

## Using the ‘improper’ language in the classroom: the conflict between language use and legitimate varieties in education. Evidence from a Greek Cypriot classroom

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This paper examines the tensions created in a Greek Cypriot primary classroom between the legitimate variety of the school, Standard Modern Greek, and the home variety of the students, the Greek Cypriot Dialect. Ethnographic data are presented to indicate that language use in the classroom, contrary to what language policy-makers argue, is multi-levelled and complex. The choice of linguistic variety depends on the occasions of communication, with the Standard associated with formality and appropriateness and the domain of actual lesson, while the Dialect is mostly associated with naturally occurring talk and informality. Additionally, it is documented that a middle linguistic variety is created where certain features of the Dialect are legitimised and ‘penetrate’ more standard-dominant occasions. Despite this, not all the students seem to comply with the norms set out by the school and the teachers, and very often tensions are created between students’ language choice and the norm of the classroom with serious educational and pedagogic implications.

**Keywords:** classroom discourse; language choice; bidialectalism; Greek Cypriot Dialect; Standard Modern Greek

‘Speaking always entails a choice (deliberate, spontaneous, automatic). . . Whether one speaks, and if one speaks, the way in which one speaks, are elements of choice and hence of the meaningfulness of language. (Hymes, 1985, xxiii)

### Introduction

In the past years the promotion of multilingualism in education and the recognition of all languages and cultures as equal has been central in the discourses of supranational bodies such as the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (Briedbach 2002). Despite this trend, the concern that there will always be a battle between the languages legitimated by the school and the home varieties of the students remains valid and has been documented in many studies (Duff 2002; Heller 1996; Martin-Jones and Heller 1996). Language, being associated with ethnic and national values but also being a vehicle for gaining power and social mobility, is not easily negotiated. Language policy in each country normally safeguards the rights of the majority or of the group(s) in power, usually promoting one linguistic variety as a national standard and leaving the quest for a multilingual society and multilingual education a step behind.

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The current paper examines the tensions created between monolithic language policies and the multilingual reality of classrooms in the highly politicised context of Cyprus.<sup>1</sup> Cyprus is far from being a monolingual country. Greek and Turkish are the two official languages of the state and the first languages of the two main ethnic groups of the island, Greek and Turkish Cypriots. There is also a strong tradition in English and other minority languages that existed in the island for centuries as well as a fast growing number of immigrant languages. Under the umbrella of ‘Greek’ there are two distinct and often opposing linguistic varieties, Standard Modern Greek and the Greek Cypriot Dialect (and a similar situation exists for ‘Turkish’). Cyprus has been characterised as a bidialectal (Moschonas 1996; Papapavlou 1998) or even diglossic case (Sciriha 1995) with Standard Modern Greek as the formal language of education, the media and the written code, and the Greek Cypriot Dialect as the home and everyday spoken variety.<sup>2</sup>

The formal language education policy in Cyprus has been fixed since the birth of the republic in 1960 (Ioannidou in press) promoting Standard Modern Greek (Papapavlou and Pavlou 2005) and targeting a Greek identity. Greek Cypriot language education has always followed the language reforms, textbooks and curricula of Greece. This was mostly done for practical reasons in the years of British rule (1896–1960) due to the lack of an independent government. However, it continued after independence, expressing the conviction that though political union with Greece could not be achieved, spiritual and educational union would be pursued (Persianis 1981). Despite changes in governments and political parties in power, these policies have remained unchanged. Over the years the teaching of Standard Modern Greek has been maintained as an indisputable and non-challenged policy. The Greek Cypriot Dialect suffered by these policies since it was banned from formal education, both as a medium of communication and as a subject for study.

On the level of practice, however, Cypriot society has been evolving and changing dramatically. The *de facto* partition of the island in 1974, the accession of Cyprus to the EU, the increase in numbers of immigrants and the opening of the ‘green line’<sup>3</sup> created many social changes within the Cypriot society, shifted attitudes and expanded traditional perceptions of identity (Mavratsas 1997). Although education and language policies remain unchanged till today, in practice a whole new picture has been created on matters of language use, language attitudes and connections to identity, and this applies in particular in schools.

The aim of the current paper is to shed some light on classroom language use in Greek Cypriot primary schools by exploring the way the Standard Modern Greek, as the legitimate variety of the school, and the Greek Cypriot Dialect, as students’ home variety, interact and co-exist in classroom discourse. The data presented are from a micro-ethnographic work of classroom discourse conducted in one urban primary classroom in Cyprus for a period of 4 months.

### **The hegemony of the standard: a theoretical framework for understanding language policy in Cyprus**

Education and school as main socialising agents and transmitters of cultural, national and social values (Lucas and Borders 1994) are called on to fulfil the quest for either mono- or multilingualism. Although multilingualism is a central concept in much academic research and in policy guidelines, the majority of European and other countries of the world continue to sustain monolingual policies in education (Tollefson 1991).

