Bidialectalism in Cyprus and its impact on the teaching of Greek as a foreign language

PAVLOS PAYLOU AND NIKI CHRISTODOULOU
University of Cyprus Intercollege, Nicosia

This study examines the problems that emerge in the teaching of Standard Modern Greek as a foreign language in Cyprus due to the fact that the linguistic code taught in the classroom does not correspond exactly to the linguistic code that is used in the Cypriot speech community. The study focuses on how teachers of Greek as a foreign language perceive the effects of bidialectalism on their students and on their own teaching. Moreover, it examines whether students themselves are aware of the situation and the consequences it has for their acquisition of Greek. Teachers' and students' suggestions on how to address the problems that may arise because of bidialectalism are presented. Finally, on the basis of the findings, the authors offer their own recommendations.

Introduction

Learning an additional language is a multi-faceted process whose success depends on many factors. These can be classified into psychological, cognitive and linguistic aspects, the last one pertaining to the structure of the L1 and L2 at the phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic levels (Krashen 1981; Brown 1993). Such considerations always play a role in the learning of any foreign language. In certain cases, however, a number of sociolinguistic factors can further affect the learning of a foreign language (W. Stewart 1964). One such element is bidialectalism, a situation existing to varying degrees in many countries in which two varieties of the same language coexist in one linguistic community (Beche 1981). According to Di Pietro (1973), "bidialectal individuals are those who possess both a socially stigmatized and a prestige variety of the same language". Cyprus provides a case in point: members of the Greek-Cypriot
speech community simultaneously employ two dialects, Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and Cypriot dialect (CD) for communication. Our interest in this stems from our experience as teachers of Greek as a foreign language (GFL) in Cyprus, where we are often confronted with questions and problems that our students face due to bidialectalism. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of bidialectalism on teaching GFL in Cyprus.

Theoretical background

For a thorough understanding of the problems of teaching GFL in Cyprus, it is essential to discuss notions such as the relationship between the terms language and dialect, the primacy of standard languages in education, the domains in which CD and SMG are used in the Cypriot speech community, and the communicative needs of learners of GFL.

Linguistic varieties, standard language and dialect

At this point, it is important to distinguish clearly between the terms linguistic variety, dialect and language. Many linguists have experienced difficulties in establishing criteria for doing this. Linguistic variety is defined by Wardhaugh (1992: 22) as "a specific set of linguistic items or human speech patterns (presumably sounds, words, grammatical features etc.) which can uniquely associate with some external factor (presumably a geographical area or a social group)". The term "language" can be used to refer either to a single linguistic norm or to a group of related norms (ibid: 25). If it refers to a single norm, then this is considered to be the standard variety. All the other varieties which diverge from the standard norm are called dialects. Language in its broader sense encompasses all the different dialects (linguistic varieties) of that given language (see also Chomsky 1989).

In the case of Greek, the term 'the Greek language' encompasses all the numerous Greek dialects, including Pontic, Cretan, SMG and CD (Horrocks 1997). Therefore, any Greek dialect is a subsystem of the Greek language as a whole. Among all these linguistic varieties, one has been selected to operate as the standard norm. Selecting or imposing a dialect as a country's standard language is not based on aesthetic or other subjective criteria but instead reflects economic, social, geographic, political and historical circumstances. In the case of Modern Greek, the dialect chosen to become the standard (official) language was the one spoken in the territory of the first Greek independent state (i.e. southern mainland Greece). Had this state been established in Asia Minor or Cyprus, then the official Greek language could have been the variety spoken in these areas - i.e. Cappadocian Greek or Cypriot dialect (Horrocks 1997).

Sometimes non-standard varieties are stigmatized (Di Pietro 1973: 37-8; Kroch 1978). However, 'stigmatized' would be a rather strong label to apply to CD. Language attitudes in Cyprus are ambivalent, and therefore CD may be a stigmatized variety for some, but for others it may not (Pavlou 1997; Papapavlov 1998). If someone considers a dialect to have low status, they are less likely to attempt to learn it.

