
“Their Greek goes to waste”:

Understanding Greek heritage language teachers’ language ideologies and instructional practices

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Abstract

Framed within critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics, this narrative study sheds light on the language ideologies and practices of eight Greek heritage language (HL) teachers in Greek schools in Montreal and Toronto. Examining the teachers’ ideologies and practices is important, as they can either engage or alienate HL learners. Engaging HL learners is significant, because for many of them the Greek school is their only opportunity to use the language. Language portraits, written tasks, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, which were then analyzed narratively and thematically. The findings suggest that the teachers’ attitudes towards students and practices are largely shaped by their monolingual ideologies. The need for targeted teacher training is highlighted, to ensure that HL teachers are equipped to accommodate all their students’ needs.

Key words: language ideologies, heritage languages, Greek heritage language education


Résumé

Ancrée dans le champ de la sociolinguistique poststructuraliste critique, cette étude narrative met en lumière les idéologies et les pratiques de huit enseignants de langue d’origine (LO) grecque dans les écoles grecques de Montréal et de Toronto. Il est important d’examiner les idéologies et les pratiques des enseignants, car elles peuvent soit engager ou aliéner les apprenants. L’engagement des apprenants est important, car pour beaucoup d’entre eux, l’école grecque est leur seule opportunité d’utiliser la langue. Des portraits linguistiques, des tâches écrites et des entretiens semi-structurés ont été utilisés pour collecter des données, qui ont ensuite été analysées de manière narrative et thématique. Les résultats suggèrent que les attitudes des enseignants envers les apprenants et leurs pratiques sont largement affectées par leurs idéologies monolingues. La nécessité d’une formation ciblée des enseignants est soulignée afin de garantir que les enseignants de LO soient équipés pour répondre à tous les besoins de leurs élèves.

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Mots-clés: idéologies linguistiques, langues d'origine, enseignement du grec comme langue d'origine

Introduction

The term *heritage languages* (HL) refers to languages, which in the Canadian context are languages other than the two official languages—French and English—and indigenous languages. Efforts to preserve HLs through heritage language education (HLE) programs are organized and supported primarily by the ethnolinguistic minorities themselves (Haque, 2012). Ethnolinguistic minorities are particularly concerned about preserving their HLs, as research suggests that within three generations HL speakers are likely to fully replace their HL with the dominant societal language(s) (Campbell & Christian, 2003). The fear of losing their HL motivates minority communities to take action and strive for *language maintenance* (Fishman, 1996) through HLE programs where speakers continue to use a non-dominant language in one or several social spheres despite competition with the dominant language(s) (Baker, 2011). Language maintenance is indeed greatly needed, as maintaining a connection with the HL can be beneficial for HL speakers on all personal, social, and cognitive levels, while it is also fundamental for their identity formation and sense of group membership (Cummins et al., 2005; Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2014; Valdés, 2005). Thus, most minorities are willing to undertake the painstaking task of organizing and supporting HLE programs, to ensure the intergenerational transmission of their HLs.

Situating the study

The Greek communities in Montreal and Toronto

In this article, I focus on Greeks in Canada, an ethnolinguistic minority that is particularly concerned about preserving its language and culture. Greek immigration to Canada has been recorded since the early nineteenth century, but increased dramatically in the twentieth century (Constantinides, 2004). Today, there are approximately 250,000 people of Greek origin in Canada, and a staggering 80% of them reside in Quebec and Ontario, and more specifically in or close to Montreal and Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2017a). The linguistic landscapes of Quebec and Ontario present significant differences; Quebec's only official language is French, whereas Ontario has a regionalized language policy, with some areas using English only, and others using both English and French (Haque, 2012). While some areas in Ontario are bilingual, English is unequivocally the most widely used language in the province (Statistics Canada, 2017b). The dominance of English in all other Canadian provinces renders French speakers in Quebec a 'fragile majority', heavily concerned

about protecting its language (McAndrew, 2013). In turn, this concern is often translated in French-only language policies and practices (Haque, 2012).

