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Greek Language and Culture in Australia

1. Introduction

The Greek migration and settlement circle in Oceania comprised four important stages: the stage of exodus of approximately 300,000 Hellenes from their ancestral residences (1829-1974), the painful and agonizing stage of settlement in Australia and New Zealand during the pre- and post-WWII period, the stage of their socio-economic and cultural interaction during the years 1975-1995, and the stage of consolidation and citizenship that followed.¹ During this period, Greek and Cypriot settlers arriving as migrants to Australia, were progressively transformed into citizens enhancing their social presence, consolidating their economic and cultural contribution, and overcoming the pre-War restrictive immigration policies and attitudes.

Usage of Greek in Australia commenced as early as 1850 and was defined by the immigration and settlement of Greek migrants from Greece and Cyprus, as well as other regions of the historic Diaspora, including Asia Minor, Romania, Egypt and Middle Eastern countries.² By the turn of the 19th century, Greek settlers had already established in the major cities of Australia institutions for the preservation of their ethnolinguistic identity, namely Greek Orthodox churches, Communities and schools of language and religious instruction, thereby facilitating networks for language loyalty for the pre- and post-War waves of Greek immigrants arriving in large numbers until 1974.

1. For a comprehensive bibliography on Greek immigration and settlement in Australia the reader is referred to the works of H. Gilchrist (1995, 1998 & 2004), A. M. Tamis (1997, 2000 and 2005), C. Price (1975), M. Tsounis (1975) and G. Kanarakis (1997).

2. Tamis (2005) provides a substantial account of the historic and immigrant Hellenic Diaspora and its consequences for Greece and Cyprus.

2. The Australian bilingual perspective

Australia and New Zealand, being multilingual countries, offer to sociolinguists a natural perspective for the study of the environmental factors which influence the retention of immigrant languages. Studies in this area (Haugen 1953; Fishman 1968) attracted much discussion and concluded that the immigrant community's efforts to maintain the mother tongue are doomed. Similar studies in Australia (Bettoni 1981; Clyne 1982; Tamis & Gauntlett 1993, Tamis 2001) led to the conclusion that ethnic languages are restricted in use to only a few language domains. Since their arrival, most of the native speakers of Greek have been forced to interact and to communicate in the host language and thus become bilingual.

Cross-tabulating the birthplace with the religion and the language regularly used reveal that all ethnic or community languages have suffered substantial losses in the number of people who claim them since the 1986 census. However, Greek Australians in 2005 continue to demonstrate the strongest language maintenance in Australia at intergenerational level. To date 98% of the 108,000 Greek Australians born overseas use Greek regularly, while 19.6% – the highest ratio in Australia – do not use English regularly, despite the fact that Greeks maintained in 2005 the highest rate of Australian citizenship (96%), if compared with any other ethnic group in Australia. Available data derived from cross-tabulations of the 2001 Australian Census suggest that 62% of Greek and Cyprus born Australians use Greek as their main language, 34% speak both Greek and English according to the occasion and only 4% use English almost exclusively. Most of the people who use English exclusively settled in Australia during pre-school age and thus although socially are foreign born, linguistically are second generation Greek Australians. It is also worth noticing that of those who use both languages, 70% spoke more Greek than English, 20% alternated evenly and only 5% spoke less Greek than English. The work place is the most important domain of language use in determining whether Greek maintains its position amongst its native speakers. At present 64% of overseas born Greek Australians have the opportunity to speak in their own language at work “always”, 24% “usually”, 8% rarely and 4% “never”.

The 2006 data, emerging from both the 2001 census and cross tabulations incorporating the variables of language use, religion and ancestry, suggest that among Australian born Greek Australians (2nd generation) the language shift to English was 9.2% (the lowest of any ethnicity in Australia together with the Macedonians). It was also found that, depending on their occupation, 34% of Australian born used Greek as a main medium of communication, 42% spoke both (depending

on the occasion) and 24% used English exclusively. At **intergenerational** level, home is the **domain where Greek is mainly** employed. The usage **among** 2nd generation bilinguals depends on the encouraging **efforts** of parents, other family members and above **all** on the disposition of the **individual** speaker.