The primacy of standard language in education

The standard variety has certain characteristics, such as being codified, exhibiting congruence between the written and the spoken norms of language, and being elaborated, i.e. having expanded the expressive resources of the language to meet the increased communication needs that it must serve (Custred 1990: 233-4). The standard variety is used almost exclusively in certain domains of activity such as education, the mass media, courts and the professional world. In contrast, non-standard varieties tend to be used for private communication, and their use constitutes an act of identification with a certain group.

It is clear that in the sphere of education the standard variety has primacy over other varieties. This obliges a large number of the members of a given speech community to acquire and perfect their command of the standard language. Consequently, there is an inherent obligation on the part of public education to cater for these people's linguistic needs (Custred 1990).

The primacy of the standard variety in the field of education extends also into the area of teaching it as a foreign or second language (Quirk 1990). Some EFL/ESL educators accept that "their students' target [language] is a non-standard dialect of English" (Goldstein 1987: 433), which implies that non-standard varieties could be the target for non-native speakers. On the other hand, there seems to be strong opposition to this view. According to Quirk (1990), it would be wrong to institutionalize non-native varieties in foreign language teaching; he further claims that the same applies to non-standard (regional or social) varieties. He believes that only institutionalized (standard) varieties should be the focus of foreign language teaching since these varieties are the ones that increase freedom and career prospects. Quirk points to the fact that the primacy of Standard English (SE) in teaching English to non-native speakers "is assumed by most foreign Ministries of Education and by most foreign students and their parents" (Quirk 1990: 7). Teachers themselves accept the basic conclusion that it is the institution's duty to teach the standard language. Finally, learning the standard variety (e.g. SE or SMG) is a way to link the speaker to the wider English-speaking or Greek-speaking community, respectively.

However, we believe that the use of non-standard varieties in foreign language teaching should not be totally dismissed. Often we witness the need to vary our language according to social, professional and other needs. Moreover, proficiency in a language is fostered by exposure to its varieties. The premise that learners of a language should at least be able to comprehend non-standard varieties has been supported by Hughes & Trudgill (1979). This necessity to expose learners to the various dialects of a language has been recently taken up by Ball (1997) for French, Stewart (1999) for Spanish and Russ (1995) for German. Each of these authors describes the varied and changing nature of the language examined and shows how dialects of a given language affect the
standard variety. In the case of Greek, although primacy should be with SMG, we believe that CD can enhance the learner's competence in the standard.

The discussion about which variety should be taught as a foreign language has certain pedagogical implications. Teachers need to decide what to do if the students' target is a non-standard dialect, and they should not manipulate feelings of identification in an attempt to change students' targets to the standard variety (Goldstein 1987). Instead, teachers should determine whether or not the standard is necessary to their students' public lives and discuss with the students the situations in which they would need to use it. This holds for any language.

SPEECH COMMUNITY

Defining speech community is not an easy task. Lyons (1970: 326) defined it as "all the people who use a given language or dialect". Other sociolinguists, however, like Milroy (1987), Labov (1970) and Gumperz (1967), offer definitions that are more complex. Gumperz postulates that there must be concrete linguistic differences between the members of a speech community and the speakers outside it. He defines a speech community as "every human aggregation characterized by a regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage" (Gumperz 1971: 114). The Cypriot speech community fulfills the requirements of this definition. The use of CD sets the Cypriot speech community apart from the corresponding speech community in mainland Greece. The structural differences between CD and SMG are relatively minor, and the most obvious differences are found in the phonology (see Eisenstein & Verdi 1985, and below).

DOMAINS OF USE OF CYPROT DIALECT

It is often the case that when more than one linguistic code is used in a given community, there is a distribution of these codes over distinct domains (Holmes 1992, Fasold 1987). SMG is used in education, the media and public documents. CD is used for everyday communication, with relatives, acquaintances and friends, and occasionally in the mass media with the sole aim of more directly and effectively addressing the speakers of CD. In addition, there can be a geographic dimension (i.e. urban vs. rural) in choosing the code: CD is used more in the rural areas, while people who live in urban centers make use of a more moderate version of the dialect and try to speak SMG as much as possible. There are also local varieties of CD in different areas of Cyprus.

As far as the distinction between spoken and written language is concerned, CD is mainly used for oral communication, with the exception of folk poetry and folk literature. It is important to mention that there is no uniform or codified way of writing a number of CD sounds - since CD is mainly used for everyday oral communication, there has never been a need to develop a system for writing it.

