

# ATTITUDES TOWARD BILINGUALISM: THE CASE OF TWO GREEK ISLANDS

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**Abstract** – *Bilingualism, and more recently plurilingualism, is attracting considerable attention due to the increasing influx of people with different ethnolinguistic background to Western societies as well as the fact that we live in a globalised world. This study presents the results of a large-scale survey administered to 1,727 students enrolled in Greek schools in the islands of Rhodes and Symi during the scholastic year 2002-2003. Using an adapted version of Baker's questionnaire (see Baker, 2001), the study attempted to investigate students' attitudes toward bilingualism. The results indicate a general positive attitude toward bilingualism. Most of the students were aware of the fact that knowing more than one language would be useful in their adult life, particularly in view of the professional and economic rewards that this brings in an increasingly globalised world. It was however found that the subjects of the study were not so positively disposed toward bilingualism as a societal phenomenon. The study findings are discussed in relation to language education policy in Greece.*

## Introduction

**I**n view of the increasing influx of people with different ethnolinguistic background to European societies and the phenomenon of world globalisation, bilingualism and more recently plurilingualism are attracting considerable attention. It is estimated that about one-third of the European population under the age of 35 has an immigrant background (Gogolin, 2002). Greece is not an exception. Indeed, although traditionally assumed to be monolingual, Greece is registering today a steady increase in linguistic and cultural diversity. This diversity is evident in public schools where the number of school-aged children having a linguistic and cultural background other than Greek continues to grow. According to Gotovos & Markou (2004), during the 2002-2003 scholastic year, the number of children belonging to a different ethnolinguistic background was estimated at 98,241 pupils, representing 6.7% of the total school population. This diversity is also evident in Rhodes (see Filippardou, 1997; Vratsalis & Skourtou, 2000).

Moreover, an increasing number of children are learning one or more foreign languages. Greeks are aware of the fact that as their language is not widely spoken outside their country, they are obliged to learn foreign languages if they want to be competitive in a globalised world. The same applies to other small countries like, for example, Sweden (see Cabau-Lampa, 1999). It could therefore be expected that they hold a need-driven attitude toward foreign languages. This expectation needs to be verified through empirical data. The island of Rhodes, and to a lesser extent Symi, seemed to be interesting research locations due to their growing linguistic diversity. This study was designed to make up for the existing lack of research regarding students' attitudes toward bilingualism and plurilingualism.

## **Defining bilingualism and plurilingualism**

More than half of the earth's population is bilingual and many people are multilingual. Although bilingualism, and even multilingualism, is the rule in most societies, in Western thinking it is approached with suspicion since it goes contrary to the ideal society that demands linguistic unity based on the tradition of 'one nation and one language ideology' (Thomas & Wareing, 1999; Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2001; Luchtenberg, 2002). Linguistic diversity, however, is becoming more accepted. Given that, in the last two decades, bilingualism has also become associated with cognitive, social and psychological advantages both at an individual and at a societal level, schools should therefore play an important role toward its development (Garcia, 1997; Miramontes, Nadeau & Commins, 1997; Cummins, 2003). Recently, the Council of Europe<sup>1</sup> has extended the notion of bilingualism by promoting the learning of several languages for all individuals in the course of their lives with the aim to encourage Europeans to become plurilingual and intercultural citizens (Beacco & Byram, 2003). In this sense, plurilingualism implies much more than just acquiring languages, as it is concerned with intercultural interaction and communication, the promotion of mutual understanding and the development of individual responsibility (Beacco & Byram, 2003).

On the other hand, bilingualism and multilingualism are often used interchangeably, referring to situations where speakers of different languages are in contact, without taking into account the intercultural aspect of being bilingual or multilingual. In some cases, multilingualism is assumed to include bilingualism (Clyne, 1997), whereas, in other cases, bilingualism is considered as a broader term which includes multilingualism (Baker, 2001). However, in the context of the Council of Europe, the term plurilingualism is used when referring to an

individual's ability to use several languages, whereas multilingualism or linguistic diversity is used for describing the co-existence of many languages in a society (Beacco & Byram, 2003).