The attitude of the Church in maintaining the **superposed** variety in liturgy and a gradual shift to English (in **order** to win over the second and subsequent generations) should be seen as factors inhibiting language **maintenance**. On the **affirmative, government** policies promoting **ethnic** or community language learning and **more** receptive attitudes in **community** have **facilitated** the use of Greek in other socio-economic domains (mainly in schools and institutional life). The establishment in 1978 of both State **and** independent bilingual **primary** and secondary schools in **Australia** has reinforced mother tongue maintenance. This is due to making **Greek** not only a **compulsory** subject in the Greek **curriculum** for second and subsequent **generations**, but also by promoting the status of the language. In addition, in 2005 more than 8000 students **were enrolled** in the nine Greek daily **schools** and the three State bilingual schools in Australia, **where** classes were conducted in Greek **for** an average of six **hours** per week. In one State bilingual school in **Victoria (Lalor North Primary School)** Greek is used for at least 11 hours as a medium of instruction in certain disciplines.

The academic relevance of Greek continues to influence students and parents with its introduction as an examinable matriculation subject for tertiary entrance **purposes** since 1973, in which year the lectureships and the **programs** in **Greek** studies **were** also made at university level in NSW and Victoria. In the wider **social spectrum** Greek as a **community language** is now accepted as **important** for its educational value and not merely for ethnic or **cultural reasons**.

The 2006 data also suggest that among Australian born Greek Australians (3rd generation) the language shift to English was 16.2% (the lowest of any ethnicity in Australia). It was also found that 21% of them continued to use Greek as a main **medium of communication**, 42% spoke both (depending on the occasion) and 37% used English exclusively. The high rate of language shift to English by the **third** generation Greek Australians is determined by the large percentage of school age children that do not attend **Greek** language classes (**currently** 28%) and the fact that almost 34% of those students **entering** Greek language **primary** schools did not have any language **competence** in Greek.

There are many factors conducive to the retention of Greek." For one thing,

3. For a detailed study on the language loyalty efforts of the Greek communities in

its greater **structural** variance from English than Romance and Germanic language makes it **more** difficult for the Greek immigrant to learn English. **Furthermore**, the family and community-oriented Greek **culture** insulates Greek settlers, at least until their children **start** to bridge the **communication** gap between the two cultures. In general, Greek communities abroad have shown that their language is inseparable from their cultural ethos, and Greek is **widely** used amongst members in Australia, 92% of whose **members** reside within the **metropolitan areas** of State capital cities.

There are other factors, however, which are conducive to a shift from Greek, the most **influential** being **out-marriage** (see below). The **percentage** of out-marriages, involving second and **third generations** increased from 11% in 1972, to 32% in 1984 and 44% in 2007. This **has had** a **marked** effect on the linguistic attachment of Greek community **members**, as almost ~~8~~ of all Greek Australians who opt for a non-Greek spouse **are** male. **Members** of the **Greek** community who marry out **are** generally **prepared** to accept the spouse's **culture** and language, but their choice of language can **change** according to the **interlocutor's** cultural and linguistic **background**.

3. The *providers of Greek language* education

In 2008, over 36,000 students attended classes in Greek provided by the State and Territory *governments* (**primary**, secondary, distance education **centres**, Saturday schools of modern languages), the *independent denominational* schools, the *Greek daily schools*, *Greek* community schools (**organised** by the **Greek** Communities, the **Greek Orthodox** Church and independent educational entities, especially in Victoria) and *private multilingual centers*. An additional number of 1150 students are enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate Greek studies in ten *tertiary institutions*, both State universities as well as the Catholic University of Notre Dame in Western Australia.⁴

Greek language programs at both primary and secondary levels varied

Australia and Canada the reader is referred to the study of A. M. Tamis and E. Gavaki (2002). See also the study of Smolicz and Secombe (1997) on the attitudes towards languages by various cultures.

4. In 2008, Greek studies were offered in the universities of Notre Dame in WA, the University of Flinders, which also administers a Greek studies program in the University of Adelaide and the University of Darwin, La Trobe University, which also administers a Greek studies program in the University of Melbourne, the RMIT University, the University of Sydney, Macquarie University and the University of New South Wales.

substantially in nature, objectives and intensity across Australia, depending upon the provider and the student composition. Government schools in SA and NSW are the strongest providers of Greek language education in these States catering for the 73% and 46% of the total number of students attending classes in Greek, while in Victoria ethnic schools organised by community and independent sources are the strongest providers (47%). The most popular Greek programs offered in Adelaide and Sydney are those involving foreign language programs. The combined mother tongue development and second language programs are most popular in Victoria.

