THE USE OF DIALECT IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL SUBJECTS ON DIALECT USE

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Abstract

The Cypriot-Greek speech community is a bidialectal community where two codes are used widely, namely Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and the Greek-Cypriot Dialect (the GCD). In the Cypriot setting, as in other bidialectal settings, the standard language is in most cases the linguistic variety selected for the domain of education. The aim of this study is to explore how the GCD is used in the elementary school classroom by teachers and by pupils. More precisely, the objectives of the study are: a) to elicit teachers’ views on the use of the dialect in the classroom, by replicating the study by Pavlou and Papapavlou (2004), b) to look at what actually goes on in the classroom with regard to the use of the GCD, and especially c) to investigate the effect of school subject on dialect use. The data were derived from three sources: a) questionnaires completed by teachers, b) guided interviews with a representative number of teachers and c) transcriptions of lessons taped in primary schools. The results show that teacher behaviour with regard to dialect use is largely similar to that reported in Pavlou and Papapavlou (2004). In general, teachers consciously correct themselves by switching into SMG, employ the GCD to create a more relaxing and pleasant classroom atmosphere, and often use code switching to explain more complex concepts and theories. With regard to use of the dialect by students, the results show that teachers generally correct students who use GCD during the lessons, and definitely correct students who use the GCD in their writing, but do not negatively evaluate pupils who use GCD. Finally, the lesson transcriptions show that students use more dialectal elements in activities that lend themselves to discussion, allow them to express ideas and opinions, and create more opportunities for talking.

Keywords: dialect, education, classroom discourse.
Introduction

In multilingual and multidialectal settings there is a functional specialization and
distribution of labour among the various codes used, with the result that certain
domains of use are associated with particular linguistic codes, as postulated for
bidialectal settings by the diglossic model of Ferguson (1959). However, in
many settings the conventions are not as straightforward as this statement
implies, since certain linguistic codes are found in domains not predicted by the
model. For example, speakers may employ a high variety (H) in a domain where
a low variety (L) is expected, or an L variety may pervade a domain where one
would expect to encounter only the H variety. One domain of the latter type is
that of education, where usually the H code is promoted and expected to be
used. The key players in an educational setting, i.e. the students and the
teachers, behave in interestingly varied and more intricate ways than previously
identified towards the two codes employed in the classroom, especially
regarding the use of the L variety.

The degree to which a code is used by speakers, whether deliberately
or non-deliberately, depends on a number of factors. First of all, such use
depends on the speaker’s command of the two competing codes. A speaker who
has limited or no competence in a given code will tend to avoid using it if s/he
has the choice of selecting a code for a given situation. Myers-Scotton (1993)
believes that code switching may be more associated with familiarity in using
the two codes than with the extent of command of the two codes, or with age or
education. A related factor is the facility with which a speaker can code-switch,
especially in cases where there is a preferred code and at the same time the
selection of the non-preferred one is not considered a serious violation of the
sociolinguistic norms of the given speech community. For the members of the
Greek-Cypriot speech community, such facility seems to be a criterion for the
characterization of a speaker as mono-dialectal or bidialectal, because all
speakers, on top of being competent in their mother tongue (the GCD), have at
least a passive knowledge of SMG through their exposure to the mass media,
another domain of the H variety. The bidialectalism of these speakers is
manifested in the active use of both codes and in skilful and appropriate code-
switching.

The vast majority of adult language users are clearly aware of the
sociolinguistic norms of a speech community and this awareness is reflected in
their language attitudes (for language attitudes in the Cypriot-Greek speech
community see Papapavlou 1998, 2004). However, young children and non-
native speakers who are members of a given speech community may not be
aware of the relevant norms and therefore may think that the selection of either
code is optional. We do not dispose of studies showing children’s or non-native
speakers’ awareness of linguistic code – domain connections, but it is natural to assume that both groups could adopt the language attitudes of the native adult members of the speech community (for children’s language attitudes in Cyprus, see Pavlou 1999).

Also significant are the code requirements of the situation. If the situation does not leave room for choice, and the use of the non-appropriate code will be viewed negatively, then speakers will attempt to use a given code regardless of deficiencies in their competence. For example, in TV shows bidialectal speakers will make every effort to use the L code because this is the accepted code for the media and the speakers know that if they do not conform to this sociolinguistic norm they may be open to criticism by members of the audience.

An additional factor is the symbolic function of language use, or the use of a language as an act of identity which reflects the speaker’s desired identity, background and ideology. For example, if a teacher believes in, and tries hard to implement, the provisions of a language policy which allows the limited use of the dialect only under certain conditions, then s/he will consciously aim not to use the dialect in the class except under those appropriate conditions. On the other hand, if for any ideological reasons s/he disagrees with the current language policy with regard to the GCD, then s/he will be more liberal with the use of the dialect in class.

Finally, the subject of a verbal interaction can also be a determining factor in the use of a given code. As is the case with registers and jargon, a topic may require the use of a specific code or technical vocabulary. For example, the dialect is more likely to be used for a personal account than for the recital of memorized historical facts in an official setting such as the classroom.

With the above in mind, the current study attempts to explore how the GCD is used in the elementary school classroom by both teachers and pupils. In particular, the study aims to elicit teachers’ views on their own and their students’ use of the dialect in the classroom, then to corroborate the reported claims (as revealed by the questionnaires) by looking at what actually goes on with regard to the use of the GCD during activities in the classroom. Finally, the study aims to investigate the effect of different school subjects on dialect use.

