The pedagogical use of the linguistic variation: An empirical study in a Greek High School

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1. Language and linguistic diversity

1.1. Language and idiolect

The study of a language is nothing but a study of the world that surrounds us. Everything that the human intellect expresses through the different codes of communication is, and must be, the subject of thorough research as it gives rise to the discovery of new linguistic phenomena in space and time. "When we study human languages, we approach something that we could call the "human essence" that is the different qualities of the mind which, as far as we know, are unique to man."[1]

Despite the differences or different approaches of language learners, in terms of species and structure, we must admit that every form of linguistic behavior has a specific purpose and goal but they are realized each time in different ways and means.[2] The members of a society send and receive messages in order to communicate with each other in the context of a code that holds together the language. And as the language consists of a certain number of elements—phonemes, forms and words, they are automatically recognized by their speakers as elements of their own language.

In the homogeneity of the linguistic system and the language community, W. Labov opposes the variation, which he describes as "a set of alternative ways of

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[1] Chomsky 1972.

[2] Jakobson 2009, 59.

saying the same thing, in which the choices given have a social significance."[3] Labov based his findings on the classical sociological research conducted in New York in the 1960s. Examining the variety of vocal (r) in the speech of employees of three stores: Klein, Macy's and Saks, concluded that the different phonemes are associated with class stratification.[4] Labov's findings subsequently confirmed similar research.[5]

Differences between speakers are observed at all levels of linguistic analysis: phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical. The unique characteristics of the language of an individual speaker are called whimsical. It constitutes the individual aspect of the language and is shaped by the influence of factors such as the tone of the voice or the style that characterizes the speaker's speech and writing, his emotional state, and the speed of speech. Leech & Short define the peculiarity as "the linguistic imprint of a particular person, the characteristics of his speech, which distinguishes it from others."[6] The peculiarity enables the speaker, not only to shape his / her own language behavior with personal choices from the language available, but is also used as a strategy for creating an effective text and fulfilling each of the communication goals.[7] It is estimated that the Greek language is made up of about 20,000,000 idiolects, which is the number of its speakers.[8] When the particular features of an idiot are not confined to individual level and characterize a

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[3] Bright 1992, 217.

[4] Labov 1972, 43-59.

[5] Trudgill 1974; Cheshire 1978; Milroy 1980.

[6] Leech & Short 1981, 167.

[7] Mpakakou Orphanou 2005, 121.

[8] Fromkin et al. 2005, 569.

group of speakers, language varieties are formed within a language,[9] which are now a subject of particular interest to the science of Linguistics.

1.2. Linguistic diversity

Variety, in which linguistic heterogeneity is prevalent, is defined as "a set of linguistic elements with a similar social distribution."[10] The close relationship between language and society has, in the past, been the subject of major scientific studies in the field of sociolinguistics.[11] Linguistic variation, as a characteristic of the social aspect of the language, is shaped by members of the language community under the influence of different factors. More important for shaping our linguistic behavior, according to Halliday, is the context of situation. As he underlines, "every act of meaning has a constitutive context, an environment in which it is rendered and interpreted."[12] It follows from the above that the linguistic diversity could be defined as the existence of a difference in the social use of the language, which allows the speakers to choose the appropriate linguistic means they want depending on the objective and conditions imposed by the particular communication environment.[13] One would expect this dissimilarity, which is the result of many factors and is connected with the perpetual course of language over the centuries, to make communication between people more difficult. However, the variety of a language assures the possibility of common expression among millions of people in a remarkable way.

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[9] Delveroudi 2011.

[10] Hudson 1980, 24.

[11] Trudgill 1974; Hudson 1980.

[12] Halliday 2001, 201.

[13] Tsigkou 2015.

