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Language issues and language policies in Greece

Abstract

Στο άρθρο αυτό που καταρχάς συζητά και προσδιορίζει τον όρο 'γλωσσική πολιτική' (*policy* στα αγγλικά), σκιαγραφούνται οι ελληνικές γλωσσικές πολιτικές με άξονα τα ιστορικά ζητήματα βάσει των οποίων διαμορφώθηκαν: τη μακραίωνη διγλωσσία, τις γλωσσικές στάσεις απέναντι στην ελληνική σε στενή σύνδεση με τα ζητήματα της ελληνικής εθνογένεσης, τα ιδεολογήματα περί την ελληνική που κινητοποιούν έντονες συζητήσεις ακόμη και σήμερα αλλά και καθορίζουν δραστικά σε κάποια σημεία τη γλωσσική εκπαιδευτική πολιτική, στη δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση κυρίως. Η ελληνική γλωσσική πολιτική σήμερα χαρακτηρίζεται από ρητές κινήσεις με στόχο την προώθηση και στήριξη της επίσημης ελληνικής γλώσσας και την αποκλειστική σχεδόν χρησιμοποίησή της στη δημόσια σφαίρα εκτός μερικών εξαιρέσεων, καθώς και μια ομοιογενοποιητική τακτική που συμβάλει στην εξαφάνιση των διαλέκτων.

Το άρθρο αναφέρεται εκτεταμένα στις ρητές και άρρητες πολιτικές ή και στην απουσία τους για τη ρύθμιση της χρήσης της γλώσσας στο δημόσιο βίο και για την εξασφάλιση των γλωσσικών δικαιωμάτων όλων των κοινωνικών ομάδων. Αναφέρεται επίσης στην έλλειψη οργανωμένου σχεδίου για τη διαφύλαξη των γλωσσικών δικαιωμάτων των οικονομικών μεταναστών και την υποστήριξή τους στην εκμάθηση της γλώσσας που τους επιτρέπει πρόσβαση στην αγορά εργασίας και την πολιτική εξουσία. Τέλος, αναφέρεται στις γλωσσικές εκπαιδευτικές πολιτικές, στη ρύθμιση της γλωσσικής εκπαίδευσης στο σχολείο και στις γλωσσικές μεταρρυθμίσεις, ενώ συζητά για θέματα που αφορούν και άλλες γλώσσες σε όλο το φάσμα της εκπαίδευσης.

1.   Introduction

The English term 'policy' has no equivalent in many other European languages which do not make a distinction between 'language *policies*' and 'language *politics*' (e.g., *politique linguistique, Sprachpolitik, políticas lingüísticas, γλωσσικές πολιτικές*, etc.), for reasons which have a cultural basis. Yet, even in English, the term 'policy' has no single meaning since for one thing the very nature of the practices it is meant to signify differs from one sociocultural context to another, and also because language policy is neither an ideologically free concept nor an ideologically neutral social practice (Dendrinos 1996). Therefore, despite the fact that the term usually suggests a planned course of action, a strategy of some sort, its pragmatic meaning ranges from 'prudent' conduct to making ad hoc common-sense decisions and uncritically accepting things as they are, to a principled approach, plan or action by federal governments, organizations or enterprises which affects public or group interest. When there is no enunciated policy on particular language matters, there is implicit or explicit recognition that the way things work with language *is* policy. And that is in fact the case in many instances when language policy is of the unstated kind. Social action or practices regarding language matters may derive from and be consistent with a country's constitution and be based on precedent rather than statute.

On the basis of the above, language policy is understood in this paper to mean any of the following: (a) deliberate plan or strategy, (b) endorsement of social and political

activity, (c) incidental decisions made by authorities institutionalizing language rights and generally the use of language as a basis for social (in)equality, (d) ways that the social milieu or specific institutions such as education, the media, etc. deal with language issues. In the case of Greece, which is the country whose language policies this paper focuses on, there are certainly politically motivated pronouncements and governmental decrees, state regulations and consciously planned actions reflecting efforts to integrate decisions about language and language use with higher level laws and with the constitution. Some are deliberate, stated and implemented. Others are tacit and sometimes even disguised in the actions of government officials, employers, businesses, the media, and various community groups. Therefore, they are often hard to identify. We will attempt to uncover these, but we will also disclose deliberate policies – those which involve conscious status or corpus planning.[1] In doing so, we adopt a 'historical-structural' approach, recognizing the dynamic relationship between language policy and sociohistorical components.