For the purpose of this study, bilingualism is used as a generic term which includes multilingualism and which applies to all contexts, including Europe. In addition, the present study does not take into account the intercultural aspect of being bilingual or plurilingual. In general, definitions of bilingualism vary considerably with respect to competence and function ranging from native-like control of two or more languages to lesser ability in one of the languages (see Kostoulas-Makrakis, 1995). But although there are throughout the world many different forms of bilingualism, a main distinction is drawn between bilingualism as an individual phenomenon and as a societal one. Individual bilingualism refers to a person's capacity to use two or more languages, whereas societal bilingualism refers to a society in which two or more languages or varieties co-exist. According to Apeltauer (1993, p. 273), bilingualism can be the outcome of particular life circumstances (e.g., a bi-/multilingual environment) or of an individual's decisions and efforts. In the first case, we speak of 'socially conditioned bilingualism' whereas in the latter of 'individual bilingualism'.

Another distinction is often made between the natural bilingualism of ethnic minorities and migrants, and learned bilingualism through formal language learning at school, or, as it has been termed, between 'folk' bilingualism and 'elite' bilingualism (Mills, 2001). In the first case, people become bilingual involuntarily in order to work and integrate in the educational and social structure of a society, whereas the second case refers to educated middle class people who choose to become bilinguals. As Luchtenberg (2002) has pointed out, 'the latter is generally much more highly valued than the former, though in reality the two often overlap' (p. 50). There is an ambivalent attitude toward bilingual speakers and their languages are valued hierarchically (Thomas & Wareing, 1999). When, for example, a child is bilingual in the language of the dominant society and another prestigious language such as English, French or German, bilingualism is then considered an asset. However, in cases when the child is bilingual in the dominant language and a migrant language, bilingualism is then either ignored or undervalued (see Thomas & Wareing, 1999; Skourtou & Kourtis-Kazoullis, 2000). In other words, 'bilingualism is not envisaged the same way when it concerns migrant languages as opposed to foreign languages' (Hélot, 2003, p. 271). It is thus obvious that it has to do with the status of the languages involved and their value in the 'linguistic market' (Bourdieu, 1991). Generally speaking, different status or value is ascribed to particular languages/language varieties, which in many cases reflects the status accorded to the speakers of these languages.

In this study, the notion of bilingualism is understood as the capacity of using two or more languages, which are: (i) the first language(s) of the child in case of children whose one or both parents are foreigners living in Greece; and (ii) Greek, the language learned at school. We should mention here that the Greek education system and curriculum focus only on monolingual and monocultural children, even if there are some bilingual schools which cater primarily for the needs of repatriated children.

## **Foreign language teaching and learning**

In the new Europe that expanded to 25 member states in 2004 and which aspires to political and economic integration, the need to know foreign languages is gaining importance as a prerequisite to participate in the European market without frontiers. Besides that, knowing foreign languages is considered an asset that facilitates free movement and the discovery of different cultures and mentalities. In this vein, the European Commission<sup>2</sup> pressures all member states to promote the learning of at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue (see Mackiewicz, 2002). As clearly stated in the *White Paper Towards the Learning Society*, the European Union (EU) views plurilingualism as a necessity for professional and economic mobility (Krumm, 2004). On its part, the Council of Europe has for many years addressed language issues with the aim of promoting plurilingualism as a means of securing peace and stabilising the development of democracy.

While the traditional idea has been that foreign languages should be taught so that well-educated people could read classical literature in the original text, the main concern nowadays is to communicate, to learn about another culture, to travel and to be an attractive job candidate in our globalised world (McDonough, 2001). In the European context, competence in language(s) is considered a characteristic of democratic and active citizenship, both as a prerequisite to it and for its implementation (Breidbach, 2003). Today's societal demands have consequently shifted the direction of the focus of foreign language education. In this sense, the aims of the teaching of languages are now convergent with those of education for democratic citizenship: both are concerned with intercultural interaction and communication, the promotion of mutual understanding and the development of individual responsibility (Beacco & Byram, 2003). Language can thus be seen not only as a marker of national or ethnic identity, but also as a form of economic and social capital. Notwithstanding this, foreign language teaching as a school subject has been developed within a monolingual education framework, which implies that foreign languages do not have as much importance as other school subjects (Stern, 1992).