2.1. Geographical varieties

Geographical varieties are related to the geographical identity of the speaker. Geographical differentiation of languages has been observed since antiquity and it is the kind of linguistic variety that has been studied more extensively.[14] Multiple fields of this kind fall into all levels of language: lexical, syntactic, morphological, vocal / phonological. Geographical linguistic varieties are called dialects or local idioms.[15]

In particular, the term dialect "usually refers to variations of a language used by speakers of a particular geographical area or, alternatively, to linguistic differences in relation to space."[16] Dialects differ significantly from common speech in all language levels (eg Pontian, Tsakonic, Cypriot). In the 6th volume of the Historical Dictionary of the Academy of Athens (Research Center of the Modern Greek dialects and idioms) the dialect is defined as "the linguistic variety whose differences are so great that it is a problem for speakers of other varieties of the same language to understand this linguistic variety."[17]

The idiom, on the contrary, is a geographic variety that does not very greatly differ from the official language and the deviations observed are limited to the level of vocal and vocabulary (e.g. the north, the idiocy of Mani or those of the Dodecanese). In addition, Kakridi Ferrari refers to a third kind of geographical differentiation, the "accent" of voice and / or phonological differentiation.[18]

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[14] Hudson 1980, 39.

[15] Triantaphyllidis 1938, 62-68.

[16] kakridi Ferrari 2007.

[17] Academy of Athens 2016, 1.

[18] Kakridi Ferrari 2007.

Essentially, this is a variety of common or standard language that can be "pronounced with the speaker's local pronunciation." The term pronunciation refers to the particular characteristics of the speech that gives information about a person's dialect and is a powerful indication of the country in which a person grew up and the sociolinguistic group he belongs to. It is also used if one speaks a language differently from a native speaker.[19]

In contrast to standard language, its varieties, in whatever form, have a reduced social status and, in most cases, they are identified with speakers of provincial areas or social groups of low educational attainment. The apparent decline of dialectical systems, under the pressure of common sense, is therefore associated with socio-cultural causes. However, the shrinking and the gradual loss of the dialectical discourse is also linked to the attitude of the speakers themselves to preserve or not their linguistic peculiarity in relation to the symbolism of their identity.[20]

3. The study of Modern Greek dialects and idioms

The diversity of the language and, especially, the geographical varieties were and are the subject of dialectology developed within the 19th century and concerned historical linguistic reconciliation. In fact, dialectology was the first branch to attempt to describe language on a cross-sectional basis and by searching, describing and, comparing the dialectical differentiations of a language, aimed to illuminate the vocal laws that determine language development.

In the 19th century, the study of Modern Greek dialects and idioms got underway although their existence had already been observed since the 16th century. Browning, in an attempt to explain the reasons why research of modern

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[19] Fromkin et al. 2005, 572.

[20] Malikuti Drachman 2000, 23.

Greek elites faced difficulties, points out that the delay is due to a) the lack of descriptive studies on the idiom of each region, and b) the tendency to consider Modern Greek idioms as descendants of ancient dialects.[21]

Tzitzilis divides the history of the study of Greek dialects into three phases.[22] Initially, there were works for individual dialects, which usually focused on phonological features following the approach of historical linguistics. During the second period the structural dialectology developed, which emphasized not only on phonology but also vocabulary. During the third period we observe the shift towards the genetic dialectology marked by Newton's pioneering book.[23] Tzitzilis also notes that there has been little research in the field of social differentiation or retirement; in addition, there are no linguistic atlases, with the exception of the Atlas language written by Kontosopoulos.[24]

The first systematic scholar of our local civilizations is the founder of linguistic science in Greece, George N. Hatzidakis.[25] Hatzidakis, with his work on Modern Greek dialects, attempted to prove that "the Greek language with its long and unbroken life and the variety of its local forms provides extremely interesting information about the history and evolution of Indo-European languages."[26] The oldest, most well-known and "classic" classification of Geo-variants of New Hellenic

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[21] Browning 1985, 161.

[22] Tzitzilis 2000; 2001.

[23] Newton, B. 1972. *The Generative Interpretation of Dialect. A study of Modern Greek Phonology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[24] Kontosopoulos 1988.

[25] Xatzidakis 1892.

