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Advanced Greek in the Anglophone Diaspora

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Yaya's Tongue, Yaya's Threats: On Teaching Advanced Greek in the Anglophone Diaspora

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to discuss the importance of the teaching of the Greek language at advanced level for the maintenance and development of Greek Studies in the large diasporic societies of the Anglophone countries. Apart from reviewing parameters identified in existing literature, such as national policies and institutional changes affecting small programs, curricula and academic staff, factors that have facilitated and impeded an increase in the number of learners of Greek in higher education are examined, with a specific focus on the microanalysis of qualitative data. Drawn from questionnaires, observations and students' journals, these data point to a series of polarities existing within academic and ethnic settings that have an impact on both the quality and the level of proficiency of tertiary education offerings on Greek language in the English speaking countries.

Keywords: Advanced Greek Language, Anglophone Diasporic Communities, Social Background, Multiculturalism

PROFICIENCY IN LANGUAGE has been advertised as one of the most highly valued learning outcomes for the graduates of ethnic studies in academic curricula worldwide. Although consistently challenged by the global dominance of certain languages, and positively enriched by the current association of linguistic competence with cross-cultural awareness, expectations of high proficiency remain strong, especially in multinational societies with robust ethnic communities that support language programs numerically and financially. Interestingly enough, standards of excellence found to both motivate and tantalise higher education policies in their pursuit of high status (Lewis, 2006) tend to be reversed in the case of low priority languages, with not much energy or “soul” left to sustain their maintenance and creative development.

This paper aims at tackling the problem of declining students' interest in learning advanced Greek in the US and Australia by reviewing existing literature and noting new parameters that impact on Greek language teaching in tertiary education. The point of departure for the investigation is pragmatic; that is, it is based not on *a priori* analysis, but on observations and materials drawn from a specific language environment: on students' accounts and also texts created in and around the academic class. It is an action (first and second person) inquiry, with no linear cycles of reflection, conducted during my seven years of teaching Greek at an Australian university, with the purpose of introducing improvements through innovative pedagogy. Further reflection on these materials, which were collected at a period of crisis, led to surrounding domains, such as the academic, migrant and other communities; therefore to parallel examination of national strategies, institutional policies, family attitudes and ethnic community initiatives related to Greek language teaching in the US and Australia. This combined method of resource examination pointed to a series of intercultural and cross-cultural polarities impacting on the quality of current offerings of Greek language and culture,

which are related to concepts such as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986 and Robbins, 2000); language codes (Sadovnic, 2000 and Christie & Martin, 2007); modes such as orality and cultural literacy; and most importantly to the duality of manual and intellectual labor, as reflected both in the organization of knowledge transmission in higher education, and in the social background of migrant families in the Anglophone diaspora at large.

There is no doubt that existing literature is very informative regarding the macroprocesses of Greek language shift/loss in the US and Australia. The impact of demographical factors (Hayek & Nicholas, 2004 and Clyne, 2003); the ideological discourse and policies of assimilation and multiculturalism (e.g. Journal of MGSA, 2006 and Schmidt, 2007); community aspirations and generational differences in linguistic attitudes and cultural values of Greek migrants (Arvanitis, 2004 and Holeva, 2004); sociolinguistic and specific communicative contexts and migrants' social background (Clyne, 2003 and Tamis, 2005); modification of identities due to socioeconomic changes, educational opportunities and professional practices (Papademetre & Routoulas, 2001); and teaching methodologies both in the homeland and the host country as viewed by stakeholders of Greek cultural literacy in specific cases (Brandshaw & Truckenbrodt, 2003). What seems to be missing is the human agents' part, not in the form of preconceived and elaborated views, but as raw material drawn from a space that is "partly habitual, partly creative and improvisational", "partly ours, partly theirs"; a third, practice-based, space that transcends macrosocial processes where identities, languages, relationships and fantasies are blending and renegotiated (Georgakopoulou & Finnis, 2009:468-469). On this space, which already points to a third language and a third culture (Holeva, 2004), the present paper attempts to shed light, locate polarities and draw conclusions.