In Greece, foreign languages are among the least popular subjects at school. However, there is an increased interest in foreign language learning outside schools. This is evident from the large number of private foreign language centres in Greece which are attended by the great majority of school children. There are in fact more than 8,000 foreign language schools in the private sector spread all over the country. The majority of their students learn English, followed by those who learn German, French, Italian and Spanish. In a survey concerning citizens' views on lifelong learning among the residents of all 25 EU member states together with Iceland and Norway, it was found that at least half of the respondents from Greece were ready to consider contributing some money from their own pockets in order to learn a new language and obtain a certificate (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [CEDEPOF], 2003). Moreover, due to the ongoing developments in the EU and the opening of the labour market, the official Greek education policy concerning foreign language teaching has changed in recent years. More specifically, while English has become at primary level the compulsory foreign language from Grade 3 onwards, English, French and German are now being taught in secondary schools. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education is planning to introduce a second foreign language (either French or German) from Grade 5 in primary schools. Apart from English being the compulsory foreign language in tertiary education, there are also at this level a variety of foreign languages (such as French, German, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Arabic, etc.) according to the curriculum of each institution.

### **Attitudes toward bilingualism**

Given that language attitudes affect the development of bilingualism, it is of utmost importance that these attitudes are taken into consideration when discussing bilingualism (Baker, 1992). In some cases, language attitudes seem to be limited to attitudes toward the language itself. However, the definition of language attitudes is most often broader, including all kinds of behaviour concerning the language in question (e.g., attitudes toward bilingualism) (Fasold, 1984). According to Baker (1992), attitudes toward bilingualism differ and are conceptually distinct from attitudes toward a specific language, in the sense that attitudes toward bilingualism are about two languages in contact. Language learning, and eventually bilingualism, is affected by attitudes toward specific languages. We should keep in mind that language attitudes reflect the psychosocial attitudes about the language, thus conveying the social, cultural and sentimental values of the speakers (see Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2001).

Language attitudes may have an instrumental/extrinsic and/or an integrative/intrinsic orientation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Instrumentally motivated persons learn a foreign language mainly for its utilitarian value. This may be, for example, to qualify for a better job, to achieve personal success, to improve one's status, and so on. An integrative attitude, on the other hand, is defined as the person's desire to be an accepted member of the target language community, to come in contact with and to share the culture of that group. However, in the 1990s, researchers began to revise and extend this dichotomy because they found it too static and restricted (see Ho, 1998). The world itself has moreover changed greatly since Gardner & Lambert introduced this dichotomy in language learning (Lamb, 2004). These two orientations in language attitudes are not necessarily opposites: indeed, they can co-exist in an individual at the same time (Baker, 1992) and can also be indistinguishable (Lamb, 2004). Green (1999) in fact views motivational drives as dynamic and developmental, in a state of constant flux rather than as static binary opposites. According to Dörnyei (1990), another problem with the instrumental/integrative dichotomy is that it is not directly applicable to foreign language learning since this kind of learning does not involve any interaction with the target language community. Research indicates the importance of the home background and socio-cultural milieu on attitudes toward language learning and bilingualism (Gardner, 1985; Kostoulas-Makrakis, 1995; Gardner, Masgoret & Tremblay, 1999).

This paper attempts to investigate students' attitudes toward bilingualism in the Greek islands of Rhodes and Symi. More specifically, the paper examines the possible attitudinal differences between monolinguals and bilinguals. In this context, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- (i) In general, all subjects are expected to hold more positive attitudes toward bilingualism than monolingualism.
- (ii) Monolingual subjects are expected to hold less positive attitudes toward bilingualism than bilingual subjects.

## **Methodology**

### *Subjects*

The sample consisted of 1,727 students from the Greek islands of Rhodes and Symi, 40% of whom attended primary schools, 36% lower secondary schools and 24% upper secondary schools. We chose to conduct our research in these two geographical areas in view of their high number of foreign residents, both as a result of mixed marriages and incoming foreign labour.

The demographics of the students in terms of their ethnolinguistic background varied widely. While 10% of the subjects' fathers and 16% of the mothers were identified as having another country of origin, 14% of the fathers and 18% of the mothers were identified as having another language background. The great majority of the students with non-Greek background were Albanians, Germans, Scandinavians, British and from Balkan countries. Most of the subjects' fathers belonged to middle class (49%), followed by lower class (37%) and upper class (14%). A similar trend was observed for the subjects' mothers, the difference being that 41% of these women were housewives. With respect to the gender composition of the sample, 51% of the subjects were boys and 49% were girls.

