

The Greek Language of the Diaspora in the Era of Globalisation

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This paper is divided into two parts. The first one deals with the Greek language and education in the United States, focusing on schools, books, teachers and the educational policy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the Greek Government regarding this subject. For comparative purposes a brief portion of this section deals with the teaching of the Greek language and culture in Canada, Australia, Germany, and other countries.

The second part focuses on the global aspects of the Greek language. It discusses the effects of the fall of Communism and the full membership of Greece in the EU and how these factors affected the Greek language and Government policy, regarding the funding of Greek Education globally. Finally, the paper offers some recommendations for maximising the benefits arising from this new world of globalisation.

A. The Greek language in the USA yesterday and today

The Greek language and culture in America have a long history with their roots reaching beyond America's birth as a nation. In fact "The Oldest Wooden School House" in America, still standing in St. Augustine, Florida, predates the American Revolution. That was the school where John Giannopoulos taught the Greek language and culture to the Greek American children of the failed colony of New Smyrna (1768), (Panagopoulos, 1978:181–83; Papaioannou, 1985:32–33). It took more than a century before the Greek Americans were able to establish their first regular Greek School that opened its doors at the turn of the 20th century in Boston. The lack of a systematic educational activity for such a long time was primarily due to the fact that after the failed experiment of the New Smyrna colony there was no serious immigration to America till the late 1800s. The only presence of Greeks from the early to the late 18th century was mainly in the form of a few merchants and sailors operating in major port cities, such as New York, New Orleans, Chicago and other such cities especially on the eastern coast, along with the orphans — around 40–50 of them — of the Greek Revolution of 1821 that were brought to the USA primarily by American Phil-Hellenes.

One of the most famous of these orphans is certainly John Zachos (1820–1898), brought to this country by Dr Samuel Gridley Howe, an American physician who supported the Greek Revolution with his services as surgeon. Zachos had a fascinating life. He was a medical doctor, inventor, philologist, pedagogue, Unitarian minister, professor and poet (Papaioannou, 1985:42; Malafouris, 1948:47). Another such orphan was Christodoulos Evangelides, who after his studies in the USA returned to his native island of Syros, “where he established an American-type boarding school”, bearing his name (Papaioannou, 1985:41). Finally, another prominent orphan was Lucas Miltiades Miller (1824–1902) that was adopted by the Phil-Hellene volunteer of the Greek Revolution colonel Jonathan P. Miller. Miller studied law and after various positions in the state of Wisconsin, he was elected to the U.S. Congress, serving from 1892–1894 (Papaioannou, 1985:108).

A somewhat parallel life to that of John Zachos was that of Evangelinos Apostolides Sophocles (1800–1883), who came to Boston in 1828 and majored in Greek, Arabic, and Latin at Amherst College. In 1842 he became professor of the Greek language and literature at Harvard, where he taught until his death in 1883. Equally impressive was also the career of Michael Anagnostopoulos or Anagnos, who was brought to the USA by Samuel Gridley Howe in 1868. Howe appointed Anagnos as his assistant in the famous Perkins School for the Blind, where he became its Director after Howe’s death (1876).

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Those early Greek scholars presaged the many educational achievements attained shortly after the mass migration of the early 20th century, when the Greek presence became more pronounced in the USA. From 1900–1920, 351,720 Greeks immigrated to these shores (Moskos, 1990:11). One of the outcomes of this mass migration was the creation of Greek Schools in urban centres with strong Greek presence, such as New York, Chicago, Boston and Lowell, MA. Saloutos informs us that the first immigrants considered the school both “as a matter of necessity as well as of cultural and national pride” (Saloutos, 1967:8).

The first Greek School, i.e. Kadmos, opened in Boston, in 1907, but closed later on due to financial problems. At the same time two new schools opened in Chicago, i.e. “Socrates” in 1908 and “Koraes” in 1910, and one in Lowell (1908), (Malafouris, 1948:188). During the same period the Florists’ Association of New York bought a building (1911) in the Bronx, which housed the first Greek American School in the state of New York. The school known since as “Greek American Institute” is still in operation. Additionally, the following day schools operated under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of N. and S. America during the same period: the school “Socrates” in Montreal, Canada, and two day schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Finally in Tarrytown, NY, operated the “Pallekaris – Ventova” school, which was private.

