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EDUCATION, POLITICS AND CULTURE

Anno V
Numero I
Giugno 2016

Iscrizione al registro operatori della comunicazione R.O.C. n. 10757
Direttore responsabile: Arturo Lando

Pubblicazione semestrale: abbonamento annuale (due numeri): € 36,00

Per gli ordini e gli abbonamenti rivolgersi a:
ordini@mimesisedizioni.it

L'acquisto avviene per bonifico intestato a:

Mimesis Edizioni, Via Monfalcone 17/19

20099 - Sesto San Giovanni (MI)

Unicredit Banca - Milano

IBAN: IT 59 B 02008 01634 000101289368

BIC/SWIFT: UNCRITM1234

Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, via Suor Orsola 10, 80135 Napoli
Phone: +39 081 2522251; e-mail: civitas.educationis@unisob.na.it

MIMESIS EDIZIONI (Milano – Udine)

www.mimesisedizioni.it

mimesis@mimesisedizioni.it

Isbn: 9788857537818

Issn: 2280-6865

© 2016 – MIM EDIZIONI SRL

Via Monfalcone, 17/19 – 20099

Sesto San Giovanni (MI)

Phone: +39 02 24861657 / 24416383

Fax: +39 02 89403935

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Minority Languages in Greece: Linguistic Peripheries and Immigrant Languages between Politics and School Education Legislation

Maria Dimasi, Panagiotis G. Krimpas*

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to concisely present the educational context of linguistic peripheries and immigrant languages in Greece with respect to language teaching in its legislative/institutional perspective, as well as on the basis of insights drawn from sociolinguistics and language didactics. We start by a short description of the main issues, proceed with presenting the linguistic map of Greece with historical references and illustrate the Greek socio-political context with respect to national identity. Then we present Greek legislation and practice on primary and secondary school education in terms of linguistic peripheries, immigrant languages and foreign languages. Finally, proposals are made for the methodological management of language teaching in the direction of cross-cultural dialogue and current examples are given. The article concludes that there is a lot to be done to efficiently address the issue of linguistic peripheries and immigrant languages in the Hellenic Republic in terms of both respecting otherness and, at the same time, safeguarding Greek (and wider European) identity.

Keywords: *European periphery, Greece, immigrant education, minority education.*

Riassunto

Il presente articolo è un tentativo di presentare sinteticamente il contesto educativo delle periferie linguistiche e delle lingue di immigrati in Grecia per quanto riguarda l'insegnamento delle lingue dal punto di vista legislativo/istituzionale, nonché sulla base di intuizioni tratte dalla sociolinguistica e dalla glottodidattica. Cominciamo con una breve descrizione dei principali problemi, procediamo presentando la mappa linguistica della Grecia con riferimenti storici e illustriamo il contesto socio-politico greco per quanto riguarda l'identità nazionale. In seguito presentiamo la legislazione e la prassi sull'educazione scolastica primaria e secondaria per quanto riguarda le periferie linguistiche, le lingue di quelli immigrati in Grecia e le lingue straniere. Infine, facciamo delle proposte sulla gestione metodologica dell'insegnamento del-

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le lingue nella direzione del dialogo cross-culturale e offriamo degli esempi attuali. L'articolo conclude che c'è molto da fare per affrontare in modo efficace la questione delle periferie linguistiche e delle lingue di immigrati nella Repubblica ellenica nei termini del rispetto dell'alterità e, allo stesso tempo, della salvaguardia dell'identità greca (e di quella, più ampia, europea).

Parole-chiave: periferia europea, Grecia, educazione degli immigrati, educazione minoritaria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s Greek society, hence also Greek educational system have been facing a diachronic problem of substantial school and social integration of population groups with different linguistic, social and/or ethnic/racial characteristics. Recently, due to the rapid developments with respect to the immigrant and refugee issue and given that the political leadership and, largely, also the society seem unprepared to address the ensuing multiple problems, embarrassment has arisen in terms of management of the educational needs of thousands of children, whether unaccompanied or not, as well as of thousands of adults who—as they allege, unwillingly—remain in the country; a major issue consists in finding the best way to teach them the Greek language and culture and create the relevant conditions for the Greek society to be acquainted with the culture of the countries of origin of the main/most populous groups, in a way that does not pose risks for Greek (and wider European) identity and legality, on one hand, and respects said groups' identity, on the other hand.

If to this already difficult backdrop one adds also the already existing 'intrinsic' handicaps in linguistic diversity management, going back to the establishment of the Greek State, one may understand how difficult the task is of achieving substantially positive outputs in both the educational system and the society.

2. MINORITY LANGUAGES: LINGUISTIC PERIPHERIES AND IMMIGRANT LANGUAGES

2.1 *Minority languages*

So far it has been rather difficult to find an all-embracing definition of the concept designated by the term 'minority' as used in international law or social science. An old, still handy definition is the one by Capotorti:

Minority is a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of

solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Capotorti, 1979: 96)¹.

This definition suggests that linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population, combined with some other conditions, may be part of a minority's identity.

Apart from each country's domestic legal provisions—mostly constitutional—on the protection of minorities, the latter are directly or indirectly protected by several international law documents such as *The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (Strasbourg 1.2.1995 [in force since 1.2.1998]), the 1992 United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Minorities*, the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (ECHR) (Rome, 4.11.1950 [in force since 3.9.1953]) etc. An alleged difference between the first two of the abovementioned documents is that the latter applies both to 'national' and to 'ethnic, religious and linguistic' minorities, while the latter's scope is narrower. Article 5 of the 1975 Constitution of the Hellenic Republic protects human rights of linguistic minorities by setting forth that

All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and freedom, irrespective of nationality, race or language and of religious or political beliefs. Exceptions shall be permitted only in cases provided for in international law.