[26] Kontosopoulos 1994, 16.

is based on phonological criteria. Hatzidakis distinguishes modern Greek idioms in north and south, with the main criterion being the phonological changes of the vowels.[27] Thus, in northern idioms, the vowels [i] and [u], when not highlighted, are eliminated, while [e] and [o], change to [i] and [u] respectively, when not emphasized, e.g. *χουράφ', κιφάλ', πιδί, γ'ρούν'*. In southern idioms the above vowels remain unchanged: *χωράφι, κεφάλι, παιδί, γουρούνι*.[28]

M. Triantafyllidis distinguishes the reasons for the formation of the lands in a) geographical, b) administrative and c) settlement.[29] In the third period, mainly represented by the work of B. Newton the theoretical model of genetic dialectology is used.[30]

The most recent division of the Modern Greek dialects is that proposed by Kontosopoulos, which is based on the type of questioning pronouns, speaks of Greece of the *ti*—continental Greece and the Ionian islands—and Greece of the *inda*.[31] It is the only attempt to rank, which is not based solely on a trait, but on a bunch of vocal, lexical and even cultural "isoglosses."[32] He revisits himself and publishes a list of dialectical phenomena that he considered cartographic.[33] Trudgill (2003) divides Modern Greek idioms into: 1) Central, 2) North, 3) Mani 4) Tsakonika, 5)

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[27] Xatzidakis 1892, 342.

[28] Xatzidakis 1892, 342-343.

[29] Triantafyllidis 1938, 64.

[30] Newton, B. 1972. *The Generative Interpretation of Dialect. A study of Modern Greek Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[31] Kontosopoulos, N. 1983-1984. "La Grèce du ti at la Grèce du inda." *Γλωσσολογία* 2-3:149-162.

[32] Tzitzilis 2000; 2001.

[33] Tzitzilis 2001, 167.

Paleoathenica, 6) Kymi, 7) South, 8) South-East, 9) East, 10) Smyrna, 11) Central Cyclades, 12) West Cyclades, 13) Mykonos, 14) North Cyclades.[34]

3.1. The map of Modern Greek dialects and idioms

The Institute of Modern Greek Dialects and Idioms of Athens Academy proceeds to a conventional linguistic classification, which usually adopts a mixture of linguistic, mainly vocal and geographic, criteria. It should be noted that the following classification coincides greatly with that attempted by Kontosopoulos (1981; 1994; 2000).[35]

Table 1. Distinction of geographical varieties into dialects and idioms.[36]

DIALECTS	IDIOMS
• Pontian	• North
• Cappadocian	• Semi – north
• Down-italian	• Dodecanese
• Tsakonic	• Eptanese
• Cypriot	• Asia Minor
• Cretan	• Mani, Kymi and Old Athens

4. Dialects and education: considerations and perspectives

The recognition of linguistic diversity is in fact contrary to the practices of education in its, at least, traditional form. The limitation of diversity and geography, in particular, can be attributed historically to literacy and the introduction of compulsory education. Writing attributed social status to the

[34] Trudgill 2003. He includes Arvanitika, which is not a Greek language idiom.

[35] Kontosopoulos 1981; 1994; 2000.

[36] See http: //www.academyofathens.gr

spoken language that was written. Any deviation from this was marginalized due to the diffusion of literacy. Grammars, dictionaries, and textbooks cannot de facto record all the variants of the language, thus capturing a standard language and greatly regulating its use. The standardization, which involves encoding the language through the textbooks, concerns all linguistic levels.[37]

However, linguistics, especially in the second half of the 20th century, has shown that this assumption obscures the reality of language communication, which is much more complex. In particular, each speaker uses different language elements, while speaker groups are characterized by their own language varieties.[38] In this context, the discussion of the position of linguistic varieties and, particularly, the position of dialectical—idiomatic systems in the educational process is a matter of great concern to the scientific community.

In most educational systems, there is an embarrassment as to the location of the different geographical varieties in education. According to Yiakoumetti, views on language education policy are divided into three groups: a) use of standard variety as a means of education; b) use of non-standard dialects as a means of education; and c) education, which includes the use of both.[39]

The French sociologists P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, endeavoring to illustrate the role and character of the linguistic form used in schools, argued that the language used in school is the official language of the state, since school is one of the main ideological mechanisms.[40] The state, for its own reasons, imposes on the

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[37] Kakridi 2000, 162.

[38] Kakridi, Kati, Nikiforidou 1999; Mattheoudaki 2015, 118.

[39] Yiakoumetti 2006, 296.