Greek in the Context of Foreign Languages Teaching in the Diasporic Communities of the US and Australia

The teaching of Greek language in the large diasporic societies of the USA and Australia is engaged in a triadic relationship (Arvanitis, 2004): policies towards the first, second and third generations of citizens of Greek background; educational and political strategies of the migrants' countries of origin; and the dynamics of the Greek ethnic communities, which are part of a globally dispersed diaspora. The term diaspora is particularly relevant in the case of the Greek language, which is currently spoken by 16 million people, approximately one third of whom reside outside the borders of the Greek nation-state.

In the 20th century the United States, Australia and Canada were the three top resettlement countries worldwide, hosting a diversity of foreign cultures and languages, and constituting a paradigm for the study of other Western societies that have moved in the same direction in the last decades of global mobility and interaction. Languages spoken in the USA and Australia have been classified as main, foreign, indigenous, and minority languages as well as Foreign and Less Common Spoken Languages; and Australian English, Asian, European and Indigenous, as well as Migrant and "Languages other than English" (LOTE) in Australia. Apart from the local versions of English, in the USA the main languages are Spanish, Chinese, French, Filipino, Vietnamese, German and Korean (US Census, 2008); while Italian, Greek, Chinese, Arabic and Vietnamese are identified as such in Australia (Australian Government, 2009).

It is very important to mention here that the amount of teaching of the above languages in elementary and secondary education is not necessarily proportional to their number of speakers. Assimilation of the early migrants through quotas and the lack of feeder schools are considered decisive factors for the limited Greek language literacy to be found in the USA (Klironomos, 2006), in which there are 337,339 speakers, out of 1,350,400 citizens of Greek ancestry (US Census, 2008); and the virtual cessation of migration from Greece since the 70s, followed by an unexpected fall in demand in the secondary sector in the 90s (Hayek and Nicholas, 2004), has resulted in the exclusion of Greek from the list of main foreign languages for high school students in Australia, in which there are 320,000 speakers, out of 449,000 citizens of Greek ancestry (Tamis, 2005). Although the discourses of multiculturalism and post-colonialism have relatively marginalised European languages in academia (Jusdanis, 2005), French and German remain popular for demographic (USA) and vocational/cultural prestige reasons (USA and Australia). At the same time, in both countries, Asian languages are currently classified as languages either of high demand or national priority in education, sometimes despite their small numbers of speakers or learners. (Vistawide, 2009).

An instrumental feeder for students of the advanced level of Greek in Australian universities has been secondary education Greek schools in the public sector that are mainly supported by Greek communities. In the 70s and 80s the move towards heritage languages successfully bridged the gaps in Greek language literacy in American education through the establishment of a variety of Greek academic programs of not particularly high status. These developments have been attributed to the aforementioned influx and ebbing of migration, and to assimilation policies for a prolonged part of the 20th century, and have been favoured by the adoption of multicultural/intercultural practices by the respective governments and societies. They took place in the context of debates on linguistic and cultural diversity; on national and transnational idiosyncrasies; on cultural stereotypes; and on issues of racism, identity and bias, the so-called “culture wars” in both the USA and Australia in the 80s and 90s. They have also been reinforced by the increasing interest of post-war Greek governments that came about as a result of the contribution of the migrants’ remittances to the Greek economy, and as increasing recognition of the transnational character of the Greek diaspora. Since the 80s this interest has been translated into transfers of Greek teaching staff and the shipment of educational material that supported the revival and learning of Greek language at levels of high competence in both North American and Australian ethnic environments (Tamis, 2005).

It is indisputable that after the 60s multicultural practices experienced a major shift in official and social attitudes towards native/background language learning in both countries. “The sense of inferiority experienced by early migrants and their children speaking their native tongue has faded away” (Tamis, 2005). However, literary and documentary sources indicate that strong memories of everyday racism regarding the use of the Greek language in public are still recounted by families (Clogg, 2005), along with old and recent students’ accounts of experiencing Greek and English as belonging to two distinctively separate domains (Iliou, 2007): the former private, and the latter public. The scarcity of data regarding Greek schools at secondary level in the USA points to a minimal number of students with a formal and therefore advanced knowledge of the Greek language. The optimistic number of 150 secondary schools with 10000 students offering Modern Greek in Australia in the early 90s (General Secretariat of Greeks Abroad, 2009) was followed by accounts of a con-

siderable drop in enrolments in the last two decades, especially among those taking Modern Greek as a final year subject.