2.   Language issues in Greece: a historical perspective

Until recently, most language planning activity in Greece revolved around the issue of diglossia,[2] a problem bequeathed to the Greek nation during the years of the Hellenistic Koine,[3] and secondly around the debate concerning a national language that would wake the national consciousness and the desire for liberation – a debate that began during the years before the Greek Revolution in 1821. The traditionalists argued for the resurrection of classical Greek, uncontaminated by 'impure' admixtures with which it had been 'polluted' during its contacts (especially with the Turkish language during the Turkish occupation). Others advocated a less utopian approach characterized by two tendencies, both of which recognized the priority of the language people actually spoke. The liberals promoted the spoken, popular language as the only possible mans for mass education and hence spiritual cultivation and national uprising. The conservatives advocated the spoken language, but 'cleansed' – having rejected all (Turkish) loan words, by rectifying the phonology, morphology and syntax of the spoken language through the grafting onto it classicizing forms (cf. Christidis 1996).

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[1] Language planning, often defined as a government authorised, long term, sustained and conscious effort to alter the function of a language in society for social and politically motivated reasons, generally falls into two areas called *corpus planning* and *status planning*. The latter involves decisions which affect the relative status of one or more languages in respect of that of others, and is therefore politically and ethically contentious. The former on the other hand involves the development and regulation of the forms of language itself. Such regulation occurs through the publication of reference and pedagogic grammars, dictionaries, style manuals, school curricula, standards for broadcasting, etc.

[2] *Diglossia* refers to the use of two varieties of the same language in different social domains. In this case, we are referring to high Greek which was used in public service, administration, legal or medical matters, in government dominated media and education. Low Greek was mainly used in personal communication, certain literary texts and a part of the press.

[3] When the Koine (the Common Greek language) became a 'global' language during Hellenistic years, its contact with other languages brought about language change and this gave birth to the Atticist movement, which was basically a reaction to change viewed then, as it is still often viewed today, as language deterioration.

Despite that the debate over language is brought to a halt during the Greek Revolution, all official documents by the scholars and the intellectuals of the time were in an archaic variety. Given their prestige, the language they used was sanctioned and consequently it was the variety used, during the formation of the Greek nation state. In other words, it was the intellectuals and not the federal state that determined the language policy those years – a policy which aimed at establishing and ideologically legitimating a 'purified' form (cf. Diatsentos 2006). This form, later called *katharevousa*[4] (originating from *katharo* meaning 'clean') and given an official function, is a language variety with a strong tendency for the classicization of words and their morphological features. This tendency is tightly linked with the nationalist re-visions of Greece after the Crimean War (Diatsentos 2008) and, as such, *katharevousa* in due course acquires high symbolic value. It is a representation of Modern Greek as a continuation of Ancient Greek and a basis upon which the Greeks would claim their European identity because classical Greek had such an immense effect on the West.

Efforts to standardize this 'high' variety of Modern Greek also brought to the surface the need of vocabulary expansion in order to respond to the social development in a European context. And, indeed, there was drastic borrowing, both *internal*, from the older phases of the language but often mediated by the European languages which tended to use Greek linguistic material to create their special vocabularies, and *external*, that is from European languages, especially French at the beginning and English later on (Christidis 1999a).

The heated controversies resulting to political disputes over the choice of the official language were rekindled toward the end of the nineteenth century, and the debate was not merely the product of ideological conflict. According to Liakos (1996), the neoclassical national ideology, and with it the cleansed language, did not entirely satisfy the nation's needs. The narrating of the nation's history could not continue to be supported by the pillar of antiquity on the one hand and the pillar of the National Revolution on the other, with an enormous time gap between them. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, it began becoming obvious that the idea of national revival would need to be replaced with the idea of national continuity.

At that period, and up to the end of World War I, Greek cities and especially Athens and Piraeus experienced a rapid increase of their populations and with this a consolidation of the middle classes. The needs of everyday urban life were presented more vividly by a new generation of journalists and writers with a new repertoire of themes. The concept of private and public space, the idealization of the countryside and the critique of city life, the division of labour between men and women, and occupation with the needs of childhood education gave to Greek social and cultural life new contents which were clarified in language (Liakos ibid). More and more intellectuals supported the use of the popular language for it was viewed as a means for the achievement of national goals. The point raised in fact was that the Greece was backward because of the inadequate education of its people and that the source of evil in educa-

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[4] This term is used systematically after 1850 (Delveroudi 2008).

tion was the language of access to education. What was being insinuated is, very simply, that when the language of access to education is different from that which is used at home, education fails to meet its goals.[5]

