

**International ELINET Symposium 2018**  
**“Literacy in the 21st Century: Participation – Inclusion – Equity”.**

July 23-24, 2018, Cologne, Germany



**Section VI: Instructional methods in early literacy teaching**

**Chairs:** Patricia Schillings, University of Liège & Renate Valtin, Humboldt University, Germany

Tuesday, July 24, at 11.30–13.00      **Location:** Seminar Building / Room S 23

LITERACY CHANGES LIVES.

**Our class's dictionary. An aesthetic approach to defining words in preschool and early primary education**

**Presenter:**

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University of Crete, Greece.

**Abstract:**

Learning to define words in school is an exceptionally useful activity. It helps children to develop language and literacy skills and particularly to understand the meanings of words and the environment in which they function. Definitional learning is a demanding teaching task that requires children to approach the words being defined with precision. For this reason, the usual teaching practice in school, and particularly in the lower grades of education, follows the principles of the direct teaching and teacher-centred approach (Loftus-Rattan, Mitchell & Coyne, 2016).

The purpose of this study is to describe the steps for designing a new instructional practice to aesthetically approach word definitions in preschool and early primary education. The theoretical underpinnings of this pursuit are the “transactional theory», as put forth by Rosenblatt (1978), and its extension as the theory of “aesthetic response”, as developed by Iser (2000). The design criteria of this instructional practice are borne out of the principles of “aesthetic teaching” (Pike, 2004; Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, 2012; 2016). The new model of activities is structured so as not only to activate children cognitively, but also holistically; these activities contain children's creative responses and exploit other literacies besides the linguistic.

During their implementation, children do not participate only in learning a given definition, but also in formulating it. Moreover, the meaning of the resulting definition extends beyond the academic, literal, denotative to also include elements that have to do with the ways in which each student perceives the word he/she is defining (Eisner, 2002). This procedure incites the participation of all children and allows the creation of a “dictionary for every class”. The results of this presentation concern the ways in which the proposed instructional practice can be applied in the context of preschool and primary classrooms.

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**Bio note:**

**Marina Sotiropoulou – Zormpala, Dr.**, is associate professor of Aesthetic Education in the Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete. She holds a piano diploma (National Conservatoire), a degree from the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens, a postgraduate degree (D.E.A.) in Psychology of Art (Paris X - Nanterre) and has completed a doctoral thesis (University of Athens) on “Sound as a teaching medium in elementary education”. She is the director of the research Laboratory of Music and Psychomotor Education of the University of Crete. Her teaching concerns issues of “teaching through the arts” and “teaching arts” pedagogies. Her publications focus on issues of policy in arts education, integrating creative-arts activities in the learning and teaching processes, “aesthetic teaching” of non-arts subjects in preschool and elementary education, and connecting theory and practice in arts education. She took part in the evaluation of the current music textbooks for Primary Schools, under the auspices of the Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education). She has overseen the pedagogical aspects of a number of theatrical plays for children.