The concern to preserve the Greek language and culture was quite strong among the early immigrants. A strong debate about the future of the language and culture was still going on, almost a century later. It is a good sign that we are still discussing this issue today, considering that back in 1926 the late Bishop of Boston Alexopoulos and others believed that the Greek language would disappear from this country by the end of the 20th century (Papaioannou, 1985:380). Thankfully the Greek language and culture still survive and today we have more Greek day schools and teachers than in 1926. Moreover, the Greek community still has one daily paper published in Greek, i.e. *Εθνικός Κήρυξ*, one magazine, i.e. *Εσείς*, dozens of radio, and several TV Programs.

Related to the above, it is interesting to note here that there was a steady increase of schools, students, and teachers throughout the Depression and World War II. For example, in 1932 we had 284 schools with 12,712 students and 330 teachers, while in 1942, we had 500 schools, 21,834 students and 553 teachers (Malafouris, 1948:189). During the same period there was also an equal number of Sunday Schools operating every Sunday in the Greek churches.

Finally, a generation later, i.e. during the decade of the 70s, the Archdiocesan School System had 18 day schools, most of them in New York City, with approximately 5,000 students, offering K-8th grade education. Most of the graduates of these Schools were of a higher calibre than those of the New York City public schools. With regard to the afternoon schools, what most Greek Americans call “Greek Schools”, in 1978 there were around 400 under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese; their number was about 20% higher than their respective number in 1970, (Moskos, 1990:83), but lower by 20% compared to the 1942 data. At the turn of our century (2002), the Yearbook of the Archdiocese reported a total of 18 Greek American day schools. One of them, the St. Demetrios in Astoria, New York, had also a High School. The total number of students for all day schools in 2001–2002 was 4,104 and for 2008 approximately 4,500 in 27 Day Schools (Yearbook, 2008:108–110). Likewise, for the year 2011–2012 there were 30 day schools and 340 Greek afternoon schools with 22,650 students (Yearbook, 2012:107).

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As is well known, the issue of education is inextricably intertwined with the issue of language, methodology, curriculum, books, as well as with the education and compensation of teachers. Below we present a quick sketch of these factors affecting our schools.

Starting with the language, it should be pointed out that initially the teachers were using katharevousa and the polytonic system. In the beginning, most of the books used were the same with those in Greece. Slowly, however, local writers and publishers emerged, such as the D.C. Divry, Inc. and Kentrikon in New York. The strong efforts and support of Archbishop Athenagoras (1931–1948) postponed the inevitable erosion of the Greek language and its transition to English. His unwavering support

evidenced in his many encyclicals stating that “Greek is the language of the Gospel, a unique privilege of Hellenism” (Papaioannou, 1985:390), delayed the unavoidable transition. This transition into more English continued under Archbishop Michael (1949–1958), who accepted its use in the Sunday Schools and the meetings of the GOYA and under his successor Archbishop Iakovos (1959–1966).

In the area of education Iakovos continued the policy of his predecessors. With the passing of the time, however, he realised that the education problem was quite complex and difficult to solve. The children did not want to attend Greek School when their American friends were out playing; many parents were not very keen about the Greek education of their children and many teachers did not have the proper educational training, while their compensation was rather pitiful. Finally, the books in use were not appealing, in contrast to the American books. As a result, the Archbishop brought this matter to the Clergy-Laity Congress of New York in 1970, and asked for changes. More specifically he said: “The language must be presented in a systematic fashion and there should be a full use of contemporary linguistic research results and audio-visual technology” (Papaioannou, 1985:392). Then the Archbishop asked the Archdiocesan Office of Education to respond to the challenge.

Indeed, the Office of Education began producing new materials adapted to modern pedagogical methods and many of these new books drew upon the Greek American experience. The language of instruction was the spoken Modern Greek and the books had attractive illustrations and many exercises based on American models. In addition to the books published by the Archdiocese, similar were also published by independent writers. The best known among them was Theodore Papaloizos. Despite the fact that the appearance of his books was rather unattractive, the arrangement of his material, the exercises of his lessons and the inclusion of a Greek-English vocabulary made them quite attractive to the teachers. At the same time the production of new teaching materials by the Archdiocese and other Greek Americans, such as Dr Athan Delikostopoulos, who published the series “Learn the Modern Greek the Best Way” (Athens, 1968), and others, was coming along.