Thus, the problems of education were made out to be a direct outcome of the use of a language variety or code that people did not actually know or use in their daily lives. Of course, this claim was true. Hence, what was called the demoticist movement and linked to language education, signalled the beginning of a very harsh debate between the supporters of the two language varieties. Endeavours to use the popular language in genres that were the thrones of the high code (the scriptures and the Oresteia), and especially the efforts to introduce the popular code in school, created violent social battles (people actually died in social upheavals) and motivated various forces of repression (policing, legal penalization, etc.). Any attempt to connect education with the popular variety met with strong opposition and, in 1891, the high variety became the state's official language *by law*, after parliamentary vote. But 'the language issue' did not end there. Linked to the national ideology, it was a recurrent debate in the history of contemporary Greece, with many steps forward and backward, always interrelated with the political power in government, until 1976 when, after the fall of the junta, *popular* Greek was voted as the official language.

3.   Language issues in Greece at present

Despite the authorized end of the diglossic issue, which Greece had to endure for nearly two thousand years, the ideological meanings connected with the birth of the new nation state keep reappearing in various forms and shapes in today's reality. For example, a position advocated in the 1980s by a group pf prestigious academics proclaimed the 'decline' of Greek as a language, often implying and occasionally stating that this deterioration was a consequence of moving away from the roots of 'pure' Greek (meaning of course archaic Greek). The position spread quickly, the language-decline myth became a common theme in the media and up until recently it was a common subject of academic conferences and public debates. Some intellectuals and influential politicians bought into the myth and finally reached a point when the proposal to take measures to 'save the national language' was brought to Parliament.[6]

Frangoudaki (1996) argues that positions of this sort are pervasive when they are formulated in grandiloquent nationalist terms and construe an idealised image of the Greek language, celebrating it for its diachrony – a feature said to be exclusive to the Greek language alone[7]. In this context, Greek was and still is branded by those who reproduce

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[5]   Many years later, in the 1970s and 80s this argument was developed by the sociologist Basil Bernstein (1990) with his elaborated and restricted code theory.

[6]   This issue was debated in parliament on 19 November 1985.

[7]   It is interesting to note here that the ideology of linguistic superioritism can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks. As Calvet (1998) reminds us, they had found a comfortable way of dividing up the world by placing all those who did not speak Greek and so were 'strangers' into the category of barbarians. The Romans proceeded to borrow the word and thus the concept which then entered the Romance languages. As for French, the *Littré* dictionary gives, for example, this text from the 14th century: 'Barbares, tous ceulz qui sont de estrange langue' (Oresme). In Spanish Antonio de Nebrija

these linguistic ideologies as an 'unequalled', 'extraordinary' and 'unique' language.[8] Moreover, lexical borrowing was and still is sometimes treated by some conservative linguists and lay people, as a misdeed or transgression. Linguistic borrowing was and is still viewed by some as a sign of linguistic degeneration and linguistic 'pollution'.[9] However, the movement to linguistic 'purism', as this is called, which usually involves religious fundamentalism and a return to (or search for) linguistic authenticity,[10] motivated the myth about the 'linguistic poverty' of youth – an argument which is recurrent in contemporary (though not exclusive to) Greece, put forth by those that systematically ignore the social nature of language. It was in fact through this myth that another one was created: that by re-introducing the teaching of classical Greek in school, Greek youth would acquire a rich vocabulary and thus develop a better knowledge of Greek (cf. Christidis 1999b). Likewise, and in the same spirit, old issues recur under a new light and language questions that were thought to be resolved reappear. An example of such a question is whether or not to bring back the use of the Greek 'polytonic' graphemic system,[11] which was done away with when the popular language was adopted as the official state language. There is also a new heated debate about the orthography of the lexical items in dictionaries. Linguists interested in language, irrelevant of its users, argue in favour of etymological spelling. Others, who value users more than the symbolic system, are opposed to such spelling conventions. They argue in favour of simplifying spelling which is likely to help the masses develop the sort of literacies that they need in the age of information and computer mediated communication. Issues such as these, which are of course crucial because they are related with other issues in corpus planning and tightly linked with language education planning, are not of course exclusive to Greece. For example, the orthography issue has also raised heated debates

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(*Gramática de la lengua Castellana*, 1942) asserts: 'Barbarism is an intolerable mistake in any part of a sentence; and it is called because the Greeks called all peoples besides themselves barbarian. In turn, the Latins called barbarian all other nations save themselves and the Greeks. And because the strangers they called barbarians corrupted their speech when they wanted to speak it, they called barbarism the mistakes they committed in a word.'