However, it does not explicitly protect their *sensu stricto* linguistic rights.

At any event, given that: a) the very term 'minority' speaks for itself, as it comes from Lat. *minor* (= smaller, lesser); b) the letter of the abovementioned Article 5 of the 1975 Constitution of the Hellenic Republic speaks of "All persons living within the Greek territory," even if not explicitly protecting *sensu stricto* linguistic rights; and c) the above definition of minorities does not include illegal immigrants or legal immigrants who are not nationals of the State (i.e. have not been granted citizenship), thus leaving outside description groups of *de facto* linguistic communities that live in considerable numbers in given States (among which Greece serves as a relevant example), we shall here use the term 'linguistic minorities' to designate any linguistic group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being or not nationals of the State—possess linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their language.

2.2 Linguistic peripheries

Linguistic minorities—whether officially recognised or *de facto* ones—with long presence in a region of given State, especially when considered

1 See more in <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/internationallaw.aspx>, accessed 10 April 2016.

from the point of view of linguistics or language didactics rather than international law, can be more relevantly designated by the term ‘linguistic periphery,’ practically identical with Joseph’s term ‘linguistic Periphery,’ which he spells with capitalised initial letter, used in that same sense as in Joseph (2006: 52), i.e. in contrast with the concept he designates by the term “linguistic Centre” (*Ibidem*) rather than, say, as used in Tomasello (2003: 282-283) to designate “lexicon, the conceptual system, irregular constructions and idioms, and pragmatics” (*Ibid.*: 282) within Generative grammar. Therefore, in this article, languages used in linguistic peripheries will be designated by the term ‘peripheral languages’ rather than ‘minority languages.’ By the term ‘linguistic periphery’ we shall designate any group with a long presence in given State, numerically inferior to the rest of the population of same State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their language. Moreover, we shall use the term to designate a geographical region where a ‘peripheral language’ is spoken, or the very group of ‘peripheral-language’ speakers.

2.3 Immigrant Languages

Given the above definitions of ‘linguistic minorities’ and ‘linguistic peripheries,’ we shall reserve the term ‘immigrant languages’ to designate languages of legal or illegal immigrant communities, i.e. ones made up by nationalities/ethnicities with no long (i.e. historical and uninterrupted) presence in given regions of a State, hence any ‘non-peripheral,’ ‘non officially recognised minority’ language with a limited official, disadvantaged, unofficial, secondary or auxiliary use within given State.

3. THE LINGUISTIC MAP OF GREECE

3.1 Historical overview

Greece was traditionally a multilingual region, although various forms of Greek were always spoken by the majority of the population. Ancient Greek writers recorded non-Greek speakers such as Thracians, Tyrrhenians, Pelasgians, Eteocretans etc. in Greek territories. During the Eastern Roman Empire, other languages such as Latin, Bessian, Gothic, Slavic, Aramaic, Armenian, Georgian etc. were at times spoken in various regions of the Empire. During the Venetian and Ottoman rule, Italian, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Vlach, Ladino, Romani (also known as Rromanes), Turkish, Armenian etc. were spoken along with Greek in the conquered Greek territories. However, Greek had always been the language of prestige, which influenced all other in lexicon, morphology and, in some cases, even in syntax and phonotactics (Sandfeld, 1930: 175, 178, 213; Krimpas, 2007: 35-59).

3.2 Current situation

Following liberation of the Greek people from Turkish rule and the emerging idea of nation-state, multilingualism was discouraged both as individual and territorial phenomenon. The influence of the French Revolution was strong in the case of Greece, which followed the same policy as France, where “[...] linguistic diversity quickly came to be subordinated to the aim of linguistic centralisation and homogeneity” (Kaufmann, 2005: 46). Indeed, Greece shares with France also the double function of said policy, described by Kaufmann:

Thus when the French insisted on linguistic homogeneity after 1793, this might have been motivated by a desire to exclude non-ethnic French and to assimilate linguistic peripheries into the French as opposed to descent- it can serve to render the nation liberal and flexible in its attitude to ethnic boundaries (Ibid.: 47).

Over time, further strengthened by the population exchanges of 1919 (under the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine) and 1923 (under the Treaty of Lausanne), this policy resulted in Greece’s having long been a virtually monolingual country, its only official language being (Modern) Greek (Yağmur *et al.*, 2012: 38). However, monolingualism in the Hellenic Republic is relativised by at least three factors:

- a) surviving small pockets of non-Greek speakers, the vast majority of them elderly and bilingual with Greek; such pockets date at least from Ottoman times, many also from Eastern Roman times and are to be found scattered throughout the territory of the Hellenic Republic; normally they do not exceed a 4% of the total regional population (Tsitselikis & Christopoulos, 1997: 433); all but one of these *de facto* ‘original’ minority languages of Greece belong to the Indo-European linguistic family, namely: Turkish (non-Indoeuropean: Turkic), Pomak, ‘Slav’ (Indo-European: Slavic), Vlach, Ladino (Indo-European: Romance), Arvanitic (Indo-European: Albanian), Armenian (Indo-European: Armenian), Romani (Indo-European: Indo-Iranian) (Sella-Mazi, 1997: 361-401; Mpaslis, 2000: 85);
- b) non-Greek legal or illegal immigrants who are entering Greece for economic or other reasons since the 1990s; two exceptions of such immigrants are Greeks from Northern Epirus (now part of Albania) and, sometimes, from former Republics of the Soviet Union (mainly Pontic Greeks who speak the Pontic Greek dialect, Russian, Turkish, Georgian or any combination of these languages);
- c) foreign language teaching in Greece, which creates bilingual or multilingual individuals without, however, ‘threatening’ the knowledge and dominance of (Modern) Greek.

