- I have a feeling that teachers just get in a lecture theatre and give a speech. This isn't teaching. To my understanding teaching involves a dialogue among teachers and students.
- Your English class is not a lecture like other subjects. However, even in lectures, our teachers should change the structure to make their teaching more understandable.
- I think that your class is a workshop. I mean, you are not talking all the time. We are given a set of tasks and we are working on them. We can always ask you for any help if needed. I think that's very useful.
- Is your class a seminar or a class?

Task level
- I think that you should realise that we find Academic writing quite hard.
- Many students have forgotten English and find it hard to cope. I think group work in class should be divided into tasks for different levels. Thus, all students could work on tasks. You know sometimes some students do not contribute much in group activities because of their low English level.

Task instruction
- I am not quite clear about the peer evaluation activity in group work.
- I think it would be useful if you gave us exact instructions on how to do tasks in class.

Teaching practice
- Mutual respect on the part of both teachers and students during learning is important.
- I know that professionalism is important for you.
- Your class is very organised. You take your work very seriously.

5.3. Q3: Students' preferred learning strategies gained in a tutorial session

Students' comments showed that the majority of them recognised the need to self-assess their skills and performance. A large number of students reported that the tutorial sessions could be used as a vehicle to make them identify their weaknesses and trigger their effective study (82.75%). These comments indicated that the characteristic "Reflective" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model was important and that this should be taken into account when a tutor plans tutoring sessions. Tutors are suggested to encourage students to discuss their own thinking in relation to their learning.

The group of students who attended classes regularly (48.27%) reported that this discussion on tutoring process proved valuable in making them realise the importance of study skills in learning. Students' responses show that Greeks seem to realise the importance of metacognitive strategies that could manage the learning process (Oxford, 1990), for example the concept of control in learning, recognising their insufficient planning skills (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.44). Some of their comments are offered below:

Learning process
- I think that I need to learn how to organise my notes when writing a piece of academic writing.
- I just realised that It would be useful for me to jot down my enquiries before attending a tutorial session.

The group of students who did not attend classes regularly (34,48%) appeared to lack study skills, specifically the skill of proper note taking. They noted that they don't know how to write down notes quickly during a class and that it is important to learn how to do it. This finding implies that this group of students seemed to lack both metacognitive strategies demonstrating lack of evaluation of the learning activity and cognitive strategies showing that they don't have the knowledge to manipulate the language material and reorganise information to develop knowledge structures (Oxford, 1990). A few comments include:

Student Mentality
- I don't keep notes during your class because I don't think it is important.

Student ability
- I don't know how to keep notes.
- I think I am not sure what to write down when you explain to us different ideas and concepts.

Student self-assessment
- I think I need to admit that I don't understand the importance of note taking.

5.4 Q4: General Benefits derived from tutorial experiences

The main thrust of information derived from the interview discussions indicated that all students had a positive experience. They all mentioned that these discussions were interesting, encouraging them to attend a future tutorial with more specific enquiries. It was noted that 68.96% of the students acknowledged the teacher's effort to boost their confidence. This shows that the characteristic "Encouraging" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model is appreciated since students reported that the student-tutor discussion is reassuring, motivating them to prepare for a

tutorial. This finding shows the importance of awareness that feedback and encouragement are essential in any learning experience. This is in accordance with a survey undertaken by Duarte (2013, p. 7) who found that engaging students in terms of their emotions could be used as a means to instil students "the will to learn". Duarte (2013, p. 7) argues that this could be done when "the teacher acts as a facilitator who will motivate students to want to learn; to want to explore and learn for themselves". Some comments are offered below:

Learning support
- I appreciate your effort to help me understand key issues and improve myself.
- Although I am still struggling, this discussion made me feel better.

Learning modes
- Tutorials are very useful. I plan to come regularly. Can I book appointments for that?
- When I book an appointment for a tutorial I will come prepared. I will bring a list of questions.

Some interesting comments revealed that some perceptions are ingrained due to past experiences at secondary education. Students reported that during their senior high school years, their foreign language teachers were indifferent and did not seem to cater for students' individual needs (27.58%). The main implication is that students are seeking positive interaction with the tutor, reflecting results in Alexander's (2004) survey. This indicates that the characteristic "Nurturant" describing the best tutor in the INSPIRE model is appreciated since students reported that they need their teachers' support on their efforts. In addition, this was emphasised by Yam and Burger (2009) who found that teachers' personality is significant in reaching all students who expect their tutor to help them in their transition to university learning. It also shows that Greeks seem to appreciate the importance of teacher-student interaction in learning reflecting the use of affective strategies for controlling emotions during language learning (Oxford, 1990). Selected comments were:

Rapport
- At school my English teacher was very strict. She never had a conversation with me. I came to your office because I wanted to say that students need individual attention.

Classroom management
- In secondary education, foreign language teaching is not properly organised.
- My French teacher was very disappointed because we were very noisy in class. She gave up after a while.

This result corroborates findings in Karavas's (2010) survey where it was found that more than half of the teachers in her sample find teaching stressful and more than 1/3 have felt emotionally drained from their work. She argues that a possible explanation for these negative feelings may be that the learners' lack of interest in the subject and discipline problems in class may impair teachers' own enthusiasm for teaching.

6. Some implications and future research

With reference to the overall tutorial use within an EGAP context, it was found that Greek students' orientation towards learning is identified by performance rather than any learning goals. Specifically, with regard to the reason why students chose to attend the interview, their responses indicated that their motivation was extrinsic since their purpose was to get exam feedback in order to get better marks in the future. This is also shown in their comments regarding the tutor-student relationship.