[8] Myths about the superiority of one's language thrive not only in Greece but in many linguistic cultures around the world (Bauer/Trudgill 1998) and the members of the culture that produce such myths often cherish them to the extent that this is turned into policy which affects attitudes to other languages in the society in question (see, for example, Ferguson 1959, about myths concerning Arabic, Miller 1982 about myths concerning Japanese and Balibar 1985 about the linguistic superiority of the French).

[9] Proponents of this position, as for example a popular linguist in Greece and well known for his conservative convictions, George Babiniotis, have gone so far as to make the incredible claim that Greek has the particularity of not needing to borrow words from any other language (Babiniotis 1984).

[10] Interesting studies regarding linguistic *purism* have been carried out by Wexler 1974, Annamalai 1979 and Jernudd 1989.

[11] During the Hellenistic period, as Christidis (2005: 213-14) clearly explains, signs or accents were introduced to reveal how particular vowels of Greek were pronounced in the past, as the prosody had changed by then. In the ninth century A.D. these multiple signs on a word (i.e., the polytonic) were established in the graphemic system of Greek. With the adoption of the popular language, the polytonic system was no longer to be used. The official writing system makes us of a single accent that indicates word stress.

in Germany recently. However, in Greece issues of this sort are clad with the strong symbolic values of the past and they bring to the surface the political conflict connected with language and national identity bonded or dissociated from the ancient Hellenic past (Kakridi-Ferrari 2008).

The symbolic values with which Greek is vested lie at the basis of contemporary men and women's linguistic chauvinism. But, then, linguistic chauvinism or linguoracism, as Dendrinos calls it elsewhere (2000), is by no means exclusive to Greece. On the contrary, it seems that such attitudes are re-emerging everywhere and nowadays they often take the shape of resistance against the 'invasion' of English, viewed as a threat to the national language. A case in point is Brazil, as discussed by Rajagopalan (2004), whereby the form of linguoracism articulated is not dissimilar to that articulated in Greece and elsewhere in Europe. It construes language as the most important characteristic of a nation and thus it must be safeguarded at all costs against foreignization, viewed as contamination. A recent example was the 2003 declaration of the Greek Academy of Letters and Sciences, recommending that the use of Greeklish[12] be restricted (cf. Koutsogiannis/Mitsikopoulou 2003). Interestingly, a significant portion of the right- and left-wing press defended the position of the Academy. Only the arguments articulated differed slightly. The right wing basically construed Greeklish as a threat against the Greek language, which needs to be protected from foreign invasion, due largely to present-day globalization. The left based its attack on the negative impact of globalization whose ideological practices include forms such as Greeklish.

The above is but a small sample of reactions against the hegemony of English (cf. Macedo/Dendrinos/Gounari 2003, 2005, 2006), which are not institutionalized in any way. Quite the opposite, actually. English is promoted in school and in other social institutions, as we will see below.

4.   Facts and figures about the Greek language

Greek, as both the national and the official language of Greece, is spoken by a population of approximately 11 million people inside Greece and by Greeks in the diaspora (estimated to consist of 10 million people who have different levels of language competence and literacy in Greek). For these diasporic populations, Greek might be their first, second or even their third language.

Of course, when referring to Greek as a first or a second language, we are basically referring to standard Greek. However, it should be noted that there are Modern Greek dialects spoken inside and outside Greece, and these dialects, along with hybrid varieties of Greek have been an object of study (cf. Tzitzilis 2001). Recently, they have received attention again and support through the work of the Centre for the Greek Language, which is attached to the Ministry of Education, is under the wing of the Ministry of Culture and is mainly funded by the Greek state.

The important work of Christidis (1999) presents the most prominent dialects spoken outside of Greece which are still alive but have little support from the 'motherland'.

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[12] A term used for when someone writes in Greek using the Latin alphabet.

The most important of these dialects is Pontic, spoken by approximately 300,000 speakers in Russia and Turkey, especially Asia Minor. Another dialect spoken in Turkey, but dying fast, is the Greek dialect spoken in Cappadocia. Southitalian Greek, deriving from Doric Greek once spoken widely by the two communities of Calabria and Salentina, is now spoken by a few of the elderly. It is one of the celebrated dialects outside of Greece but also one of the most threatened languages in Europe today. The Marioupolic dialect or else called Hellenocrimaic (because those who spoke it moved to Marioupoli from Crimea in the eighteenth century) is a dialect spoken by 120,000 people still today in the Ukraine. Finally, there is the Sarakatsan dialect which is spoken in Bulgaria by approximately 10,000 and the Cretan dialect spoken in Lebanon and Syria by about 7,000 people. In Lebanon, in fact, there are a number of Greek schools funded by the Greek state for the Greek speaking Christians. The most important Greek variety spoken outside of Greece is of course Cypriot Greek which is spoken by about 650,000 Greek Cypriots, cultivated and studied inside and outside Cyprus.