4. LINGUISTIC EDUCATION IN GREECE

4.1 *Minority education in Greece*

Neither peripheral languages nor immigrant languages have official status in Greece. Muslims in Thrace are the only recognised minority in Greece (Askouni, 2006: 13; Dimasi *et al.*, 2014: 1), with such recognition existing in terms of religion rather than language (Tsitselikis & Christopoulos, 1997: 787). However, by designating Turkish as their mother tongue in education, the Greek State mistakenly treats them as a homogeneous peripheral group, despite that homogeneity is mostly limited to their common Islamic religion².

- 2 Members of the Muslim minority can actually be distinguished into three subgroups with different cultural and ethno-racial background and—most importantly—a different language, namely:
 - a. *tourkogeneis*, as they are called in Greek, which literally means Turkish-descendants, although this is not always the case, given that in some regions of Greece small population groups converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule. All of them have Turkish as their mother tongue and currently do not exceed a 50% of the total Muslim minority population (Malamidis, 2008: 18);
 - b. Pomaks (in Greek: *Pomakoi*), who speak the Pomak language (Magkriotis, 1994: 51; Theodoridis, 1995: 84-85; Mpaslis, 2000: 86), a southeastern Slavic language, to some degree creolised by Turkish and Greek morphological and lexical elements. The case of Pomaks is peculiar with respect to the management of their cultural identity on the part of both the Greek State and the Turkish-speaking minority, who are the most populous group within the Muslim minority. Mainly—or rather exclusively—on the basis of their religious identity, state educational policy had them ‘assimilated’ with Turkish-speakers, which resulted to their studying and learning Turkish as mother tongue and gradually—especially the younger ones who now live and form families in urban and suburban centres of Xanthi and Rodopi to a great extent—being led—the right tense would be rather ‘have been led’—to the loss of their language and, partly, of their cultural identity. The interest that has been manifested during the last two decades about highlighting the specific nature of the Pomak case can be described, on one hand, as empirical when arising from people without the appropriate level of education and, on the other hand, as actions of late scholarly interest when linked to efforts at the political level;
 - c. Roma (also spelled *Rroma*; in Greek: *athigganoi*, *tsigkanoi*, terms now considered to be pejorative exonyms), who speak Romani, a Dardic language of the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European languages, the speakers of which entered Europe from India as early as the XII century A.D. (Mendizabal *et al.* 2012). They make up about 20% of the Muslim minority. According to the census of 1981, at that period they numbered 17,074 and lived scattered throughout Thrace (Malamidis, 2009: 18, citing: Tressou-Milonas, 1992; Vasiliadou & Pavli-Korre, 1994; Vasiliadou, 1994; Kogkidou *et al.*, 1994). The first author of the present article has observed that one could support the view that this tripartite division is a rather schematic one, since in many cases the limits of determination of individual identity are blurred (Dimasi *et al.*: 14), due to intermarriage between the various groups, a process facilitated by the common religion. We also note the lack of access to statistical data, which results in there being no clear image of the Muslim population and its exact composition (Xanthopoulos, 2008: 8). As Dimasi *et al.*, report, by citing relevant sources: “The study of data published suggests a significant deviation of numbers among various sources. As an example we note that,

Schools that are part of the minority education system are subject to a peculiar operation system, regard exclusively Muslim minority children in terms of primary and secondary education (Askouni, 2006: 63).

Legislation governing Minority Education includes, on one hand, international and transnational (with Turkey) treaties and conventions and, on the other hand, (Greek) domestic law (Xanthopoulou, 2008: 12-34; Malamidis, 2008: 11-25).

The program of such schools is bilingual and the subjects are taught in both languages with equal distribution of teaching hours. The results of studies conducted to evaluate the Greek-language skills of minority children conclude that the majority of primary education graduates do not reach B2 level (Dimasi *et al.*, 2014: 8); in particular, less than 10% reach B2 level the sixth class (Tzeveleku *et al.*, 2004: 23). No special mention of linguistic and cultural particulars of Pomak and Roma students is included in either analytic or school education context.

English is taught as a compulsory foreign language to all *polythesia* (with more teachers and more classes, distributed in more classrooms) primary schools with no differentiation in terms of learning content and teaching methodology in comparison to other public schools (Zafeiriadou, 2011; Spathariotou, 2012).

Unfortunately, modern history of Greek education system is marked by the political party identities' dominance in the management policy of important educational issues. As a typical example let us mention the latest attempt at the level of educational-pedagogical intervention planning, as recorded by Dimasi *et al.*:

In order to establish a new school, where pedagogical interventions are possible that aim at the effective recognition of linguistic and cultural peculiarities of all minority students, free of the monocultural perception arising from the recognition of Turkish as their only mother tongue of, the decision was made to establish Experimental Primary Schools (Dimasi *et al.*, 2014: 16-17).