During the same period these multicultural policies, albeit more cautiously, have been continuously challenged ideologically and politically by “assimilationists”, and have become a subject of scepticism by some “pluralists” in both countries. The debate over the issue of English as a “common unifying language” in the USA, where there is no sole official language, produced charges that bilingualism apart from being divisive and harmful to national unity, is responsible for maintaining ethnolinguistic and social stratification in the country (Schmidt, 2007:143). And official multiculturalism has been described as “an artificial creation” and “a sedative politics”, “for managing difference by supporting and financing interest groups or coalitions of ethnic communities” (Kamboureli, 2000:82 and Hawkins, 1986: 77) in nations that still maintain an official language such as Canada and Australia. On the other hand, English is not like any other language, and not ideologically neutral. It operates in accordance with dominant structures and principles (Authers, 2005:136); it is charged with a colonial present and a colonial past; it is used for legislation, regulations, executive orders, treaties, federal court rulings and other official pronouncements; and it is the lingua franca of international commerce, finance, diplomacy and the media, including the internet. For the purpose of this article I take into account the argument that “official multicultural policy in the Anglophone societies promotes a form of cultural heritage that is ossified and stagnant” (Authers, 2005:133) and also ‘not self-generated and spontaneous’ (Hawkins 1986). I also share the alternative notion that ethnicity is an effect of identification with, and distinction from others, and a process that is multiple, ongoing and fluid (Arvanitis, 2004:11). In the latter lies its potential to generate change for the benefit both of the ethnic communities and for the hosting countries.

Greek in Tertiary Education in the US and Australia: Interaction with Local Communities

A predominant characteristic of Greek tertiary education in the USA and Australia is dependence on the local communities of Greek background. USA communities have first set the paradigm by establishing endowed chairs through Greek donors, fund raising and community based initiatives. Greek-Australian communities followed the same pattern to a certain extent in the past, and much more so in the last decade, because of the shrinking of enrolments in Greek studies. This widely and understandably much praised collaboration that functioned both as a refuge and a Gordian knot for community members, has affected Greek education at all levels by imposing limitations on the free expression of ideas by communal lobbies and religious institutions; conservative choices in research orientation, curricula and in the selection of people in leadership roles; and has led occasionally to the marginalisation of those who do not fit the community expectations and patterns. This has not been seriously challenged even in the most controversial studies (Tamis, 2005 and Jusdanis, 2006) by researchers of the older generation, the majority of whom more or less depend on the community for recognition and funding. Objections showing awareness of the co-dependent and dysfunctional aspects of community interrelations appear sporadically either in the form of humorous or caustic comments in recent literary and cinematic works (Kokkinos, 1997 & Tzoumacas, 2005), or as references to the “community stigma” from which middle class educators of Greek background wish to extricate themselves and their descendants. Although frequently

mixed with an ossified admiration for the glorious ancient Greek past, they are much more apparent amongst the young generation of Greeks studying at the universities, as in the following note from the Greek-Australian students' journal *The Oracle*:

You know you're Greek if...

- Without thinking your hand automatically moves to do your cross when you pass a church.
- Your merchant, plumber, electrician, accountant and travel agent are all blood relatives.
- At least five of your cousins live in your suburb.
- A high school diploma and one year of college has earned you the title of "professor" among your grandmother's friends.
- You have been hit with a *pantoufla* (thong) or a *koutala* (landle).
- You can dance the *kalamatiano*, *tsamiko*, or *zeibekiko* without music.
- You or a family member has been photographed with a donkey.
- You still get threatened by a Greek School Teacher even though you're 20 years old.
- You have a bottle of OUZOU in your house right now.
- You have at least two kitchens in your house and someone related to you owns a spit.
- Stand proud.

(Mavroleferos, 2007-2008)

Challenged or not, since the 80s community support coexisted in the USA with the widespread establishment of Greek language programs and with a flourishing interest in contemporary Greece, which generated a remarkable research corpus in the English language on topics varying from history and society to literature, popular art, theatre and cinema. In Australia, apart from certain bright exceptions, Greek tertiary education focus has mainly been on language offerings, whilst the research output of the academic staff is considered to have been minimal until the early years of the new millennium (Tsianikas, 2008). With the increasing demand on the part of the tertiary institutions for academic research competence in both countries, and the decline of background learners' enrolments in Australia, a notable albeit unofficial gap has been established between language teaching/learning and studying subjects in Greek history and culture. The gap, which is a matter of concern for all language studies, has been manifested in Greek studies as a twofold stream of learning: one of the exotic and "difficult" Greek language, that has not particular professional outlet or utility, and another, the more prestigious one among both academics and students, of contextual Greek cultural subjects offered in the English language.