The most prominent argument commonly advanced in favour of promoting one variety only is that of ‘equity’, where all students regardless of their home variety should have the right to acquire the language of the state and therefore have access to the domains of power

and public life. This argument becomes more intense in countries with increased migration where it is suggested that the best way to ensure social mobility for immigrant children is to intensify teaching in the formal language of the state. Nevertheless, it has been documented that it is not easy for people to change the way they speak (see e.g. Trudgill 1975 on how this applies in the case of dialects) and it has been widely argued that it is a basic human right to be able to use, elaborate and develop your home variety in school (Brumfit 2001). Many scholars suggest that it is exactly the selection and promotion of one variety only that creates inequality in society (Milroy and Milroy 1991; Tollefson 1991), and that alternative approaches such as extension of linguistic repertoire (Brumfit 2001) and bi- or multilingual educational models should be developed (Cummins 1986).

In the case of Greek Cypriot education, however, the prominence of Standard Modern Greek in education and its superimposition over the Greek Cypriot Dialect has remained consistently in place in policy terms. In the formal curriculum it is clearly stated that students are expected, as soon as they enter primary education, to 'shift from the linguistic idiom to the pan-Hellenic demotic'<sup>4</sup> (Ministry of Education 1996), while interviews with language policy-makers at the Ministry of Education confirmed the existence of the widespread belief that all students have the right to learn and become competent in the Standard (Ioannidou 2009). As one policy maker argued, 'all students should have access to the literary variety of education and books'. There are no references to the reality of the Greek Cypriot Dialect in the educational curricula and no formal guidelines for the teachers on how to tackle the issue of bidialectalism in the classroom. The latter was confirmed in a study by Pavlou and Papapavlou (2004) who explored teachers' attitudes and documented diverse opinions on whether to discourage or 'correct' the use of the dialect in the classroom, confirming the lack of clear policies regarding the position of the dialect in education.

Another important argument underlying the promotion of one unified language, also identified in the policy statements of the Ministry of Education, is the need for 'national unity'. The standard language is very often seen as the 'national language' and those who object to its hegemony are often accused of disrupting national unity (Calvet 1998; Crowley 1989; Mey 1988; Phillipson 1992). Protecting the 'national language' means protecting the 'nation', and the existence of societal or even institutional multilingualism are often seen as 'threats' to the survival of both the national language and the nation. This argument has been particularly strong in the case of Cyprus where periods of ethnic rivalry and war coincided with the need to protect Greek Cypriots' sense of 'Greekness' and their national language (i.e. Standard Modern Greek). This notion equating the standard with the national language is widespread in school curricula, in the Cypriot daily press (Ioannidou 2002) and in policy makers' arguments in favour of the Standard. As one policy maker claimed, 'this (Standard) is the language of the Greek world, whenever they go, this is the language that connects Greeks as a nation'.

Those who object to the promotion of only one variety argue that the standardisation process and assimilationist linguistic policies reflect efforts of dominant groups to ensure their hegemony over subordinate groups (Calvet 1998; Crowley 1989; Foucault 1970; Phillipson 1992; Volosinov 1973), or what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as the 'authoritative word' where the heteroglossic reality is suppressed by the notion of a fictional single and unified language. This suppression of natural multi-accentuality (Volosinov 1973) creates a value system where certain varieties are legitimate and powerful while others are weaker and often stigmatised. In turn, there are serious educational implications concerning students' language attitudes, their self-perceptions and ultimately their educational achievement. Imposing a 'standard ideology' on students contributes to the formation of a 'complaint tradition' (Milroy and Milroy 1991) regarding the 'correctness' and 'misuse'

of the promoted language and often results in teachers evaluating non-standard speakers less positively (Edwards 1985), with implications for these students' academic achievement (Edwards 1983). Additionally, there are implications regarding children's identity if the school 'ignores' or 'suppresses' their home language. As Edwards (1983) argues, 'language and identity are so strongly intermeshed that any attack on the way we speak is likely to be perceived as an attack on our values and integrity. Thus, if children's language is undervalued or rejected in school, they may well respond by withdrawal or defiance' (9).

How do we then account for the survival of non-standard varieties and dialects in educational settings, given such monolithic language policies and their potentially negative consequences? Many scholars have observed that even where there is strong institutional support in favour of only one linguistic variety, other forms of language maintenance take place, where individuals through social networks act as language planners in order to sustain their home varieties (Milroy and Milroy 1997). Identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Rampton 2006), solidarity (Hudson 1996) and the use of language as a form of resistance to existing power or institutional structures (Halliday 1997; Hewitt 1989; Rampton 1995) have all been described as contributing to the maintenance and reinforcement of multiple language use, even in linguistically monopolised institutional settings. In the following section, an account is given on how primary school Greek Cypriot students tried to negotiate the use of their non-standard variety in the classroom. It is shown that the interactions between 'legitimate' and 'non-legitimate varieties' between teacher and students were complex and multi-levelled and depended on various factors.