On the basis of:

- the document with ref. n°. 6037/12-12-2008 (A 3359/17-12-2008) of the Directorate of Primary Education of Xanthi Prefecture;
- the document with ref. n°. 1096/31-3-2009 (A6427/1-4-2009) of the Department of Languages, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries,

in the census of 1991 on the population of the Minority in the prefectures of Xanthi, Rhodope and Evros the numbers 88,000-89,000 and 98,000 are reported and it is estimated between 105,000 or 115,000-120,000 to 130,000. In the 2001 census 85,000 Greek Muslim citizens are reported. These data, despite numerical differences, clearly suggest the decline of the minority population, a fact that should at least be taken into account in the context of Minority Education policy” (Dimasi *et al.*: 15).

whereby the Senate of the Democritus University of Thrace decided to support the establishment of four Experimental Primary Schools in Xanthi region (decision n. 28/632/04.09.2009). However, the change of government in the 2009 elections led to its application being suspended.

In summary, we note that Muslim students neither acquire the Greek language at the level that should be expected on the basis on the degrees they are awarded upon completion of their studies within the Greek school educational system, nor do they learn their putative mother tongue, i.e. Turkish, at the proper level; of course, curricula do not allow for Pomak or Romani.

Apart from purely educational factors, this problematic situation is connected (less in the last decade and more rarely in urban areas):

- with family and social environment of students, where another language is used (mostly Turkish, but also Pomak and Romani), thus being no daily contact with the Greek language, which is limited to the teaching hours of Greek-language modules;
- with the presence or absence of the desire, on the part of students and their families, to learn Greek;
- with the lack of pre-school education until 2008 (Mavromatis, 2005: 311-313).

4.2 Immigrant language teaching in Greece

4.2.1 Cross-cultural schools

Since the 1990s, when there were massive population influxes into Greece (mainly from Albania and the former Soviet Union states), the Greek State, in an attempt to respond to the new social and school reality, proceeded to the establishment and operation of cross-cultural schools. Establishment and operation thereof took place according to Law n°. 2413/96³, which strictly provided for the mixed composition of the student population (of both indigenous and foreign/repatriated pupils), as well as for flexible curricula with respect to the subjects taught, including the conditional teaching of mother tongues.

Generally speaking, the Ministry of Education of the Hellenic Republic has set up 26 cross-cultural schools in high migration areas and has prioritised the recruitment of teachers who speak the students' native languages (Eurydice network, 2009: 13, 15). In Greece (as in Estonia, Lithuania, Austria, Finland and Sweden), the central government authorities have set a minimum-demand threshold that must be met for teaching to be provided in the mother tongue (Ibid.: 25); moreover, four hour-long tutorials a week can be organised whenever there is demand by at least seven pupils and depending upon availability of teachers who possess the necessary qualifications. Fees are covered by the State (*Ibidem*).

3 Law n°. 2413/96 (Official Gazette Issue n°. A' 124/17.6.1996), Article 35 § 2 on Cross-cultural Education Schools («Σχολεία Διαπολιτισμικής Εκπαίδευσης»).

However, operation of cross-cultural schools revealed at times significant problems and had not the expected paedagogical and didactic impact (Zografou, 2003: 225). In several cases the school was perceived in a negative way by the community for being attended by large foreign-student rates (Pantazis *et al.*, 2007: 331-337). Teaching of languages and cultures of the countries of origin did not become possible. It was evaluative opinion was formulated that “Educational measures so far applied had low efficiency, while Greek schools were presented with instances of social stigmatization against these children” (Zografou, 2003: 225).

4.2.2 Other cases of mother-tongue teaching

The teaching of mother tongues so far in Greece is the result of initiatives taken by foreigners’ institutions and communities active in the country. In particular, operation of private schools in Athens and Thessaloniki gave—and still give—foreign workers’ children the possibility of joining and attending them. Examples of such schools are the American College⁴, Lycée Franco-Hellénique Eugène Delacroix (LFHED)⁵, Deutsche Schule Athen⁶ and Scuola Statale Italiana⁷. Other school types intended for educa-

- 4 The Athens College belongs to the Hellenic-American Educational Foundation. It offers students bilingual education. English is the primary module and is taught every day by native English-speaking teachers. In E and F classes students are compulsorily taught a second foreign language as well, namely French or German. The curriculum and methodology to be followed for teaching such languages are decided upon in cooperation with the French Institute and the Goethe Institute; for more details see <http://www.haef.gr/en/Schools/AthensCollege/PrimaryAthens>, <http://www.haef.gr/en/Schools/AthensCollege/MiddleAthens>, <http://www.haef.gr/en/Schools/AthensCollege/HighSchoolAthens> (all accessed 10 April 2016).
- 5 Lycée Franco-Hellénique Eugène Delacroix (LFHED) gives students the opportunity to choose between two sections, namely the Greek one (in high school) and the French one (in kindergarten, primary school, middle school, high school). French is intensively taught in the Greek section; accordingly, Modern Greek is compulsorily taught at all levels of the French section. In the middle school (Greek section) French and English are taught, the former being the first foreign language (six teaching hours/week). Both languages are taught at various levels while, at the same time, emphasis is given on education and culture issues; for more details see <http://lfh.edu.gr/el/vie-scolaire-secondaire-grec/programmes/programmes-au-college> and <http://lfh.edu.gr/el/vie-scolaire-secondaire-grec/programmes/programmes-au-lycee> (both accessed 10 April 2016).
- 6 Deutsche Schule Athen is supported by the German Government. It offers students bilingual education, teaching them German and Greek language and culture. Preparatory courses operate for Greek students, preparing them for the Hellenic graduation exams (*Panellīnīes exetaseis*) as well as for the German *Abitur*. Moreover, the German section operates for German students. This section follows the curriculum of German middle schools. Teaching of Modern Greek is compulsory for all students of the section from primary school to the A Class of the High School. As far as the following classes are concerned, students may choose the module of Modern Greek; for more details see http://www.dsathen.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=58&Itemid=214 (accessed 10 April 2016).
- 7 Scuola Statale Italiana is owned by the Italian State. Two foreign languages are taught: Italian and English. Italian is taught in all middle and high school classes at two levels