All the above dialects have distinctive features at the level of lexicon, phonology and morphology as well as at the level of syntax, though the syntactic features have been studied least of all. The same is true of the geographic dialects within the Greek state, roughly divided into roughly nine large categories according to certain characteristic linguistic features (mainly phonological, but also lexical, morphological and syntactical),[13] and named after the area where they are spoken. The features are interesting, but absence of relevant policies to support these dialects is leading them to extinction as linguistic standardization and homogenization are sweeping them away. The linguistic homogeneity is endorsed through tacit language policies in education and the media, while the growing use of the web, the invasion of English, forces of economic globalization and other important cultural conditions are assisting in Greece as in other countries all over the world, the forging of a standard language and its normalization through a variety of linguistic resources.[14]

Support for the standardization Greek, in the form of corpus planning, has been increasingly available in the last 30-40 years. Grammars, both reference and pedagogic grammars, dictionaries and thesauruses, and more recently language corpora are for sale on the market or accessible for free through state funded organizations such as the Centre for the Greek Language (www.komvos.edu.gr) and the Institute for Language and Speech Processing (www.ilsp.gr).

The Centre for the Greek Language is involved in both corpus and status planning of the Greek language while, through a number of publications, it has made a serious intervention in reinterpreting the value and the history of the Greek language, particularly with the work of Christidis (1996, 1999, 2001, 2005).

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[13] For a classification of Modern Greek dialects within Greece see Triantafyllidis (1993) and Hatzidakis (1892). Forthcoming from the Triantafyllidis Foundation is a volume on Modern Greek dialects edited by Ch. Tzitzilis.

[14] For the process of normalization and the symbolic control of one standard, homogenized language see Bourdieu (1991).

5.   The use of Greek in the social sphere and language rights

Language policy and common practice coincide so that Greek is used for all documents and manuals aimed to protect consumers, patients, clients and to safeguard citizens' rights. Like other service-society countries, Greece is trying to democratize the language used for public documents but it has still not adopted a 'plain language approach' for such texts (Dendrinos/Marmaridou 2001).

There is increasingly more information on the web in Greek, but as it is still limited – at least when we compare it to the availability of information in English. Therefore, more and more Greek users resort to English sites. Information exchange through the internet occurs in Greek, though there is a problem with the lack of support to the Greek alphabet by some applications. This is why Greeklish is often used in computer mediated communication, especially for e-mail an forum messages, something which has stirred reactions as discussed earlier in this paper.

Street signs and other types of signs in places frequented by Speakers of Other Languages (henceforth SOLs) appear in both the Greek and the Latin alphabet. Information in places and spaces frequented by tourists is articulated in both Greek and English, as well as in other languages, such as German, Italian, French, Swedish, etc. Of course, the language of access to information depends on the languages used by the tourists frequenting particular places. The additional languages are chosen to accommodate tourists who bring in the money. It is not the same when the SOLs are not tourists but immigrants to Greece. We will refer to this issue below.

Greek is used in all social domains and, therefore, it is not experiencing yet the type of domain loss which some of the Nordic languages are experiencing. It is the language of public documents and all public services, the language of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and the language at the workplace.

The media are accessed in Greek. However, in the last few years there are a few newspapers with Greek news in English and some of the community languages, such as Albanian, Bulgarian and Arabic. In the large urban centres, one finds newspapers in French, German, Italian and in other European languages, but also press from the Balkan, the ex Soviet Union and the Arab countries. Radio programmes are generally in Greek, but some (mainly state) radio stations provide Greek and world news in English and in community languages. Talk shows and news on TV are in Greek, and there are several sitcoms and films in Greek; but, the TV and cinema film industry is dominated by American English. There are also some popular series in Spanish and Portuguese. Unlike in many other European countries, however, most films for adults are subtitled.

What seems to be most wanting in Greece are policies for linguistic social justice and we shall refer to the main issues of concern. First of all, there is absence of a well-formulated language policy in the media and therefore very little is done about accommodating people with disabilities. Only the hearing-impaired have recently been given special attention to and an increasing number of actions are taken to use sign language in public spaces and television. However, there are no gender-fair language policies in the press and in advertising. This is also true with regard to lack of transla-

tion policies on TV, the press, advertising, etc. Where absence of such policies is most pronounced, in our opinion, however, is in the areas of scientific research and academic publications, which in the last ten years are increasingly in English.