Information provided by State Departments of Education (2008) reveal considerable increases in the number of students enrolled in Greek classes organised by government primary schools in Northern Territory, South Australia and New South Wales, with parallel marginal decreases in other States, including Victoria, despite the variations in the size of primary school language enrolments between States. For example, in 2008, South Australia was the State with the largest number of students attending Greek in government primary schools (5718) of whom 78% were of non-Greek background (NGB), while Greek was offered to 5426 children attending government primary and secondary schools in NSW, of whom 68% were non-native speakers. In Victoria the number of students attending Greek classes in 2008 in government schools was 4,068. Greek is also the language studied by most primary school children in NSW, attracting approximately 25% of the total number of students enrolled in the LOTE⁵ programs, while it is the second most preferred language of primary school children in SA. In government primary schools Greek is offered usually for 90 minutes in non-instructional time, that is, it is treated as a specialist area subject, while in secondary education there are normally 135 minutes of teaching.

In the last five years (2003-2008), the number of primary schools offering regular Greek language programs marginally decreased in Victoria, in agreement with the comparatively low overall number of primary schools providing language programs. Of the approximately 210 schools offered a LOTE in Victoria of the 1320 government primary schools, only 19 schools offered language program in Greek, while in NSW there were 37 and in SA 36. This could be interpreted that despite suggestions that the optimum age for language learning was the primary school

5. *Languages Other Than English (LOTE)* was a term employed in the late 1980s to denote the languages which were known and spoken in Australia. During the last forty years a number of terms were used to designate the "community languages" and/or "ethnic languages" used in Australia. In Europe these languages are signified as "origin languages".

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age, the number of primary schools offering courses in Greek was low. In 2008, most of these schools in Victoria, SA and NSW were offering Greek as a foreign language acquisition activity. The problem that most primary schools face is the inadequate training of the teachers of Greek and lack of continuity of their programs at post-primary level. There are certain deficiencies in key areas such as teaching material and staffing arrangements with the primary schools offering Greek as a second language. Most teachers teaching Greek at primary schools are Australian-born with limited proficiency in Greek. Particularly in schools which provide language programs from within their own staff, teachers tend not to be trained in Greek. The reliance of numerically small schools on specialist staff, e.g. supernumerary teachers, often has adverse effects as these teachers are seen by the students and the generalist staff with some bias. Currently, the best qualified teachers are in the schools with supernumerary staff.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF STUDENTS UNDERTAKING STUDIES IN GREEK IN AUSTRALIA IN 2007
(PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS)

Provider	Vic.	NSW	SA	WA	Qld	ACT	Tas	NT	Total
State	6023	7351	6447	nil	78	nil	nil	500	20399
Community	7450	3020	1540	190	740	210	102	180	13342
Greek Daily	2057	2181	662	522	nil	nil	nil	-	5422
Total	15530	11552	8649	702	818	210	102	680	39163

Source: Program "Paideia Omogenon" of the University of Crete and the Greek Ministry for National Education and Religious Affairs.

The function of the language programs in Greek at primary level is reported to have changed, as the Greek community with the 21st century entered its last phase of settlement circle, that of citizenship, and experienced the emergence of the third and fourth generation of Greek Australians. The strong tendency of the 1970s and 1980s towards mother tongue development programs in primary schools has been replaced over the last ten years with programs towards second and foreign language, attracting great numbers of students of non-Greek background. From 1990, the number of students of non-Greek background attending Greek in government schools surpassed the number of students who had a home background in Greek in all States, standing in 2005 at an average of 75%. The changing function of Greek is reported to have eased the difficulties of the curriculum with the applica-

tion of a more **simplistic** and constrained syllabus, alleviated the competition in class between Greek-speaking and **non-Greek background** students, which acted as a disincentive for second language **learners**, and led to the **sharp** increase of the number of students taking Greek. **Greek** is not offered in government primary schools in **Queensland, Tasmania** and **Northern Territory** (NT).

Lack of continuity into post-primary schools is a major **problem** and disincentive. There is a clear under provision of Greek language programs in secondary schools drawing from feeder **primary** schools (see Table 2 below). Even **South Australia**, the State with the longest history of teaching Greek in its primary schools, during the post-war period paid no **real attention** to the issue of continuity from **primary** to **secondary**, nor to the appointment of full-time **supernumerary** specialist **teachers** of **Greek** in specific **primary** schools.

Greek has been **offered** at *secondary schools* since the beginning of the 1970s in **government** schools in **Victoria, South Australia** and **NSW**, including **Distance Education Centres** (**Correspondence** schools) and **Saturday schools** of **Languages**. Since then, the **number** of students attending classes in Greek **rose** and declined, mainly because Greek **enrolment patterns** in **government** schools are determined largely by the policy of the individual schools on language programs beyond Years 9 and 10, as evidenced by the fact that the **secondary** schools which **provide** a continuous language **program** in the **eastern** States from years 7 or 8 to 12 do not exceed **15%** of their total number. **The decline** in the number of **students taking** Greek in secondary schools is most pronounced at the end of Year 8 and Year 10. **Greek** is not included in the “**core**” curriculum of any **secondary** school.