The use of the two codes in different domains has nothing to do with the structure of the two varieties but rather is the result of historical and social developments - e.g. the belief that CD has lower social status - and its use may have negative social repercussions. Karousha-Vriskis (1991) and Pavlou (1992, 1999) discuss several aspects of this issue. The choice of code is determined by the interlocutor, the purpose, the topic and other factors. Inappropriate use of the codes may lead to miscommunication, and speakers may be criticized for their choice of linguistic code (see Coupland 1980).

The following two situations are characteristic of unwarranted use of SMG among Cypriots in Cyprus. They are based on frequent anecdotal accounts.

Situation 1: When a highly educated person A converses with an equally educated interlocutor B and speaker A insists on using CD, then speaker B may think that the use of CD by A is not compatible with A's education.

Situation 2: If a Cypriot X (who has always used CD) returns to Cyprus after a short stay in Greece and uses SMG in a conversation with a friend Y, X will be regarded negatively. This kind of behavior will be considered strange and unsuitable, and Y will interpret this as an effort on the part of X to show off and project a new identity.

CFL LEARNERS IN CYPRUS

Recently, there has been a growing interest in learning Greek, not only by foreigners but also by repatriated Greeks, so this is a topic of great interest to scholars and educators in both Greece and Cyprus, the only states where Greek is an official language. Moreover, Greek is spoken by most members of the two speech communities. Consequently, if one wishes to learn or improve one's knowledge of Greek, the best choice is to do so in Greece or Cyprus. Of course, a foreigner wishing to learn Greek would most probably choose Greece for many reasons. First, it has a longer tradition of teaching CFL; major universities in Greece (e.g. the School of Modern Greek at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki) have been offering CFL courses for many years. In addition, Greece is situated closer to Europe than is Cyprus and is the center of modern Greek culture. Finally, Greece is a member of the European Union, which makes it much easier for Europeans to settle, get a job or study there.

Those interested in learning CFL in Cyprus can be classified into three categories, depending on the reasons that led them to take this decision:

a) the few foreigners who are studying Greek for academic purposes with the intention of attending institutions of tertiary education in Cyprus either as exchange or scholarship students - e.g. European students attend classes within the framework of European educational programs such as Socrates and Erasmus;

b) foreigners who permanently reside in Cyprus either as foreign workers or because they are married to Cypriots. Their motivation for learning Greek is both instrumental, i.e. in order to be able to use it in their daily lives and
further their careers, and integrative, i.e. to become acculturated to the host country and be a part of local society (Gardner 1972; Lambert 1972).

c) repatriated Greek Cypriots from traditional countries of immigration (e.g. the USA, UK, Canada, Australia) or from the countries of the former Soviet Union (e.g. Georgia). Repatriated Greek Cypriots know Greek to varying degrees. First-generation immigrants abroad usually speak Greek quite well but encounter difficulties in reading and writing. However, second-generation immigrants face difficulties in all Greek language skills (Pavlou et al. 1999).

The need to survive and communicate in bidialectal Greek Cypriot society has an impact on the methodology of teaching GFL. Emphasis is placed on learners attaining communicative competence primarily in the aural/oral aspects of the language, but also in writing. The aim of this method is to gradually equip learners with the structures and vocabulary necessary to adequately understand and produce Greek in authentic everyday communicative situations. The experts admit that this has not been satisfactorily implemented for GFL. For example, Babiniotis (1993: 5) states that "with regard to the teaching of GFL, despite certain notable efforts, the implementation of communicative competence has not been successful." In Cyprus, the task of teaching GFL is made even more cumbersome due to the existence of CD.

The study

This study examines the problems learners of GFL face in Cyprus due to the phenomenon of bidialectalism in Cyprus. The discussion here is based on a research project focusing on the following two aspects: (a) the way teachers of GFL perceive and handle the possible problems that emerge due to the bidialectal situation that we have described, and (b) students' perceptions of the problems they encounter when learning GFL in Cyprus.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, we compiled two sets of questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students, each consisting of ten questions (see Appendix 1). Thirty questionnaires were distributed to teachers of GFL, mainly in state and private educational institutions in Cyprus, which represents the majority of those teaching GFL all over Cyprus. Questionnaires were distributed to adult students of GFL who attended both state and private schools in Cyprus in 1995; 52 were returned. Biographical data on the student subjects is provided in Appendix 2.

