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LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY VS NATIONAL LANGUAGE PROTECTIONISM: LANGUAGE PLANNING IN ACTION IN GREECE

The title of my presentation contains two composite concepts which are crucially linked to the very aims of our newly founded Federation. The first has to do with the promotion of practices respecting linguistic diversity as opposed to practices of national language protectionism or, otherwise, national language promotionism. Indeed, these two types of discursive and social practices are a result of political agendas, which are based on differential valuation systems regarding language and culture.

VALUATION SYSTEMS	PROMOTING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY	PROMOTING PARTICULAR LANGUAGES
Values	Respect for linguistic and cultural differences	Regard for one's own (or some languages above all others
Purpose	To respect language-ecology	To support single (or dominant) language diffusion
Ideology	Non-assimilationist, poly-phonic, trasculturalist	Nationalist, linguoracist and culturally separatist
Discourse	Respectful of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity	Advocating linguistic and cultural homogeneity
Key feature	Respect for linguistic and cultural Otherness	Expectations of communicative and linguistic proficiency in single languages
Approach	Collaborative in order to share linguistic	**Key** Antagonistic; use of hegemonic or

	and cultural wealth	resistance strategies; power struggle
Ethos	Multilingual, heteroglossic and polyphonic	Monolingual, monoglossic and uniphonic
Communicative competence	Expectations of interlinguistic and intercultural competence	Expectations of 'native' linguistic and sociopragmatic competence

Practices of linguistic diversity promotionism are consistent with Article 2 of our unanimously passed constitution, outlining the purpose of EFNIL as follows:

- The collection and exchange of information about the officially recognized standard languages of the EU
- The provision of expert advice about language policy in the EU
- The preservation of linguistic diversity in Europe
- The promotion of plurilingualism in the EU states.

Clearly, the purpose of our organization then is not to take action so as to "protect" or promote national/official languages. And rightly so. National/official languages in EU states do not need to be protected against the "threat" of the indeed hegemonic English, nor against the "danger" of change. As linguists, we all well know that language change, linguistic borrowing, and all sorts of developments occurring in the language are a natural process of social growth which is
linguistically encoded. It is a direct result of linguistic/cultural contact and the need of each linguistic community to respond to newly arising communicative demands. Even materials, such as grammars, dictionaries, monolingual and bilingual encyclopedias which have traditionally functioned for the standardization of languages cannot possibly stop naturally occurring change. Nor is this the role of such materials, which set out to describe language in use and thus become essential supportive tools. Indeed, all official European languages are supported by such tools more than ever before, as there is an abundance of state-produced or subsidized and free-market publications available for educational institutions, groups and individuals. On the other hand, as linguists and politically minded individuals we know well enough that the value attached to some languages and not to others has nothing to do with the languages themselves and how well they are protected, supported or promoted. It has to do with the politics of languages which are very tightly linked to political systems. In the case of the EU, with its neoliberal politics, choices and valuations are directly related to market forces. Therefore, the languages being widely taught and learned are the "strong" European languages, i.e., those languages which have high-market value and carry the prestige of the political and economic status of their speakers. The "weaker" languages have slim chances of

becoming goods for sale for they are not considered commodities that can bring immediate profits to the users.

The problem of course is that with English as the global language, which also functions as a force of (economic) globalization, even the "strong" languages are loosing ground as international commodities and fewer chances than before to affect other languages through contact with them, and have the symbolic and material gains from such an enterprise. This being experienced as a problem, what features as a solution is a crusade against the hegemony of English, by way of supporting a linguistic diversity paradigm. In reality, however, more often than not, the support of linguistic diversity entails a political agenda which has little to do with shared distribution of linguistic power in the European community and equal valuations of languages. It becomes an excuse for the promotion of particular languages through monolingual, monoglossic and uniphonic ethos of communication. As such, it stands very little chance to be effective.

The preservation of multilingualism and the promotion of plurilingualism in our European community of members states, each with its own "glorious" linguistic and cultural past, and with all languages seeking to have a share of the linguistic and cultural power therein, can only succeed though the promotion of linguistic diversity by means of social and discursive practices that it entails. Language policy and legislation will not suffice, for even if it is spelled out, the market forces by which our societies operate will not allow their realization. An excellent example is the "mother + two other foreign languages" European policy, which has so far resulted to English being introduced in most European states from grade 3 or 4, and a few other "strong" languages being included in school curricula and tertiary education. Another example is the policies being considered or proposed for some European universities increasingly offering academic programmes and supporting academic publications in English, at the expense of programmes and publications in the official language of the country. The negative response to such considerations is again related to our economic and political system. Given that universities and other tertiary institutions in Europe are increasingly obliged to fund themselves and expected to respond to the competitive demands of the global market, the global language serves them much better to achieve the goals set for them.