Students' opinions indicated that tutor feedback needs to be "relevant, specific and understandable" mirroring similar findings in Murphy's and Cornell's study (2010, p 50). Their comments on task level and difficulty show that academic performance is a dominant factor. As far as students' preferred learning strategies gained in a tutorial are concerned, students' answers point to the fact that teacher invitation enhances student self-assessment on study skills. This is further shown in commentary regarding general benefits gained in tutorials. Students' replies showed that students appeared to appreciate the tool of teacher invitation in the learning process; therefore, the tutor's behaviour might enhance students' transformation from passive to active.

Results gleaned from this initial study indicate that the intersection between the tutor role, the learning environment, and learning strategies appears to be crucial for Greek students' learning behaviour. On the one hand, students reported that they need the provision of academic support and tutoring, perceiving the tutorial as an effective way to clarify taught material by the tutor. In this sense, the Greek high score on uncertainty avoidance and power distance as discussed by Hofstede (1986) is confirmed. In addition, their responses indicated that proper use of learning strategies appears to be pivotal in their learning and that the use of tutorials is a means to encourage them to employ different types of learning strategies. This implies that there is a close relation between the learning environment and appropriate selection of language learning strategies. On the other hand, findings suggested that students are in favour of developing rapport which creates an environment for open communication. This finding is in contradiction to the Greek high score on power distance as discussed by Hofstede (1986) and indicates that for the students the tutor in a tutorial on EGAP is seen as a facilitator rather than the absolute teaching authority.

The results might indicate that students prefer to explore their learning difficulties with a good 'local guide' (Fox, 1983, p. 156). However, as Fox (1983, p. 156) argues, 'no guide though, no matter how competent or experienced, can do your exploring for you. Exploration is a personal activity'. This teacher guide could help Greeks develop their self-confidence and when this is achieved, they could be ready to explore learning strategies by themselves. Two initial suggestions on tutor behaviour during tutorials are offered. Firstly, the tutor should listen to what students have to say and view each tutorial as a unique case. Results of the study show that for Greeks the tutorial process embraces a personalized dimension, which addresses personal interaction with the tutor where the tutor provides special help in difficult cases offering guidance to students' educational development (Boronat, Castano ad Ruiz, 2007 as cited in Veiga Simao et al., 2008, p.74). Secondly, the tutor should set the rule of question-based feedback during tutorials whereby students' individual learning potential could be triggered. The results of this study show that for Greeks the tutorial discussion provides an opportunity to enhance their confidence.

The main implication is that findings of this survey point to the limitations in Hofstede's model (1986) as argued by Signorini, Wiesemes, and Murphy (2009) and suggest that more empirical evidence in the specific learning setting of tutorials with Greeks' relevant experience is needed in order to evaluate the use of tutorials within the Greek context. It can be suggested that, since the personalised dimension of the tutorial process is very important, tutors need training in order to ensure that this tool is properly used in academic settings. This is also noted by Ruutmann and Kipper (2011, p.60), who argue that this tutor training includes "knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies and the flexibility to change them". Therefore, the results of this preliminary study could be used in order to analyse further the identified preferable tutor behaviours by gathering quantitative data on students' specific responses in relation to tutorial use. This analysis could be useful in identifying the extent to which such tutor behaviours could be applied to a future pilot teacher tutorial training programme that could facilitate learning for Greeks.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

a) Why did you chose to attend the interview on the use of tutorial sessions?
b) What do you think is the nature of student tutor relationship?
c) What kind of learning strategies would you like to gain in a tutorial session?
d) Discuss the general benefits derived from tutorial experiences.

Appendix B: Students' Profile

Table 1 Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises

Year of study	1st year %	2nd year %	3rd year%	4th year %	5th year %
Female students	13.79	3.4	3.4	3.4	0
Male students	24.13	3.4	6.89	0	0

Table 2 Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Management

Year of study	1st year %	2nd year %	3rd year %	4th year %	5th year %
Female students	17.24	6.89	3.4	0	0
Male students	3.4	0	0	3.4	6.89

Appendix C: Students' Interviews

Attendance to classes (at least 8 weeks)

Table 3 Department of Business Administration of Food and Agricultural Enterprises

Year of study	1st year %	2nd year %	3rd year %	4th year %	5th year %
Female students	14.28	0	0	7.14	0
Male students	28.57	0	14.28	0	0

Table 4. Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Management

Year of study	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year %	5th year%
Female students	28.57	7.14	0	0	0
Male students	7.14	0	0	7.14	0

Students' comments in the four interview questions

Table 5 Reasons to attend interview

Reasons to attend interview	%
Information about the forthcoming exams and marking criteria	86.20
Explanation of specific marking criteria	62.06
Strategy to enhance autonomous study	55.17
Request to see the script	51.72

Table 6 Nature of student tutor relationship

Student-tutor Relationship	%
The tutor is a guide who facilitates learning	100
The tutor should explain more in a lecture and students should be allowed to interrupt to ask for clarifications	65.51
The tutor needs to understand that students have different needs	48.27

Table 7 Preferred learning strategies gained in a tutorial

Learning strategies	%
Tutorial as a vehicle to identify weaknesses and triggers for effective study	82.75
Organisation skills	48.27
Note-taking	34.48

Table 8 General benefits of tutorials

General Benefits	%
Encouraging to attend future tutorials with specific enquiries	100
Boost confidence	68.96

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