Greek communities supporting Greek studies in the USA have accepted the gap as a matter of fact, because of the long-term assimilation/ acculturation of their members into American society. By contrast, the realisation that Greek language demand is dropping, and that research is no longer a peculiar academic luxury, came as a surprise to the Greek-Australian community that kept identifying Greek Studies with language learning or studying "in our language". In addition to that, Greek government support emphasised language learning and appeared embarrassed with the aforementioned sweeping changes in the tertiary education of the Anglophone countries.

An additional aspect of this problem is that comparisons of undergraduate and postgraduate Greek Studies programs worldwide favour in terms of success those established in non-

English countries (Konstantinidis, 2006), despite the fact that the latter have not always been supported by strong communities. However, in the USA there are 68 university institutions providing (Modern and Classical) Greek Studies (General Secretariat of Greeks Abroad, 2009) in a population of more than 1 million citizens of Greek ancestry; and of all ethnic groups in Australia the percentage of tertiary students of Greek ancestry is the second highest (11.5%) after that of students of Asian background (Tamis, 2005). There are also thousands of Americans and Australians maintaining professional, cultural and intellectual ties with Greeks and Greece in both countries. This indicates a large number of people in American society and in the Australian universities who are more or less familiar with the Greek language, and whose sense of identity is partly coloured by their Greek background. The question that therefore arises is how it has come about that so few among them learn and most importantly pursue a substantial proficiency in the Greek language.

“When do you speak Greek?”: A Pragmatic Inquiry on the Everyday Use of Greek by Young People of Ethnic Background in Australia

An empirical survey conducted among 23 students of the intermediate and advanced Greek class at the Australian University of New South Wales in 2007 revealed that their experience and therefore their attitudes towards learning Greek was inextricably associated with their family background. Students replied to the question “when do you speak Greek?” given as part of the class routine, and the most representative answers are discussed here with references to 1) the journals *The Oracle* and *The Hellsoc Hangover* edited by the UNSW students’ Hellenic Society in 2007; 2) Greek-American stand-up comedy; 3) students’ in-class comments on mixing codes included in the UNSW Greek studies on-line journal *Mirror* that published students’ work on the university website.

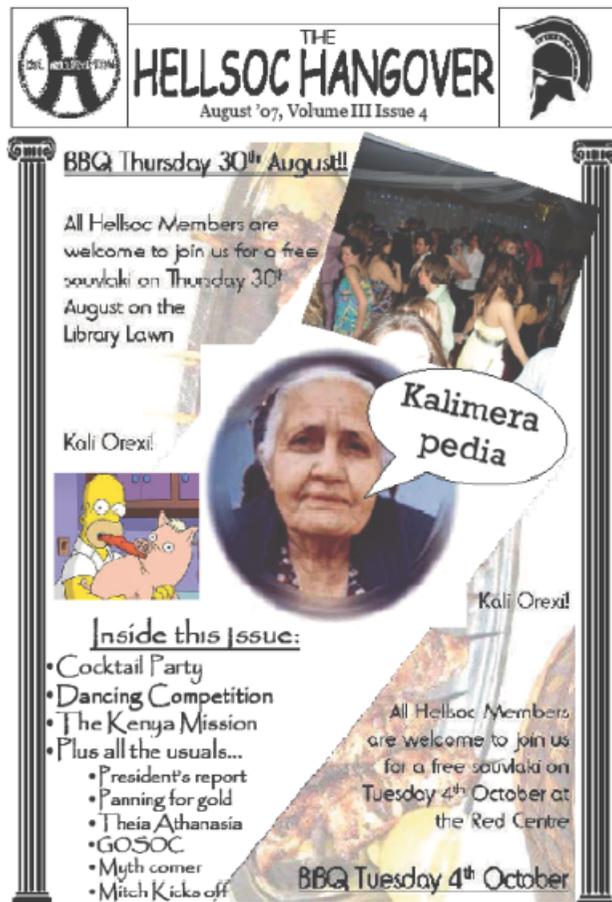
According to the questionnaire answers, grandparents, and in particular grandmothers, are the dominant figures for the maintenance of Greek language in this particular diasporic society. Students speak Greek with them both in Australia and when they call or visit them in Greece. They continue to speak Greek whenever they attend Greek language classes at school and university. They sometimes speak it with their parents but mostly with neither of them.¹ They speak Greek with family members and their peers when they do not want others (non-Greek speakers) to understand what they are saying to each other, and also when they get nervous and argue because “then Greek comes to us better” according to one account.² “Unlike my Serbian friends who all speak Serbian with each other, my Greek friends at the university usually throw a *γεια* and *πε* and that’s all what they know in Greek language” according to another verbal account. They feel forced to speak Greek often by the grandparents on social occasions such as christenings, and weddings, and at Easter, Christmas and New Years Eve family gatherings (see Appendix 1). Students answering the questions recounted a funny story about a Greek Cypriot colleague, who, although usually reluctant to speak Greek when sober, was speaking relentlessly in the Greek Cypriot dialect when drunk for a