### *Instrumentation*

The survey questionnaire contained 25 items divided into two parts. The 14 questions of the first part were designed to elicit demographic information (e.g., parents' origin and profession, students' gender, school level, area of residence, birthplace, mother tongue and the language spoken at home). The second part of the questionnaire, which contained 11 questions, sought to uncover students' perceptions and attitudes toward bilingualism. The questions concerning language attitudes were adapted from Baker (2001). More specifically, these were probes for positive (6 items) and negative bilingualism (5 items) which tried mainly to measure the students' instrumental orientation toward bilingualism. The purpose of these questions was to determine if bilinguals and monolinguals have different orientations toward bilingualism, both at individual and societal levels. Attitudinal responses were measured on a scale of four alternatives (1 – strongly agree; 2 – agree; 3 – disagree; and 4 – strongly disagree) which were reversed for consistency in the analysis. The questionnaire was administered to students inside classrooms by their teachers. A brief letter explaining the importance and the purpose of the study was distributed along with the questionnaire.

### *Analysis*

Using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test, the independent variable 'mother tongue' was examined separately with each of the items that measure positive and negative bilingualism. The objective was to search for significant differences between monolinguals and bilinguals. According to the notion of bilingualism as defined in the present study, subjects who might have learned other languages at school or at private institutions were not classified as 'bilinguals'. Thus, the two groups of subjects in the study were: monolinguals

(who have Greek as their mother tongue) and bilinguals (who speak Greek besides their mother tongue<sup>3</sup>).

Classification of the other independent factors (such as, parents' origin and subjects' birthplace) was established on the basis of 'Greeks' (i.e., monolinguals) and 'non-Greeks' (i.e., bilinguals). Again using the Mann-Whitney test, these other independent variables were also examined separately with each of the 11 items that measure attitudes toward bilingualism in order to identify possible significant differences.

## Results

In general, as Table 1 indicates, the subjects of this study, both monolinguals and bilinguals, expressed positive attitudes toward bilingualism. The most strongly agreed with statements denoting positive bilingualism were: (i) 'It is important to be able to speak more than one language' with 80% of the monolinguals and 83% of the bilinguals indicating strong agreement; (ii) 'Speaking both Greek and another language helps to get a job' with 81% of the monolinguals and 77% of the bilinguals indicating strong agreement; and (iii) 'Being able to write both in Greek and another language is important' with 70% of the monolinguals and 72% of the bilinguals indicating strong agreement. In line with this, according to a Eurobarometer<sup>4</sup> survey (see European Commission, 2006), while 75% of Greek respondents believe that knowing other languages besides their mother tongue is or could be very useful, 74% of them support the idea that everyone should speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

While no statistically significant differences were noted between monolinguals and bilinguals in any of the statements denoting positive bilingualism, it was found that these two groups differ significantly in all of the statements denoting negative bilingualism. The strongest difference between the two groups occurred in the statement 'I would like Greek to be the only language spoken in the area' where, as expected, bilinguals expressed higher disagreement ( $z = -7.8, p < .001$ ). Bilinguals again expressed significantly higher disagreement with the statements 'Speaking two or more languages is difficult' ( $z = -4.1, p < .001$ ) and 'Children get confused when learning more than one language' ( $z = -3.2, p < .001$ ). The same trend was noted from the remaining two statements denoting negative bilingualism, namely, 'To speak Greek in Greece is all that is needed' ( $z = -2.6, p < .01$ ) and 'People only need to know one language' ( $z = -2.9, p < .01$ ). These findings may reflect the monolingual socio-cultural context of Greece which presents limited opportunities for interaction in other languages unless individuals make a conscious effort to seek opportunities for using another