[40] Bourdieu & Passeron 1970.

school the official form of the language. It is that children adopt school language, even if it is different from the language of the environment in which they grow. Students are, therefore, obliged to adapt their language to a form of their mother tongue, which is imposed by the communicative situations prevailing in school, but also by the social predominant view of "the right language." Pavlou, studying the language attitudes of preschool children against the Cypriot dialect and common New Greek Cyprus, argues that you should always give priority to the standard range because through this lively ties are kept and the cohesion of a nation is ensured.[41] Custred argues that the reason people have to conquer the standard variety of language is because it lies in the nature of the economy of modern societies and the communication needs that it creates.[42] Robinson collected the criteria proposed for the disposal of non-standard varieties in education and summarized as follows: a small number of people, who speak the variety, lack of written tradition in the variety as well as teaching materials related to the variety and the cost of making the variety viable in writing underlining the negative attitudes of people towards diversity.[43]

On the contrary, there are those who claim that local dialects can be used in school. Yiakoumetti emphasizes that researchers, who embrace this educational method, agree that "all language codes are expressive and, therefore, local dialects can be used in education.[44] The English Sociolinguist Trudgill, speaking about the English education system, stated that, whereas only 12% of children who start

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[41] Pavlou 1997.

[42] Custred 1990.

[43] Robinson 1994.

[44] Yiakoumetti 2006, 296.

school in Britain speak standard English and, therefore, the remaining 88% would be at a disadvantage if using it, "it is important to ponder how we must deal with the differences and prejudices that exist for the dialects within schools."[45] Since the local variety of a linguistic community represents the most familiar environment of a person's life, we expect that teaching of this variety is more effective.

4.1. Secondary education

It is a fact that children, who come to school speaking a dialect or idiom that differs significantly from the standard language, face problems that are not met by the speakers of the standard. It may be that much of the vocabulary and the grammatical structure of the languages used for teaching is not intimate. Chesire et al. emphatically underline that dialect-listening pupils "still have poor performance at school and a realistic compensation intervention to solve a problem that has not yet been found."[46] This problem could, to a certain extent, be mitigated by the production and use of different reading material designed for specific subgroups of students,[47] which is equivalent to the introduction of the idea of bidialectism to education.

The concept of bidialectism and interdisciplinary education has been the focus of the educational community at international and national level in recent years. Interdisciplinary training is based on the creation of dialectical programs that teach children the use of the model, while encouraging them to use the local dialect in their own environment.[48] This method facilitates the learning of the target variety

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[45] Trudgill 1974,184-185.

[46] Chesire et al. 1989, 8.

[47] Lyons 1995, 318-319.

[48] Yiakoumetti 2006, 297.

and, indirectly, preserves the linguistic and cultural diversity that is in a vanishing orbit.

The benefits, of course, of interdisciplinary training based on research findings, are concentrated on the following: a) avoiding social stigmatization; b) awareness that language diversity exists; c) dialectical awareness; d) developing critical linguistic awareness.[49] Particularly for the cultivation of criticism, the use of dialects becomes particularly important. More specifically, it is considered that language varieties and dialects contribute positively to the development and cultivation of pupils' post-linguistic awareness.[50]

In order to achieve the above objectives and the implementation of the principles of bi-dialectics in Greece, there is plenty of material concerning dialectical texts. Important attempts to train such bodies include the "Greed" Dialects database,[51] the program "Thalis—AmiGre" for the creation of texts of the Asia Minor Greek[52] and "Urum" program for the Caucasian Pontian.[53] Of course, the Academy of Athens has a huge archive material, with audio recordings, handwritten collections of oral language material and few video recordings, material that will provide important data upon the completion of its digitization. Important cultural material and genealogical collections of the Foundation of the Hellenic World are, also, important.

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[49] Wolfram 1998, 1999; Wheeler & Swords 2006.

[50] Kapsaski & Tzakosta 2016, 161.

[51] Ralli et al. 2010.

[52] Galiotou et al. 2014.

[53] Skopeteas et al. 2011.