¹ Brandshaw and Truckenbrodt (2003:447) mention similar results for the role of grandparents and differentiated for the involvement of parents in their survey on the use of Greek by various interlocutors in primary education in Victoria.

² Both these point to symbolic use of language for the exclusion of others or for the expression of intimacy and solidarity (Clyne, 2003:45).

whole night. Two Greek-American international students attending the Greek classes also confirmed that they owe their knowledge of Greek to their grandmothers.

Greek grandmothers are also iconic figures both in youth journals and in ethnic popular culture. Most Greek-Australian students are fond of the show *Yaya's Threats* by the Greek-Bostonian comedian Vasile, in which a Greek-American grandmother (*yaya*) speaking Greek threatens to hit her grandson with the dreadful *koutala* (landle). A photo of a *koutala* and a Greek flag illustrated the text 'You know that you are Greek if...' mentioned above, and photos of a Greek *yaya* with the traditional black scarf around her head illustrated a popular series of humoristic articles under the title 'Aunt Athanasia's guide to being a perfect bride' in *The Hellsoc Hangover*. In the latter, overtones of the authoritative practices in the context of which Greek language used to be learned in the past have notably subsided. They have been replaced by a caustic satire on the gendered aspects of *yaya*'s old fashioned modes and their resonances on the Greek-Australian young girls' daily lives (*Mirror*, 2007).



UNSW Hellenic Society journal, Volume III, issue 4, 2007. Front page

The humorous approach to subjects' upbringing, very common in ethnic youth culture these days as noted elsewhere (Georgakopoulou & Finnis, 2009), is the most apparent aspect of

these resources, revealing a seemingly relaxed attitude that fluctuates from identification to detachment. Apart from that, the questionnaire answers, if further contextualised, offer useful insights into the students' reduced interest in attaining proficiency in the Greek language. The elementary Greek that the young generation speaks in Australia, with which some of them arrive in academic classes, is the language of their childhood. It is particularly related to the maternal side of their family background, and it has emotional undertones and significance as well as strong elements of orality. Students have learned it from their parents, grandmothers and grandfathers, who used to speak the rural version of the demotic language and the dialects of the Greek countryside. These "languages" are in conflict, culturally and socially, both with the urban language of the educated contemporary Greeks and with the sophisticated use of English in the (Australian) academic environment. The conflict is not merely linguistic or cognitive. It reveals a psychological and social gap that needs to be addressed in a creative way in the context of the strategies implemented for the enhancement of mother tongue competence in the Greek diaspora.

The notion of multiple varieties within a language as well as that of "cross- languages" is particularly relevant to the historical and sociological complexities of the use of Greek in the Anglophone societies. Apart from official bilingualism (Greek and English), students are accustomed to speaking Greeklish, a hybrid mixture of the two languages in various proportions, that has already crystallised terms and with which they feel free to improvise constantly in the Greek classes by inventing new Greek words/phrases whenever they encounter difficulties with translation and vocabulary. Despite the fact that some of these words sound poetic and funny, students need to be reminded they do not exist in the Greek vocabulary and that for a word to be valid at least a minor social consensus is required. Interestingly enough, there is a sense that Greeklish is their own Greek language, differentiated distinctively from the "*katharevousa*" that they read in the community press, listen to in the Greek media or -most importantly- are being taught through their textbooks in the Greek advanced level classes.