While the linguistic context in the two locations differs substantially, the Greek communities in Montreal and Toronto are both well organized and determined to preserve Greek (Aravossitas, 2016). Indeed, Greeks in Canada have formed communities not just in these two locations, but across the country, with Greek churches, schools, institutions, and associations that help preserve the Greek language and culture (Aravossitas, 2016; Constantinides, 2004; Damanakis, 2010). Greek HLE is formally taught in the day, afternoon, and Saturday Greek schools that are founded by the various Greek communities, parishes, and institutions in the two locations (Aravossitas, 2016). Despite the fact that Greek communities across Canada are well organized, finding new ways to enhance Greek HLE is now more important than ever before, because these schools are the only opportunity for many third- and fourth-generation Greek HL learners, who do not use Greek at home, to learn their HL (Aravossitas, 2016; Damanakis, 2010). An important distinction must be made here: HL speakers are individuals who are exposed to the HL in the home and local community and who are able, to a lesser or greater extent, to use and understand their HL (Montrul, 2010). On the contrary, HL *learners* are members of ethnolinguistic minorities who maintain a connection with the HL not only at home and in the local community, but also *through formal instruction* (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Previous research has identified some challenges that Greek schools in Canada are confronted with, namely the fact that the schools are underfunded, there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials, and the teaching staff is in some cases untrained and has little or no background in pedagogic studies (Aravossitas & Oikonomakou 2017, 2020; Constantinides, 2001; Tisizi 2020a, 2020b). Despite such challenges, Greek schools in Canada remain one of the main places where students of Greek origin can learn and practice their HL. Enhancing Greek HLE in Canada, by examining the HL teachers’ ideologies and practices is this study’s main focus.

The present study

The findings reported in this article stem from a larger study (Tisizi, 2020b), and pertain to Greek HL teachers’ language ideologies and instructional practices. The study focuses on the perceptions and practices of eight Greek HL teachers in primary and secondary Greek private schools founded by the respective Greek community, Greek parishes, or other institutions in the greater areas of Montreal and Toronto.¹ Examining the perceptions of Greek HL

¹In the two locations Greek courses are offered in public schools too; for example, Greek is one of the HL languages offered in the PELO (Programme d’enseignement des

teachers is important, as their ideologies, positionality towards students, and instructional practices can either engage or alienate HL learners (Blommaert, 2010; Varghese et al., 2005). Currently, many third-and-fourth generation Greek HL learners with minimal knowledge of their HL are enrolled in Greek schools. To ensure the intergenerational transmission of Greek, it is important to find ways to retain these learners in the Greek schools and improve their learning experiences.

The study examines the following questions:

1. What are the Greek HL teachers' attitudes towards their students?
2. What are their attitudes towards other Greek HL teachers?
3. How do their attitudes and ideologies affect their instructional practices?

Literature review

The research presented here is framed within critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics, according to which language is a social and ideological construction (García et al., 2017; Weber & Horner, 2017). Conceptions of languages as stable and bounded are widely challenged by critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics that views languages and individuals' language practices as fluid and flexible (Byrd Clark, 2010; Lamarre, 2013). Critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics focuses on the ideological processes behind the hierarchization of languages that results in the validation of some linguistic varieties and the depreciation of others (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Pennycook, 2010). It stresses that the power embedded in languages creates social inequalities that individuals either perpetuate or challenge, as they negotiate their own identities (García et al., 2017; O'Rourke et al., 2015). In short, critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics highlights that power is exercised through language, and thus language becomes a *site of struggle*, where power relations are either maintained or resisted (Norton, 2013). The boundaries between languages and the speakers' perceptions about them are important considerations.

Language ideologies and attitudes

Language ideologies are widely adopted overt and covert beliefs about language varieties and their speakers (Blackledge, 2000; McGroarty, 2010). Language attitudes, on the other hand, refer to individuals' *personal* beliefs

languages d'origine) program in Quebec and in the International Language Program in Ontario. As these two programs present substantial differences and the teachers' and students' experiences are not necessarily comparable, the participants selected for this study worked only in schools founded by the two respective Greek communities or other Greek institutions.

about languages and their speakers (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). Language ideologies and attitudes are closely linked to societal power relations, and influence individuals’ own language practices as well as the way they perceive others’ linguistic choices (O’Rourke et al., 2015). They are influenced by sociopolitical beliefs that associate certain languages — and their speakers — with social prestige and power, and distinguish them from other languages — and their speakers — that are consequently devalued (Heller, 2007).