Greek is **amongst** the seven **most frequently** taught languages in **government secondary** schools in **SA, Victoria** and **NSW**, attracting **approximately** four per cent of the enrolments in *Languages Other Than English* (LOTE). **Reinforced** by the prevailing **demographic characteristics**, **Greek** reached its maximum enrolments in **secondary** schools in 1985, **before** its slow but consistent decline, **from 1993** onwards. **Available** data suggest that **there are** no gender **differences** in Greek enrolments at least up to Year 9. However, **differences** between the **numbers** of male and female students begin to emerge from Year 10, reaching its climax by Year 12, where female enrolments are **more than double** the **male enrolments** (**74%**) in all States where the subject is taught.

Despite the **serious reduction** in the number of students **undertaking** Greek at HSC level (Year 12) during the last ten years (1997-2007), in 2005 there were over **2000** students **studying** Greek at matriculation level (Years 11 and 12) in Australia, while **certain Universities** were **awarding 10%** bonus marks for those

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students undertaking a LOTE at matriculation. The decline is partially **justified** by the policy of many **government** schools not to offer Greek as **part** of the **normal** teaching **program** at this level. Despite the unfavorable trends, Greek continued to be one of the most popular languages at Year 12 level, attracting over 1200 students in Victoria, NSW and SA. The status of Greek, its syllabus and its assessment must be **improved especially** amongst NGB students for the subject to attract healthier **numbers** at **this** level. Currently **only** three per cent of NGB **students** and "false **bilinguals**" manage to leach the **matriculation** examination in Australia. NGB **student enrolment** will only **rise substantially** with the **introduction** of extended **programs** designed to cater for the needs of **students** with no previous or limited knowledge of Greek. This **program** should be enlarged to widen the catchment area within the Greek community to include students of Greek **back-ground** with a **non-native-like command** of Greek.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF STUDENTS ATTENDING GREEK IN VICTORIA, NSW, SA AND WA
(1998-2008)

State	Provider	1988	1992	1998	2005	2008	% of NGBS*
Vic	Gov. Primary	3929	4265	2784	2822	3912	77
	Gov. Secondary	3837	4012	1572	1246	1096	21
	Daily Greek	1633	1840	2107	1559	2057	21
	Community	1 1 7	12,779	7700	6030	7450	2
NSW	Gov. Primary	2351	3581	3312	4314	5322	79
	Gov. Secondary	3164	2850	2280	1112	1356	29
	Daily Greek	320	1004	1988	2301	2181	8
	Community	5345	5299	3476	3859	3020	3
SA	Gov. Primary	4327	4956	5342	4861	5364	81
	Gov. Secondary	1313	1326	893	887	705	23
	Daily Greek	112	185	477	655	662	9
	Community	1085	2131	1824	1525	1540	3
WA	Gov. Primary**	0	97	1005	0	0	0
	Gov. Secondary	30	43	0	0	0	0
	Daily Greek	0	68	163	487	522	89
	Community	280	367	300	758	190	2

*NGBS = Non Greek background Students.

** All Greek primary classes in Greek were offered until 1999 as insertion classes in WA administered by the Greek Orthodox Community of Evangelismos.

Source: Research of the Paideia Omogenon Program undertaken by the National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, La Trobe University for the University of Crete.

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The **average** weekly teaching time for Greek is 135 minutes at Year 7 in most **secondary** schools, rising to **220** minutes for the linguistically elite students reaching Year 12. All **secondary** schools offering Greek require a **minimum** of two years study of the subject. **Current** conditions on the frequency, extent and consistency of teaching do not allow for a positive linguistic proficiency and the **improvement** of language skills of their students. **Parental** support for the teaching of Greek in **government primary** and **secondary** schools is **moderate** to **almost** non-existent. Furthermore, as has already been noticed, there is a lack of any real and essential **co-operation**, and thus continuity, between feeder **primary** schools and the prospective recipient **secondary** institution. **Many** Greek programs at secondary schools operate in **regions** with no substantial number of feeder **primary** schools offering the subject, or in suburbs which used to have concentrated **numbers** of Greek **settlers** in the 1970s and **1980s**, prior to their **internal** immigration into developing suburbs in the 1990s and 2000s.