Very few questions pertained exclusively only to one of the two groups. The student questionnaire was in English, since English is the language used by most foreigners in Cyprus, while the teachers' was in SMG. Teachers were requested to help their students with the questionnaire by providing clarifications where needed.

RESULTS

Awareness of the phenomenon of bidialectalism

The majority of the teachers stated that their students, especially those who live or work with Cypriots using CD extensively, are aware of the difference between SMG and CD. However, very often teachers have to clarify and explain this bidialectal phenomenon in response to the many questions posed by the students about Cypriot vs Greek expressions. It is also interesting that many teachers report that their students are aware of similar dialectal phenomena in their countries of origin.

In an attempt to assess the degree to which students are aware of the existence of bidialectalism, teachers were asked to classify the students into two groups: those who live in a Greek Cypriot home and those who do not. Those who belong to the first group are aware of the fact that CD is spoken at home and SMG is used in the classroom, and this bidialectal situation creates a certain amount of confusion when they attempt to learn Greek through formal instruction. In contrast, those in the second group approach learning SMG with less confusion about the object of instruction.

The majority of the students stated that they are aware of the fact that the Cypriot-Greek speech makes use of two linguistic codes. Most of them found out about the parallel use of the two codes after Cypriot friends or relatives pointed this out. Other students became aware of the phenomenon at the workplace, through the media or through interaction with other foreigners. Finally, some observed Cypriot parents urging their children not to use CD.

It is natural that in the process of formally studying a foreign language, the learner initially is exposed to only one variety of the target language. In our study, 33 out of the 52 subjects stated that SMG was the variety they first came into contact with, whereas 17 of the subjects their first contact with Greek was through CD. Two subjects believed that they started learning the two codes simultaneously. Finally, two subjects were not aware that what they were learning was a mixture of two related yet distinct linguistic codes. It is interesting that some subjects were expecting to encounter such a phenomenon since similar multi-dialectal situations exist in most speech communities.

In addition, the students offered some unsolicited sociolinguistic observations, such as the attitude adopted by many Cypriots that SMG has a higher status than CD. Also, they observed that CD is almost entirely excluded from the media. Comments were also made on the role of English in Cyprus, which subjects feel has an adverse effect on the learning of GFL because English is in evidence everywhere (the media, shop and street signs etc.), and the opportunities GFL students have to communicate in Greek diminish due to the large numbers of native and non-native English speakers.

Problems due to bidialectalism

The majority of the students agree that the strongest interference between SMG and CD appears in oral communication, with most of the problems encountered
in the areas of pronunciation and vocabulary (both in CD and SMG), leading to difficulties in the oral comprehension of both codes. This is to be expected because, as mentioned above, CD is mainly used in this function and there is no codified system for writing it. Subjects also believe that problems exist in the initial stages of learning Greek in Cyprus and that these problems gradually disappear in more advanced stages of learning the language. It must also be noted that the students who had absolutely no prior knowledge or contact with the Greek language showed no interference between the two codes in their use of Greek. On the other hand, those who have some knowledge of CD due to their interaction with Cypriots show interference. (One student reported that he learned CD first and then acquired some “bad habits” in using Greek, which reflects the belief that CD is considered to be deficient and less prestigious.) At the same time, the students in this latter group recognize the differences between the two codes more easily and actively try to improve their ‘Cypriot-Greek’.

An observation by teachers is that the students are perhaps deprived of a richer vocabulary due to the fact that they live in an environment where the use of CD is dominant. Undoubtedly, CD has a rich vocabulary, but the differences confuse those who are learning SMG as a foreign language. One of the consequences of this phenomenon is that students have trouble selecting the appropriate lexical items for oral communication.