Greeklish may not represent Greek identity, but it represents the history of Greek migrants. It is a way with which one can find a balance between Greek and English (A. Artemi).

Greeklish for me and for many other young Greek people is a language we speak between us. We speak English fluently, we are in trouble with Greek in *katharevousa*, and we join the two languages in Greeklish. Greeklish is so to say another language among the central and most important world languages. It will never threaten the Greek language and it does not give power away to English (A. Sallis).

(*Mirror*, 2006: 21-23)

However, *katharevousa* as such does not exist officially in Greece any longer. It represents a historical stage of the Greek language, and in 1975 was replaced by *demotiki*, the language of Greek laypeople. Borrowings from *katharevousa*, the old language of educated and upper class people, have survived, but there is a liberty in mixing it with *demotiki*, even in scientific texts and official documents. Nonetheless, the official *demotiki* of Greece is a sort of *katharevousa* for young Greek-Australians. It is an urbanised popular language that has overridden

the countryside dialects, which their families brought to the other side of the world from their villages. Therefore in their Greek-Australian universe their Greek remain a private and marginalised language for special purposes, attached to *yaya*'s world, whilst English is the language of the public domain, and most importantly the language of science.

Greek and English in the Curricula of Greek Studies: Bridging Yaya's World with the World of Science

Since the 80s there has been a clear-cut orientation of the higher education institutions in the Anglophone countries towards the corporate world, a distinctive turn towards external funding to meet shortfalls in the budget, and a gradual shift of focus of research priorities towards areas other than the Humanities (Tsianikas, 2008). Non-academics, or academics with a corporate-laden mentality, have been positioned in the administrative sector of the universities, which, owing to their prior public or civic functions, still maintain certain bureaucratic practices. As a result of these changes, academic programs have been streamlined, and pedagogical, educational and professional issues related to teaching, evaluation/assessment, workload and collegial activities have been rendered secondary in significance, handled with a profit-laden logic and with lessened democratic sensitivity. At the same time, middle academic management, encouraged to form independent corporate or communal affiliations, has tended to withhold information related to the consequences that decisions made at the top have had at the base of the academic pyramid. The perception of education as public good accessible to all young citizens according to their interests has subsided (Klironomos, 2006:163) and it is not uncommon for university students to be treated as clients (Tsianikas, 2008).

The consequences of these changes are overwhelming for the Humanities and the teaching of "small languages", and more specifically for Greek -Classical and other- studies which have no measurable vocational or market exchange value. Language, literature and ethnic studies programs have become less and less autonomous and the prevailing trend is for them to be subsumed within wider umbrella studies (e.g. European or International). As a result, ethnic historical and cultural context subjects are offered almost exclusively in the English language, whilst courses aimed at linguistic competence, such as in Modern Greek language, are shrinking in nearby classes with low status. The prestige of the latter is thus underrated in students' consciousness, whilst the role of English is elevated to that of the primary/sole means for fostering theoretical knowledge in Arts subjects. Yaya's world is being further separated from the world of science.

Yaya's world is already burdened with contradictions, treated with ambivalence and associated with hardship. "When I am James I feel important. When I am Jimmis (the Greeklish version of James) I think that I am in Greece and I speak with my uncle. When I am Dimitris (the Greek version of James) I feel that I am in trouble" a student wrote to describe how he feels about his first name(s) (*Mirror*, 2009:4). Two additional resources are employed at this point of the discussion of institutional and other polarities: (a) two characteristic answers to the question "What is Greece and Greekness to me" given to 12 advanced students during an in-class discussion at UNSW in 2006, and (b) quotes from an article on the Greek and Australian 1960s, in which a student compares Greek and Greek-Australian mentalities.

Another polarity, secondary in significance yet still very strong in the history of Greek language and culture studies, involves a fixation on the glorious ancient Greek past, as op-

posed to the mundane Modern Greek present. Ancient Greek culture, for instance, has been consistently overrepresented in the curricula of the institutions of higher education through Classical studies, usually taught by non-Greek academics of high status. This polarity that reflects what has been described as a cultural dilemma (Herzfeld, 1982) permeating many aspects of Greek society in the last two centuries, including the use of two languages, plays a significant role in the formation of students' views and ideas about identity issues (Greekness), Modern Greece and its culture.