Greek is used in the labour market and it is difficult to get and to maintain a job without a good knowledge of Greek, except in a few multinational enterprises and that for a short period of time. Social literacy is expected in the workplace and social affairs, but grammatical and orthographic literacy are of utmost importance, and a rich lexical repertoire is a matter of social prestige.

Of course, other languages are also important for job seekers (dominant languages and particularly English, German, Spanish, French, Italian and recently Russian – more or less in that order). Job applicants for public services are awarded significant credit points for their certified competence in each of these 'foreign' languages.

Despite the fact that officially Greece is a monolingual nation state, the society is progressively multilingual. People who have recently immigrated from the Balkans, the ex Soviet Union, Asia and Africa have brought with them a wealth of languages, which are used as community languages, as the Greek state recognizes the right of anyone to use his/her mother tongue privately or in public. However, not one of these imported languages has any significant status.[15] On the basis of Greek policy, the languages recognized as minority languages in Greece (and therefore recognized as having some rights) are Turkish, Latino-Hebrew and Armenian. Other languages with a long tradition in Modern Greece which, however, are not officially recognized are: Slavomacedonian, Pomach, Vlach, a particular variety of Albanian[16] and Rom.

Actually, the linguistic rights of immigrants are wanting. While Greece conforms to European law regarding legal rights and, in courts, the state provides SOLs with interpreters, this policy is not always implemented. The same is true of legal services – the information documents on which are to be in Albanian, Russian, English and French. Also, it is true of public services for asylum seekers, for whom there are supposed to be instructions, guides and other information documents in English, French, Turkish and Arabic. Such information is supposed to be available at the Immigration Service and the Social Security Office where, besides written information, interpretation services are to be provided to immigrants. But, it must be noted that policy implementation and actual practices have not been systematically investigated yet. There are indications that things do not work exactly the way they are supposed to.

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[15] Greece is only one of the EU member states that clings to a linguistic assimilationist ideology, despite the recommendations of the European Commission for member states to respect the EU's and their own multilingualism. Such ideology, prevalent in European nations that up until 20-30 years ago were still fighting for linguistic homogenization, may have motivated European Parliament voting on 15-11-2006. The EU Parliament adopted a language plan and legislation for collective language rights, modifying the EU Treaty to allow for a legal base for linguistic diversity and for the fundamental rights agency to take care of language rights. See: 'Unity in Diversity? European Parliament rejects Bernat Joans Report proposals' (Eurolang 2006).

[16] This variety, which has over the years become hybridized – mixed with Greek – and which is becoming to a large extent extinct (cf. Tsitsipis 1995) was and still is called *Arvanitika*, not Albanian/Alvanika/.

In addition to the above, it is noted that there is not a well-thought out host-country language policy for immigrants who wish to be incorporated in and are needed for the Greek labour market. This issue relates to their linguistic and cultural heritage rights. It also relates to their right to language education – an issue which is very complicated, because it may restrict rather than promote access to economic resources (cf. Tollefson 1989). Although immigrants are not prevented from using their native language in public life, there is no policy explicitly stating that they have the right to learning Greek so as to increase access to economic resources and political power.

In conclusion, it is perhaps important to stress that Greece does not have a strong commitment to language rights through an explicit language policy which demonstrates the value of official recognition of language rights in education, the media and social life. In this respect, Greece – as well as many other EU member states – cannot be compared with countries such as Australia, the national language policy of which specifies not only the right to government information and services in one's mother tongue, but also native language education for pupils who do not speak the country's official language, i.e. English. Therefore, with their national language policy, as Lo Bianco (1987) explains, the Australian government had wanted not only to ensure that everyone would have an opportunity to learn the language of access to power in the country but also that those that do not speak it would not be seriously disadvantaged.

6.   Language in Greek education

6.1   Greek in the curriculum and language policy in school

Greek is the language through which all official knowledge *is accessed* in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Exceptions to this rule are international schools operating in Greece. They do not follow the Greek national curriculum and knowledge is accessed in other languages, most often English. University departments of foreign language and literature are also an exception to the rule of having all courses taught in Greek; their courses are commonly taught in the language which is their object of study. So, for example, literature and linguistics courses in the Department of German Studies are taught in German. Finally, in recent years, some postgraduate programmes in disciplines such as economics and marketing are offered in English.