Half of the teachers do not feel that the parallel use of the two codes in the Cypriot speech community hinders their students’ learning of Greek, whilst the other half feel that it does create learning difficulties, especially at the initial stages because, as one of them stated, “we use SMG to write and read and CD when speaking”. This statement accurately reflects the distinct domains of use of the two linguistic codes in the Cypriot speech community. Many teachers emphasize the decisive role that the teacher and the teaching method play in alleviating the problems emanating from bidialectalism. Generally, problems mainly arise in oral interactions with Cypriots whose version of CD is difficult for the students to understand. At the same time, the process of learning SMG is slowed down due to the fact that contact with SMG is limited to the classroom and to the media. The problems can be categorized as phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical.

Phonological differences
As we have already mentioned, the area in which the differences between CD and SMG are more apparent is phonology. Therefore, it is only natural that most problems are encountered in this domain (Payne 1976). The major differences between SMG and CD phonology are summarized here:

a) Consonants found only in the Cypriot Dialect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sound</th>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>/ʃʃi/</td>
<td>/ʃʃi/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>/kʃ’raʃa/</td>
<td>/kʃ’raʃa/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃʃ/</td>
<td>/ʃʃai/</td>
<td>/ʃʃai/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/æʃ/</td>
<td>/kæʃai/</td>
<td>/kæʃai/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Geminates: double consonants are pronounced in the Cypriot Dialect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a’la/</td>
<td>/a’la/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k’itarol/</td>
<td>/k’itarol/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learner problems can be divided into two categories: those that are clearly and solely phonological, and those which are phonological but result in semantic differences. Example (1) shows a purely phonological change that has no semantic implications. In cases such as this, the teacher may draw attention to the differences between the two codes so that the student can form generalizations about the phonological rules and apply them when using the language.

1) SMG CD

έχεις έχεις ‘you have’

/εχις/ /εχις/

In example (2), the phonological change leads to a semantic change:

2) SMG

μαγείρουσα ‘female chef’

/μα’γιρισα/ /μα’γιρισα/ ‘cooking pot’

Morphological differences
a) the augmentative e- prefix in the past tense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>πήγα</td>
<td>επήγα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φάναξα</td>
<td>εφάναξα</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) 3rd person plural:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ποιούν</td>
<td>ποιούν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>αποκαλούν</td>
<td>αποκαλούν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) The use of final -v in the accusative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>το θέιον</td>
<td>τον θέιον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>το γιατρόν</td>
<td>τον γιατρόν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Syntactic differences
Position of adjectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>την άκουσα</td>
<td>άκουσα την</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μου άρεσε</td>
<td>άρεσε μου</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lexical differences
There are many CD words which are completely different from their SMG counterparts which appear in textbooks and the press and in everyday use.
These pairs of words are synonymous but are not related etymologically and may have been borrowed from different languages that CD and SMG have come into contact with, e.g. Italian, French, Turkish, and Slavic. Greece and Cyprus do have a common history; however, a great number of loanwords found in the two codes are different, e.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMG</th>
<th>CD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>στέκτηκα</td>
<td>πειρόγχο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κέντρη</td>
<td>κέντρο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μεκόνικη</td>
<td>μεκόνι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>πρόσκοιν</td>
<td>πρόσκοι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κοκκύνια</td>
<td>κοκκύνια</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communicative needs

The main point for discussion in this paper is whether the phenomenon of bidialectalism may impede communication between learners of CFL and Cypriots. The frequency and severity of communication problems would be an indication of how bidialectalism affects the learning of Greek by foreign students. Communication problems due to bidialectalism do arise when foreign students actually put their language skills to use. Some students report having problems in communication with other Cypriots, especially the elderly, who mainly use CD. This reflects the fact that people of different ages and sex use different linguistic codes. It is natural that elderly Cypriots are less competent than the younger generation in SMG because: (a) older generations had fewer educational opportunities and thus less contact with SMG, and (b) the media, which are a powerful tool for the use and dissemination of standard language, were not as plentiful in previous generations as they are today.

There are many reasons for learning a foreign language. As mentioned earlier, the two major categories are instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. In this study, 31 subjects stated that their reason for learning Greek was to facilitate their integration into Cypriot society, and 10 expressed genuine interest in the Greek language (integrative motivation). Interestingly, among these 31 subjects, some said that learning Greek is a way to show respect for the host country and is necessary in order to communicate with all Cypriots regardless of their social class. Nine subjects decided to learn Greek for professional reasons, and one chose to do so in order to help her children with school work (instrumental motivation). In addition, two subjects reported that they focused on learning to write and read Greek, whereas speaking was of less interest to them.

