

A QUASI-MONOLINGUAL TERTIARY EDUCATION IN GREECE: BABY STEPS TO INTERNATIONALISATION

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Abstract

Although the state Greek education system has always been largely monolingual, this has been gradually changing mainly due to the large numbers of incoming populations from European and other countries. Changes in the monolingual profile of the country are also due to the decisions taken at a European level regarding the learning of at least two foreign languages starting at primary school. Given these changes and needs, the current paper focuses on the language profile of tertiary education in Greece and, in particular, of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), the largest university in Greece. The data collected will be used to extrapolate about the language profile of tertiary education in Greece. The paper will also present the results of a small-scale survey among the foreign language students of the School of Modern Greek at AUTH in order to examine the language context to which they are exposed but also their beliefs regarding the monolingual and multilingual approach to education. The results of our study clearly indicate a change in the monolingual profile of Greece's tertiary education and stress the need for top-down changes that will take into consideration the realistic needs of Greek students and academics but also issues such as the internationalisation of higher education.

1. Introduction

The Greek institutionalised education system remains a monolingual one, although foreign language instruction in the Greek state education is compulsory and English language teaching in particular is introduced at grade 1 of primary education. In fact, English is the first foreign language in Greece, as in the rest of Europe (Eurydice 2008), and it is the language most widely taught and learnt. Europe promotes the knowledge of two foreign languages besides that of one's mother tongue, (M+2) (White Paper 1995) and in response to this, Greece has introduced a second foreign language during the last two grades of primary school. But what really happens in the tertiary education of this country? Is multilingualism promoted in tertiary education?

Are students supported in developing their academic skills in foreign languages? In the present paper we intend to discuss some of these issues in turn, exemplifying facts from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Northern Greece, one of the oldest and largest state institutions of the country.

Thus, in the next sections we are going to briefly outline the educational profile of the country and, drawing on the example of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, we will discuss how a quasi-monolingual tertiary education is gradually transforming into a multilingual one.

2. The language profile of Greece

Greek is both the national and official language of Greece, spoken by 11 million people inside the country and another 10 million people in the Greek Diaspora (as a first or second language). In addition, there are a number of non-official, minority languages in Greece (e.g. Turkish, Armenian, Albanian, Aromanian, etc.)¹. Turkish is also used for instructional purposes in Thrace where there is a large minority population.

In Greece all official documents and education are accessed exclusively through the Greek language. However, conforming to the European Law, there is provision of interpreters for public and legal services, though not always. Nowadays, some government internet sites (as the one of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and that of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction) have begun to translate the information provided on their sites into English.

Despite the fact that officially, Greece is a monolingual state, the society is becoming progressively multilingual. The language profile of Greece's inhabitants has changed substantially the last 20 years and it is currently quite mixed: there are people who have immigrated from the Balkans, the countries of the former Soviet Union, Asia and Africa and, more recently, Greece has been the host of thousands of refugees and immigrants mainly from Arab-speaking countries. All those people have brought with them their home languages which are used as community languages, as the Greek state recognises the right of anyone to use their mother tongue privately or in public.

¹ For more information about Greece's minority languages, see <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/GR>

3. Languages in the Greek educational system

In response to the European-wide commitment to language learning (Hunt *et al.* 2008) and the European Parliament's recommendation for promoting linguistic diversity, Greek secondary (since 1987) and primary (since 2003) education include in their curricula the teaching of English as a compulsory foreign language. The general positive attitude towards the promotion of multilingualism led Greek authorities and policy makers to pilot the introduction of English language teaching from the first grade in 1,000 primary schools in various geographical regions of the country; as the impact of this pilot project on children's L2² development was proven to be quite positive, from next year onwards the measure is going to be expanded to all Greek state primary schools.

There are various issues that need to be resolved with relation to foreign language education in the Greek state education system. One of them is learners' transition from primary to secondary education which remains problematic and is acknowledged to be rather challenging, since the vast majority of Greek speaking children learn English in the private sector (with programmes parallel to the state ones). A related issue is the heterogeneous foreign language classes as well as the lack of learner motivation that results mainly from discontinuity in syllabi and instruction (for an extended discussion see Alexiou and Mattheoudakis 2013).

The Greek educational system promotes foreign language learning by means of school curricula that include the teaching of English as a foreign language starting at age 6 and the teaching of a second foreign language (German, French)³ according to demand and according to availability at age 10. Due to the large influx of immigrants and refugees in Greece, a large number of children attending Greek state schools have various L1's. Unfortunately, there is no framework at an official level for teaching those students' L1 (Mitakidou and Tressou 2005), even though this is institutionalised by Law N.2413/1996 on "Intercultural Language". Similarly, there is no support for the teaching of Greek to children who speak other L1s. Some academic programmes co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) and Greek

² L2 here denotes any language a person is learning in addition to their native language

³ During 2006-07 the Ministry of Education piloted the teaching of Spanish in six high schools and seven more during 2008-9, but this pilot programme has not expanded to more schools. Similarly, during 2010-11 the teaching of Italian was introduced to 650 schools. At present, however, it is only the German and French languages that are offered as second foreign languages in the state primary and secondary education.

national funds through the Operational Program "Education and Lifelong Learning" of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) aimed to fill this gap; *Diapolis Programme* (for Foreigners and Repatriated) www.diapolis.auth.gr, the programme for the Muslim minority in Thrace www.museduc.gr, and the programme for Roma children www.keda.uoa.gr/roma/ are only some of the academic projects aiming to provide a framework for the teaching of Greek as L2 to students with different L1's . Overall, support of children's literacy in their L1s is not yet catered for within the state school context and its provision depends solely on voluntary initiatives of the communities.