Greek is an also an *object* of official knowledge throughout primary and secondary school. Until recently, language viewed as an autonomous meaning system was the theoretical basis of syllabuses for the teaching of Greek as L1, and instructional methods promoted the teaching and learning of the formal properties of language, emphasizing the importance of learning to speak and write grammatically correct Greek and being able to use a rich range of sophisticated vocabulary. Recent curriculum reform has shifted some of the emphasis from language knowledge to social and academic literacy, from linguistic competence to communicative performance and the production of discourse and text. The Centre for the Greek Language has played a very important role in assisting the shift through an excellent portal which hosts guides, mate-

rials and tools for the teachers of the Greek language and Greek literature.[17] The interesting pedagogic material included in the portal for the support of Greek language teachers and students is in the form of tools that can be employed by users for autonomous learning, and the development of their literacy, inside and outside of the formal education system.

The subject of Ancient Greek is still a sore subject to discuss. As a school subject, it has been in and out of the secondary school curriculum, depending on the political bend of the government in office. However, conservative attitudes to what language is and how it should be learnt are still quite prevalent, and this determines not only whether the study of Ancient Greek should be included as a compulsory subject or not, but also why and how it should be taught, whether it is expected that everyone learns it or that school will offer knowledge about the language, its history and/or the sociocultural origins of Modern Greek.[18]

As in many other European countries, in Greece there is a serious absence of articulated language policies in schools; that is, there are few statements of action including provisions for follow-up, monitoring and revision at all levels of state and private education. For example, there are few written documents determining the ways in which the language programme of primary schools, as defined by the national curriculum, will serve children of varied social and ethnic groups. Furthermore, there is no language policy across the curriculum in secondary schools, tackling the problems of the language in different disciplines. More importantly, there are no stated policies to ensure linguistic social justice in schools or in tertiary education; that is, policy for critical language awareness, for the treatment of youngsters with learning disabilities, for gender-fair language use, for provision of bilingual education and for support for the teaching and learning of Greek to the children of immigrants and generally to speakers of other languages.

6.2 Greek as a second and foreign language and bilingual education

As regards the language education of SOL, there are a few stated policies and many tacit ones. One of the most interesting instances regards the language education policy developed through a funded project to reform the language education of the predominantly Turkish speaking Muslim population in Thrace – an area of Northern Greece. Through the project, planning for bilingual education has resulted to an innovative, intercultural education programme, which is changing attitudes and developing cultural tolerance.[19] The language to access knowledge in this programme is Greek and Turkish.

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[17] Visit: www.komvos.edu.gr (in Greek)

[18] All these are of course politically and ideologically loaded questions, but so is the way that each of them is dealt with. A book by Christidis (2005) is written in Greek especially for secondary school students. It constitutes a rereading of the history of the Greek language for school, with the aim to reveal the genuine value of the Greek language as it developed over the centuries, but stripped from the attire with which it has often been vested and ideologically distorted.

[19] For information, visit: www.museduc.gr.

There are few other bilingual education programmes in Greece and these are not state funded. Furthermore, there are very few other programmes in the country which use languages other than Greek to access knowledge but these are for the privileged social groups and they are linked to the dominant languages in the French, English, German, American and international schools in Athens and Thessaloniki. Their school curricula are integrated and they have often used Content and Language Integrated Learning approaches (CLIL) in their programmes.

Up to the present, there are no bilingual education programmes for economic immigrants, and Greek as a 'second' language (GSL)[20] inside and outside of the formal school context has not been the case extensively. While there are several free adult-education programmes for the teaching of Greek to SOL, they are still too few and they are in the urban areas – for immigrants and for repatriated Greeks of the diaspora, plus they do not provide economic incentives for people to attend them. Moreover, the support for GSL in primary and secondary schools during after-school programmes, as extra curricular activity, is neither enough nor adequate. In addition to this, there is no policy yet for support to the immigrant children for language education in mainstream classes.

Part of the reason may be that there is no expertise in the area of teaching GSL. This is why universities in Greece have recently introduced postgraduate programmes for GSL and GFL (Greek as a Foreign Language). These programmes have been state funded as there is concern to develop expertise in the field. Through these semi-academic and semi-practical programmes, curriculum and syllabus planning, as well as materials development for the teaching of Greek are taught and practiced. Whereas GSL is in greater demand inside Greece more than ever before, GFL is in demand outside of Greece also, and the need to be certified for one's language competence in Greece has motivated the Greek language examination system developed by the Centre for the Greek Language. The language examinations to be certified for one's communicative competence in Greek are administered inside and outside Greece, while support materials for the teaching and learning of Greek as a *second* and as a *foreign* language are increasingly available in the market.