Language ideologies and attitudes play an important role in language education, as research suggests that the nationalist ideology according to which native speakers constitute a homogeneous group of people who share the same background and language is still prevalent, despite having been heavily criticized (Aneja, 2016; Holliday, 2008). Such ideologies disregard the fact that languages constantly change over time and through people’s interactions, and treat any language variety that does not adhere to the so-called standard linguistic norm as less valid. Research has shown that the language ideologies and attitudes of HL speakers and their families have a profound impact on HL maintenance (Guardado, 2018; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). Evidently, it is important to keep a vigilant eye for the ideological assumptions underlying language teachers’ actions too, as these can influence the learners’ own beliefs.

Different types of language learners

HL learners are members of ethnolinguistic minorities who maintain their HL through formal instruction (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). While there is no general consensus as to an exact definition of HL learners, they are understood as individuals with personal, cultural and/or familial ties to the HL (Carreira, 2004; Valdés, 2005). My understanding of the term is aligned with definitions that place emphasis on the learners’ connection with the HL and the respective minority community (Aravossitas, 2016; Hornberger & Wang, 2008), as such definitions foreground the learners’ agency, which I consider a key parameter in the conceptualization of HL learners’ identities.

A distinction that needs to be made is the one among HL, second language (SL), and foreign language (FL) learners. While they are not synonymous, these three terms can easily be misunderstood, because they all refer to the learning of additional languages. SL learners are individuals who take up an additional language that is widely used outside the classroom. In contrast, FL learners take up an additional language that is not widely used outside the classroom, and therefore the classroom is the only place where they can be exposed to the target language (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). As described previously, HL learners are individuals who receive formal instruction to preserve a non-dominant language with which they have personal connection. The three terms need to be clearly defined and distinguished because research suggests that

each type of learner has different needs, and thus different teaching strategies work best with each of them (Carreira, 2016a; Kagan & Dillon, 2008).

Indeed, HL learners have been found to have stronger aural competence and a more extensive vocabulary than SL and FL learners, and tend to find it easier to understand pragmatic rules in the HL (Kagan & Dillon, 2008; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). On the other hand, SL and FL learners tend to face fewer difficulties with spelling and understanding the metalanguage used to explain grammatical phenomena (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). Research also suggests that macro-based approaches work best with HL learners, because they usually have an already developed HL aural competence (Carreira, 2016a; Kagan & Dillon, 2008). Macro-based approaches start from the learners' background knowledge in the HL and then move to grammar and vocabulary teaching. In contrast, research indicates that micro-based approaches, that is, approaches that start from decontextualized information and gradually move to more complex knowledge, work best with SL and FL learners (Carreira, 2016b). Evidently, language teachers need to be aware of the differences among the different types of learners, and must adjust their teaching strategies accordingly to best accommodate their needs. As this study will show, things are further complicated for teachers when their classes include different types of language learners.

Methodology and methods

Since my aim is to examine the participants' ideologies, I find narrative inquiry to be the ideal fit for this study. Narrative inquiry focuses on how people construct personal accounts of their lived experiences and how they make sense of them (Chase, 2011; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). It is used to gain nuanced insights into the narrators' perceptions and designate the uniqueness of each individual's voice (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Riessman, 2008). These personal accounts are *representations* of the narrators' experiences, and therefore offer plausible ways of understanding these experiences, rather than imposing a singular truth (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Clandinin, 2006). Rather than focusing on generalizability, that is, making generalizable claims about a study's findings, narrative inquiry's aim is *particularizability*, namely, the ability to foreground unique lived experiences that resonate with broad populations in different contexts and allow for critical reflection, by either confirming people's already established perceptions or challenging them (Donmoyer, 2008).