In 2008, Greek courses are offered only in the *School of Languages* of NSW and Victoria, in an attempt to supplement the mainstream provision of Greek in each of these States. Greek and Italian remain the most popular languages in terms of the number of providing centres in the Victorian School of Languages and are offered by more than 61% of both metropolitan and country centres.⁶ These schools offer 90 instruction hours in Greek during the year, outside regular school hours, usually on Saturdays. Although the majority of Greek enrolments are in Years 7 to 12, language instruction is available from Year 1 to 12, while it is the third major provider of LOTE at matriculation level after the Greek community based schools and the systemic government schools. During the last four years the number of students attending the Victorian School of Languages continued to rise, from 942 in 2000 to 1979 students in 2008.

The Independent Greek *Daily* Schools commenced their operation in 1979 with a transitional bilingual program founded by St. John's Greek Orthodox College in Melbourne. Since then, another 11 Greek daily schools have been established in four States, of which nine continue their services, catering for a total of over 5,300 students in 2008. Two of them (St. Andrew's Grammar in Perth and

6. The Victorian School of Languages, previously known as Saturday School of Modern languages, was established in 1935 and is currently the largest provider of LOTE in the Victorian Government school system, incorporating approximately over 500 casual instructors. The Saturday school of Community languages of NSW began operation in 1978 in six centres in Metropolitan Sydney offering programs in 16 languages.

Alphington Grammar in Melbourne) appear to be **broad-syllabus-centred** and operate on a secular **non-ethnospecific basis**, drawing their clientele from the mainstream society.⁷ One of them (St. **Anargyroi** College in **Oakleigh**) is **administered** by the local Greek community of Oakleigh, another one (St. John's Greek **Orthodox** College) was purchased in **1992** by the Greek **Orthodox Archdiocese**, while the remaining **five**,⁸ although they have been established by local laity **communities**, are more exposed to **Church** authority.

Greek Independent Schools offer their Greek language **programs** to students of **all** ability levels **resulting** in high **retention rates amongst** even NGB students **from Years 1** to 10 (**approximately 85%**) as well as at matriculation levels amongst **Greek background** students. **Surveyed teachers** of these schools claimed that their schools **were** founded with a view to improving, via enhancing teaching of **Greek**, family cohesion and self-esteem. Alphington **Grammar** **portrays** itself as a **non-denominational school** and **offers** a second and **foreign language program** in **Greek** as a core **subject**. All of them, despite their **intra-group** politics, are independent from higher authority, be that of Church or Government, and to a **significant** extent maintain their autonomy. The Greek Government contributes substantial assistance to these **schools** by means of language **teachers** and resources but does not exercise **control** over their administration. The number of teaching **periods** in Greek varies **from** school to school, depending on the school philosophy and the objectives of the approved **authority**. Classes in Greek **are** offered **from** a minimum of five periods per week to a **maximum** of seven to beginner, **intermediate** and advanced **groups**.

Overall enrolment **numbers** have **significantly** declined only in St. John's **Greek Orthodox** College **administered** by the Greek **Orthodox Archdiocese** **from 904** in **1992** to less than 450 in **2008**, while all other **daily schools** considerably **increased** their **numbers**. Available data **reveal** that the number of NGB students attending the independent **Greek daily schools** will continue to rise, with a **parallel increase** in the number of these schools.

LOTE **programs** are not developed or encouraged in many independent

7. Currently Alphington Grammar has a NGB student **intake** of 69%, while St. Andrews Grammar has an even greater one (83%).

8. Reference is made here to the following schools: All Saints, St. Euphemia and St. Spyridon (NSW) and St. George and St. Spyridon in SA.

9. In 2008, in South Australia the local Greek communities operated two Independent Daily Schools, St. George's is administered by the Greek Orthodox Community of Thebarton and St. Spyridon's by the Greek Orthodox Community of Unley.

schools to judge by the fact that over 40% do not offer a LOTE. The teaching of Greek has been eradicated in recent years in independent schools despite a growing interest in cross-cultural education. There were only two schools in Victoria and one in Sydney offering Greek to 280 students at secondary level. No primary school offers Greek. Most independent colleges employ two curricula, separating beginners from advanced students, and working in composite classrooms. Greek is not taught in Catholic education, despite the enormous number of students of Greek Orthodox background attending both primary and post-primary Catholic schools in Australia. However, the Ancient variety of Greek is taught to over 700 students in Melbourne and Sydney, administered in nine prestigious Independent Colleges.¹⁰