On the basis of the above, it is strongly suggested that, whereas policy and legislation might be helpful in some respects, unless European states support the teaching and learning of each other's language, especially by creating social contexts in which languages might be useful and valuable, policy and legislation will remain words on paper. In other words, what is being proposed is language planning which actively intervenes to create such contexts. This brings me to the second concept in the title of my talk, i.e., language planning in action. It is this concept which is behind the national Greek language project I would like to present. This project, briefly described in the Supplement to this brief introduction, entails the design and development of a unified system for the assessment of language competence in a European language for certification which can be used as a work qualification.

THE STATE CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
The national project described in the Supplement has been of particular interest to me for a variety of reasons1, including the following, which I consider most important.

Up until now, certificates of foreign language proficiency in Greece (and many other countries in fact) have been provided by large organizations primarily interested in both material and symbolic profit. Therefore, they have developed systems for international exams which, of course, are neither culturally nor ideologically neutral. A case in point is that they take little account of local social needs for the use of the language in question. However, the Greek learner of English, for example, who needs a certificate of English language competence at intermediate or advanced level, as a qualification that will allow him/her to find work or to secure his/her job, has very different needs for the use of English than, say, the French, Spanish or Swedish learner of English. Hence, my interest in designing English exams for people who live and work in Greece, based on relevant research and needs analysis, as well as on experience and socio-cultural insight.

Most importantly, the only languages for which the certification of proficiency level is provided in Greece and in many other countries are the big, prestigious languages that are supported by strong economic and political systems - usually English, French, German and Italian or Spanish. In this way, foreign language certification becomes a means for the reproduction of the unequal distribution of linguistic and cultural power in Europe and elsewhere, as well as a mechanism for legitimating some languages and marginalizing others. For example, university students going on Erasmus projects make few attempts to learn the language of host countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Portugal if these languages have no tangible value attached to them upon their return (say as work qualifications). Another example relates to the linguistic wealth in Greece presently, with its many newcomer economic immigrants speaking, say, Russian, Rumanian, Bulgarian or Polish. As it is not possible to take language exams and receive certificates of proficiency in these or the aforementioned European languages (because there is no private enterprise that has developed an examination system for any of these languages, nor an organization supported by the governments in countries where these languages are spoken), this linguistic wealth is devalued and delegitimated. Since one cannot be certified for knowing these languages, proficiency in these languages does not count socially. Therefore, they cannot possibly be considered as a work qualification. I am sure I don't have to spell out the consequences of this state of affairs. It is these consequences that I am concerned with, and here lies my interest in the larger project.

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The information in this pamphlet concerns the examination and certification system implemented on the basis of a 1999 law, by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs of the Greek state, who is the legal copyright owner of all documents containing information about the system of the "Kratiko Pistopiitiko Glossomathias" (KPG).

The system is designed and developed by a central committee of specialists, appointed by the Ministry of Education. This committee has the obligation to inform the public and disseminate information regarding the system as a whole and the examinations in particular languages. In this capacity, members of the committe produce information documents in Greek and in the other languages in which exams are carried out. As such, the members listed

below have collaborative responsibility for the texts produced and share ownership rights with the Ministry.

- English texts: Bessie Dendrinos, President of the KPG Committee and Exam Board
  Professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- French texts: Vasso Tokatlidou, Member of the KPG Committee and Exam Board
  Professor at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki
- German texts: Frideriki Batsalia, Member of the KPG Committee and Exam Board
  Professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Italian texts: Antonios Tsopanoglou, Vice-President of the KPG Committee and Exam Board
  Professor at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki

1. WHAT IS "KPG"?
- An acronym for "Kratiko Pistopiitiko Glossomathias" [State Certificate of Language Proficiency]
- An examination system, on the basis of which levels of proficiency in a European language are certified.
- The certificate is awarded to those who pass both the written and the oral part of the exam.

2. WHAT ARE KPG EXAMS DESIGNED TO MEASURE?
- Exams for different levels of proficiency aim to test candidates' ability to make socially purposeful use of the target language at home and abroad.
- The exams measure candidates' competences to comprehend and produce oral and written discourse, as well as their ability to act as mediators across language and their awareness of how the target language works to produce socially purposeful meanings.
- Each exam consists of four modules:
  ❖ The first module is designed to test reading comprehension and language awareness.
  ❖ The second module is designed to test free writing production and mediation skills.
  ❖ The third is designed to test listening comprehension
  ❖ The fourth is designed to test free speaking production and mediation skills.

3. IN WHICH LANGUAGES CAN INTERESTED PARTIES TAKE KPG EXAMS?
Presently, candidates can take an upper intermediate level exam in:

- English
- French
- German
- Italian

In the immediate future, one will be able to take other level exams in these languages, aswell as in:
- Spanish

On the basis of research results investigating social needs, exams will be designed for:
- other European languages.