Participants

For the purposes of this study, I purposely selected eight Greek HL teachers (four from the greater area of Montreal and four from the greater area of Toronto), making sure that the participants of the study had different back-

grounds and worked in different educational contexts (day, afternoon, and/or Saturday Greek schools). The average age of the participants was 38; five of them were Greek-born and three were Canadian-born.

Methods

The participants of the study were invited to create the language portrait of a fairly typical Greek HL learner, complete a written activity, and participate in semi-structured interviews. The combination of these methods allowed for a nuanced understanding of the participants' views, and also gave participants the opportunity for critical self-reflection.

Language portraits

Using language portraits to prompt individuals to reflect on their relationship with language allows them to verbalize emotions and thoughts that are otherwise difficult to express (Busch, 2018; Prasad, 2014). For the purposes of this study, I asked the participants to create the language portrait of a fairly typical Greek HL learner. The reason why I asked the participants to create the language portrait of the typical Greek HL learner as opposed to creating the language portrait of a real HL learner was twofold. First and foremost, I was of the opinion that if I asked teachers to use real students as their inspiration for this activity, I would risk revealing the students' identities. Secondly, I found it appropriate to ask teachers to create the portrait of the typical learner, because this would provide insights into the teachers' perceptions of the students; both of those who fit the label of the typical Greek HL student and those who do not. Indeed, as will be shown in more detail in the following sections, the teachers' creations were revealing of their ideologies.

Instead of using a pre-made body silhouette, I gave full freedom to teachers; I provided them with blank sheets and invited them to draw the silhouette of the typical Greek HL student whom they deemed fit, and then map the student's languages onto the silhouette by using one colour for each language. It must be highlighted that the language portraits that the teachers created are not the ones that students would have created for themselves, and therefore should not be considered as true representations of the students' linguistic repertoires. However, the aim of this activity was to examine the teachers' perceptions about the students' profiles.

Written task

The participants of the study were also invited to complete a written task, where they needed to explain how they manage their students' different levels of familiarity with Greek. Having to work with students of different levels is a frequent occurrence in HL classes as the backgrounds of the students and

their exposure to the HL can vary substantially (Aravossitas, 2016). By asking teachers to explain how they manage this discrepancy in the students' levels, I was seeking to understand not only the strategies they use, but also, and most importantly, their attitudes towards students from various backgrounds.

Interviews

After creating the language portrait and completing the written task, the participants were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. The language portraits and written tasks were used to reveal the participants' first thoughts, whereas the interviews provided participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their responses and critically reflect on their experiences as HL teachers. A sample of the questions that were used during the interviews with the participants can be found in Appendix A.

Data analysis

The different types of data were analyzed in two phases; first, they were analyzed narratively, and then thematically. I began by restructuring the participants' written and oral narratives based on Labov and Waletzky's (1997) narrative framework to get the core information of each narrative. To ensure that the new narratives were accurate representations of the participants' perceptions, I stayed as close to their words as possible. This first phase allowed for a detailed understanding of the participants' perceptions, and helped designate the uniqueness of each teacher's voice (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Next, the data were analyzed thematically; initial patterns of meaning were identified and were then collapsed and expanded to formulate broad themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). While the narrative analysis helped designate the uniqueness of each teacher's experiences, the thematic analysis helped bring the data together and identify common themes across the teachers' beliefs.

Research ethics

A clear description of the research was provided to the participants in advance. The participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to their participation in the research. It was made clear to them that they could drop out of the study at any point they wanted without notice. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data.

Findings

What are Greek HL teachers’ attitudes towards other Greek HL students?

Greek HL learners’ linguistic repertoires

When describing the typical student’s linguistic profile, the participants agreed that all students have some knowledge of English, French, and Greek. Interestingly, despite the difference in Quebec and Ontario’s linguistic landscapes, English was described as the students’ preferred language in both locations. In terms of the students’ relationship with Greek, the vast majority of teachers agreed that Greek HL learners love the language, irrespective of their ability to use it. When creating the language portraits, most teachers used blue to represent Greek, and elucidated that this colour is not only the color of the Greek flag, but also the colour of the Greek sea and sky, and therefore the most appropriate for representing the students’ feelings towards their HL. Many teachers used blue on the silhouette’s heart, to indicate the students’ love for Greek, while others, such as George (Figure 1), used the same colour on several body parts, to indicate that Greek defines the HL learners’ entire worldview.