tion of non-Greek national communities living in Greece are the one of the Armenian Community⁸, the ones of the Jewish Community⁹ as well as the ‘Zygmunt Mineyko’ Polish school operating in Athens, with two annexes: one in Thessaloniki and another in Santorini¹⁰.

4.3 *Applicable-still unenforced-legislation*

At the level of political will and intent for cross-cultural management of linguistic diversity, the Greek State has adopted relevant legislation. In particular, in 1994, ministerial decision n°. Φ2/378/Γ1/1124¹¹ was issued, whereby teaching of foreign students’ mother tongues two or three hours a week became for the first time available in addition to the analytic curriculum, provided that a relevantly qualified teacher was found.

Later, in 1999, ministerial decision n°. Φ10/20/Γ1/708¹², along with the continued support for the effective learning of Greek as the most important goal of cross-cultural education, mentioned the possibility of students’ attending classes on language and culture of their country of origin. We should emphasise that this reception-class project on teaching the country-of-origin language and culture was implemented as a pilot project (in Komotini, during the years 2005-2008) in the Department of Languages, Literature and Culture of Black Sea Countries (School of Classics and Humanities, Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini, Greece)¹³.

(beginners’ level and advanced level). Italian terminology is also taught in subjects such as mathematics, physics and biology. Teaching of English is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Hellenic Ministry of Education; for more details see <http://www.scuolaitaliana.gr/images/documenti/POFcorretto.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2016).

- 8 Armenian primary schools follow a bilingual curriculum, within which Armenian is not just a subject but a means of teaching other subjects such as history and the Armenian Apostolic Church religious doctrine. Otherwise they follow the analytic curriculum of public Greek schools. Recently an Armenian middle was also founded (Nikolaou, 2002: 58).
- 9 Two Israelite private primary schools operate in Greece: one in Athens and another in Thessaloniki, where Jewish history and religion are taught in Greek; Hebrew is also taught in said schools; for more details see <http://athjcom.gr/scholio/dimotiko/>, <http://www.jct.gr/school.php> (accessed 10 April 2016).
- 10 The ‘Zygmunt Mineyko’ Polish School is funded by the Polish Ministry of National Education (*Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej*) and operates under the regulations governing all Polish schools. Teaching of Greek has been added as a compulsory subject in all classes. Additional education is available for children of the Polish community attending Greek or foreign-language schools, offering courses of Polish language, history and geography (*Ibidem*); for more details see http://www.ateny.msz.gov.pl/el/polish_community_in_greece/schools/ (accessed 10 April 2016).
- 11 Ministerial Decision n°. Φ2/378/Γ1/1124 (Official Gazzette Issue n° B’ 930/14.12.1994).
- 12 Ministerial Decision n°. Φ10/20/Γ1/708 (Official Gazzette Issue n° B’ 1789/28.9.1999).
- 13 Subproject in the framework of the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (O.P. “Education”): “Higher Education Internship-C Phase”, Measure 2.4: “Vocational Guidance and Connection with the Labour Market”, Action 2.4.2: “Students’ Internship and Liaison Office Support” Action Category 2.4.2.a: “Higher Education Internship”, Institution: Democritus University of Thrace, Subproj-

4.4 Foreign-language teaching in Greece¹⁴

At the level of state policy on language education the policies of the party that took over the governance of the country following the Democracy Restoration (1974)—to limit ourselves only to the modern history of Greek education —, have been firmly supporting foreign—language teaching in public education, with variations as to the language considered to be the most important in a particular historico-political era, but always with a positive evaluation as to their contribution to the shaping of a multilingual identity for students—a multiliteracy one, as we would call it in modern educational terms.

In particular, English has been ranking as the most important one in primary and secondary education in Greece. Taught as part of the compulsory education as well as in high school (lyceum) as a compulsory foreign language, it is definitely the preferred “non-domestic linguistic choice” (Krimpas, 2009: 86) in Greece.

The teaching of English has been introduced in primary school (D-E-F classes) since 1992. Since 2003 its teaching has been extended to C class¹⁵ by adjusting the relevant scientific argumentation on paedagogical-didactic principles underlying the age threshold for starting to teach/learn a foreign language. The basic objective is associated with the social identity of students in a changing multilingual and multicultural society¹⁶.