A special place in this new effort by the Archdiocese has the work of Athena Hatzimmanuel, who authored a series of books entitled “Mathaino Ellenika”. This series was the product of cooperation between the Archdiocese and the Greek Ministry of Education and covered the needs of the Greek American Community for at least a decade. Then it was followed by another joint initiative between the Archdiocese and Greece. In this new undertaking a team of curriculum writers, funded by the Greek Government, under the direction of the Education Counsellor in New York, Mr Emmanuel Vassilakis, produced a new series, entitled “E Glossa Mou”.

In addition to these efforts by the Church, there was also another one for the production of Social Studies materials *for the Greek and Greek-American students attending American public schools*, spearheaded by Dr Byron G. Massialas, Director of the Bilingual PhD Program at Florida State University. This Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, within a five-year period, (1978–1982), produced a significant

number of books, close to twenty titles, that were then published by EDAC in Dallas, TX (1984), as well as by Lesley College, MA and disseminated throughout the United States. This writer served as Assistant Director for most of this Project's duration.

The above efforts, i.e. the writing and publication of current and attractive language materials, took a new turn at the end of the 20th century with the "Paideia Omogenon" Project of the University of Crete. This Project funded by the European Union (EU) and the Greek Government was a much larger undertaking. Its mission was the production of many books, videos and other learning materials not only in the area of the Greek language, but also of Greek history and social studies, and finally of teaching materials in digital form. This writer co-authored one of these books — "Apo te Zoe ton Ellenon sten Amerike" — pertaining to the USA. The most significant difference of this Program is the production of educational materials for the Greek-speaking children of the *entire diaspora*. That includes materials — besides the USA and Canada — for Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. It is the first such Project, financed by EU and Greece, that looks at the Greeks abroad as a world-wide diaspora and the Greek language as a language competing with many others in the global market place. We will use this new Program and its many facets as a springboard to *examine the use and prospects of the Greek language in this new era of Globalisation*.

B. The Greek language in the diaspora and globally today

It is not an accident that the EU and Greece funded the "Paideia Omogenon" Project as a global project. Its formulation and execution covering several continents is based on the fact that the Greek language has some global dimensions, which are the result of some old and new realities. In the area of the "very old realities", we witness the *Greek as a global language*, thanks to the educational and cultural achievements of Ancient Greece and the military genius of Alexander the Great. The unrivalled intellectual production of Ancient Athens coupled with the genius of Alexander brought the Greek language to the end of the then known world and as Cavafy would say "In the Year 200 BC", "We the Alexandrians, the Antiochians, / the Selefians, and the countless / other Greeks of Egypt and Syria, / and those in Midia, and Persia, and all the rest: / with our far flung supremacy, / our flexible policy of judicious integration, / and our communal Greek language / which we carried into Bactria, [and] even to the Indians" (E. Keeley and Ph. Sherrard, 1972:82).

That wide use and prevalence of Greek, serving as *lingua franca*, for many countries and cultures continued during the Roman Empire, which brought an end to the free political life in the Ancient Greek world. A small token of the universality of Greek is seen in its appearance, alongside Latin and Aramaic, on Christ's cross, as well as in the Greek text of the Rosetta stone that became the key to the decoding of the Egyptian hieroglyphics.

During the Byzantine Empire period (330–1453AD) the Greek language continued playing a pre-eminent role in the world for more than a thousand years. Moreover,

its usage was not significantly reduced even during the Ottoman period, since a great number of non-Greeks in the Balkans — especially in the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (Runciman, 2003:196ff; 218ff) — were using Greek, in their social, commercial, economic and other activities. Indeed, Greek was the dominant language of commerce and trade in the 16th–19th centuries in the Balkans. Furthermore, Greek emigration to Crimea and the area of Marioupolis in Ukraine in the 1770s, (Dialect Enclaves, 1999:55–71, 129–145), expanded the usage of Greek in that area. This usage continued into the 20th century, albeit at a reduced level. The Asia Minor catastrophe, however, and later on the advent of Communism in several Balkan states at the end of WWII, led to a reduction of commercial, economic, and other activities, and thus to a further reduction in the use of Greek in that area.

While this standstill took place in the Balkans, the Greek language found a new outlet and flourished in other parts of the globe after WWII. As a result of the significant destruction of the infrastructure in Greece during WWII and the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), an exodus of Greeks took place in the following two decades. This new emigration to such nearby countries as Germany and Belgium that needed “gastarbeiters” (Damanakis, 2007:89–117) and to such faraway places as Australia, Canada, South Africa, and even Latin America, led to an expansion in the usage of Greek in those new places. If to these we also add such places as the USA, which witnessed a new wave of immigration after 1965, and England, plus the many pockets of Greek within the former Soviet Union, we are faced with a new state of affairs for the Greek language. *Thus, at the close of the 20th century, we encounter a new reality in the use of Greek on a global scale.* On one hand, we have older generations of Greeks in various parts of the world using Greek and on the other, a recent immigrant wave, which reinvigorates and reshapes the old ones.