Figure 1

Student portrait created by George

The following quote by George is indicative of the central place Greece and the Greek language hold for HL learners according to their teachers:

Blue is linked to Greece; it is the colour of Greece. I could also use white to represent Greek, but there is something neutral about white. By choosing blue, I am adding colour; their existence is coloured through blue, through Greece.

In contrast to most participants who represented the learners' multiple linguistic resources in ways that indicated that each language is separate and used for different purposes, Anna created a very complex representation of the students' linguistic repertoires (Figure 2), with three concentric circles in the silhouette's head, to represent the interrelation of the students' languages.

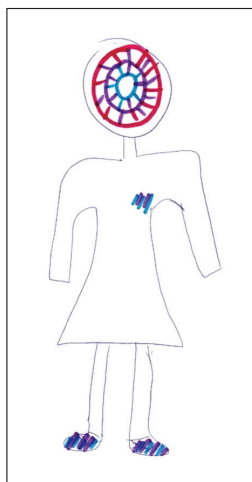


Figure 2

Student portrait created by Anna

When prompted to explain her choice, Anna noted:

English is the language they think in, the language they choose, the language they are most comfortable using to communicate. French is the language they need to use in the broader society. . . . Greek is linked to Greek values, family values. It is the smallest part, the most central. . . . However, I think that the three circles are interconnected. It's not like this is where the one circle ends and the other one begins.

This quote reveals that, while Anna understood that HL learners use their languages for different purposes, she also realized that these languages are interconnected and cannot be fully separated. As will be shown, language separation in the HL class was an important consideration.

The teachers' attitudes towards learners from diverse backgrounds

When creating the language portraits, some participants stressed that the students' linguistic repertoires are largely influenced by their backgrounds. The student population of some Greek schools in Montreal and Toronto is comprised not only of students with Greek origins, but also students of other

ethnicities who share the same religion as most Greeks. These are students of Russian, Bulgarian, or Ukrainian origin, among others, who are Orthodox Christians. Three teachers, Stella, Sofia, and Kostas, referred to such students, as well as children from so-called mixed marriages (marriages between Greeks and non-Greeks), and argued that their language abilities in Greek are not as strong as those of students whose parents are both Greek. Kostas went as far as to argue that students from mixed unions are “not fully Greek”. When creating the language portrait of the typical Greek HL learner (Figure 3), he chose to represent languages other than English, French, and Greek outside the silhouette he had drawn.

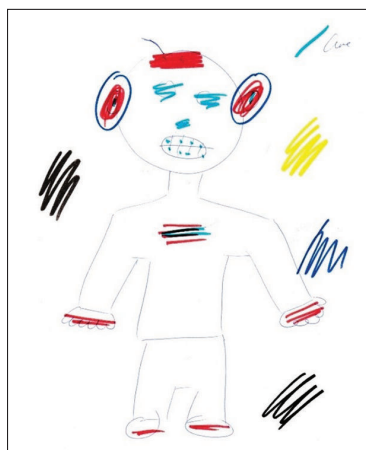


Figure 3

Student portrait created by Kostas

When invited to explain his choice, he stated:

Sometimes, the students in our school are half Greek and half another culture. ... So, this child is not a full Greek. Since we live in Canada, it is possible to have mixed marriages. ... The average student may be half and half, it's a possibility, but it is rare. Out of the two hundred students in our school, maybe five students are involved in a mixed marriage.

While Kostas claims that the vast majority of students in Greek schools have similar backgrounds, the number of students from diverse backgrounds will only continue to increase due to globalization and people movement. Rather than denying diversity, teachers should find new ways to accommodate learners' various needs and utilize all their linguistic and cultural resources in the class.

When asked to complete the written task about managing mixed-abilities classrooms, four teachers (Lena, Sofia, Niki, and Kostas) made special reference to first-generation Greek students and their language abilities. The teachers found the discrepancy among Greek-born and Canadian-born students' language abilities in Greek to be irreconcilable. Sofia even argued that Greek-born students' Greek *goes to waste* in Greek schools because of the fact that their peers cannot keep up with them. Sofia wrote:

Children coming from Greece go to waste in this school. Their Greek goes to waste. Of course, they help other children, because they speak Greek very well, but it's a shame for them.