In promoting the European Union’s position for educational support of linguistic pluralism and given the infrastructure for the promotion of English teaching in Greece, since school year 2010-2011 English is taught in A and B classes in 800 day-long schools of the country in the framework of a pilot project. ‘Learning English in Early Childhood (PEAP)’ project is different from the analytic curriculum applied in English teaching in other classes. As Dendrinou notes:

It is based on a scientifically documented plan of emerging multiliteracy, mainly through experiential teaching practices, aiming at the development of respect for oneself and the Other, love for the mother tongue and the

ect name: “Internship for students of the Department of Languages, Literature and Culture of the Black Sea Countries of the Democritus University of Thrace in teaching of Black Sea languages in Primary and Secondary Education.” Professor responsible for the project: Maria Dimasi.

14 It seems that at the level of language planning the view is diachronically followed that “[...] in order for people to overcome any “limits” that divide them, whether geographic, ethnic, economic, religious or other, it is necessary to understand the “other” and foreign-language learning decisively contributes in the direction of essential communication and mutual understanding” (Glavas, 2006: 4; Koutlaki, 2011: 2).

15 Ministerial Decision n°. Φ. 20/482/95210/Γ1 (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1325/16.9.2003).

16 Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 303/13.03.03, p. 4086.

foreign language, as well as at the development of sociability (Dendrinou, 2010, cit. in Zafeiriadou, 2011: 62).

At this point we think it is noteworthy to refer to the objectives of English teaching in high school (lyceum) under the current curriculum (1999-2000), as it is essentially an attempt to address what the country is nowadays experiencing. Awareness of students and the shaping of positive attitudes towards social, cultural, ethnic/racial otherness, as well as the ability of an empathic cross-cultural management at an individual and collective level are directly connected with the possibilities offered/guaranteed by the use of English as an Interlingua in a constantly developing multicultural environment¹⁷. It helps develop relationships of mutual understanding with other peoples and shape personalities that can operate in a variety of cultural contexts.

Since school year 2005-2006 pilot teaching of French as a second foreign language has also been introduced in classes E and F of primary school, aiming at “promoting communication and developing cross-cultural awareness”¹⁸.

Since same school year pilot teaching of German as a second foreign language has been introduced in classes E and F of primary school¹⁹. The direction of the relevant goal regards, in the middle run, the social and, in the long run, the professional identity of students, who will be tomorrow’s adults, with obvious connections to the critical consideration of German’s being powerful in the labour market²⁰.

The school year 2007-2008 support was attempted of a non-European language²¹ and, what is more, this was done in the perspective of a substantial contribution of education to cross-cultural management of linguistic diversity²²: pilot teaching of Turkish was introduced as optional language (along with French and German) in five middle schools in Rodopi and Xanthi prefectures²³. The objectives of this pilot project, as described in the curriculum, are as follows: a) making students able to use Turkish as a means of acquiring new knowledge and cultural experiences; b) making students able to explore the influence of Turkish in their daily reality;

17 Ministerial Decision n°. Γ2/3994 (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1868/11.10.1999).

18 Ministerial Decision n°. Φ 20/482/95210/Γ1/9-9-2003 (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1325/9.9.2003).

19 Ministerial Decision n°. Φ 20/482/95210/Γ1/9-9-2003 (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1325/9.9.2003).

20 Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 303/13.03.03, p. 4120.

21 Arguments for the non-European character of Turkish see in Krimpas (2007: 31).

22 Teaching of Turkish “[...] meets the principle of multilingualism, which, in a multicultural era, is a priority for all education systems in Europe” (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 867/10.7.2006).

23 Pilot teaching of Turkish has been introduced in the following middle schools: 4th Middle School of Xanthi, 6th Middle School of Xanthi, 1st Middle School of Komotini, 2nd Middle School of Komotini, 4th Middle School of Komotini under Ministerial Decision n°. 110842/Δ2/29.8.2008 (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1743/29.8.2008).

c) making students able to identify similarities²⁴ and differences between the two languages, concerning the presentation of the same subject (socio-linguistic and cross-cultural approach). Eligible for participation in this program were minority students who either attended a minority primary school or in an ordinary public school. In the first case they were allowed to continue to study the Turkish language, which they had been taught as a mother tongue in the primary school but its teaching is not continued in high school (lyceum); in the second case they had the opportunity to learn Turkish as a mother tongue, provided that the public primary school did not provide for a similar language management of Turkish as a subject. Turkish teaching was also offered as an opportunity to students who were not members of the minority. The economic crisis led to the suspension of the implementation of said project since school year 2011-2012.

Same school year (2006-2007) pilot teaching of Italian as a language option was introduced in six middle schools²⁵ and as a second foreign language in four high schools (lyceums)²⁶. For the teaching of the Italian language the Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework for Foreign Languages is applicable with explicit references to the principles of experientiality and multiculturalism²⁷. Since school year 2008-2009 an Italian teaching program as a first foreign language was implemented in four general high schools (general lyceums) of the country²⁸ in the aim of developing cross-cultural readiness with main focus on the society and culture of Italian-speaking communities²⁹.