An important multimodal tool is the Digital Museum of Greek Oral History, which is designed to accommodate dialectical data from the major dialectical regions of Greece. The data can be used in the classroom as a tool for counter-vocal teaching of Common New Greek and the dialects, either through their audio files or through the interactive exercises, given to the Museum.[54] Finally, the innovative programs include the database "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΗΕΝ". This database includes recordings aimed to studying the vowel system of six Greek dialects, Cretan, Peloponnesian, Epirus, Kozani, Larissa and Common New Greek.[55]

4.2. The pedagogical use of linguistic variation and critical skills

Despite the emerging homogeneity under the influence of the globalization of the economy and the prevalence of the internet, linguistic diversity and, in particular, dialects are treated in a very positive spirit, as bodies of cultural and linguistic values. Changing the attitudes of societies towards linguistic diversity is validating new linguistic-based proposals that incorporate language varieties in the teaching process. In the same direction, Pedagogy of Critical Literature moves in its various versions, placing itself favorably against linguistic / dialectical diversity and incorporating it creatively into language teaching programs.[56]

Critical literacy, in its pedagogical version, is "a program which allows us to organize and teach a language with the aim to link how a language is transmitted or challenged with the meanings that dominate the wider social context."[57] The pedagogy of critical criticism is interested in educating the citizen with the view to

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[54] Tzakosta et al. 2015, 300-321.

[55] Papazachariou 2015, 293-295.

[56] Ntinas 2015,167-168, 172.

[57] Xatzisavvidis et al. 2011.

his integration into society in order to understand the conditions under which the texts are produced and to be able to change them.[58] The educational act is presented in various versions: a) the genre-based literacy pedagogy movement developed in Sydney by Australian linguists (Genre Schools)[59] and b) with the multiliteracies movement (New London Group Hampshire of Australia),[60] which is attempts to promote cultural and linguistic diversity through new communication technologies.[61]

In the context of the globalized multi-literacy movement, accompanied by the abandonment of the idea of cultivating a unique linguistic model at school,[62] there is the need of making use of dialects in teaching. According to Kapsaski & Tzakosta, based on the principles of pedagogy of polygraphism, "linguistic diversity, pupils' experiences and life should come to the center of language teaching"[63] in order to develop the critical linguistic awareness of students.[64] In this way, it is not possible to detect and accept unaccountably the latent and physiological ideological changes that often accompany linguistic diversity. Pedagogy of multilingualism suggests a language teaching based on texts related to pupils' life, as "today's literacy cannot be separated from the world in which they live."[65]

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[58] Ntinas 2015, 174.

[59] Kekia 2011.

[60] Kalantzis & Cope 2001.

[61] See Ntinas 2015, 291-292.

[62] Kapsaski & Tzakosta 2016, 161, as cited in Kaskamanidis & Ntinas 2004.

[63] Kapsaski & Tzakosta 2016, 170.

[64] Archakis et al. 2015, 67.

[65] Bruce 2007, 8.

5. The Research

5.1. Import

In accordance with the principles of the communicative approach to language teaching and in the context of interdisciplinary education, linguistic diversity is required in terms of teaching materials and the use of language, in general. Regarding the possibilities of didactic intervention for the exploitation of local elites, what seems realistic, on the one hand, and feasible, on the other hand, is the differentiation by region in the courses of Modern Greek Language and Literature. This means that students could be exposed to authentic linguistic material, spoken and written, purely either dialectical or idiomatic.

This idea is also included in the present teaching proposal for the exploitation of Ioannina idiom in the course of Modern Greek Language and Literature of the 3rd Grade, along with the Common New Greek.

5.2. Goals

We, therefore, proceeded to design a teaching scenario and a teaching proposal with the following objectives: a) to apply our proposal to real class conditions; and b) to carry out the evaluation of the process. In particular, through the teaching scenario proposed, the pupils are seek to: a) Contact the written form of the idiom; b) Become acquainted with and, then, recognize the most important characteristics of the Ioannina idiom either in the oral or in writing speech and c) Indirectly cultivate their tolerance towards linguistic diversity.

In addition to the scientific interest of the researcher, the intention to try to implement the proposal in this particular school as well as the specific idiom was that there was a strong interest in the last few years in the educational community to promote the geographical variations of the language.