A major contribution to language loyalty efforts of the Greek community and Greek teaching is made by the substantial number of part-time community based ethnic schools which operate in all States and Territories throughout Australia, administered by the Greek Communities, the Orthodox Church and individual educators. The main objectives of these schools include the maintenance of the mother tongue, the development of cultural awareness and the support of family cohesion and ethnic identity. Available data suggest that almost 16,000 students study Greek in more than 300 after-hour community schools in Australia, comprising approximately 41% of all Ethnic schools operating in Australia and catering for 51 LOTEs. With the exception of Victoria, almost all Greek ethnic schools are community-based establishments, administered by local Greek communities and the Church. In Melbourne, many schools are organised by individuals and organizations without religious affiliations, administered by an independent school body and an executive board of directors. A rather substantial number of students (proportionally averaging 4%) attend private classes in Victoria and NSW. In fact, since 1984 the number of students enrolled at independently run community schools in Victoria was higher than all other providers together.¹¹

The structure of Greek ethnic schools ranges from single teacher schools set up at the request of a community group or a brotherhood or at the initiative of an individual, to more complex establishments which may retain their autonomy or

10. Ancient Greek courses are being offered amongst the most prestigious colleges in Sydney and Melbourne, including Pymble Ladies College, Caulfield Grammar, Xavier and Scots Colleges.

11. The largest ethnic school in Australia is Omivros College operating in Victoria and catering for over 1000 students in 12 school units.

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depend on intermediate community authorities which carry responsibility or act as the approved authority for a greater number of schools operating in different suburbs. Most community groups (70%) in all States and Territories have their own buildings and facilities which are utilized for ethnic school classes. However, most independent Greek ethnic schools (95%) hold their own classes in Government and Catholic schools. Many schools councils impose excessive hiring fees, restrictions and conditions which could not be met by the directors of the Greek afternoon schools, forcing them to change the venues for their classes regularly.

The lack of an official policy securing the registration of the Greek ethnic schools to an educational authority should be viewed as the major reason for the absence of proper accreditation and accountability and the low prestige that they enjoy, particularly by professional educators. However, the existence of over 180 parochial Greek Communities and Parishes and over 600 brotherhoods and associations in Australia makes the notion of accountability complex and subtle. Greek ethnic schools have an open admission policy and accept all children and adults regardless of ethnic background. Available data reveal that almost 78% of all students at Greek ethnic schools use Greek at home, compared with the average 53% for other LOTEs.

Children enrolled at the Greek ethnic schools range from native speakers to those with practically no knowledge of Greek. In the intermediate level there are passive bilinguals, those with a monolingual family background and those with a bilingual, those with both parents of Greek origin and those children of mixed marriages. The most serious difficulty that many ethnic schools face is to grade together students of different ages and mixed abilities, without regard to their varying cognitive development, causing embarrassment, lack of interest, infrequent attendance and therefore progressive shift to English. This is exacerbated in some cases, particularly in WA, Queensland and NT, by the lack of professionally trained and qualified teachers and scarcity of teaching material.

There is a growing support for ethnic schools by community members and parents arguing that they not only supplement the formal schools system, but also fulfill a more important and unique role: they reinforce the sense of identity. Support for ethnic schools was also expressed by the Government recognizing their role in language teaching as a supplement to the language offered in formal education. Since 1990, the State governments recognized the ethnic schools as eligible to offer accreditation for internal assessment of matriculating students.

It is necessary to bear in mind the lack of language methodology options within Greek teaching at ethnic schools given the limited resources. The methodol-

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ogy used in these schools depends on the training, age and place of birth of the teachers-in-charge and the provider. Australian-born teachers with formal qualifications employ a functional approach (65%), based on activities aiming at developing the communicative skills of their students rather than at understanding individual grammatical structures. Depending on the level of education (primary – secondary) and the actual year level of their students, they rely heavily in the last five years on resource material developed by the *Paideia Omogenon* Program of the University of Crete (82%), other imported text books (18%), as well as their own (15%).

4. *The Current State of the Greek Language*

In 2008, as already noted, there were over 39,000 students of the Greek language attending classes organised by 11 providers. It was estimated that almost 31% of those students were of non-Greek language background. Most of them (62%) attended government and independent daily schools. There were 194 government and 7 independent schools offering classes in Greek across the country. Courses in Greek language, culture and civilization were introduced as tertiary disciplines in the Universities of Notre Dame, Adelaide, Flinders, Melbourne, La Trobe, RMIT, Macquarie, Sydney and N.S.W., attracting approximately 1,200 tertiary students. La Trobe University in 1997, under the leadership of Professor Michael John Osborne emerged as the most "Hellenized" university of the Diaspora, establishing in addition to the Greek Studies Program, the *National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research (NCHSR)*. The mission of the latter is to disseminate Hellenic culture and civilization and propagate research and cultural activities related to Hellenism in Australasia. Incorporated Societies of *Friends of the NCHSR* were established in Perth, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane to disseminate the objectives of the Centre and to assist with the implementation of its goals. RMIT University also administers an Archival Centre for the Greek community.