Higher Education (i.e. institutions or organisations that provide degrees at the tertiary level, ISCED⁴ 5 and 6 (Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004)), includes both state universities (funded, recognised and accredited centrally and officially by the Ministry of Education) and private ones (not accredited officially yet, thus collaborating with, usually, a UK-based fully accredited university). Moreover, the Hellenic Open University (<https://www.eap.gr/en/>) is partially state-funded and the only distance learning institution in Greece; the International Hellenic University (IHU) (<http://www.ihu.edu.gr/>) is a state university located in Thessaloniki, Northern Greece in 2005. IHU targets international postgraduate (MA) students but mostly students from South East Europe and offers MA programmes in Economics, Business Administration and Legal Studies, Humanities, Science and Technology. Admitting students from 18 years onwards, all the above are research- and teaching-focused institutions and Greek is their official language, but for the International Hellenic University, whose official language is English. As far as private institutions are concerned, given that they are usually affiliated with British or American universities, their programmes of studies are bilingual or English-based.

As for the teaching of foreign languages at universities, classes at various levels of proficiency are offered in a variety of languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, etc.), but these do not necessarily include curricula that aim to enhance academic skills (for a discussion see Kitis *et al.* 2016). In addition to those, there are university units (e.g. at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, etc.) that offer classes of Greek as a second or foreign language; these aim to prepare foreigners develop their language

⁴ International Standard Classification of Education

proficiency in Greek – at least at level B2 (independent knowledge according to CEFR) in order to pursue studies at universities in Greece; knowledge of the Greek language at B2 is a prerequisite for foreigners who wish to attend the Greek educational system (Ministerial Decision F152/B6/1504/30-5-2001 (FEK658T.B')). Such courses do not place emphasis on the development of academic skills but are exclusively oriented towards developing foreign students' language skills in Greek.

4. The road to internationalisation

Internationalisation of higher education has been defined as “the process of integrating an international intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight 2008). The internationalisation process involves changes that affect (a) the student population, (b) the faculty, (c) the study programs of the universities, (d) certification as well as administration and management of human and material resources (Maudarbekova and Kashkinbayeva 2014). According to Guruz (2008), the internationalisation of higher education started with the adoption of the English language as a medium of instruction for the teaching of natural sciences, engineering and medicine in non-communist countries in the first half of the 20th century. Thus, academic institutions in countries with different native languages introduced a foreign language – English – as the language of instruction in order to homogenise curricula and attract foreign student populations.

Knowledge of foreign languages is a major requirement for the internationalisation of tertiary education; In their study of students and professors' level of awareness about the internationalisation process in higher education, Maudarbekova and Kashkinbayeva (2014) found that the lack of knowledge of foreign languages was cited by the respondents as one of the greatest obstacles to the internationalisation of higher education.

As knowledge of foreign languages is a *sine qua non* for the process of internationalisation, as this has been defined and described above, it would be worth examining the role of foreign languages in tertiary education in Greece and the extent to which they are promoted in various faculties and departments. Taking into consideration (a) the increasingly multilingual profile of the Greek society, as this was described above, (b) the requirements and challenges of globalisation, which affects

higher education (cf. Jibeen and Khan 2015), (c) the internationalisation of education, as this is witnessed globally, and, finally, (d) Greek students' needs in the era of globalisation, we would like to sketch the language profile of tertiary education in Greece and underscore the importance of multilingualism and multilingual education in the academic setting. To this aim, we are also going to explore foreign students' views and attitudes towards monolingual and multilingual education.

Aguilar and Rodriguez (2012) and Tatzl (2011), among others, have carried out similar studies to examine teachers' and students' views and opinions towards the internationalisation of higher education in Spain and Austria, respectively. In both countries, findings were positive, as both instructors and students favoured English-medium instruction. Some of the concerns students and/or teachers voiced in Tatzl's study involve student workload, different levels of students' prior knowledge and reduction in the amount of content that can be taught. Aguilar and Rodriguez found that lecturers' low level of proficiency in English was the most serious issue that needs to be addressed.

5. The present study

The main aim of the present paper is to explore the language profile of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the largest university in Greece. The data collected will be used to extrapolate about the language profile of tertiary education in Greece. To this aim, (a) we collected facts and figures pertaining to the language background of AUTH students, the number of foreign languages available in the curricula of its schools and departments as well as the languages in which academics choose to publish their research; (b) we carried out a small-scale survey among active students of the School of Modern Greek at AUTH in order to explore the languages to which they are exposed at the SMG but also their beliefs regarding the monolingual and multilingual approach to education. Since the focus of SMG is on teaching Greek as a foreign language, attitudes towards multilingualism were elicited in the framework of foreign language teaching experiences and did not refer (explicitly) to the use of other languages in the curricula of their disciplines.

6. Results

6.1 The language profile of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the largest comprehensive University in Greece, includes 11 faculties, consisting of 36 Schools and a total of 41,031 active students (in 2015) (out of 65,999 registered). The percentage of foreign students rose from 4.1% in 2011 to 5.3% in 2015⁵, as shown in Figure 1, below:

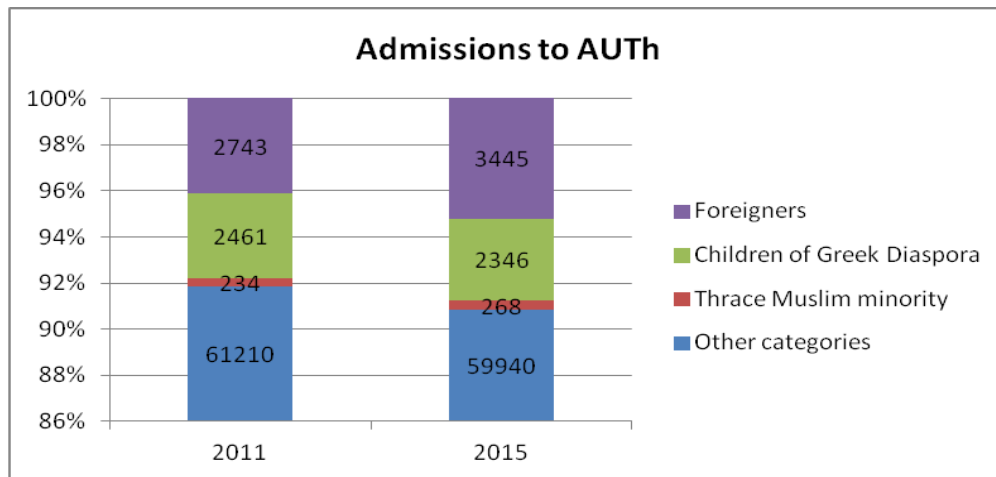


Figure 1: Distribution of categories of students admitted to the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Although the vast majority of university students originate from Greece, a respectable number of them come from other European countries. The number of students of non-E.U. origin has decreased during the last five years, according to relevant surveys conducted by the Observatory of students from vulnerable social groups in the Aristotle University (Figure 2).

⁵ Data come from two reports of the Observatory of students from vulnerable social groups, for 2011 (<http://acobservatory.web.auth.gr/acFiles/Ekthesi.pdf>) and 2015 (http://acobservatory.web.auth.gr/images/keimena/ekthesi_paratiritirio_2016.pdf)

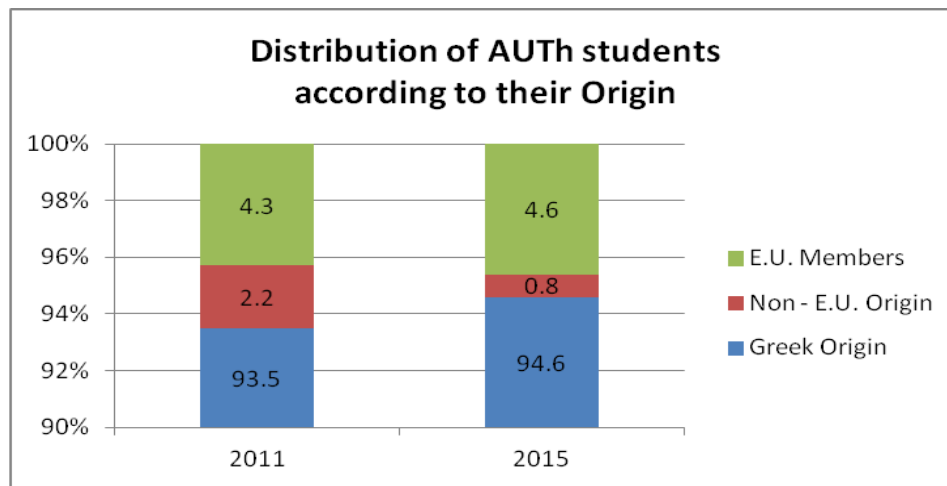


Figure 2: Students of Greek and non-Greek origin at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

AUTH is widely recognised as a vibrant centre of learning and has been actively participating in the Erasmus Programme, since 1987, accounting for about 1/4 of the Erasmus mobility in Greece⁶. More specifically, as shown in Figure 3, exchange students have reached the highest numbers in the academic year 2015-16.

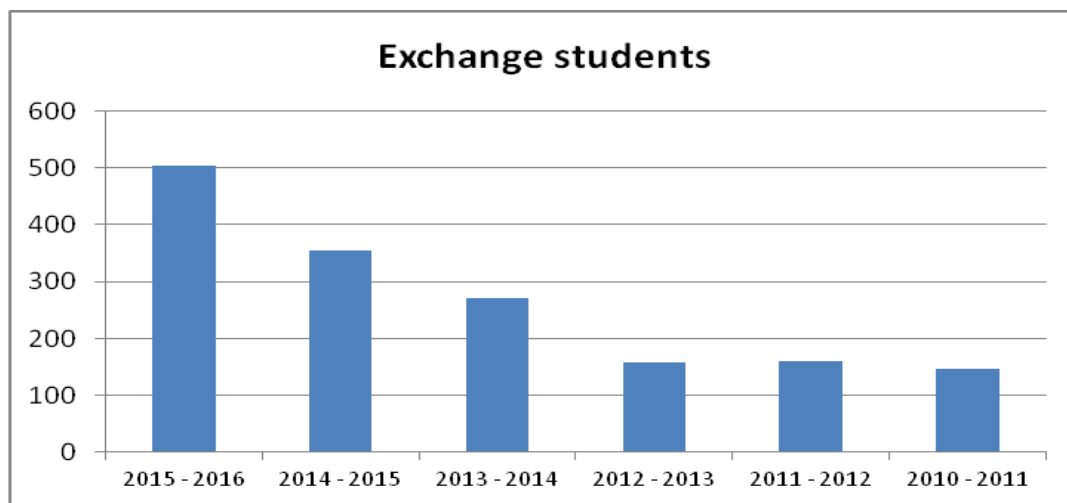


Figure 3: Exchange students at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Mobility rates for incoming and outgoing students of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki are also enhanced, as illustrated in Table 1⁷ below (but for inbound undergraduates). According to surveys conducted for the European Commission, there

⁶ <https://eurep.auth.gr/sites/default/files/AUTH%20European%20Policy%20Statement.pdf>

⁷ <https://eurep.auth.gr/el/statistics>

are relatively balanced levels of incoming and outgoing students in the Greek Tertiary education, with a rate of 3.8% for inbound mobility and 4.5% for outbound mobility (during the 2011/12 academic year) (European Commission 2015⁸).