- 24 However, similarities between Turkish and Greek should not be exaggerated, as: i) they are almost exclusively limited to lexicon; ii) they often appear only in specific language registers and/or substandards (mostly in N. Greece and vernaculars of mainly Asia Minor refugees) rather than in Standard Modern Greek and, at any event, are not as numerous as e.g. the ones between Italian and Greek or between (also among) the Balkan languages and Greek, where mutual influence is present virtually to all language levels (Krimpas, 2007: 35-59; Krimpas, 2014: 39-83). See a brief comment by P.G. Krimpas on this issue in <http://blog.peempip.gr/τα-τουρκικά-στην-καθημερινότητά-μας/> (accessed 10 April 2016).
- 25 Pilot teaching of Italian in the following middle schools: 1st Middle School of Kalyvia (Attica), 6th Middle School of Dodecanese, 4th Middle School of Pyrgos (Ilia), 2nd Middle School of Ioannina, Middle School of Velissario (Ioannina), Middle School of Lixouri (Kefalonia) (Official Gazzette Issue n° B' 1154/28.8.2006).
- 26 Pilot teaching of Italian as a second language in the following middle schools: 60th Middle School of Athens, 9th Middle School of Patras, 4th Middle School of Nikaia (Piraeus), 1st Middle School of Corfu (Official Gazzette Issue n° B' 1154/28.8.2006).
- 27 Official Gazzette Issue n° B' 1121/9.8.2005.
- 28 Teaching of Italian as first foreign language in the following General High Schools: 60th General High School of Athens, 3rd General High School of Nikaia (Piraeus), 13th General High School of Patras, 1st General High School of Corfu (Official Gazzette Issue n° B' 1351/10.7.2008).
- 29 Official Gazzette Issue n° B' 1351/10.7.2008.

In school year 2006-2007 pilot teaching of Spanish was also implemented in five middle schools in the country³⁰. The curriculum mentions multiculturalism as part of the goals and as a framework for shaping multicultural awareness and acquaintance with other cultures, as well as understanding and respect for them³¹.

In school year 2008-2009 pilot teaching of Russian was introduced in fifteen middle schools in Greece³²; according to the curriculum, teaching of Russian aimed at promoting literacy, multilingualism and multiculturalism and pursued the “cultivation of communication skills[, which] promotes the cross-cultural dimension of language and complies with the principles of modern didactics of living languages” (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1396/16.7.2008). The teaching of Russian was similarly suspended due to the economic crisis since school year 2011-2012.

4.5 Methodological management of language teaching in the direction of cross-cultural dialogue

4.5.1 Genre pedagogy, language teaching and (cultural) otherness management: the case of ‘Ekthesi-Ekfrasi’ textbook for C Class of Lyceum

Since the 1990s multicultural composition of student population should be taken for granted in Greece, which—apart from the diversity at the social and geographical stratification levels—revealed issues of linguistic, ethnic/racial, religious and general cultural otherness. The definition of school literacy, which is the main goal of school education, has also been discussed within the fields of didactics, linguistics and pedagogy.

The term literacy does not denote only the students’ ability to read and write, but also to understand and effectively use written language and, through such involvement, to acquire solid school knowledge and become proficient—i.e. critically thinking—operators and users at an everyday level (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007: 19). Thus, in a wider sense, literacy involves individual and social emancipation, is a complex phenomenon that combines cultural, social, historical and cognitive aspects (Hatzisav-

30 Pilot teaching of Spanish in the following middle schools: 5th Middle School of Aigaleo (Attica), 3rd Middle School of Patras, 5th Middle School of Larissa, 5th Middle School of Chania, 1st Middle School of Pallini (Attica), Middle School of Diavata (Thessaloniki) (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1115/16.8.2006).

31 Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1115/16.8.2006.

32 5th Middle School of Aigaleo (Attica), 13th Middle School of Kallithea (Attica), Cross-cultural Middle School of Acharnai (Attica), 3rd Middle School of Aspropyrgos (Attica), 5th Middle School of Alexandroupoli, 16th Middle School of Thessaloniki, 32nd Middle School of Thessaloniki, 7th Middle School of Stavroupoli (Thessaloniki), Middle School of Echedoros (Thessaloniki), 3rd Middle School of Eleftherio (Thessaloniki), Middle School of Diavata (Thessaloniki), 5th Middle School of Kozani, Musical Middle School of Komotini, Cross-cultural Middle School of Sapes (Rodopi), 2nd Middle School of Nea Moudania (Chalkidiki) (Official Gazette Issue n° B’ 1351/10.7.2008).

vidis, 2005: 35-52), is characterised by conceptual multiplicity and defined in two different ways: the existence of different “social languages” and the “diversity” of digitally mediated meanings (Dimasi & Aravani, 2013: 56). It thus evolved into the concept of ‘multiliteracies,’ which refers to two important aspects of language use: volatility in the creation of meaning that takes place in different cultural and social contexts or in specific fields of interactivity in correlation with different types of communication that we use in our surroundings (*Ibidem*). Paedagogy of multiliteracies proposes a language teaching based on texts related to the students’ lives, since “nowadays literacy cannot be detached from the world in which they live” (Bruce, 2007: 8). It emphasises linguistic and social empowerment of students by understanding the diversity in which meanings are produced in modern social environment, in order for students are made themselves into effective meaning manufacturers and prepare their own social future (Bernstein, 1990: 65-67, 171, 181; 1996: 46, 126).

In Greek education, 2011 school curricula and textbooks for teaching Greek seem to have been prepared on the basis of the principles of multiliteracies and the broader aim of fostering critical literacy³³.

Implications of such considerations about school literacy lead to the formulation of the opinion that, since literacy as a socio-cultural function changes according to the requirements of given era and current era requires citizens capable of: a) handling, apart from everyday speech in which narrative prevails, the ‘strong’ genres (pragmatic, argumentative, procedural) as well; b) managing multimodal texts resulting from the development and standardisation of digital and printing/publishing technology, as well as multiculturalism that acquire such texts in a now multicultural society; c) approaching with a critical view the written language, teaching in general—and language teaching in particular—should be adapted to these data (Dimasi, 2012: 29-30).