This invigoration and emergence of new “centres” of Greek language around the globe creates a new reality that also becomes a concern for the Greek government. At the same time the changes experienced by the Greeks of the diaspora are not unique to them. Equally significant changes start taking shape *inside Greece* for several reasons. One of them is the fact that Greece, being for a long time (1961) an associate member of the European Economic Community (EEC), in 1981 becomes a full member of the EU. The many economic and other benefits resulting from this union lead to a substantial increase of the Greek standard of living. On the other hand, the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union (1989) and the Balkans shortly thereafter had a profound effect on Greece and other countries in Europe and the Balkans. More specifically the collapse of Communism in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and the disintegration of Yugoslavia resulted in the emigration of hundreds of thousands of their citizens to Greece, where they created a new reality. This new reality, which affected the Greek life in all its facets, had also an effect on the Greek language.

All of a sudden the Greek language becomes once more an important language in the Balkans and beyond — to the millions of foreigners that come to find a better

future in Greece. Moreover, the collapse of Communism in the Balkans gives a new impetus to the Greek spirit for commerce, trade and entrepreneurship. *Thus for the first time in centuries we witness a foray of Greek businessmen, industrialists, and bankers into the neighbouring Balkan countries.* They go there to create businesses, establish factories, open banks, make deals. Along with the money they bring, they also bring their language and culture. And that created a new reality: a renewed interest for the knowledge of Greek by those who wanted to go to work in Greece and by those who wanted to be employed by the Greek entrepreneurs in their own country.

As a result of these two different demands, we have the emergence of schools that teach Greek in the neighbouring countries, some of them private. We also witness the introduction and/or expansion of the Greek language at the college level and sometimes in high schools. Thus the teaching of Modern Greek as a Foreign Language is a new reality in many Balkan countries and beyond, e.g. the Black Sea area. There, in various parts of Ukraine, especially in areas with earlier Greek population, such as Marioupolis, the Greek and local population show a great interest in improving their Greek or learning it from scratch, as they ponder the pros and cons of emigrating to Greece. The same forces also affect the life of the Greeks living in Georgia, especially in the area around Tbilisi, Tsalka and Suchumi (Dialect Enclaves: Pappou-Zouravliova, 1999:129). As a matter of fact a significant number of the Greeks living there, applied for and received Greek passports and returned to Greece. Their exodus to their ancestral motherland served as an example for a good number of local people to do the same. Thus along with the tens of thousands of Pontic Greeks that returned to Greece, we also have hundreds of thousands of non-Greeks from Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and other neighbouring countries, who are seeking their fortune in Greece. Nobody could have foreseen this chain of events in the 1970s and nobody could have imagined, that in less than a generation Greece would become the host of close to two million immigrants, legal and mostly illegal, from various parts of South-eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.

As a consequence of these developments we witness an upsurge of the Greek language in the aforesaid areas, from people who lived in Greece and returned to their country, to people aspiring to emigrate to Greece, and finally from people who are involved in commerce and trade with Greece. Talking about commerce and trade, it is appropriate to examine here the role of the Greek merchant marine. The huge size of this fleet — over 170 million tons and over 3,000 ships — that according to an article “is accounting for roughly half of all European shipping and almost 20 percent of the world shipping fleet” (Etudes Helleniques: Constantinides, 2008:62), becomes a very important tool for the Greek language and diplomacy. If we take into consideration that today over 50% of the crews of Greek-owned ships are non-Greek — over 13,000 men in 1998 (Concise Statistical Yearbook of Greece, 2002:63) — and the fact that they work there for a limited time, we can easily conclude that hundreds of thousands of seamen from various countries of Asia, Africa and Europe, have worked on Greek ships during the last thirty years and used Greek as the *lingua franca* of their ships.

Then we have to think about the dissemination of this language in their countries, where they return. We should also think of the thousands of other people in many parts around the globe that have an advantage knowing Greek.