Higher rates are mainly observed in the outbound mobility among undergraduate students (rising from 1.46% in 2010-11 to 1.89% in 2015-16), while inbound mobility decreased (with only 0.32% in 2015-16, from 1.04% in 2010-11). The highest percentages of incoming MA students are observed during the academic year 2014-15 (5.81%), while outgoing MA students reach the highest mobility rate during the present academic year: 2015-2016 (1.25%). As far as PhD candidates are concerned, mobility rates are kept quite low: PhD candidates mostly came to AUTH during 2013-14 (0.82%), while the highest percentage of PhD candidates leaving AUTH was observed a year before, i.e. during 2012-13 (0.98%).

	Undergraduate students			Master students			PhD candidates		
	total*	inbound	outbound	total*	inbound	outbound	total*	inbound	outbound
2015 - 2016	41.031	135	779	4.620	116	58	2.645	2	11
2014 - 2015	37.621	319	602	3.474	202	52	2.659	8	18
2013 - 2014	36.494	303	750	3.459	133	33	2.652	22	12
2012 - 2013	36.556	200	663	3.402	103	30	2.747	6	27
2011 - 2012	37.193	289	637	3.429	138	40	2.719	3	12
2010 - 2011	38.832	403	570	3.479	72	24	2.666	9	13

*total: the total number of active registered students at AUTH

Table 1: Incoming and outgoing AUTH students (by level of education)

Academics coming to teach at the Aristotle have gradually increased during the last years, while relevant information is not yet updated for academic years after 2014-15, as illustrated in Table 2. The same observation applies for administrative staff. On the other hand, the number of academics and administration staff going abroad is kept at similar rates throughout the last years.

⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/182EN.pdf

	Inbound			Outbound		
	Academics	Administrative staff	MUNDUS	Academics	Administrative staff	MUNDUS
2014 - 2015	100	65	14	94	27	2
2013 - 2014	84	29	10	85	19	
2012 - 2013	73	28	6	80	35	
2011 - 2012	17	4		85	24	

Table 2: Inbound and outbound AUTH staff

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, being the largest university in Greece and in the Balkans, attracts large student populations. Those students mostly come from Greece but during the last years, there has been an increasing student population coming from EU countries but also from non-EU countries. The numerical differences from one year to the next are mild and all data point to a common finding: The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki seems to have developed an international profile – not only with regard to its students but also with regard to its administrative and teaching staff.

6.1.1 The role of foreign languages at AUTH

The educational programs at the Aristotle University (as in all other state institutions of tertiary education in Greece), are mainly offered in Greek. Upon their enrollment, all foreign students are required to continue attending lessons of Modern Greek language as a foreign language according to the regular schedule of their Department (Decree 1051/ 1977).

On the other hand, specialised study programs at an undergraduate and postgraduate level at the Departments of English, French, German and Italian language and literature, Faculty of Philosophy, are offered in the respective foreign language. On top of that, knowledge of one or more foreign languages is an essential prerequisite for registration in any of the post-graduate programmes organised by those departments.

As noted by the Quality Assurance Unit (MO.DI.P.) of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki⁹, courses in four European languages are incorporated in the curricula of

⁹ <http://qa.auth.gr/el/statistics>

the various university schools: 682 classes in English, 145 in French, 174 in German and 69 in Italian.

With respect to Erasmus students, in particular, the largest number of available foreign language classes are offered by the Departments of the Faculty of Philosophy (as might be expected, since these include the Foreign Language Departments mentioned above). A great number of classes taught and assessed in a language other than Greek are also included in the curricula of the remaining Faculties (Figure 4). In fact, the academic staff of those Faculties provides supportive material for non-Greek speaking students and is willing to examine the incoming Erasmus students in a language other than Greek, which, in most cases, is English.

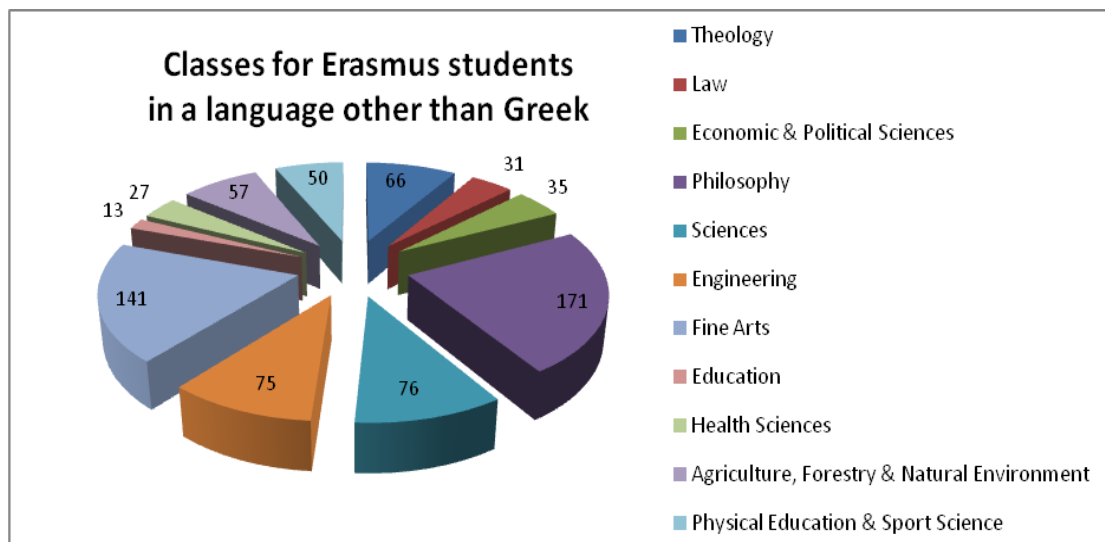


Figure 4: Distribution of classes for Erasmus students taught and assessed in a language other than Greek

Despite the uniform adoption of Greek as a language of instruction in Greek Higher Education, most university departments require postgraduate applicants to sit English language exams in order to prove knowledge of English at C1 or C2 level; this is a prerequisite for students' admission to postgraduate programmes as they are required to access English language bibliography, submit and publish papers and present projects in English.