The participant's strong language echoes her firm belief that being a Greek native speaker in and of itself guarantees that one's abilities in Greek will be superior to those of HL learners. This belief was brought forth by four teachers, indicating the potency of monolingual ideologies among teachers.

What are their attitudes towards other Greek HL teachers?

Aside from examining the Greek HL teachers' attitudes towards their students, I also wanted to understand their perceptions about other Greek HL teachers. As it has been described in previous research studies (Aravossitas & Oikonomakou, 2020; Constantinides, 2001), and as it is also reflected in the participant profiles, there are both Greek-born and Canadian-born teachers teaching in the various Greek programs in Canada. Five participants (Maria, George, Lena, Stella, and Sofia) were adamant that Greek native speakers, and more specifically, newcomers from Greece, are better suited for the position of a Greek HL teacher than Canadian-born Greeks. The teachers elucidated that Greek native speakers have a better grasp of the Greek grammar and vocabulary, and most importantly, they have a "correct Greek accent". Indeed, these five participants seemed to be convinced that the accent of Canadian-born Greek HL teachers, which they described as deviant from the standard Greek accent, is inappropriate for Greek HLE, as it may set the wrong example for students.

An additional reason for preferring Greek native speakers for the role of a Greek HL teacher was presented by Lena, who argued that Canadian-born Greeks make extensive use of English in the Greek HL class, because they find it easier to express themselves in their dominant language. In fact, she speculated that the teachers' use of English in the HL class is so problematic that parents would happily choose inexperienced teachers who are Greek native speakers over teachers with long experience, but poorer language abilities.

The remaining participants held different opinions. Kostas, a Canadian-born Greek HL teacher who admitted feeling insecure about his Greek, was

very conflicted and argued that the two types of teachers present different strengths and weaknesses. He felt that Greek native speakers have a better command of Greek, but argued that Canadian-born teachers find it easier to connect with students, because they share similar backgrounds with them. Anna and Niki maintained that it is indispensable for Greek HL teachers to have a good command of Greek, but stressed that it is not impossible for non-native speakers to be fluent in Greek.

How do Greek HL teachers’ attitudes and ideologies affect their instructional practices?

The written task and the interviews provided participants with opportunities to reflect on their instructional practices. Almost all participants agreed that providing sufficient exposure to Greek is important for Greek HL learners’ success in learning their HL. They reported trying to use *only Greek* when teaching, but explained that they often have to switch to English for the purposes of instruction-giving, and grammar and vocabulary teaching. The teachers also reported a preference for conventional teaching methods, and approaches that start from decontextualized information (i.e., grammar and vocabulary activities) before moving on to more complex tasks (i.e., reading comprehension activities, revision activities, essays).

The participants also stressed that Greek HL classes are usually mixed-abilities classes, as the learners’ backgrounds tend to range considerably. Five teachers admitted that adjusting the course to every student’s level is nearly impossible, especially when financial hurdles prevent the administration of Greek schools from breaking down the classes into smaller and more homogeneous ones. For instance, Lena was adamant that having large mixed-abilities classes is a disservice to all students. She commented:

You need two classes — one for children who don’t understand, to have the teacher focusing on them individually, and another class with the rest of the children who do understand, so they can progress faster. The way things are done now is unfair, both to beginners and to advanced students. But there’s a financial factor involved here — they don’t want to pay for extra teachers.

Most participants explained that given the circumstances, the best strategy for them is to *follow the pace of the majority* when teaching. Niki, for instance, commented:

I have a girl at Saturday school who’s just come from Greece and of course she speaks Greek. She is very good. I have told her mother, ‘Look, your daughter’s level is very different than other children’s. . . . I can’t teach strictly on your daughter’s level, because I will lose all other students’. So, I follow the majority.

However, the participants also noted that, while following the pace of the majority is a strategy that they widely use in Greek HL classes, it also leaves them with no time for differentiated instruction that could help less advanced students improve their language skills, and also increase advanced students' engagement.