Greek has been classified as one of the nine priority languages of wider use in Australia and is taught in all States and Territories in a variety of systems and levels of education. Network analysis shows the importance of family networks in maintaining the core culture among members of the Greek community. The over-riding attitude towards education and culture dictates maintenance of Greek as a medium of communication or as a symbol of identity. Standard Greek is the result of a synthesis of two formally competing varieties: a Demotic or commonly spoken Greek and *Katharevousa*, a superimposed purist and essentially written variety which, prior to 1976, enjoyed the status of the official language of the Greek State. Tamis &

Gauntlett (1993) have argued that the significance of Greek for Australia derives principally from the established presence of a vast number of Greek speaking residents (estimated at 320,000) and of many more thousands of Australians with ancestral, sentimental, professional, cultural and intellectual ties with Greece and Greeks. Greek remains the sole modern descendant of the Hellenic branch of the Indo-European family of languages, in which fundamental texts of western civilization and Christian scripture were formulated and transmitted through the ages.

The vitality of the Greek language in Australia is determined by a variety of factors including the disposition of Greek community members towards it and their desire for continued distinctiveness as a group. Sociocultural factors include the existence of a large number of speakers, the creation of broad functional areas and an adequate community network which will develop language use outside and beyond the group controlled areas of home, church and ethnic school. Also important are the promotion of Greek to the broader society, the perceived prestige of the language, the ability to rally institutional support from the government, education policy, industry and media support, and demographic characteristics such as residential concentration, the birth rate, the rate of exogamy and the degree of interactional dynamics characterizing the Greek community.

Greek Australians at the beginning of the 21st century, as already discussed, display the strongest degree of ethnolinguistic vitality of all ethnic groups in Australia. Among the Greek settlers and their children exposed to a language-contact situation, language loyalty towards Greek, at an inter-generational level, continues to be the strongest if compared with other ethnicities. The shift to English is determined by the steady decline in the intake of Greek migrants from Greece since 1974, the inter-ethnic marriage patterns especially in areas with low concentrations of Greeks and the attenuating affects of multiculturalism, which, although it promotes the maintenance of diverse cultures, compels the use of one common linguistic medium among the various ethnic groups.

Greek serves a wide range of purposes in Australia, from the strictly utilitarian (communication for domestic and professional purposes) to cultural and ethnic identification. Some of these are open to both Greeks and non-Greeks. Thus in the educational context, objectives can include acquisition of practical fluency skills, knowledge of the cultural context of the language, developing a sense of cross-cultural tolerance or simply development of the intellectual and linguistic capacity of the student. Greek has three main functions in Australia: (a) that of a community language employed by members of the Australian Greek community in a communicative and symbolic role, (b) that of a second language

of socio-economic and political significance for Australia and (c) that of the modern sequel to the **tradition** of Hellenic Antiquity which is perceived to have **particular cultural significance** for Australia and the West as a whole.

Other **factors** conducive to the retention of Greek include the social isolation of **large numbers** of Greek immigrants and the Greek experience in the **Diaspora**. Greek **culture** is different **from** Anglo-Australian and tends to insulate Greek immigrants, even when their **children** have socially integrated **into** the **mainstream** society. Recent evidence (Tamis 2001) suggest that approximately 30% of Greek immigrants do not mix socially **with** any **other ethnic** group in **Australia**. They form **relationships more readily** with southern **Europeans** with whom they **share** similarities in **culture**. **Large proportions** of the world's Greek-speaking population have been living outside the **Greek** nation-state since antiquity and thus have a long **tradition** of loyalty to Greek language and culture. Greek is not just a medium of communication for **expatriate Greeks**, but a social symbol and a key **ingredient** of ethnic identification. The vast **majority of Greek settlers** (96%) **believe** that people of Greek descent living in Australia should have knowledge of Greek. Reasons closely linked with **preserving** the heritage, **culture** and ethnic identity account for **almost** 61% of these responses, whereas practical and linguistic **reasons** comprised 34%. Second **generation** respondents **proportionally** outnumbered **their first** generation **counterparts** in suggesting cultural values as the main **reason** for language loyalty to **the** mother tongue.