To this aim, some Faculties include in their curricula classes of Terminology and classes of a foreign language for Specific Purposes, depending on the needs of the students each year. These may be compulsory or optional courses depending on the study programme of each School or department. Thus, a total of 194 'Foreign

Language' classes were found in a query for the academic year 2015-16. As few of the courses are offered in more than one foreign language, the distribution of classes per language is as follows: 117 classes in English, 6 in French, 63 in German and 28 in Italian. It is quite obvious that most Faculties give priority to the English language and include it in their curriculum, thus promoting it as a working language and gearing up participation of their students in international conferences and peer-reviewed journals.

This is also true for all academics who wish to publicise their research and become widely known within the international academic community. Their profile and publications are available at the site of I.K.E.E. (Institutional Repository of Scientific Publications) of the Central Library¹⁰. Although the information retrieved is not fully updated and should be considered with caution, the dominance of English is quite apparent: we notice that among 75,556 records of ATh faculty publications, 30.44% are written in Greek and 65.88% in English, the remaining being in other languages.

	in Greek	in English
Journal articles	6358	31998
Conference articles	9366	14500
Books & other publications	6704	3108
Artwork & Multimedia	544	105
Technical Reviews	30	68

Table 3: ATh faculty publications written in Greek or English

Specifically, the number of research published in peer-reviewed journals written in English significantly exceeds those written in Greek (42.35% vs. 8.41%), while Conference proceedings are more balanced between the two languages (19.19% in English vs. 12.39% in Greek). Researchers who publish in Greek usually remain unknown to the international community, whereas those who choose to interact with the international community and publish in English, unfortunately do not acquire the publicity they might have acquired in the Greek academic community, had they published in Greek.

¹⁰ <https://ikee.lib.auth.gr/>

6.2 The survey at the School of Modern Greek (SMG-AUTH)

The School of Modern Greek is a language school within the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Its students include prospective or active university students, as well as other foreign language speakers wishing to learn Greek. The teaching staff is neither academic (i.e. research and teaching) staff nor administrative staff. As such, they are not required to carry out their own research nor do they have any administrative duties, but they are qualified to teach Greek as a second language. Still, they form a quite vibrant group of teachers: they have authored more than 10 teaching books for Greek (for adult learners as well as for children) and have more than 180 publications, relevant to teaching methodology and L2 acquisition. Publications that come from conference proceedings are mostly written in Greek, aiming at dissemination within the Greek-speaking community, while research papers of broader linguistic interest are mostly written in English, targeting higher impact factor in the international community.

During the academic year 2015-16, a total of 642 students in a language class offered by the SMG-AUTH. Among them, 110 Erasmus students (following pre- or post-graduate studies) participated in special classes targeting their needs (semester courses, two-week or on-line courses), while some 30 more chose to join the annual or three-month classes. These annual or three-month courses provide 10-hour or 20-hour classes per week and they actually constitute the main type of classes offered. Among the students registered in these classes, we find also 20 post-graduate students and 125 students enrolled in various Faculties of AUTH. All these students are required to attend the classes they are enrolled in and to sit an end-of-course examination in order to be awarded the respective number of ECTS.

Besides, the largest body of foreign AUTH students attends special classes organised and tailored to their needs. According to relevant legislation (article 44 of the Law 4009/2011), when foreign students pass the exam at the end of the semester, they are awarded a number of ECTS, which the School, where they are enrolled to, specifies. As in the majority of the other classes in Tertiary education, attendance is not compulsory. However, this may create problems when it comes to language courses as language acquisition is heavily dependent on learners' exposure to the language.

In 2014, the Scientific Committee of SMG-AUTH identified the following paradox: foreign students, holders of a Greek Degree are acknowledged to be proficient in

Greek. However, after their admission to Tertiary education with a B2 certificate, their language progress or (at least) maintenance of a B2 level was not secured: although enrolment in a foreign language class is mandatory at most of the Faculties, they were given a choice between attending Greek or another foreign language class. Thus, foreign students could be awarded a Bachelor, a Master or a PhD having attended and having been examined in a language other than Greek, English in most cases, while Greek was not used to a great extent throughout their curriculum. Still, the acquisition of a Greek university diploma is considered to be evidence of proficient knowledge of the language of the institution. To this aim, the SMG-AUTH committee proposed that all foreigners choose Greek as a second/foreign language classes for two to four semesters during their academic life, securing in this way their Greek language development.

6.2.1 Participants

A short questionnaire was administered to 12 classes with a total of 150 students registered in annual or three-month courses at the School of Modern Greek. The survey took place in April 2016 and student participation was voluntary. We received 109 completed questionnaires which provided us with the necessary data on which our research has been based. Completed questionnaires came from 12 different classes (level A1 to C1). The participants were 38 men and 71 women of various origins with different mother tongues (for more details see the Results section).

6.2.2 Materials/Methods

Questionnaires included two types of questions: (a) those that focused on participants' demographic information and educational profile, and (b) those that elicited participants' beliefs about the language used in the curricula of their studies, in their work as well as in the Greek foreign language class.

More specifically, demographic information referred to participants' origin, mother tongue, sex and age. Their educational profile included information on the level of their education, the discipline of their studies and whether they held a postgraduate degree. Participants were also asked the purpose of their learning Greek, if they were already enrolled in a Faculty of AUTH (or other institution) and their status (Erasmus, Scholarship, or other). They were also asked whether the classes they attended were

held in Greek (or other language(s)) and whether assessment and research papers were written in Greek or other language(s), which they had to specify.