### **The multilingual reality of Class E**

In order to thoroughly explore issues of language use and values in Greek Cypriot schools, an ethnographic approach was adopted. As Denzin (1997) points out, ethnography involves an in-depth study of people and phenomena in context in their natural setting and therefore many techniques such as representative sampling and generalisation are not appropriate. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that one of the key features of qualitative sampling is small samples nested in their context and studied in depth. For these reasons the urban primary school of 'Polis' was selected, a school which brought together students of mixed socio-economic backgrounds and had the profile of a 'standard' school as the principal of the school and policy-makers at the District Education Office confirmed. Within the school, it was decided to focus on one classroom as a unit rather than on individual students since a classroom is a microcosm of society (Cummins 1986), 'a perfect image of the linguistic landscape of the outside world' (Van De Craen and Humblet 1989, 17). Second, exploring a classroom as a school unit would provide insight on interactions between policy and practice, since the classroom is the point where the two merge. Finally, I decided to focus on the 10–11 years age group since, as it is noted in the literature (Andereck 1992), by this age children have formed clear social and linguistic attitudes and orientations. The class selected is named here as 'Class E', a class of 25 students where the vast majority were Greek Cypriots.

The main data collection techniques were classroom observations for a period of 4 months, where I audio-recorded classroom talk and took in-depth field notes. I observed the students in all their curriculum subjects taught in total by seven different teachers.<sup>5</sup> In addition, individual interviews were conducted with the students and the teachers of the classroom, as well as focus group discussions with the students to explore issues of language use in the classroom and language values.

In the analysis of classroom interaction in class E many incidents were noted where the language of the school and authority (Standard Modern Greek) collided with the non-standard variety used by the students (Greek Cypriot Dialect). In particular, it was evident that standard was the language of classroom authority, but the way the students reacted towards it depended first on the occasion of communication and second on the preferences of individual students. It was also noted that a unique linguistic code was created by the students and the teachers, a merge of the dialect and the standard, a variety in the middle of the linguistic continuum where certain features of the dialect were accepted while others were disregarded by the teachers. All these are examined next.

### *Imposing the norm in the lesson*

Throughout the analysis of classroom talk, heavy code-mixing and code-switching were noted. However, it also emerged that each variety was distinctively associated with specific occasions of communication (Hymes 1985). The dialect was associated with more informal occasions such as commenting, complaining, joking, etc. while the standard was associated with ‘actual teaching’, in other words all those occasions directly connected with the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

In Extract 1, for example, the topic of the lesson is ‘Saving water’ and Lydia talks in Standard Modern Greek about the desalination units on the island (1). The teacher, using mainly standard variants, asks for clarification of the term ‘desalination units’ (2). Giannos makes a spontaneous remark (3) in the dialect, which the teacher acknowledges in the dialect (4) but she code-switches to the standard to continue the ‘actual lesson’ (4). Lydia answers using the standard exclusively (5). This example suggests that the standard is associated with more formal domains, mainly the teaching process and especially occasions like posing and answering questions, while the dialect is connected to more informal domains, such as making comments and giving feedback.

#### *Extract 1. Greek<sup>6</sup>*

1. Lydia: είναι και οι μονάδες αφαλάτωσης  
(*it is also the desalination units*)
2. T: τι είναι τούτες οι μονάδες αφαλάτωσης;  
(*what are these desalination units?*)
3. Giannos: κυρία επήαμεν.  
(*miss we went*)
4. T: επήαμεν, ναι, ξέρω το (π) τι είναι Λύδια;  
(*we went, yes, I know it (p) what is it, Lydia?*)
5. Lydia: οι μονάδες αφαλάτωσης είναι εκεί όπου παίρνουν νερό από τη θάλασσα και το κάνουν (...)  
(*the desalination units are there where they take water from the sea and they make it (...)*)

The strong association of the standard with the formal domains of direct instruction was reinforced by the fact that on all other occasions of communication, both the teachers and the students would mainly use the dialect. So, even those teachers who used predominantly standard when they taught would code-switch to the dialect when they wanted to tell students off (Extract 2), to encourage them (Extract 3) or to make informal comments (Extract 4).

Similarly, the students would use the dialect on all other occasions of communication, e.g. when they complained (Extract 5) or made informal remarks (Extract 6).