An alternative strategy for teaching in mixed-abilities classes was offered by Stella and Sofia, who reported grouping their students based on their language abilities. They explained that they use different sets of activities and tasks for each group, to ensure that students can follow the pace of the course. Stella was confident in this approach and wrote:

Now I have found some balance—I ask half of them to copy a text, to keep them busy and quiet, while I explain something to the other half. I have found solutions to manage different levels.

Interestingly, Sofia did not hold the same opinion. Despite having used this strategy herself, she found that grouping students according to their abilities, made less advanced students feel marginalized and discouraged:

Certainly, the less advanced students feel at a disadvantage. Because they see what we are working on with the others, and they realize the difference. I believe they feel at a great disadvantage.

Discussion

This study showed that the instructional practices and positionality of most Greek HL teachers towards their students and colleagues are affected by their monolingual ideologies. The participants considered the so-called standard variety of Greek as the norm, and the only appropriate for use in the HL classroom. They were also of the opinion that by definition Greek native speakers have the “correct” accent and generally a better grasp of the Greek language, and are therefore better suited for the position of a Greek HL teacher.

Evidently, the standard variety of Greek is not the only linguistic variety that Greek speakers use in the greater areas of Montreal and Toronto (or in Greece), and as critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics highlights, from a linguistic perspective, it is in no way superior to other varieties (Weber & Horner, 2017). Similarly, the assumption that all native speakers use their language in similar ways has been challenged by research that has highlighted that there is great variability in the language practices of native speakers, based on factors such as geographic features, language contact, and the speakers' education and environment, among others (Holliday, 2008). Therefore, the conceptualization of native speakers as an idealized homogeneous group, which was largely adopted by the study's participants, has been shown to be rather inaccurate. The participants of the study did raise an important point:

for many of the students, being in the Greek school and interacting with their Greek HL teachers is their only opportunity to use the HL. This makes the teachers' role all the more important, as they are the students' main models regarding the use of the Greek language. This issue could be addressed by putting the HL learners in online contact with students from Greece or other Greek-speaking areas, thus giving them the opportunity to experience authentic interactions in their HL, while also being exposed to different—and equally valid—uses of the language.

Undoubtedly, Greek HL teachers must have an excellent command of the language they are teaching, whether it is their first language or not. Ideally, they must also have a sound understanding of pedagogic studies. As previous research (Aravossitas & Oikonomakou 2017, 2020; Constantinides, 2001; Tisizi 2020a) suggests however, many Greek HL teachers in Canada either have limited Greek language skills, or no background in educational studies whatsoever. Offering teacher training opportunities targeted at both aspects is thus indispensable for the enhancement of Greek HLE in Canada.

The study shed light on the Greek HL teachers' attitudes towards their students. The teachers believed that the language skills of students who are Greek native speakers are naturally superior and can never be reached by their Canadian-born peers. Some Greek HL teachers also believed that students from different ethnic backgrounds and students from mixed marriages are at an even greater disadvantage, because of their limited exposure to Greek outside the Greek school. It must be acknowledged that the fear that without ample exposure to the target language students will not be able to learn it successfully, is not without merit. Nevertheless, research also indicates that providing opportunities to HL learners to use the language is equally important for their learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). By creating safe environments, where all students, irrespective of their language abilities and backgrounds, are invited to take risks and use their linguistic resources freely, Greek HL teachers can increase the HL learners' motivation to learn Greek, and boost their confidence when using the language. While maintaining a close connection to Greek is obviously beneficial for the students' learning, teachers must acknowledge that for many Greek families in Canada, this is not always an option. It is imperative that teachers hold high expectations for all their students and create educational contexts where they can all feel included and valued.

The study also revealed that the Greek HL teachers' language ideologies greatly affect their instructional practices. The teachers reported a preference for micro-based approaches, that is, approaches that start from decontextualized information before moving on to more complex tasks. Following the pace of the majority and grouping students according to their language abilities were also mentioned as strategies that, while not ideal, are often employed in mixed-

abilities HL classes. Evidently, following the pace of the majority, is a strategy that is efficient for most but not *all* students. Likewise, grouping students according to their language abilities and using different sets of tasks with each group is a strategy that is practical but can make less advanced learners feel left out and discouraged. At the same time, the teachers' perception that the language abilities of advanced students "go to waste" because their peers cannot keep up with them, can be equally discouraging, leaving students with the idea that they do not have much to gain from attending Greek school.