Greekness means light but it is not the light that is born out of darkness, but the pure virgin light that existed always and will continue to exist (S. Toghias).

Greece is like home to me. My house in Cythera or my grandfather's house. My own corner at Club Paradise in Mykonos. Café bar Lis in Glyfada. Melidoni Beach in Cythera that is very beautiful. Everest after the night clubs where I was drunk (J.Calligeros).

(*Mirror*, 2009: 9-12)

Overall, although current attitudes of young people towards the affective and recreational aspects of contemporary Greek culture are usually positive, as shown above, it tends to be undervalued among the remote diasporic societies of Greek background (USA and Australia) and many migrants who left Greece in the 50s and 70s are preoccupied with the underdeveloped aspects of Greek society. Nevertheless, these aspects are part of their own personal history and identity and need to be acknowledged and embraced in the process of their integration into the hosting countries.

In the meantime, and despite its chaotic and less modernised aspects in matters of technology and infrastructure, Greece has been transformed into a Europe oriented multicultural country at the crossroads of East and West, with a flourishing cultural and intellectual life and the ongoing involvement of its still overeducated population in the political and social discourses of our time. Furthermore, social mores are very liberal in the country, if compared with the defensive ghetto mentality adopted in the diaspora as a way of preserving migrants' boundaries in the context of the dominant cultures. Young people of the second and third generation who travel to Greece appear puzzled, although pleasantly surprised, by this discovery, which challenges both the *yaya's* old fashioned manners, and the perception of Greece as a holiday resort for the summer. By approaching the culture with low linguistic skills and an ongoing fascination with an idealised remote past, they miss the opportunity to deepen their understanding of its continuation and diversity up to and in the present, beyond a superficial level, limited to listening to the dodgy style music usually exported to the diasporic market, visiting the Acropolis and Mykonos, or tasting the touristic delicacies of Greek cuisine such as *tzatziki* and *souvlaki*.

In my opinion it is also important to add that the mentality of the Greek migrants of the 60s has stood still in time. In other words, they still have the same ideas as when they left Greece. While in Greece the Greeks have advanced towards modernism and freedom, the Greek migrants in Australia hold onto the old ideas, morals and customs [...]. In Greece children have far more freedom in comparison to children here in Australia. I realised that on a trip we went on when I was 12. In Australia my parents did not allow me to go out beyond the front door whilst in Greece they let me go out with company

because that's what all kids did there[...]. Also the descendants of the Greek migrants of the 60s know more about the tradition, the morals and customs, they know the traditional dances better, and they are more tied to their family in contrast with kids in Greece (Dakis, 2007: 21).

A key point for bridging the institutional and cultural polarities described above is the reinforcement of the teaching of the advanced levels of Greek language, by employing creative ways to embrace various aspects of the students' previous and present linguistic experience, using as a departure point its oral and affective character. This is not an easy task in the middle-class academic intellectual context which tends to overlook low culture as such, considers the expression of emotions a character defect in the Anglophone countries, and tends to treat early life experience as naïve or childish. It is, however, a worthwhile transitional strategy for supporting students of ethnic background to attain linguistic and research skills in areas that matter for their self-esteem and their lives.

Towards a Type of Greek Scholar who does not Speak Greek in the Diaspora?

Amongst the themes tackled in a 2006 issue of the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* analysing their status in the English speaking countries of the northern hemisphere, there is an interesting claim that language no longer constitutes an integral part of ethnicity these days (Jusdanis, 2006). Although such a hypothesis can be justified by the currently declining enrolments in Greek studies, one could also comment that accepting these facts as fate generates self-defeating tactics. A simple comparison between the overwhelming number of English words in a Filipino popular magazine, and the high quality of French language offerings in the Anglophone universities, shows that ethnicity is also a matter of attitudes towards and against current trends, and a process that is being reshaped and renegotiated according to certain principles and values. The current trend in the communities around Greek Studies is a wordy interest in Greek and a reluctance to learn or speak the language. "We shall speak in whichever language we are familiar with" in the words of a Greek-Australian scholar chairing a public meeting aimed at raising awareness and funding for the maintenance of Greek in Australian universities in 2009. An emancipating statement indeed, if it did not point to a discrepancy between actions and words, and to the fact that language shift and loss is a choice, not a matter of fate.