*Extract 2. Science – ‘telling students off’*

1. **τι καταλαβαίνουμε** με **αυτές τις δύο** λέξεις; ποια είναι η λειτουργία του συστήματος; σςς, έννα σιωπήσεις; (*What do we understand with these two words? Which is the function of this system? Shhh, will you shut up?*)

*Extract 3. Science – ‘encouraging students’*

1. για να φάμε **μας βοηθά** το στόμα; ‘Ατε ρε βάρτε το νου σας να δουλέψει  
(*in order to eat, it is the mouth that helps us? Come on, put your brain to work <think>*)

*Extract 4. Greek – ‘informal comments’*

1. T: κάθοντα θωρείς; ‘Ισσια να μεν γύρνουν  
(*can you see sitting like that? Straight, not to bend <comments about his writing>*)
2. S1: εν ιμπόρω  
(*I can’t*)
3. T: μπόρεις, εννά μάθεις  
(*you can, you will learn*)

*Extract 5. Music – ‘complaining to the teacher’*

1. Nefeli: κυρία ο Άγης κάμνει μας συνέχεια τζαι γελούμε  
(*miss, Agis makes us and we laugh all the time*)

*Extract 6. Greek – ‘Informal remarks’*

Agis: κυρία πε μας ξανά, εν ακούσαμε  
(*miss tell us again, we did not listen*)

The evidence suggests that there was no such clear-cut dichotomy between the standard being the language of the classroom and the dialect the language of break-time, as many policy-makers would argue. The dialect was a reality in the classroom, used in various occasions of communication, mostly relating to less formal purposes for talk. However, it seemed a value system was created where the standard was connected to the formal process of teaching and learning, and the students made efforts to comply with that norm by including standard variants in their speech. This tendency was confirmed in students’ interviews where the standard was associated with the domain of school and specifically with participating in the actual lesson and addressing the teacher.

- During the lesson time I use Greek but if I have to ask something I might speak in Cypriot – Orestis.
- When I am in the class and I read something I say it in Greek – Menelaos.

*Negotiating an 'intermediate' variety – linguistic continuum*

Language use was multi-levelled in class E and a thorough analysis of the data revealed considerable variation and complexity in the way the teachers and the students used standard and dialect variants. It emerged that a 'legitimate middle' variety was established in classroom talk where certain features of the dialect were 'accepted' by the teacher and the students while others seemed to have the function of negative markers, triggering disapproval by the teacher and laughter by the fellow students.

Some examples of the 'accepted' dialect features<sup>7</sup> (marked as shaded in the extracts below) were

- a) the prefix *e/ε* in front of the verbs to indicate past tense, e.g. 'e-lyete/*ε-λύετε/you would be solving*' (Extract 7);
- b) the third person present tense of the verb 'to be', *en/εν/it is* (Extract 8).

In Extract 7 the students work on a written text and the teacher poses various questions to enhance comprehension and explore the meanings of the text. This is therefore a core instructional activity, where the standard might be expected. Despite this, both the teacher and the students consistently retain the dialectal prefix *e/ε* in front of the verbs (line 1, 'e-lyete/*ε-λύετε/you would be solving*'; line 5 'εβρίσκαν/*e-vriskan/they would find*') while they convey other words in the standard. Similarly, in Extract 8 the teacher explains a grammatical phenomenon, i.e. the formation of the singular and plural form of the adjective 'I am present' ('paron' and 'parontes' respectively). The teacher retains the dialect form of the verb 'to be', *en/εν/it is* (lines 1, 4) while modifying other variants towards the standard.

*Extract 7. Greek*

1. T: εσείς, εσείς αν είχετε τούτον το πρόβλημα πώς θα το ελύετε;  
(*you, you, if you had this problem how will <would> you solve it?*)
2. Ahilleas: εγώ θα έβαζα εμ, χάρτινους τοίχους ή ξύλενους και για την πόρτα με /  
(*I would have put paper walls or wooden and for the door with /*)
3. Giannos: και να το βάψει τζ' άσπρο κυρία  
(*and to paint it and white miss*)
4. T: μπορούσαν να βάλουν ένα σεντόνι  
(*they could have put a sheet*)
5. Dafni: ε κυρία πού θα εβρίσκαν να το στερεώσουν;  
(*em miss where they will <would> find to attach it?*)

*Extract 8. Greek*

1. T: εν το παρών αλλά δεν εν σωστό όπως το είπε, «είμαστε όλοι παρών», ένας είναι;  
(*it is 'paron' <I am present> but it is not correct the way he said it, 'we are all paron' <I am present>, is it just one person?*)
2. S1: παρόντες  
(*'parontes' <we are present>*)
3. T: παρόντες, είμαστε όλοι παρόντες, παρών εν ένας

(‘parontes’ < we are present>, we are **all** present, ‘paron’ <I am present> is for one person)

In contrast, however, there were other dialect features that were highly likely to be converted into the standard during the lesson or when the teacher wanted to indicate formality. Some examples of these features are as follows:

- (1) the combining article ‘tze/τζα/and’,
- (2) the third and second singular persons of the verb ‘to have’, e.g. eshii/έσσειε/it, she, he has
- (3) the interrogative pronouns ‘indalos/είνταλος/ how’, ‘inda/είντα/what’.

All the above markers were the most susceptible to change, while more ‘legitimised’ dialect markers (Extracts 7 and 8) were retained. It was as if the conversion of these words into the standard form was used to indicate the formality and often ‘seriousness’ of the situation, signalling a change in the tone of the teacher and of the whole classroom atmosphere.