4. WHAT LEVELS ARE KPG EXAMS DESIGNED FOR?

KPG exams are presently designed for Level B2 (see below) but are planned to include exams for the two "independent User" levels and the two "Proficient User levels" on the scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning and Assessment, developed by the Council of Europe:

- Level A: Basic User
  A1 Beginner
  A2 Elementary

- Level B: Independent User
  B1 Intermediate
  B2 Upper Intermediate

- Level C: Proficient User
  C1 Advanced
  C2 Full mastery

5. FOR WHOM ARE THE EXAMS DESIGNED and WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE THEM?

- Eligible to take the KPG exams are all E.U. citizens and others who are living, studying and/or working in Greece.
- The exams are addressed to a population of language users, regardless of whether their knowledge of the target language was acquired as L1/L2, or was learnt in a formal educational setting.
- They are designed for candidates aged 15+.

6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GREEK IN THE KPG EXAMS?

- K.P.G. exams are designed for languages other than Greek as a second or foreign language. However, the state has authorized the Centre for the Greek Language to

carry out language exams, on the basis of which levels of proficiency in Greek is certified.

- Listening and reading comprehension skills in Greek are required by those taking the exam in any language.
- As Greek is considered to be the common language of the candidates, they are required to:
  1. understand instructions and test rubrics in Greek,
  2. function in the role of mediator transferring information from Greek into the target language.

7. WHAT IS THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE KPG EXAMS?

- The development of a unified examination system in European languages, treating them as equal in social value.
- The recognition of proficiency in any European language as a work qualification.
- The promotion of:
  1. social multilingualism and individual pluriligualism in Greece.
  2. foreign language learning in Greece, viewed as an asset for educational and professional mobility within and outside the E.U.

8. WHAT IS THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE KPG?

- Given that KPG is a "proficiency assessment" (rather than diagnostic or competences measurement) examination system,
  1. it sets out to evaluate socially purposeful language knowledge and literacy.
  2. it adheres to a functional approach to language use.

- Its global scale descriptors and its specific language use descriptors are related to those of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

- The methodology used for K.P.G. test construction and item design is conducive to:
  1. standardised testing procedures,
  2. the design of a reliable and valid measurement tool.

9. WHO ARE THE BODIES INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM?

Hellenic Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs

- General Directorate of International and European Educational Affairs
  Directorate for the Certification of Foreign Language Proficiency

- Executive Committee
  Central Examination Board

- Departments of Foreign Language and Literature:

English and German: University of Athens, French and Italian: University of Thessaloniki

10. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KPG AND OTHER LANGUAGE
CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS?

- It resembles other national/state language systems for the certification of language proficiency (e.g. the Finnish National Language Exam System), but it has its own characteristics.
- As this is a national exam system, with face validity in the Greek and the European social context, it differs markedly from large-scale international examination systems (such as the Michigan Language Exam).
- It does not have commercial interests and it is subsidized by the state.
- There is no interest in the material and symbolic profit often connected with international exams concerned with assessing and certifying proficiency in one of the "strong" European languages.

11. IS THE KPG A NATIONALLY / INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AND ACCREDITED EXAMINATION SYSTEM / LANGUAGE CERTIFICATE?

- As the KPG follows the levels of proficiency specified by the Council of Europe and takes into consideration the global-scale and language use descriptors in the Common European Framework, it lends itself to European benchmarking procedures.
- As the system is being developed, it publishes detailed descriptions of all relevant procedures and strategies, making the system transparent on both national and international levels.
- It is presently recognized by the Greek state, along with other language certification systems, with which it does not wish to have a competitive relationship.
- The KPG (B2 certificate) has recently been credited by the Greek state and it is recognized as a work qualification.
- In connection with the development of the KPG exams, the Greek Ministry of National Education has become a member of ICC-Europe, based in Frankfurt.
- As the system develops, it is building into it mechanisms for internal and external evaluation, so that when it is fully developed it can be fully recognized internationally and the language certificates have international accreditation.

12. WHAT INFORMATION AND MATERIALS ARE PRESENTLY AVAILABLE ON-LINE?

Interested parties may find on-line (at http://www.ypepth.gr/kpg), presently only in Greek, but soon in other languages as well, the documents listed below:

- Information about the KPG system and its implementation
- Bodies and institutions involved in policy and system design

- Names and titles of the language specialists involved in the design of the system and the examination
- Rules and regulations regarding the examination system
- The Common KPG Framework for all languages
- Specifications for the B2 level exams in English, French, German and Italian (including test typology and examples in the four languages)
- Sample exams in the four languages
- Past papers in French and Italian

13. WHAT PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS PREPARING CANDIDATES AND FOR CANDIDATES THEMSELVES?

- Most of the information and materials presently on-line has also appeared in a recent publication of the Ministry of Education, which has, in addition to this publication, issued two News Bulletins about the KPG. One is in Greek and the other in the four languages of the 2003 exams.
- Video recordings have been made for the preparation of orals examiners
- Commercial local and international publishers (unauthorized for this task) have already produced books for the tutoring of KPG exam candidates (particularl in English).
- The Central KPG Exam Board plans to invite local and international publishers to produce the following collaborative publications:
    1. Teacher-Training Manual for language teachers and KPG exam tutors
    2. Textbooks for the preparation of candidates
    3. Self-directed learning and preparation materials.