The main purpose for learning a foreign language, however, is communication, regardless of the more specific reasons an individual may have. Both teachers and students are aware of this central function of language and refer to the role of communication very often on the questionnaires. Teachers of CFL realize that their students can effectively communicate using SMG because the

In the classroom

When phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical problems arise, teachers may choose to discuss the differences between CD and SMG at one or more of the following three levels:

a) the juxtaposition of the two variants: Teachers report that they explain to their students that one variant belongs to CD and the other to SMG while pointing out that they are both correct. Most teachers report that they correct their students in the sense that they indicate both variants without claiming that one dialect is superior to the other. Sometimes the students are free to choose the code in which they express themselves better or which is more useful to them in their everyday life. At the same time, however, many teachers convey the message that learning SMG will prove to be more useful for communicating with speakers of SMG in mainland Greece, Cyprus or other countries where Greeks of the diaspora live.

b) the sociolinguistic aspect of each variant: Teachers promote the use of SMG instead of CD (mainly for sociolinguistic reasons). The teachers draw attention to the fact that using CD may have negative associations (Papapavlou 1996). Being competent in CD helps the students communicate in their immediate environment, while using SMG is usually regarded as being more 'correct'.

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c) a linguistic explanation of the differences: In some cases teachers offer in-depth explanations related to the phonology of the two codes and the historical development of the dialects. A student may ask for clarification about the two different pronunciations of the same word, e.g. SMI /psou'mi/, CD /pes'mi/ 'bread'. Teachers explain that the words in this pair have a common origin and are basically two variants of the same word, have the same meaning and are interchangeable in oral communication. In some cases the teachers like to make a brief reference to Ancient Greek and explain the evolution of the language, which is something that the students enjoy.

d) different domains of use: Teachers mention that CD is mainly used in oral communication and in folk poetry (when the latter is written). When the dialect is used in oral communication, teachers mention that something can be said in two ways and suggest that all dialects are related and are derived from a common source. They encourage their students to use CD only in oral communication (since CD does not often appear in written form). In addition, attention is drawn to the fact that CD is accepted for oral communication in Cyprus, but in Greece its use would impede communication.

According to most students, another way that teachers deal with such problems in the classroom is to correct students when they use CD. Through the teachers’ comments, it becomes evident that they themselves classify Greek into ‘correct’ and ‘less correct’ varieties, and the belief that CD has a lower status than SMI is thus imparted to the foreign learners. This classification often seems so strict that some students adopt the opinion that the Cypriot dialect is a kind of slang/argot. Some students report that the teacher corrects their reading and writing more frequently than their spoken Greek. This reflects the fact that CD is accepted more as a spoken variety than as a written one.

The simultaneous teaching of the two codes
Teaching both codes may be useful and necessary for foreigners in Cyprus, but it is a time-consuming process. Explaining the relationship between CD and SMI is, of course, mainly of historical and linguistic interest. In addition, teaching CD would help preserve it as one of the many Cypriot dialects.

If the simultaneous teaching of both codes is adopted as a possible solution, most of the teachers believe that teaching phonology should take precedence over other linguistic areas. The main reason for this is that CD is primarily used in the oral domain, and phonology constitutes the major area of difference between the two codes. However, most teachers feel that teaching both SMI and CD would create many difficulties and slow down the learning of GFL. In the initial stages, this could discourage most students from learning Greek, and some might abandon their efforts.

Students' opinion on which of the two codes should be used in the classroom
When the students were asked which of the two codes should be taught in the classroom, they offered conflicting opinions: some are not willing to learn both languages/dialects, while others state they want to learn both; 38 out of the 52 favored the use of SMI. The justification given for this preference is that SMI is more widely used, especially by the media. Also, SMI is believed to be more prestigious, correct and nicer. Moreover, the students believe that it is easier to learn CD once you have learned SMI. More than half (28 out of 52) believe that giving the pronunciation of a word in both codes in class would not be helpful. Ten students stated clearly that this would cause great confusion, and they favored the exclusive teaching of SMI. One of their arguments is that Cypriots can comprehend SMI more easily than mainland Greeks can understand CD. A small number of students favor the teaching of CD since, in their opinion, one must learn the linguistic code which is used in the speech community s/he is a member of. Finally, 7 students favor the teaching of both linguistic codes even though they offer no arguments to support their view.