For instance, in Extract 9 the teacher is upset because some students stayed in the classroom during break-time, something not allowed, and Erato is being told off for this. Both the teacher and Erato use exclusively dialect variants and high-pitched voice in a very confrontational conversation (7). However, the teacher tries to be calm again after a long pause (7) and addresses all the students (not just Erato), trying to establish a new classroom rule. Her tone is serious and calm. In order to achieve this seriousness and indicate the importance of the new rule she introduces her sentence using standard variants, although she retains some of the dialect variants that are more ‘accepted’. What is revealing is the use of the standard form ‘**ki**/κι/and’ (7) to signal the formality of the situation and the shifting from one variety to the other.

*Extract 9. Greek*

1. T: Ερατώ εμπήκες εσύ, έμεινες μέσα;  
(Erato, did you get in, did you stay in?)
2. E: κυρία ήμουν με τη Στέλλα  
(Miss, I was with Stella)
3. T: εχρειάζεσουν, είσσιες καμιά δουλειάν;  
(were you needed, did you have any job <to do>?)
4. E: όι  
(no)
5. T: καλό;  
(then?)
6. E: όι, επήαμεν μαζί  
(no, we went together)
7. T: ΕΙΝΤΑΛΟΣ ΕΠΗΕΤΕ μαζί; Είπαμε να μείνει καμιά ομάδα μέσα; (π) **Από** εδώ **κι** εμπρός, όποιος μείνει μέσα κάμνει λάθος, **κι** έννα τον αφήνω εγώ **όλα** τα διαλείμματα τιμωρία  
(**HOW DID YOU GO** together? Did we say that any team will stay inside? (p) **From now and on**, whoever stays in makes a mistake, **and** I will leave him all the breaks detention <inside>)

Similarly, in Extract 10, the teacher explains the creation of the passive form of the verbs using the ending ‘-ome/-όμαι’. She is widely using the ‘accepted’ dialect variant



'en/εν/it is' along with other dialect features (2–3). However, when she provides an actual example for the rule (3) she introduces it using the standard variants 'and/κι/κι', 'it has /ehi/έχει'. These two strong markers signal a shift in formality and serve to gain students' attention. Similarly, the standard variant 'it has /ehi/έχει' is retained in her speech when she comments on the mistake the students made (4). From all the spoken data collected, it emerged that even when the teachers used dialect variants when they wanted to give a more serious tone to their discussion, the 'it has/ehi/έχει' marker was mainly used in its standard form. Only on occasions where the teachers seemed upset and were holding strong discussions with some students (Extract 9) would they code-switch completely into the dialect, using the dialectal form of the 'it has/eshii/έσσειει' marker as well (Extract 9, line 3).

*Extract 10. Greek*

1. S1: -όμαι, είντα που εν τούτο;  
(*'ome', what is this?*)
2. T: εν το «στριμώχνω, στριμώχνομαι», εν τζαι έβαλες το – ομαι, τη λέξη – ομαι,
3. τούτη εν μόνο η κατάληξη (π) ας πούμε στριμώχνω **κι έχει** πάλια – ομαι, είναι το ρήμα στριμώχνομαι, εν τζαι έχει λέξη «-ομαι» μόνο (*it is 'I push, I am being pushed', and you didn't put 'ome', the word 'ome', this is just the ending (p) let us say 'I push' and it has a dash '-ome' it is the verb 'I am being pushed', and it does not have a word 'ome' on its own*)

Finally a similar marker was the interrogative pronoun 'how/indalos/pos'. In strongly standard dominated situations the teachers would use the standard form of 'how/**pos**', as shown in Extract 7 (line 1), although retaining other accepted dialect markers. In contrast, in more naturally occurring talk, where the teacher was upset or had an intense discussion with the students, she used the dialect form of 'how/indalos' (Extract 9, line 7).

**Complying and resisting students**

This establishment of a dialect-standard continuum in the classroom and the legitimisation of certain features of the dialect reflect the existence of a linguistic continuum in contemporary Greek Cypriot society; the classroom reproduces this trend, as a 'micro-world' within the wider society. In the data presented so far, it was the teacher that led classroom talk and established the socio-linguistic rules of the classroom. The majority of the students made efforts to comply with classroom linguistic norms, trying to use the standard on occasions related to the actual lesson, retaining some of the 'acceptable' dialect features and avoiding more 'hard core' dialect variants as in the cases of Dafni and Achilleas (Extract 7).

Nevertheless, there were two contrasting smaller groups of students who exhibited completely different language behaviour. The first group, consisting of a few high-achieving students (Nefeli, Lydia, Anastasia and Menelaos), mostly girls, used the standard consistently and predominantly on occasions related to the actual lesson. For example, Lydia in Extract 1 used exclusively standard variants despite the fact that the teacher included some dialect features when posing a question or that another student made a comment solely in the dialect. Similar linguistic behaviour was shown by Anastasia and Nefeli (Extract 11) where they used exclusively standard variants in their speech despite the fact that one of their classmates (Giannos) used solely dialect.