With respect to their beliefs about the language(s) used in-class, either for academic purposes or for foreign language teaching, we included open statements with two possible choices (affirmative/negative), one of which they had to select and justify: “I believe that (a) Greek should / should not be the only language used because...”, (b) “another pivot language should / should not be used to facilitate learning because...”, and (c) “all students’ known languages (their L1s and other foreign languages) may/may not add to their understanding and/or academic evolution, because...”.

6.2.3 Results of the survey

Results presented below refer to the main findings. With respect to demographic information, notice that the majority of our sample, i.e., 73/109 (67%) of the students who participated came from Balkan countries, Eastern European countries and countries of the ex-Soviet Union (Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, and Latvia), while 19% are from other European countries and 14% from Turkey, Albania, China, Uganda and Arab speaking countries (two to three individuals in each case).

With respect to their educational status (during the time of the survey), only 58 answers were received: 38 participants stated that they are currently enrolled in a university programme at the AUTH; 8 specified that they would be starting their studies during the next academic year (after having successfully acquired a B2 level certification of Greek as a Foreign Language) and 12 more stated that they intended to follow tertiary education sometime later, after having passed the relevant examination.

Not all active university students (n=38) provided us with information relevant to their studies: out of the 25 responses obtained concerning the language of the lectures in their school, half of them (56%) stated that they take classes only in Greek; similarly, with respect to the language they use in their writings, more than half of the students (18/28; 64%) noted that they prefer to write their essays, etc. exclusively in the Greek language (Figure 5). Noticeably, looking closer at these percentages, we observe that 7/14 of those who declare attending classes only in Greek (and write their essays only in Greek), come from the School of Theology. The remaining are almost

equally distributed among the School of Philology, the School of Pedagogy, the Department of Psychology and the School of Economics. Students who attend classes only in English come from the respective School of English, while the rest of them are dispersed in various Faculties and Schools at AUTH, a small percentage of Erasmus students among them¹¹. Similar observations apply to the distribution of the languages in which they prefer to write their essays for class assessment: thus, preference for Greek comes first (64.28%), followed by English (25%), and only a few students prefer to write in both languages (19.71%).

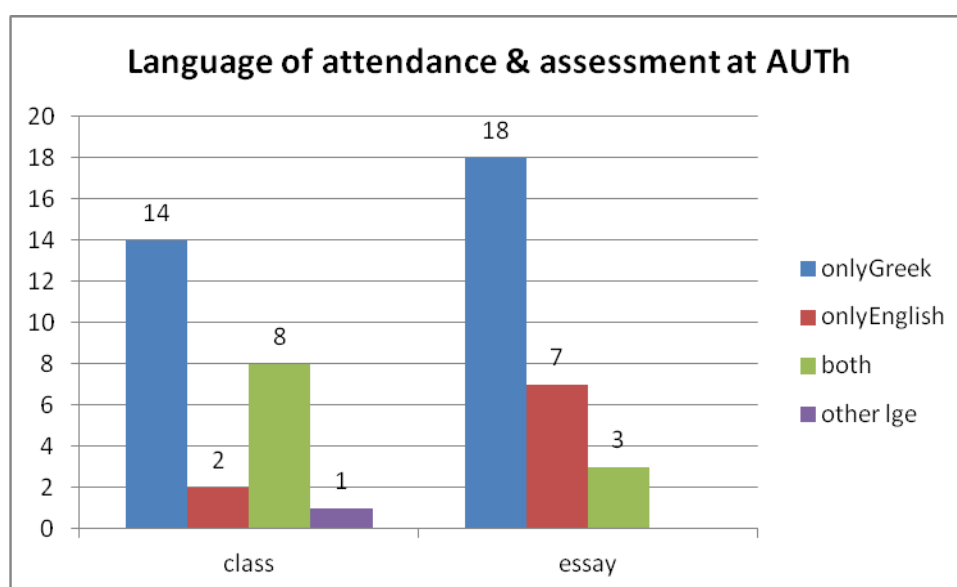


Figure 5: Language of in-class lectures and course assessment (through essay writing) for students of SMG at AUTH

SMG students who are involved in research activity (after having obtained an MA or a PhD) mostly prefer to write in English (but also in their L1s): among nine answers received, only one uses exclusively his L1 to publicise his work¹², while the remaining alternate between their L1 and English ($n=5$)¹³ or write exclusively in English ($n=3$)¹⁴. Although the results are very limited and should, thus, be used with

¹¹ The proportion of Erasmus who participated is extremely low ($n=4$), thus, no valid conclusions can be drawn about this group. Notice, however, that this group traditionally receives supportive material in a language other than Greek and is assessed through papers written mostly in English.

¹² This student is registered in the School of Theology and uses only Russian (L1) to publicise his work.

¹³ Their L1s vary: Chinese, German, Russian, Turkish and Romanian.

¹⁴ One of them is an English native speaker, while the other two have other L1s, namely German and Bulgarian.

caution, they seem to mirror the general tendency observed among scientists to use English as the most preferred working language.

Based on participants' answers to the open statements, we elicited their opinion and beliefs regarding the use of languages in education and regarding translanguaging, in particular. Otheguy, García and Wallis (2015: 281) define translanguaging as "... the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages". Below we present the main results of students' answers to this section of the questionnaire.

Out of the 109 questionnaires, we received a total of 106¹⁵ responses to the open statements section: 46 participants prefer to use only the Greek language for study purposes, 20 believe that communication in their L1s can help them achieve their educational needs and 40 consider that all the known languages (their L1s, English, or other L2s) should alternate interchangeably even in the class of foreign language teaching. If we add the results of the two latter categories and oppose them to the answers suggesting exclusive use of Greek (favouring a monolingual process), we notice that the proportion of those who prefer a monolingual approach to education to those who prefer a multilingual teaching methodology is quite balanced (43.4% vs. 56.6%). Thus, we needed to examine whether other characteristics of their individual (and educational) profile were related to their attitudes towards the language(s) used in education.