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Looking at Greece and the Greek language in this context, we can discern some aspects that should be of interest to the Greek state. We can understand, for example, the millions of euros spent by Greece to send hundreds of her teachers to various countries with Greek immigrants, especially Germany. We can understand the millions of euros spent to establish and maintain Greek educational institutions in the Balkans and other countries. We can understand how Greece provides free books to students and pays the salaries of Greek teachers teaching not only in Greek Schools in other countries, but also in public schools of such countries, as for example in Charter Schools in the USA. We can also understand how Greece pays for salaries and pensions of many Greek teachers in the Parochial Schools of America, Canada, England, and Australia. We can also see how Greece pays salaries of University professors that teach Greek language and culture in some countries of the Black Sea area or other countries around the globe. One of the main reasons for this generosity is her support for the Greek diaspora and the dissemination of her language and culture worldwide. In a way, this policy is a continuation of a tradition that goes back to millennia. We should not forget Isocrates' famous pronouncement: "we consider Greeks those partaking of our Greek paideia". What better way to create new Phil-Hellenes and keep Hellenism around the world alive and well, by toning up, maintaining, and disseminating the Greek language and culture?

This cultural awareness will certainly have a multiplier effect and some of its outcomes might take the form of increased Greek exports and support for the Greek tourism, the most dynamic branch of the Greek economy. In this respect the Greeks of the diaspora become the best ambassadors for the dissemination of the Greek language and culture. To achieve that, however, Greece has to become more "aggressive" in offering the diaspora Greeks more opportunities to maintain, enhance, and expand their knowledge of Greek, especially to those who were not born in Greece and never visited the country. *There should be a concerted effort on the part of the Greek state, to make sure that all the diaspora Greek children will spend at least one summer in Greece, before they go to college. In the same vein Greece should be more proactive in exporting its Greek language and culture, by offering to the world Greek art exhibits, theatrical plays, Greek movies, famous artists, or subsidising the shooting of foreign films in Greece, as for example "Captain Corelli's Mandolin".*

Last but not least, if we judge from the data available on Greek education abroad, only a small segment of the Greek-descent children attend Greek School in most foreign countries. Earlier we discussed the Greek Educational System in the USA. Our study of this system in other countries with significant Greek immigrant population — such

as Canada, Australia, Germany and South Africa — yielded similar results. In both Canada and Australia we witness similar to the USA trends, although Greek immigration there is a more recent phenomenon. The case of Germany is a unique one. Germany, for example, takes the lion's share of the Greek educational budget for the Greek diaspora, but her educational results are quite poor. Despite their high cost the students at the day schools there, are not of a high calibre and both parents and students are not happy with the results. Although the number of students in these schools (2,956 in 1997/98 and 6,377 in 2002/03 out of a Greek population of 363,000 in 1997, Damanakis, 2007:91–92) is close to that of the Greek day schools in the USA — about 4,500 in 2008 — (Yearbook 2008:109–110), their expense to the Greek Government is extremely high. Somewhat similar is the situation in Canada. The big difference in Canada is the fact that the schools receive a significant portion of their funding from the Canadian Government, especially in Montreal. Similar to Canada is also the situation in Australia, where there is financial support from the Australian Government. However, despite all these forms of assistance, as the time goes by, we notice an erosion both in the number of students that take Greek and the funding by the Government.

Taking into consideration all the above Greece should become more engaged and selective in her educational involvement with the Diaspora Greeks, as well as with countries that wish to promote the Greek language and culture. If Greece wishes to keep the Greek language as a viable player in the world market of languages, she must increase her efforts to this end. And she can get a good return on her investment: increased exports, increased tourism, better international relations, more support for the Greek causes at the UN and other international forums, more influence in various international organisations and countries.

If Greece chooses to neglect or ignore these obligations, time might exact its revenge. Studies show that there is an erosion of language learning and language retention, if there is not sufficient contact with the users of a language. A small but “lucky” country like Greece cannot afford to neglect this great treasure she has inherited. The Greek language is “αυτός ο κόσμος ο μικρός ο μέγας” to use Elytis’ verse. This “small but great world”, we possess, is a unique legacy and it will be criminal negligence, if we do not do our best to enhance, increase, and expand it to our European neighbourhood and the neighbourhoods of the world. Such an expansion will be good not only for Greece, but for the entire planet. *Let us for a moment ponder how much of the Greek language is already part of the English and of other languages.* As a matter of fact it is almost impossible to study medicine today in the English-speaking world, without some knowledge of Greek prefixes, suffixes and medical terminology. And that is only a small token of that “μικρός κόσμος, ο μέγας” that we should all strive to keep it “μέγας” and hopefully one day it might turn into “μέγιστος...”

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