## Extract 11. Greek

1. T: τι κάνω για να εξοικονομήσω νερό;  
(*what do I do to save water?*)
2. Nefeli: να μην ποτίζουμε τα λουλούδια μας και να βάζουμε πολύ νερό  
(*not to water our flowers and to put a lot of water*)
3. Giannos: κυρία άμια θέλω να κάμω μπάνιο το νερό ώσπου τρέσσει πηαίννει κάτω κυρία, καλλύττερα να βάλω σίκλα, τζείνον που τρέσσει να το μαζέψουμε  
(*miss, when I want to take a shower the water is running and it goes down, it is better to place a bucket miss to collect that which is running*)
4. Anastasia: άμια πλένουμε κάτι, τά πιάτá ή κάτι άλλο να μην αφήνουμε το νερό να τρέχει και μεις να /  
(*when we wash something, dishes or something else, not to leave the water running and we to /*)

All these students fully identified with the standard in their interviews arguing that this was the appropriate variety to use in the classroom and claiming that during the lesson they only used standard. They also expressed negative attitudes about the dialect in terms of aesthetics, status and appropriateness, arguing like Anastasia that, ‘people might create a negative picture about you so it is better not to speak Cypriot all the time’. These students not only held positive attitudes towards the standard and considered it the most appropriate for the classroom, they also appeared competent in using it without great dialect interference.

In contrast, there was another small group, mainly boys (Giannos, Agis, Tefkros and Iasonas) with medium to low achievement, varied socio-economic background and a ‘lively’ presence in the class, who did not make any effort to use standard variants when they were nominated to speak. Rather, they consistently used predominantly dialect features regardless of the occasion of communication. For example in Extract 11, although Giannos is ‘surrounded’ by standard talk in the ‘actual lesson’, he is not influenced and uses the dialect exclusively when he replies to the teacher. Giannos, like his fellow students belonging to the same group, consistently used the dialect in standard-dominated situations, defying the linguistic ‘rules’ of appropriateness and formality set out by the teachers.

Whether this linguistic behaviour was a matter of necessity, i.e. these boys were not competent in the standard, or of choice, i.e. they refused to comply with the norm of the classroom, is not completely clear, since the data from this paper do not explore students’ linguistic competence in either the standard or the dialect. However, there were occasions when these boys did include standard variants in their speech in class, mainly when they wanted to convince the teachers of something, as shown in Extract 12.

## Extract 12. Music

1. T: Γιάννο, γιατί έκατσεσ έτσι; Έλα σε παρακαλώ  
(*Gianno, why did you sit like this? Come please*)
2. Giannos: Αφού κυρία εν μπορώ να δω  
(*But miss I cannot see*)
3. T: ‘Ατε, γρήγορα, έλα κάτσε  
(*Come on, quickly, come sit*)
4. Giannos: Έθθελω να κάτσω εδώ κυρία  
(*I don’t want to sit here, miss*)

Here, Giannos tries to convince the teacher not to change his seat; when he sees that his argumentation is not enough (2) he unusually includes a standard variant in his speech ‘**here**/εδδώ’ (4). The music teacher used more standard variants compared to the other teachers observed, so Giannos tries with linguistic means to convince the teacher not to change his seat. What this extract reveals is that for this group of students the standard was the variety they would access only when they wanted to. So, they defied the general classroom rules of using the standard during the actual lesson, but they would ‘go into’ the standard only when they felt that they needed to do so and not when it was imposed to them either by the teacher or by the linguistic status quo of the classroom.

Interview data revealed that, contrary to the first group’s attitudes, these boys had a strong positioning in favour of the dialect and an equally opposing attitude towards the standard. For these four boys the dialect was the main marker of their identity, the variety they felt more close to and more comfortable speaking. Although the majority of the students from this particular classroom exhibited similar attitudes towards the dialect, this group of boys were the only ones who seemed to put their values into action and actually *choose* not to comply with the norm of the classroom and retain their *own* variety. Their comments during the interviews encapsulate this positioning.

- When I speak Greek <standard> I feel, how can I say it? I feel like I am a stranger because most of us in Cyprus we speak Cypriot. Miss, this is not my language – Agis.
- I feel more comfortable using Cypriot because I am used to it, this is how I learned to speak – Tefkros.
- I prefer to speak Cypriot because I know it well and I want to feel the others are my friends – Iasonas.
- I don’t want not to speak Cypriot because I like Cypriot speech, because I am Cypriot, I was born in Cyprus – Giannos.

### *Tensions in ‘multi-accentuality’*

It can be argued that class E was a community of practice where the two linguistic varieties attached to various values and attitudes co-existed and interacted, each used in different domains and for different functions. This co-existence might appear ‘peaceful’ and fruitful since each variety complemented the other, serving different purposes. Nevertheless, the reality of the class was rather different, and on many occasions tensions and clashes between the legitimate standard and the home variety of the students were observed. There were many occasions when the boundaries between what was accepted and rejected were not clear, with the teachers adopting a more ‘aggressive’ attitude towards the dialect and those students who used the dialect in ‘inappropriate occasions’. Some examples of this clash are presented and discussed below.