Starting with the examination of their origin as a possible factor differentiating their preferences, it turned out that 55.1% of the students who support the exclusive use of Greek during in-class teaching, originate from ex-Soviet Union countries (Russia, Ukraine, Latvia) and various Balkan countries (Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania), as shown in Figure 6. On the other hand, no such grouping could be made for the proportion of students who support a multilingual teaching methodology: the distribution of their countries of origin was quite diverse and no accumulation was observed for specific nationalities.

¹⁵ The three participants who chose not to provide us with an answer to these questions were active students at AUTH, two of them originated from Ukraine and one from Turkey.

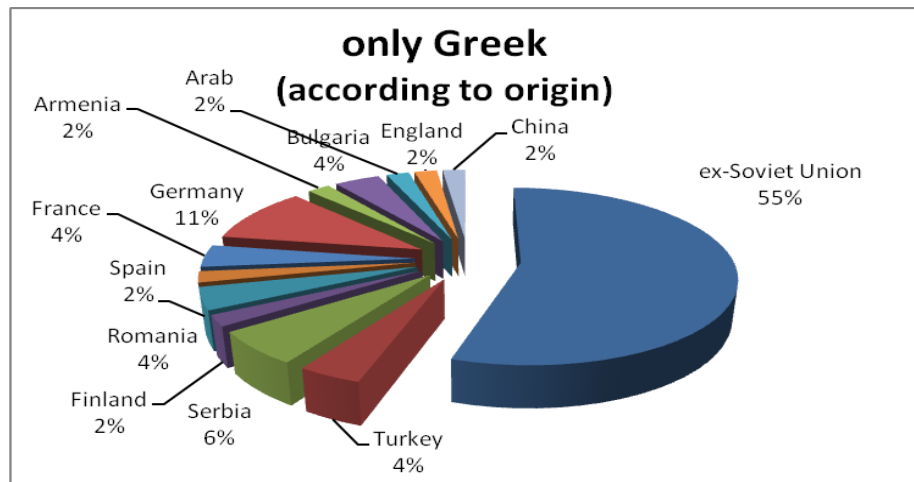


Figure 6: Distribution of students favouring the use of Greek in class, according to origin

If we consider their educational background instead (Figure 7), results show that 28.57% of the participants who opt for a monolingual approach to education are students or graduates of the Faculty of Theology, 21% have no university degree, and 12.24% are students at the Faculty of Philosophy. The rest of them come, in much smaller percentages, from a variety of other schools and departments, but none of them has post-graduate studies, and three did not specify their educational background (cf. No Answer in the graph).

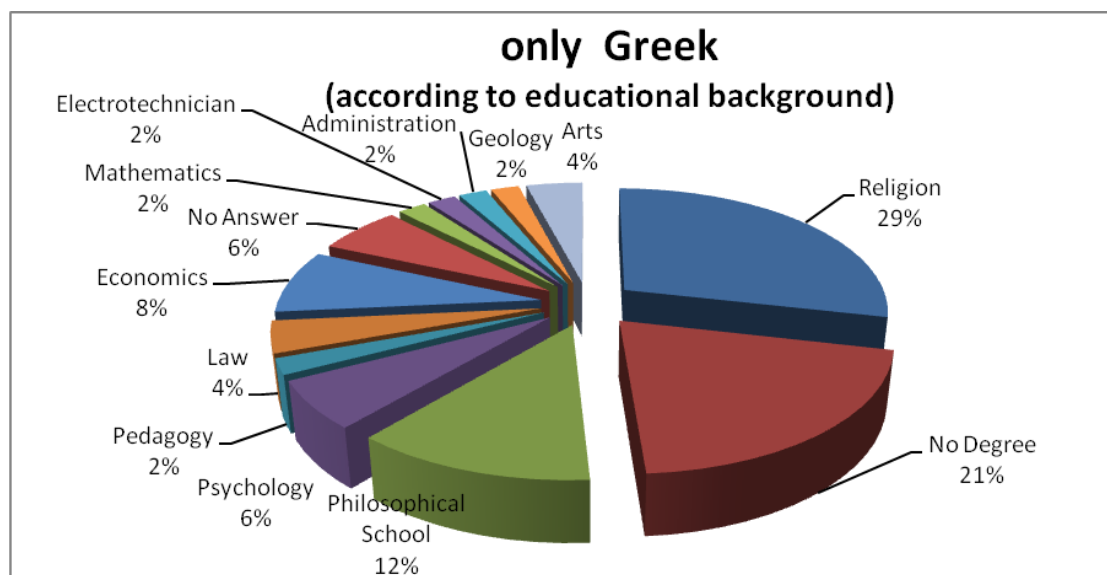


Figure 7: Distribution of students favouring the use of Greek in class, according to their educational background

On the other hand, participants who prefer a multilingual approach of teaching, varied in educational background both with respect to the level and to the discipline of their education: we distinguish among them fourteen individuals who have no tertiary education (i.e. 23.3%), fifteen enrolled in academic programmes at AUn (i.e. 25%), and the remaining 51.7% having pursued graduate or post-graduate studies: twenty-two holders of a Bachelor Degree, seven holders of a Master Degree, one PhD holder and one post-doctoral researcher. We do not include information on the disciplines of their academic degrees, due to the ample variety of schools they represent.

Let us finally, summarise the reasons participants provided justifying their preference for a mono vs. a multilingual teaching approach. According to their personal statements, the 46 participants who favoured the exclusive use of the target language, mostly indicated that this will promote the improvement of specific language skills:

“...it is a good opportunity to hear the language in the class and to understand it. It’s important to have a good pronunciation” (Age: 53; Origin: Germany).