Through policy and governmental decrees, Greece supports Greek schooling for the children of Greek immigrants to European countries, Africa, Australia and North America,[21] while the Greek Orthodox church also intervenes to have a say in the subjects to be taught in Sunday schools. Moreover, Modern Greek is taught in many universities outside Greece that maintain Modern Greek Studies, sometimes through the generous donations of philellenes or Greek ex patriots.

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[20] Though we are in agreement with the critique of using the term 'second language' for a language which may in fact be the third or fourth that immigrants or others are learning, we are using it like it is employed in the *Second Language* Acquisition literature, to distinguish it from *foreign language* learning.

[21] See, for example, Christidis, A.-F. (ed.) (1997): *Language education and Greek immigrants in Europe*.

6.3   Other languages in the school

The languages in addition to Greek which are offered in schools are taught as foreign languages and each language course follows its own curriculum, designed by 'experts' in the field of say French or German language teaching, serving the goals outlined by the curriculum designers. There is not a single, unified curriculum of modern languages with transparent statements about why some languages are included and others excluded. The fact that only a few widely used languages are offered in schools and that all smaller European languages and community languages are excluded from school curricula, is not a result of policy but of commonsensical ad hoc decisions, made by Ministers of Education.

The fact that most European languages are not considered official school knowledge, neither in Greece nor in the majority of EU member states, does not in any way contradict the European language education policies or recommendations. It does concur with the 1+2 languages policy of the European Commission, and Greek pupils must take two languages in school, in addition to Greek. Of course, it must be noted that this practice does not truly favour social multilingualism or individual plurilingualism, as it is claimed that it should.[22] Quite the contrary, in absence of a policy or plan with regard to the languages offered in European schools, the language most favoured is English, which is introduced in the third grade of primary school and it is then offered throughout secondary school. French and German are introduced later. More importantly, 'foreign' language teaching and learning is still – for the large percentage of the population – synonymous with the teaching and learning of languages that are widely used in the world and associated with economic and political power as well as social prestige (Dendrinos 1997, 1998, 2004b).

Parents', students' and teachers' expectations with regard to foreign language literacy are still dominated by the 'native speaker' paradigm, whether languages are studied in school or in privately owned foreign language centres everywhere in Greece. They offer low-fee foreign language instruction which can be accessed by everyone, including the lower economic classes. In such language centres, particularly those in the urban areas, additional languages of economic importance are beginning to be offered, such as Russian and Chinese. Some of them also offer Greek as a foreign language. International foreign language teaching/learning materials, rather than local, dominate the market and, until recently, international examination systems – which are largely dependent on monolingual ideologies and a monocultural ethos of communication – were the only ones available.

Initial foreign language teacher education programmes in universities and other institutions, as well as foreign language teachers' continuing education in many EU countries are still largely the colonial enterprises they used to be in the past, though this is bound to change with the new EU recommendations regarding multilingualism. But even

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[22] It has been argued elsewhere by Dendrinos (2003) that in many instances support to the idea of linguistic diversity and multilingualism which is promoted by the EU is no more than an alibi for national language protectionism and promotionism.

now, one should note that a lot has changed in Greece with regard to languages: language learning starts earlier than before. Greece (like with Portugal, Italy, Spain and France) has introduced one foreign language in primary school. The secondary school curriculum includes a wider range of foreign languages, and not only English or French as it did 20 years ago. Besides these two languages, schools now also offer German and more recently they have introduced, on an experimental basis, Italian and Spanish. Social demand for foreign language proficiency has surfaced in language centres now offering English, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Russian and Chinese (plus Greek as a second language). At the level of tertiary education, there are regulations about languages that students seeking to be accepted in tertiary education should be competent in, and also about which languages can be used in which under- and post-graduate programmes.

Finally, the most important step toward an alternative positioning to other languages in Greece has been made with a large scale national project, which Dendrinos began directing in 2003. This project regards examinations in a variety of European languages for certification of language competence which counts significantly for those seeking a position in public service but also for access to the job market as a whole. The project aims to support the idea of European multilingualism and plurilingual citizenry, to legitimate community languages, to have a backwash effect on how additional languages are taught/learnt and how one's literacies are used to access information.[23]

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[23] For more information on this project visit the Ministry of Education website: www.ypepth.gr/kpg (in Greek). For info in English (and soon in other languages, visit the webpage of the RCEL of the University of Athens: www.uoa.gr/english/rcel.

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