#### *Extract 13, Greek*

1. T: λαιπόν Ευαγόρα  
(*right, Evagora* <she nominates Evagoras to speak>)
2. Evagoras: στην αρχή έκανε ένα λάθος, είπε ‘όλοι κι όλοι’ ενώ έπρεπε
3. να πει **όλοι**  
(*at the beginning he made one mistake, he said ‘all and all’ while he should have said ‘all’*)

4. T: είμαστε **όλοι**  
(*we are all* <She repeats what he said, noting agreement>)
5. Evagoras: ναι άμα κάποιος **είναι** αγράμματος λέει **αυτά** που/  
(*yes when someone is illiterate he says those that*)
6. T: **μάλιστα** (p) άλλο λάθος **σε αυτό** το κομμάτι, Κατερίνα  
(*right, another mistake in this part, Katerina*)
7. Katerina: είπεν τζαι τούτοι που ‘χαν/  
(*he said and those who had/*)
8. T: ναι ‘**και**’  
(*yes, ‘and’ <she interrupts her to correct her>*)

In Extract 13 Evagoras replies to a question posed by the teacher using exclusively standard variants and the whole discussion takes place in the standard (1–5). The teacher then nominates Katerina who, not following the norm, begins her point by using the dialect and in particular a marker that is more stigmatised than others, ‘and/tze/τζαι’ (7). The teacher does not let her finish, interrupts her and replaces the dialect variant with its standard counterpart ‘**and/** ke/ και’ (8). After that Katerina just mumbles and provides a very short answer.

Similarly, in Extract 14, Erato poses a question to the teacher using a mixture of dialect and standard variants (1) avoiding the more stigmatised markers of the dialect. Even though the occasion is not directly related to the actual lesson, i.e. Erato is asking for instructions regarding their next task, the teacher shouts at her for using the ‘accepted’ but still dialectal future form of ‘we will/enna/ενν’ (2). The paradox is that the teacher continues to use some dialect variants (‘we do/kamoume/κόμεουμε’) at the same time she tells Erato off. Evidently, issues of power emerge where the teacher has the authority to decide what is acceptable and what not, when and how students should use the dialect, while at the same time she continues to use dialectal features without anyone telling her off or trying to stop her.

*Extract 14. Design and technology*

1. Erato: κυρία **τι** έννα κάμουμε;  
(*miss what are we going to do?*)
2. Teacher: **OXI TI** ‘ÉNNA KAMOYME’, **τι** ‘**θα**’ κάμουμε  
(*‘NOT WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, what are we ‘going’ to do’*)

Finally, in Extract 15 the teacher using the standard poses a question, asking them to explain what a particular phrase means (1–2). Ifigenia is nominated and she provides a wrong interpretation though using the standard (3). The teacher tries to help Ifigenia and the whole class to provide the correct answer (5–6) and continues to use exclusively standard variants. Agis is nominated and he provides the correct interpretation (7) using, however, the dialect. The teacher instead of praising him for finding the correct answer partly disregards his reply and becomes critical about his language use, saying that this is not how ‘we should say it’. Again, as in the previous example, the paradox is that the teacher also uses a dialect variant ‘will/enna/εννά’ at the same time that she criticises Agis’s use of the dialect. What is striking in this example is that from a pedagogic and educational point of view, the student who provided the correct interpretation, showing that he grasped the meaning of the text, not only was not praised but was condemned for expressing that meaning in his home variety, the dialect. On the contrary, the student who provided the

wrong answer (Dafni) using the accepted variety did not have any comments directed to her. Even more striking is that the teacher had the authority to disapprove and pass judgements on Agis for his dialect use during a standard dominated occasion even though she also used certain dialect features herself. In all these incidents the domination of standard over the dialect, of the teacher over the students and of ‘appropriate talk’ over ‘naturally occurring talk’ was striking.

*Extract 15. Greek*

1. T: πώς έπρεπε να πει τη φράση ‘θα τους βγάλει κάθε φόβο’; λέει
2. δεν έπρεπε να πει έτσι, Ιφιγένεια;  
(*how he should have said the phrase ‘to take every fear out of them’? He says he should not have said that, Ifigenia?*)
3. Ιfigenia: αυτό θα τους φοβισεί πολύ;  
(*this will scare them a lot?*)
4. S1: όι  
(*no*)
5. T: αφού λέει θα τους βγάλει κάθε φόβο, να τους βγάλει κάθε φόβο,
6. να τους βγάλει  
(*but it says it will take out every fear from them, to take out every fear from them, to take it out from them*)
7. Agis: έννα μεν έχουν φόο μέσα τους  
(*that they will not have fear in them*)
8. T: ναί αλλά έννα μεν έχουν φόο μέσα τους, έτσι έννα το πούμε;  
(*yes but ‘they will not have any fear in them’, this is how we are going to say it?*)