The coexistence of different types of learners in the same class evidently poses a challenge to Greek HL teachers, as they need to find ways to accommodate the different needs of all their students. As was previously mentioned, research indicates that there are significant differences between the various types of learners, and that different strategies are more effective with each type. With different types of learners in the same class, there are no guaranteed recipes for success. However, it has been shown that linguistically and culturally responsive teaching (García, 2009) where all students' linguistic and cultural resources are leveraged can be very effective. Combining micro-based and macro-based approaches, adopting flexible grouping strategies (pairing SL and HL learners together and assigning them tasks targeted at their strengths and weaknesses), using authentic materials, and connecting new knowledge to the learners' experiences are some of the most powerful weapons in the teachers' arsenals. All these tools and strategies can be the focus of teacher training seminars that will enable Greek HL teachers to enrich their instructional practices.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here demonstrates that Greek HL teachers' language ideologies largely determine their positionality towards their students and their instructional practices. It must be acknowledged, however, that the teachers' language ideologies are not the only factor that affects Greek HL teachers' practices. The teachers have many obstacles to overcome, which further complicate their work. For instance, the participants of the study highlighted that the lack of time and resources, and the large class sizes further reduce their ability to use differentiated instruction, tailored to each student's needs. Addressing these issues would undoubtedly help Greek HL teachers devote more time and attention to each learner and would contribute to the enhancement of their teaching.

The study's findings indicate that Greek HL teachers view the Greek language and culture as an idealized entity that only native speakers can produce and that must be passed down relatively intact from generation to generation. However, to ensure the maintenance of Greek in the Canadian

context, some process of adaptation is likely to be necessary. It is essential that Greek HL teachers recognize that the HL students’ Greek voice (such as it is) is one of a possible range of voices that as modern Canadians they *own* and that equip them to participate strongly in Canada’s multilingual and multicultural life. Greek HL teachers would therefore benefit greatly from training targeted at working with students from diverse backgrounds. Since in most HL classes—and many would argue, in regular classes too—the students’ backgrounds range substantially, teachers are required to accept this pluralism, and find ways to affirm the students’ identities and competencies. Evidently, the teachers’ training would need to be complemented with new teaching material and curricula, tailored to the students’ needs. At the same time, it would also be beneficial if Greek HL classes were broken down into smaller and more manageable ones, as this would arguably make it easier for Greek HL teachers to offer differentiated instruction to their students.

Finally, it needs to be highlighted that this study focused on the beliefs and perspectives of only one stakeholder: the Greek HL teachers. An examination of Greek HLE would not be complete without the perspectives of the Greek HL learners and their families. It is therefore indispensable to build on the foundation laid by this and previous studies, to discover their views about Greek HLE. The suggested steps to enhance Greek HLE, along with others that have previously been identified, will undoubtedly bring additional expenses that Greek schools on their own will not be able to afford. Therefore, the various Greek communities, parishes, and institutions, will need to join forces and attract individuals and organizations willing to invest in Greek HLE.

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Appendix A

Sample of questions used during the interviews (presented in more detail in Tisizi, 2020b)

1. What is the Greek school's role in the preservation of Greek language and culture?
2. What is the Greek HL teachers' role?
3. How important is the support that Greek HL teachers receive from the schools, the Greek Church and the Hellenic Community?
4. What are the challenges that Greek HL teachers need to overcome?
5. What are the differences between Greek-born and Canadian-born students?
6. How can a teacher accommodate the needs of all students?
7. Do you think that students are generally motivated to learn Greek?
8. Compared to the other languages they speak, how strong is the students' Greek?
9. How do you feel about using multiple languages in the classroom? Are there any circumstances under which using multiple languages in the classroom is not appropriate?
10. Do you think that the students will use Greek after they graduate?