5.2.1. The Participants

The survey was conducted in March 2017 in a total of seventy-five (75) students, boys and girls, attending the third grade Gymnasium of the municipality of Ioannina, West Greece, without further discrimination on the basis of gender or any other characteristics. Specifically, they are the students of the Historical Zosimaia High School, which since 2015 has functioned as a Standard High School. Participants were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

(a) their attendance in a public school in the city of Ioannina, where the subject of research is spoken,

b) becoming familiarized with the concepts of dialect in secondary education and

c) the selection of a text that could be part of the subject matter of the Greek Language Course in the Third Grade.

5.2.2. The Methodology and material—research tools

A twenty-four (24) verse text was used to make the teaching proposal. It is a fairy tale with strong elements of the Ioanninian idiom, and in particular of the Koukouli area of Central Zagori. The text is a manuscript written by N. Kontosopoulos "Dialogues and idioms of the New Greek" edition of 1994. The text is accompanied by four activities that are essentially used as a means of determining the degree of enthusiasm by the participants of the phenomena that will be processed in class.

5.2.3. The questionnaire

In order to investigate and, thus, evaluate the behavior of pupils in relation to the teaching proposal and the course of teaching that followed, a structured questionnaire was compiled consisting of: a) six (6) closed questions from which quantitative data was received and b) an open-ended question (1) from which quality data was drawn up. The purpose of completing it was to: a) gather data on the profile of the target group in order to have a clear picture of its characteristics; and b) investigate its attitude towards the proposal.

5.3. The Results

The pupils' answers to the questions, contained in the questionnaire, allow us to draw a variety of conclusions regarding the attitudes of pupils towards the idiom of their region and, in particular, the position that this geographical variety might have in school education, based on our teaching scenario.

What is clear from the students' answers is their interest in studying and learning the specificity of the language of the particular geographical area. And this knowledge can arise through a project or work by individuals or a group, whose learning outcomes would be the systematization of knowledge of the linguistic idiom of Ioannina. That is, the kind of differentiation in speech, which, so far, pupils are aware of due to personal experience or listening, can acquire the character of targeted knowledge with particularly important learning outcomes. The intent or, at least, the pupils' interest in dealing with the idiom, becomes evident. Their clear preference for learning through a project could, in our estimation, be justified by the fact that this type of learning is experiential. It provokes self-interest and raises students' interest by escaping the traditional nature of teacher-centered teaching.

The present research may trigger further exploration of the subject in a larger, numerically, sample student population. At the same time, it could be extended to associations with pupils studying and residing in schools in provincial areas of

Ioannina, such as the Municipal unity of Katsikas, Pedini and others. This extension could lead us to new data comparable to the results hereof.

6. Conclusions—Proposals

In this direction, what we propose is to pilot this kind of project into the language curriculum within the flexible area of the, already in use, subject in secondary education. Such an attempt must take into account the geographical area of application as well as the age level of pupils. Careful design, which is in line with a specific targeting, is required. At the same time, appropriate materials should be selected to meet scientific criteria.

The goal of the language course is to define the awareness of the communication language and its varieties. Starting point for conquering Modern Greek can be the language of the pupils' environment using dialectic types that are not treated as "mistakes" but as part of our linguistic wealth. Such targeting implies a teaching that exploits the dialectical material of the Greek language and contributes to the emergence of its vocabulary and morphological diversity. Thus, dialectical and idiomatic speech ceases to be the same as that of the elderly, illiterate and provincial, students are encouraged to use it in the appropriate communicative circumstances.

The problems that need to be overcome are many and largely related to the irrational characteristic, the role of secondary education, the lack of teaching material and the instruction to teachers.[66] An important step in this direction is, according to Mitsis & Paradia, the synthesis of a modern grammatical

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[66] Symeonidis 2015, 139.

communication type, which is in an organic connection with the environmental data.[67]

The demand for preserving diversity, both linguistic and non, is now more intense than ever, given the creation of more and more multicultural societies and increased mobility of the populations. Therefore, the need to be tolerant towards different cultures and different languages is reflected on the shift of interest of linguistic science to the so-called 'threatened', 'less widespread', 'less-spoken' languages.[68] This change is supposed to replace points of view that originated in the 19th century and promoted monolingualism in nation in order to protect national identity.[69]

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[67] Mitsis & Paradia 2015, 86-89.

[68] Ntinas & Zarkogiannis 2009, 17.

[69] Christidis 2001.

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