Consideration of language teaching, in particular the teaching of Greek as the official language at all levels of education³⁴ in the perspective of genre pedagogy was adopted 2011 in the new curricula and therefore in textbooks that were drawn up under the responsibility of the (Greek) Paedagogical Institute and are the main point of reference for demarcating the subject matter to be taught. In summary, the specific language-teaching point of view holds the following:

33 In Walsh’s opinion, the process of learners’ critically examining social order by means of literacy “entails developing strategies to analyze the multiple ways race, ethnicity, class, gender and language are used in school to serve dominant interests. [...] In other words, it fosters a reading of reality itself which goes beyond merely producing or reproducing the existing social relations and the ‘legitimate’ knowledge which schools frame but instead encourages learners to look at the world around them in critical ways” (Walsh, 1991: 18).

34 For a detailed description of the legislation on (and the practice of) the exclusive use of Greek in Greek higher education see Krimpas (2015: 131-142).

- Written language performs different social functions than spoken language and utilises a different technology; therefore, systematic teaching and guidance are considered necessary, in particular for socially disadvantaged students. Socially learned practices may affect textual writing production practices in the first or second language. Students from ‘lower’ educational strata or from different cultures (e.g. immigrants, refugees, returnees) are mostly exposed to spoken language of everyday life as well as to the narrative (written) language on the basis of the axis of time correlation, which results in their knowledge and thinking being organised in the linear manner of temporal evolution (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993: 78-84). However, in modern society the hierarchical way is assessed of knowledge organisation that labels non-narrative genres as “strong genres” (Kress, 1994: 10), which are not accessible to the linguistic-cultural environment of any student who does not belong to the group of the dominant culture supported by the school system. The latter, as a democratic institution, should promote the powerful forms of specialised speech that give access to the social pyramid.
- By adopting the view that teaching of genres is a matter of social justice this approach argues that, as long as student population does not become familiar with social uses of language, an important social justice issue will continue to exist, if some genres are supposed to give their users access to specific spaces of social influence and power. A main goal of genre paedagogists is the transfer of successful-reading and text-composition skills from school to work, as well as to various other social activities (Dimasi, 2012: 29-30).

4.5.2 And a brief note about higher education

At the scholarly-research level proposals have been made on utilisation of linguistic contacts for cross-cultural dialogue. For example:

- utilisation of common Greek-Turkish vocabulary for teaching Turkish to Greek-speaking students or vice versa (Dimasi *et al.*, 2005: 1-8);
- utilisation of Greek loans in Russian language for teaching Russian at the level of Higher Education (Dimasi & Charatsidis, 2005: 199-213);
- utilisation of Greek loans in the lexicon, morphology, syntax and phonotactics of Balkan languages (Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Serbian), as well as -to a much lesser degree- of the few extant Balkan loans in Modern Greek lexicon, morphology, syntax and phonotactics for teaching Greek and/or a Balkan language at the level of Higher Education, in the framework of the Inter-State, Inter-University, Inter-Faculty Master’s Programme ‘Psycho-paedagogical, didactic and cross-cultural approaches to Humanities’³⁵.

35 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2NiknHTKChrbUYtc25FTlgybU0/view?pref=2&pli=1>, <http://dddpmbs.bsc.duth.gr/> (both accessed 11 April 2016).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Apparently, despite the educational reforms and the individual arrangements of related issues in Greece, the educational targets with respect to school literacy have not been met so far. According to international studies, our country holds the last place as far as school-literacy performance is concerned. UNICEF, on the basis of OECD data reports, has published February 14, 2007 a report with the relevant results (UNICEF, 2007: 17, 18, 19, 42, 43, 47).

In terms of language policy it seems that options are promoted that support linguistic pluralism, but in a rather reserved way. We found no studies about the particulars of teaching mother tongues of some large groups of students or their home-country languages despite the existence of the relevant legal/institutional framework. We believe that policies at the level of international and transnational relations do influence/shape public opinion, which in some cases results in the government's being reluctant in the long run (e.g. in the case of teaching Albanian to the thousands of students of Albanian origin who have attended—and still attend—all educational levels since the 1990s), in fear of the prospect of their linguistic identity/otherness becoming a starting point for claims related to national identity of the members of given population group or raising minority-identity issues among other groups, however small they may be (e.g. Slav-speaking pockets in NW Macedonia)³⁶. The issue of safeguarding Greek (and, in our opinion, the wider European) identity should not anyway be ignored in regions with long history of conflicts such as NW Europe—especially if account is taken of the fact that said regions were under Muslim control for many centuries.

This situation in primary and secondary education could be contrasted with the one at the level of higher education and scientific research, where various initiatives are noted for the enhancement of cross-cultural dialogue on the basis of teaching and learning languages through extremely interesting approaches in terms of linguistics, language didactics, translation and/or terminology theory and practice.

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36 Minority issues, even if exclusively related to language, have been so far very exasperating to the mainstream public opinion in Greece. Sometimes even legal action was taken against Greek citizens who, in one or another way publicly spoke of 'minorities' in Greece; see e.g. http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/greek/articles/pr_05_02_01.html (accessed 11 April 2016).

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*Finito di stampare
nel mese di luglio 2016
da Booksfactory – Szczecin (Polonia)*