TABLE 1: Attitudes of monolinguals (M) and bilinguals (B) toward bilingualism

| Attitudes toward Bilingualism          | Strongly Disagree |   | Disagree |    | Agree |    | Strongly Agree |    | z-score |
|--|-------------------|---|----------|----|-------|----|----------------|----|---------|
|  | M                 | B | M        | B  | M     | B  | M              | B  |         |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 0                 | 1 | 4        | 4  | 16    | 12 | 80             | 83 | -0.95   |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 2                 | 1 | 40       | 48 | 28    | 28 | 30             | 23 | -2.6**  |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 2                 | 2 | 20       | 21 | 33    | 35 | 45             | 42 | -1.1    |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 1                 | 2 | 41       | 52 | 37    | 30 | 21             | 16 | -3.2*** |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 1                 | 1 | 43       | 58 | 33    | 26 | 22             | 15 | -4.1*** |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 0                 | 1 | 4        | 5  | 15    | 17 | 81             | 77 | -1.3    |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 1                 | 2 | 5        | 4  | 24    | 22 | 70             | 72 | -0.6    |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 0                 | 2 | 12       | 19 | 29    | 27 | 59             | 52 | -1.0    |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 1                 | 2 | 26       | 27 | 32    | 25 | 41             | 46 | -0.5    |
| ██████████<br>██████████               | 1                 | 2 | 81       | 87 | 13    | 7  | 5              | 4  | -2.9**  |
| ██████████<br>██████████<br>██████████ | 0                 | 1 | 34       | 61 | 28    | 19 | 38             | 19 | -7.8*** |

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

language (see Green, 1999). According to a Eurobarometer survey (see European Commission, 2006), 89% of Greeks do not use a foreign language on a daily basis. And negative perceptions of bilingualism come from a monolingual perspective of what it is to function in two or more languages (Cummins, 2003).

Although the subjects of the study generally showed positive attitudes toward bilingualism, it should be noted that most of them were not so positively disposed toward bilingualism in two out of the three statements concerning bilingualism at a societal level. In particular, 66% (38% 'strongly agree' and 28% 'agree') of the monolinguals would like 'Greek to be the only language spoken in the area', while the corresponding figure for the bilinguals is only 38% (19% 'strongly agree' and 19% 'agree'). Whereas practically half of the bilinguals (23% 'strongly agree' and 28% 'agree') believe that 'To speak Greek in Greece is all that is needed', the corresponding figure for the monolinguals is 58% (30% 'strongly agree' and 28% 'agree'). It is pertinent here to point out that the mastery of the Greek language – which is considered as the main factor of social, cultural and economic integration – remains the main priority of the Greek education system. Not surprisingly, a Eurobarometer survey (see European Commission, 2001) revealed that 90% of Greeks agreed with the statement that 'Enlargement of the EU to include new member countries means that we must protect our language more'.

Table 2 indicates that subjects whose parents had Greek background (father:  $p < .05$ ; mother:  $p < .001$ ) and those who were born in Greece ( $p < .01$ ) were significantly more likely to agree with the statement 'Speaking two or more languages is difficult'. A similar trend was noted for the statement 'I would like Greek to be the only language spoken in the area' (all three at  $p < .001$ ). It was further found that male subjects agreed more than female subjects with these two statements ( $p < .05$  and  $p < .001$  respectively). Subjects whose mother's origin was Greek and those who were born in Greece again scored significantly higher on the statement 'Children get confused when learning more than one language' ( $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$  respectively). On the other hand, subjects born outside Greece were found to believe more strongly than those born in Greece that 'People can earn more money if they speak other languages besides Greek' ( $p < .05$ ). In line with this, subjects born in Greece believed more strongly than those born elsewhere that 'People only need to know one language' ( $p < .05$ ). Besides adhering more strongly than females to the underlying beliefs that knowledge of languages translates itself into financial gains ( $p < .01$ ) and that people just require one language ( $p < .05$ ), male subjects were again more strongly of the opinion than females that 'To speak Greek in Greece is all that is needed' ( $p < .01$ ). Female subjects, on the other hand, were more inclined than male subjects to accept the statement 'Speaking both Greek and another language helps to get a job' ( $p < .05$ ).

TABLE 2: Attitudes toward bilingualism by students' gender and birthplace, and parents' origins

| Attitudes toward Bilingualism | Student's Gender | Father's Origin |         | Mother's Origin |         | Student's birthplace |         |         |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------|
|                               |                  | z-score         | z-score | z-score         | z-score | z-score              | z-score |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -0.3            | Greek   | -0.6            | Greek   | -1.6                 | Greek   | -1.70   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -3.2**          | Greek   | -0.5            | Greek   | -0.8                 | Greek   | -0.51   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -0.6            | Greek   | -0.1            | Greek   | -0.8                 | Greek   | -1.32   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -0.8            | Greek   | -1.8            | Greek   | -2.8**               | Greek   | -2.2*   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -2.1*           | Greek   | -2.2*           | Greek   | -3.5***              | Greek   | -2.8**  |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -2.2*           | Greek   | -0.3            | Greek   | -0.9                 | Greek   | -0.58   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -0.1            | Greek   | -0.9            | Greek   | -1.4                 | Greek   | -1.26   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -2.6**          | Greek   | -0.9            | Greek   | -0.6                 | Greek   | -1.9*   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -0.98           | Greek   | -0.5            | Greek   | -0.5                 | Greek   | -0.27   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -2.3*           | Greek   | -0.7            | Greek   | -1.7                 | Greek   | -2.0*   |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |
| [Redacted]                    | Male             | -4.7***         | Greek   | -5.2***         | Greek   | -7.1***              | Greek   | -4.7*** |
|                               | Female           |                 | Other   |                 | Other   |                      | Other   |         |