### Choosing multi- or monolingualism in the Greek Cypriot educational context – conclusions

This paper has documented that class E was far from being a monolingual place. The claims made by policy-makers that the language of the classroom is Standard Modern Greek are not valid. Data were presented showing that the dialect was widely used both by the students and the teachers on various occasions in the classroom. In addition, there was a strong dialect presence even during the standard dominated occasion of the ‘actual lesson’, with certain features of the dialect being legitimised and accepted as part of the norm. However, this paper has also documented that a value system was created where, although the dialect was present and in certain aspects legitimised in the context of the classroom, the standard was the language of authority. Many incidents were described where there was a clash between the language of authority and the home variety of the students, often with potentially serious educational implications. Students were interrupted, corrected and failed to be praised for providing the correct answer simply because they, either by choice or necessity, decided to convey the meaning in their own variety.

If the role of education is, as Van De Craen and Humblet (1989) assert, to contribute to a more holistic and complete development of students at school, it is worth wondering whether fixed policies of monolingualism can achieve that in a society that is at the very least bidialectal. Language policy has been unchanged in Cyprus for decades, mainly for nationalist political reasons. The idea of actually adopting a more open and diverse language curriculum, which would include other varieties, is still provoking intense protests by various national pressure groups, who view this as a threat towards Greek Cypriots’ ethnic identity. However, Cypriot society has changed and it is already a dynamic multilingual

country. Efforts to solve the political problem between the two ethnic groups of the island have been now intensified and sooner or later the prospect of actually introducing the language of the 'other' (i.e. Turkish) in public education will emerge. In addition, the rapid increase in immigrant students at school dictates that policy making will be called to take account of the reality of 'other than Greek' varieties spoken and widely used in Greek Cypriot classrooms.

The existence of multiple varieties that differ from those promoted by the state and the problems their speakers might face in school can no longer be ignored, and in other European countries with strong dialect presence the issue is at the very least addressed in public policy (e.g. Belgium, Van De Craen and Hublet 1989; Germany, Rosenberg 1989). If the role of school is to contribute maximally to the development of all aspects of language development in a stimulating linguistic environment, multiplicity in language should be acknowledged and cultivated. As Van De Craen and Humblet (1989) point out, 'attitudes of both pupils and teachers are negatively affected by the attempts of the educational authorities to ignore this state of affairs (. . .) there is no point in arguing, as the authorities do, that dialects or language variation should not be allowed in the classroom, because they are already there' (28). The recognition, promotion and cultivation of the Greek Cypriots' home variety can and should be an important starting point for the implementation of multilingualism in Greek Cypriot education.

## Notes

1. In the current paper the data presented concern the Greek Cypriot community in Cyprus.
2. The Greek Cypriot Dialect differs from the Standard mainly in the areas of phonology and lexicon, while the syntax is essentially the same in both. There is a fairly high degree of mutual intelligibility between the two varieties (Newton 1972) although Greeks from Greece often complain that they cannot understand the Cypriots when they use the Dialect. It can be argued, however, that the most striking difference between the two varieties is not so much on a purely linguistic level, but on a socio-linguistic one. In other words, each variety is connected with a distinct and separate set of values and norms (Papapavlou 1998). For a more detailed analysis of the linguistic relation of the Cypriot Dialect with the Standard Modern Greek, see Newton (1972, 1983).
3. The 'green line' is the de facto border that physically separates the two communities of the island ever since the war in 1974. In 2003 the leadership of the Turkish Cypriots decided to 'open' the border and 'allow' Greek Cypriots to travel to the northern part. Ever since 2003 the contact between the two communities has increased dramatically.
4. The terminology used here to describe each linguistic variety reveals the value system that it is already preimposed in language education policy in Cyprus. The Cypriot Dialect is characterised as an 'idiom' (a term positioning it much closer to the standard) while Standard Modern Greek is described as 'Pan-Hellenic demotic' stressing in that way its national/universal appeal.
5. In primary education in Cyprus there usually is a 'class teacher' who teaches Greek, maths and usually history, geography and science and other teachers teach the more 'technical subjects' such as PE, art, music and design and technology.
6. Transcription key  
 Bold characters: Standard Modern Greek variants.  
 Underlined characters: Greek Cypriot Dialect variants.  
 Non-marked characters: Shared features between standard and dialect.  
 Italics in parenthesis: Translation from Greek to English.  
 (p): pause.  
 <letters in brackets>: Comments made by me to facilitate understanding of the transcription.  
 T: Teacher.  
 S1, S2. . . : Unidentified individual students.  
 (. . .): Transcription unclear.  
 /: Sentence interrupted.

7. These features were validated in a larger corpus of spoken data collected from the specific class for a period of four months. For more details, see Ioannidou (2002).

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