Modern Greek studies programs have been established by a generation of scholars who have been either native speakers educated in Greece or second, third etc. generation citizens with a passion for reviving the Greek language in the diaspora and teaching and researching Greek culture. As this generation gradually makes its exit from the universities, a new type of scholar is emerging: that of the graduate or postgraduate in Greek studies with an average or questionable knowledge of Greek, and a second-hand/overly mediated understanding of Greek literature, history and culture. Although sufficiently familiarised with local educational, scientific and communal practices, this young generation is professionally vulnerable and ill-equipped, because of decreasing demand and the changing status of the field, which diminishes the possibility of a fostering environment in the context of which they could improve their skills and experience in language and ethnic area studies. They are also more educated, therefore more assimilated, placing lot of weight in career and social status than in ethnic

background (Holeva, 2004:219). All these explain, to a certain extent, the competitive and aggressive attitudes developed after 2002 towards native speaker teaching staff seconded to the higher education institutions of diasporic societies by the Greek government. These attitudes, that reflect a broader and prolonged polarity between the national centre and the Greek diaspora, if examined in the light of globalisation and the increasingly transnational character of contemporary education, point to narrow-mindedness. Interestingly enough, successful academic programs in the Greek diaspora have succeeded in integrating the newcomers from Greece, and in utilising the current enormous flow of information circulating worldwide to create inclusive networks and partnerships that combine both Greek and diasporic educational and scientific practices. Language teaching and Greek research abroad, the quality of which is questionable without a proficiency in the Greek language, has so far benefited a great deal from this kind of interaction.

Concluding Notes

Greek language shift and endangerment has led to minimal teaching offerings and the adoption of increasingly low standards in the higher education of the large Anglophone countries. This development is reinforced by changes in the cultural values of the young generations of ethnic communities, the reluctance of academic institutions to develop small and low priority programs, and the emergence of a global transnational culture that challenges static definitions of ethnic and other identities. At the same time, language loss does not occur only because of pressures arising from socioeconomic and cultural macrostructures. It is equally related to individual experiences and accumulated choices adopted during everyday exchanges that take place in microcontexts such as families, community organisations and academic settings. Examination of the latter indicates that the teaching of advanced Greek language in the large Anglophone diasporic societies is subjected to multiple linguistic, cultural and social polarities: Greek and English, Greek of Greece and Greekish in diaspora, diglossia in Greek language; Ancient Greek orientation and modern elements in Greek culture, notions of Greekness in Greece and in the migrant societies; Greek and English in the curricula of Modern Greek studies, Arts/languages versus other areas in academic studies; middle and lower class codes and values in the academic and diasporic environment, and most importantly a psychological gap between childhood/migrant experiences and the world of science. There is a great creative potential both for research and alternative teaching practices in the area between these polarities, for the development of which a sustained shift of attention is required.

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Appendix

1. *I speak Greek at home with my parents, my grandmother and with my dog Socrates. I try to call my cousin Aristeia in so that my vocabulary grows (N.L.).*
2. *I speak when I am in the Greek class and sometimes when I go to weddings whenever my grandmother forces me to do so (P.I.).*
3. *I used to speak Greek with my grandmother and my parents and with the Greek community. We speak when we do not want foreigners to understand us and when we do not want them to think that we are English for example when we had gone to Italy(V.P).*
4. *I speak Greek when I want to say something bad for someone and I do not want them to understand it. When I communicate with grandmothers, grandfathers and in the Greek class (S.T).*
5. *I speak when I do not want a foreigner to understand what I say. With my grandmother and grandfather. When I am nervous. In my family we speak (Greek) when we fight because then Greek comes to us better(J.K.).*

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Kyriaki Frantzi (BA History and Archaeology, Athens-Greece, MA Mediterranean Studies, Panteion-Greece, PhD History of Education, Ioannina-Greece) is a lecturer in Greek Studies; during the period 2003-2009 at the University of New South Wales, and most recently at Macquarie University, Australia. She is also an employee of the Greek Ministry of Education in Greece and in Australia since 1980. Her areas of teaching are Greek language and culture, and her main research interests concern second language acquisition, gender in science, and performance. During the last three years she has participated in the *Oral Presentation Project* that investigates multimodal aspects of the acquisition of German, French and Greek as second languages in the framework of Gesture Studies Network Australia. She is also the author of several research papers.

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