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

In our opinion, these results can be explained by the fact that, despite the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity, Greece has operated under monolingual and monocultural assumptions for a long time. While in most of the statements the independent factors of parents' origin and students' birthplace did not exert any statistically significant effect, the gender factor on the contrary produced statistically significant differences in six out of the 11 statements.

## **Discussion**

The starting point of this paper has been that the on-going European integration – which is characterised by the opening of the labour markets, the elimination of frontiers and globalisation – will have an impact on people's attitudes toward foreign language learning and eventually bilingualism, both at individual and societal levels. Taking into account the increasing number of students in Greek schools with non-Greek background and the fact that we live in an increasingly globalised world, this study used an adapted version of Baker's (2001) language attitudes questionnaire in order to examine students' attitudes toward bilingualism in the Greek islands of Rhodes and Symi. After identifying monolinguals and bilinguals as two distinct groups, the following two hypotheses were investigated:

- (i) In general, all subjects are expected to hold more positive attitudes toward bilingualism than monolingualism.
- (ii) Monolingual subjects are expected to hold less positive attitudes toward bilingualism than bilingual subjects.

The results of this study show clearly that all subjects, whether bilingual or monolingual, hold positive attitudes toward bilingualism. Being bilingual is generally regarded as positive or even advantageous. This constitutes an important consideration related to foreign language education in Greece and the declared aim of the Council of Europe to promote plurilingualism. The great majority of the 1,727 student participants in this study appear to have understood that speaking two or more languages gives you an advantage – which they see more in terms of job opportunities and economic rewards – over monolingual people. It seems that they realise that, especially in tourist places such as the Greek islands of Rhodes and Symi, 'bilingualism can lead to practical, career-related advantages' (Shin, 2000, p. 97). The hypothesis that 'In general, all subjects are expected to hold more positive attitudes toward bilingualism than monolingualism' can consequently be considered as verified.

This finding is substantiated by data of a Eurobarometer survey (see European Commission, 2006) which established that the great majority of Greeks (92%) think that young people should learn languages in order to improve their job opportunities. In our study, we found that the most preferred languages are English and German. This seems to reflect the international status of the first and the increasing inflow of German-speaking tourists in the area where we conducted the study. Indications are that the large number of German tourists visiting Rhodes and Symi every year has led to an awareness among the students that expertise in German is a key for finding a job, at least in the tourist business. German is also considered the language of technology and trade (see Cabau-Lampa, 1999). A Eurobarometer survey concerning Europeans and their languages found that 30% of Greek respondents assessed German as the second most useful language (see European Commission, 2006). This survey found that while 50% of Greek parents believe that their children should learn German, 96% chose English. As far as English is concerned, it is now acknowledged as a global language, being the first, second or the foreign language of a population estimated at 1.5 billion people (Crystal, 1997). It has been found that there is a strong desire among Europeans, especially within the young generations, to learn English which has established itself as the first or the most widely taught foreign language in the EU (Labrie & Quell, 1997). The same applies for English in the Asian context where this language has been identified as an integral part of the globalisation processes (Lamb, 2004).

A survey about citizens' views on lifelong learning among the residents of all EU member states as well as Iceland and Norway (see CEDEPOF, 2003) found that Greek respondents rated their knowledge and skills of using foreign languages around 15% above average. In Greece, the students' instrumental orientation toward the learning of foreign languages is highly influenced by socio-cultural factors. As already pointed out, Greek children instrumentally seek foreign languages which are viewed as economic assets in order to compensate for the fact that Greek is a 'small' language that is hardly spoken outside their country.