Since the late 1950s a number of Greek **words** related **particularly** to food and **entertainment** have entered **Australian** English. **Words** such as *spanakopita*, *fetta*, *souvlaki*, *fyllo*, *kalamari*, bouzouki *taramas*, *saganaki*, *zorbis* and *zorbaic* have been transferred from Greek and now constitute **part** of the **vocabulary** of many Australians. However, English **influences** Greek in **almost** all **linguistic subsystems**. The communicative **norm** of **Australian** Greeks can be **termed** an *ethnolect*, a **substandard form** adopted **and** used by an ethnic community in a language contact **situation**. Although the total **impact of English** on **Greek** cannot be **precisely** measured, it can be argued that there is **attrition** at the inter-generational level. The attrition is not **prompted** by **any** apparent **desire** for assimilation or simply by any weakening of the linguistic feeling of Greek Australians, but is the result of the contraction of the **generally** accepted norm of **standard Greek**. The term "contraction" is used to indicate its **temporary** status and to argue that an expansion to its original **standard Greek** norm is still possible. The degree of the contraction depends on attitude to language use, **the broadening** of the functions of Greek, its acceptability by the community and its stability of form. Over the last **thirty** years **children** of Greek

ancestry have been given more **opportunities** to express themselves in Greek in public **settings**. The sense of inferiority experienced by early **migrants** and their children speaking their native tongue has faded away.

The Greek Orthodox **Church** might be expected to be the primary institution which provides Greek **settlers** with a justification for the use of their language. However, since the beginning of the 1990s there has been a strong tendency to employ English in liturgy and pastoral care, in an attempt to attract the younger generation into the congregation. **Furthermore**, many **clergymen** in Australia promote the concept of a Pan-Orthodox congregation **without ethnic** affiliation, in **order** to make its **doctrines** accessible to more Australians and to ensure that the other **homodox ethnic groups** are not disadvantaged on linguistic **grounds**.

The establishment of a higher institution for clergy and lay **teachers providing** them with **instruction** in the Orthodox faith has been the aspiration of the Greek **Orthodox Metropolitans** since 19%. Metropolitan Timotheos had the initial vision but **neither** the **resources** nor the community **support**. Archbishop Ezekiel, thirty years later, proposed the establishment of a preparatory seminary in Australia 'so we can have local clergy who, **apart** from anything else, would be in a better position to understand the country we live in, the environment and the attitude of our Australian-born children'. He envisaged the seminary as being initially an institution equal to a high school, so that its **graduates** would be **able to attend** the Theological **Ecclesiastical School of Thessaloniki**, Greece. He also regarded as necessary a two-year retraining course for priests who come from Greece so they can adapt to the way of **life** of Hellenism in **Australia**. Ezekiel established a foundation **account** and **collected** the initial funds for the implementation of his vision. However, it was his successor, **Archbishop Stylianos Charkianakis** who **moved** in 1981 for the immediate **realization** of the **project** and the establishment of St. Andrew's **Greek Orthodox** Theological College. This **tertiary** establishment, the **first** of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, commenced its **operation in February 1986**, as a **member institute** within the Sydney College of Divinity of the University of Sydney. Its students thus were provided with the opportunity of **concurrently** attending courses at the **University of Sydney**.

Australian society, even with its **multicultural** complexion, via its political and ecclesiastic agencies does not encourage active **cross-cultural** initiatives and the enhancement of any ethnic group other than the dominant Anglo-Australian. This type of **multicultural environment** is essentially expressed via **monolingualism**. Thus, in 1981 there were over 90 ethnic languages used in **various** language domains, including the home. By 2030, the linguistic **environment** of Australia is

expected to be **mainly monolingual**. This tendency towards **monolingualism** is **further reinforced** by the prevalence of English as the **commercial** tool of the international market and the Internet. With the **termination** of migration in 1975, the **future** of the ethnolinguistic maintenance of the Greek colony could be assessed on the basis of its organization and its ability to rally the **support** of its financial and social institutions, **currently** administered by the second and subsequent generations. The main challenge for cultural **survival** remains its determination to break the **insulatory intra-community barriers**, encouraging the **mainstream** society to access and cherish **the** Hellenic civilization. **Conversely**, commercial and social activities, which **thrust** their **members** into closer contact with **the** Australian society, **accelerate** the process of integration. Thus, it is **only** legitimate to argue that by the year 2025 Greek will **remain** a **robust** medium of communication at home as well as in the Greek clubs and the **Orthodox Church**. The sound contribution of university leaders and **scholars** like Hellenist Michael **Osborne** had played an important **role** in maintaining the vitality of the Greek language and has enormously assisted in the appreciation of the Hellenic civilization in our contemporary world.

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ΤΟ ΒΙΒΛΙΟ

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PHILATHENAIOS

STUDIES IN HONOUR OF
MICHAEL J. OSBORNE

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