“...it helps learn the foreign language faster and better”. (Age: 29, Origin: Ukraine).

On the other hand, as mentioned above, another 60 students at the SMG favour the co-existence and use of many languages within the educational context, as helpful resources to reach their educational goals. Their opinions can be summarised as follows:

“...it helps to build a comparative structure of the language you’re learning and better understand” (Age: 24, Origin: China).

“... the vocabulary is more easily acquired in the mediation of another already known language, no matter if it is our L1 or not” (Age: 19, Origin: Albania).

“...it helps promoting multilingualism” (Age: 20, Origin: Albania).

“...it helps build a holistic knowledge” (Age: 47, Origin: Australia).

“...it is more effective and fast learning” (Age: 25, Origin: Russia).

It is worth noting that such answers point to the benefits of fostering plurilingualism, of holistic development and effective learning in a multilingual educational context.

7. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the language profile of tertiary education in Greece in order to extrapolate about the degree of multilingualism promoted in Greek state universities. To this aim, we collected relevant data from AUTH, the largest university in Greece, and conducted a survey at the School of Modern Greek, AUTH. Through the survey we elicited information about the languages these students are exposed to at the university and their beliefs regarding a monolingual or a multilingual approach to their education. In this respect, the present study is related to similar previous research in teachers' and students' views and opinions towards the internationalisation of higher education conducted in various countries across Europe (Aguilar and Rodriguez 2012, Tatzl 2011, Unterberger 2012, among others).

Participation in the survey was quite good, as a large number of students completed the questionnaire. With respect to the language of exposure, participants' answers indicated that in the majority of the cases, Greek is the exclusive language used both during class lectures and for assessment based on essay writing. As for their preference regarding the monolingual or multilingual approach to education, their answers indicated that they are nearly equally split between the two options: about 43% of them prefer a monolingual approach to education (i.e. exclusive use of Greek), while the rest – nearly 57% – opt for a multilingual approach to teaching and are quite happy to switch codes and use translanguaging during classes (cf. Otheguy, García and Wallis 2015). Such differences seem to be related (a) to their education, viz. the study programme of the university department they attend, and (b) to their country of origin. On the one hand, the fact that the majority of the students prefer a multilingual approach to teaching indicates a clear tendency towards the adoption of multilingualism; at the same time, however, if we take into consideration the context where the study was conducted (a multilingual environment by default), perhaps an even higher percentage of students opting for multilingualism would have been expected.

The notion of translanguaging is based on Grosjean's (2010) idea that bilinguals are not two monolinguals in one; thus, their performance in only one language would draw only from half of their entire repertoire. Similarly, other researchers, such as García (2009), claim that bilingual students should use their entire language repertoire in order to make deeper meaning and legitimise their home languages. Moreover,

language has an identity function, and the alternate use of learners' languages (L1 and L2s) actually allows them to adopt different identities according to the requirements of the situation. The monolingual character of the Greek tertiary education seems to lose its rigidity due to the increasing numbers of incoming Erasmus but also other foreign students to Greek tertiary institutions. However, the current legislation does not allow the generalised adoption of more flexible bilingual study programmes in all university departments.

The international, multilingual and multicultural aspects of higher education have attracted a lot of interest on the part of the European government, the national governments, institutions of higher education as well as various accreditation agencies (Beelen and de Witt 2012, see also Dafouz 2015). At the beginning of the 21st century, the European Higher Education Area was developed; this aims to harmonise university degrees and to promote the free circulation of international students and staff. As Dafouz (2015: 290) has suggested, “[i]nternationalisation has become a key component for *quality* in 21st century higher education”.

The need for internationalisation of the curriculum and of the teaching / learning processes raises various challenges, most of them related to the multilingual and multicultural character of the university. As already stated in this paper, Greek is both the national and official language of Greece; however, as our study has shown, student mobility as well as the need for academics and researchers to publicise their research and interact meaningfully with the international academic community require a shift from a monolingual to a multilingual educational context, at least with regard to tertiary education. Thus, there seems to be discordance between the official monolingual profile of the Greek educational system and the actual requirements, not only of the foreign student population but also of the Greek students and academics, within the context of internationalised tertiary education. Based on the data of our research, we might suggest that, although the Greek educational system is officially characterised as monolingual, this seems to transform to a quasi-monolingual educational context not because of official changes in legislation but because of bottom-up changes that aim to address the transforming needs and requirements of the wider academic community.

Currently, there are extensive discussions about Higher education in Greece and about potential changes in University Legislation. Such discussions and plans for changes cannot overlook the changing language profile of Greek universities or the

needs of the academic community for a wider and richer language pool. Given that the School of Modern Greek – and in that respect, all Schools of Modern Greek in various Greek universities – are multilingual academic units, it seems important to acknowledge their rich language profile and their contribution to the multilingual profile of the university. Given that there are Schools of Modern Greek in various Greek universities, this could be an opportune moment for a joint proposal to the state concerning changes (a) in the legislation governing the functioning of Schools of Modern Greek, and (b) in the language policy concerning the Greek tertiary education, as a whole. The external evaluation of the SMG (February 2015) specifically outlined the need for the creation of a network of schools /of Modern Greek within Greek universities with a two-fold aim: “Firstly, to guarantee the quality of teaching programmes of Greek as a foreign language across the Greek universities; and secondly, to constitute the body that will submit proposals to the state concerning the status and the functioning of the schools of Modern Greek in general”¹⁶.

It becomes quite obvious that any changes in the University Legislation cannot be introduced without taking into consideration the realistic needs of Greek students and academics but also issues such as the internationalisation of higher education and the challenges that this poses for the study programmes of all university departments at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level.

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¹⁶ External evaluation report of the SMGL. Available: http://smg.web.auth.gr/wordpress/?page_id=2973

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