Conclusion

The major findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

a) It is commonly accepted by these teachers and students that bidialectalism exists in the Cypriot speech community and adversely affects the learning of GFL. Its sole negative effect seems to be the impression that it slows down the learning of SMI. In other words, it is not the actual learning of Greek that is affected but the time needed to achieve this goal.

b) Although the majority of the teachers prefer the use of SMI in the classroom, it is felt that teaching some general rules of Cypriot phonology and morphology to students will help them understand CD. Generally, the students reacted negatively to the occasional teaching of morphological and phonological rules of CD since this, in their view, would create great confusion. The teachers’ views are not so absolute, and they favor familiarizing students with such rules.

c) According to the teachers, the use of CD can help the students enrich their vocabulary.

d) Even though none of the questions addressed to the participants was meant to elicit comments on sociolinguistic aspects of the two linguistic varieties, the students’ comments reflected the belief that CD is an inferior variety compared to SMI. Similar views were also observed in the teachers’ comments. These opinions stem from the fact that Cypriots themselves consider SMI to have a higher status.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

Since the ultimate goal of learning a foreign language is communication with the native speakers of that language, it is imperative that the students familiarize themselves not only with the structure of the standard language but also with other non-standard systems with which they will come into contact. According
to the most recognized models of communicative competence (Canale & Swain 1980), sensitization to the dialects of a language is considered to be one of the components of communicative competence which enables them to face various communicative situations more effectively.

In the case of Cyprus, GFL learners need to be familiar with both linguistic codes in order to communicate adequately with other members of the Cypriot speech community outside the classroom. Familiarizing them with the phonology and the morphology of CD will help them understand their Cypriot interlocutors better (especially those who use CD extensively).

The current educational practice in Cyprus up till now has been to teach only SMG in the classroom, and this is the code the students are required to learn. Sometimes these students are prompted by Cypriots to learn CD in addition to SMG. This creates confusion as to which linguistic variety students are expected to learn and in what domains to use it.

It is apparent from this study that, as a rule, SMG is taught in the classroom in Cyprus. At the same time, there is no well-articulated national educational policy with regard to the role CD should play in the teaching of GFL in Cyprus. The adoption of such a policy would be instrumental in establishing a common approach among educators with regard to this issue. In the event that the Ministry of Education and Culture considers that the students should have a general knowledge of some basic rules of CD, then a book on the structure of CD could be published for foreign students to consult when they need to. Finally, it cannot be doubted that the teacher can play a crucial role in preventing the confusion that may arise due to bidialectalism. This can be done at the initial stages of learning Greek by explaining the domains of use of the two codes (stressing the use of CD for oral communication) as well as the sociolinguistic attitudes of Cypriots. The teacher could make brief references to Cypriot features without going into detail.

References


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Appendix 1

Teacher Questionnaire
1. How would you describe your student's knowledge of Greek?
2. Are your students aware of the differences between SMG and CD?
3. Where is the interference of CD more apparent, in the written or the spoken language?
4. Do you think that bidialectalism has a positive of a negative impact on the learning SMG, given that SMG is the target of learning?
5. What problems emerge in the teaching of SMG due to bidialectalism and how do you deal with them?
6. Do you tend to correct a student when s/he uses CD, and do you discourage him/her from using it?
7. What do you do when a student asks for clarification of pairs of words which represent the same meaning but are pronounced differently in SMG and CD? e.g. /pu/ (SMG pronunciation) and /pou/ (dialectal pronunciation)
8. Do you think that the simultaneous teaching of SMG and CD in class is feasible? If yes, how useful do you think this is?
9. Assuming that students have to learn both SMG and CD, what aspect of CD should be given priority in teaching, the phonology or the morphology, the syntax or the grammar?
10. Given that the ability to communicate is the goal of learning a foreign language, do you think that students who learn the SMG can effectively communicate in Cypriot society?

Appendix 2

Biographical data for the students

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Subjects married to Cypriots: 15
Average length of stay in Cyprus: 38 months
Average time spent learning Greek: 6 months

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