As expected, the study's comparisons between monolinguals and bilinguals revealed that monolinguals hold less positive attitudes toward bilingualism than bilinguals. This emerged clearly from two out of the three statements dealing with bilingualism at societal level: while 66% of the monolinguals agreed with the statement 'I would like Greek to be the only language spoken in the area', 58% of the monolinguals also agreed with the statement 'To speak Greek in Greece is all that is needed'. These results reflect how many people in Greece still believe that their country is linguistically homogeneous. Present results also corroborate other studies which show that the majority language is a strong means of binding together all members of a state, while at the same time excluding those who do not speak it (see Luchtenberg, 2002). Most appropriately, there is today in Europe an ongoing discourse

about the value of linguistic and cultural diversity, how this diversity should be handled and what should be the role of language education (see Gogolin, 2002; Beacco & Byram, 2003). But Europeans still do not always accept diversity due to the fact that monolingualism is considered as the norm and bilingualism as a 'problem' associated with the great influx of immigrants in their countries. In this sense, the increased linguistic and cultural diversity is viewed as divisive and 'bilingual and multilingual individuals may appear unusual' (Wardhaugh, 1994, p. 98). In Greece, as in many other European countries, we expect in fact all members of a nation to share a common language besides learning foreign languages at school.

Gender emerged from this study as exerting a significant influence on subjects' responses to most of the attitudinal statements, irrespective of whether these denote positive or negative bilingualism. Females were generally found to be more positively disposed toward bilingualism than males. In particular, males surpassed females in only three out of the 11 statements dealing with bilingualism. This finding is in line with other studies in which females were found to hold more positive attitudes than males toward foreign or second language learning (see Ellis, 1994; Kobayashi, 2002).

Generally speaking, our study has revealed that knowing many languages is considered an asset and that bilingualism, in view of its practical and economic rewards, is becoming very important in today's world. However, the results also show that the subjects of our study were not so positively disposed toward bilingualism as a societal phenomenon. The education system has consequently to cope with this apparent reluctance to accept linguistic diversity. The present findings suggest that we need to persuade people in Greece not only about the value of bilingualism, both for individuals and society at large, but also about the naturalness and widespread occurrence of being bilingual or plurilingual. The whole point is that 'plurilingualism is not only a matter of competence but also an attitude of interest in and openness about languages and language varieties of all kinds' (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p. 10).

The major implication of this study relates to the question of 'How to change our mental representations of societal bilingualism so that linguistic and cultural diversity are seen as a source of enrichment'. As the Single Market in Europe further increases people's mobility, the incentive to learn foreign languages will also receive a boost, thereby augmenting the proportion of bilingual individuals (Apeltauer, 1993). It follows that schools must provide 'all students with the opportunities to acquire cultural and linguistic proficiencies and modes of behaviour that will allow them to participate as citizens in a changing world' (Allemann-Ghionda, 2001, p. 30). Hélot & Young (2002) consequently suggest that language awareness activities should be integrated within school programmes in order to help children and teachers appreciate language and cultural diversity in our increasingly globalised world.

The results of our study can be used as a starting point to examine how Greece handles the phenomenon of bilingualism and plurilingualism, and how this is being tackled in the curriculum. This leads us to investigate a number of interesting questions, such as, ‘Is there any reference to the educational value of linguistic and cultural diversity that is brought to schools by the various languages and cultures?’, ‘Are there explicit references to the languages of immigrants living in Greece?’ and ‘Are languages seen as resources or as problems?’. Given these possibilities, we are of the opinion that the findings of this study merit close consideration when discussing and implementing language and education policies aimed at promoting the Council of Europe’s plans in favour of plurilingualism.

## Notes

1. The Council of Europe (which is not part of the European Union) is an international organisation of 46 member states in the European region. Its main success was the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950, which serves as the basis for the European Court of Human Rights. Membership is open to all European democracies which accept the principle of the rule of law and guarantee fundamental human rights and freedoms to their citizens.
2. The European Commission (formally the Commission of the European Communities) is the executive body of the European Union. Alongside the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, it is one of the three main institutions governing the Union.
3. It was assumed that subjects who have a language other than Greek as their mother tongue are also fluent in Greek, as they attended public schools in which fluency in Greek is required.
4. Eurobarometer is a series of surveys regularly performed on behalf of the European Commission. It produces reports regarding public opinion on certain issues relating to the European Union across the member states.

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