The position of language in Elementary Education in Cyprus

In Cyprus, all children of elementary school age are required to attend school. Most attend state-administered schools; however, there are a number of private educational institutions at the elementary level which offer, for quite high fees, programmes of study largely in English rather than in Greek. These private schools are approved and monitored by the Ministry of Education and Culture,
but they are run independently and serve a clientele approximately one half of which consists of foreigners or Cypriots of non-Greek origin. With regard to the language of instruction, it must be stressed that all state-run educational programmes are offered in SMG, which is the official language of education and of all written government communications. Moreover, SMG is the language used for almost all written communication. Although most Greek-speaking persons on the island are capable of speaking and understanding the GCD, this rarely appears in writing. The dialect does have a written form, but there has been no consensus as to how to record those distinctive sounds that cannot be represented through the existing letters and diacritic marks of the Greek alphabet. Although very few books are published in the GCD, the written form of the dialect occasionally appears in the press (see Pavlou 2004, 2005).

In children’s home environments, various versions of the GCD are used. In urban centres a more acrolectal version is spoken, closer to SMG, while in smaller urban centres and villages the mesolects used retain more distinctly dialectal elements. Accordingly, it is generally assumed that village children speak a more dialectal variety than do those in urban centres and are consequently less competent in SMG. A discussion on the various levels of Cypriot Greek can be found in Papavaliou (2004) and Katsoyiannou et al. (2006). It has to be stressed (cf. Pavlou 2006) that these various versions are characterised linguistically by quantitative and not categorical variation. All speakers, regardless of their dominant/preferred version, make use of all the major features of the dialectal continuum. What differs is the frequency with which certain features appear in the speech of the various speakers, and perhaps also the co-occurrence of certain linguistic features.

The SMG is used in nearly all textbooks distributed to children in state-run elementary schools in Cyprus. This is both because SMG is the official variety for elementary education and also because the majority of school texts are published in Greece and provided free of charge to Cypriot students.

In regard to the educational setting, the language attitudes and use of teachers, based on many factors such as family, educational background and ideology, play a determining role in the children’s linguistic development. All elementary teachers in Cyprus must qualify and be approved according to the regulations established by the Ministry of Education and Culture. All teachers must be graduates from pedagogical academies in Greece or Cyprus and, for many years, graduates from other universities outside Greece or Cyprus could not be employed in public schools, regardless of the quality of their education.

This effectively means that all teachers go through the same pedagogical training programmes and receive the same instructions and/or socialization regarding the correct modes of teaching for Cypriot schools. At least part of the officially-approved teacher education programme at the
elementary level includes training in the consistent, correct use of SMG and in
the concept of the basic merit of a “pure” Greek language. The implication of
the desirability of Greek-language purity is the idea that the Cypriot dialect is
somehow inferior, even to some extent “peasant-like”, and hence shameful. As a
result, for reasons of ethnic (national) dignity as well as for practical purposes,
elementary school teachers can be easily inculcated with the idea that GCD
should not be used in the classroom – and that to do so is a violation of the
teaching principles that they were taught when they were qualifying. The fact
that many of these future teachers clearly understand that in order to
communicate with children in their classrooms they must speak in the “language
of the child” in no way detracts from their appreciation of the need to teach all
children the correct usage of SMG so that they may become proficient in it for
the purose of future success in obtaining employment. Ironically, this might
simultaneously lead to the extinction of the same children’s native language, the
GCD.

Even though there has never been an overt language policy with regard
to the position of the dialect in education (apart from the August 2002 circular,
which treats the dialect from a folkloric viewpoint; cf. Papapavlou and Pavlou in
this volume), the covert policy has consistently favoured the SMG, as can be
seen in the following excerpt from a textbook written by prominent and long-
serving elementary school teacher trainers. This textbook has been widely used
by trainee teachers.

The organisation of a language class is based on oral and written communication.
Priority is given to oral communication, which is more prominent in everyday
life. The school builds on the linguistic ability and experiences that a child
carries from his/her environment, and also on his/her linguistic spontaneity
which not only has to be preserved but also encouraged, creating the appropriate
learning environment. A child, entering the school system for the first time,
brings with him/her his/her language. This language will be used to
communicate with the teacher. The child, with his simplicity and naivety, will
use the language he uses at home which contains a number of dialectal
expressions. This language is fresh and nice. The teacher will accept it as it is.
There is time during the six years of primary school to gradually intervene and
improve (my underlining) it, always aiming at the Standard Modern Greek
language.

In order for the teacher to help the child get rid of (my underlining) the use of
our local dialect at school, he/she can also:
- Be the linguistic model for the children and avoid using idiomatic (dialectal)
  language
- Intervene and correct the children, carefully and tactfully, in a sweet and
  encouraging manner, in order not to destroy their spontaneity.
- Maintain as a principle that the linguistic education of the children, which is based on the model of the Standard Modern Greek language, will take place gradually as the child progresses in each class, without being forced and without diminishing our local dialect.

(Leontiou et al. 1989: 61)

The above excerpt is indicative of the general attitude towards the GCD in the educational system and in the speech community at large. On the one hand, it is quite surprising that the authors of the textbook acknowledge and accept that the GCD is the children's first language, that it is a "nice" linguistic code, and that it is to be tolerated in the first years of schooling; yet it is something that needs to be "improved", "corrected" or "got rid of" in the classroom as time elapses. According to many anecdotal reports, however, even this "truce" in the initial years of schooling is often not observed.

In conclusion, the elementary school system in Cyprus, and the cultural environment in general, can be characterized as being government-sponsored, controlled, and relatively small in size. Until very recently, elementary schools were very homogeneous in terms of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic background of the students. Moreover, schools are presently staffed by a body of educators who have nearly all experienced a similar educational and "socializing" doctrine in teacher-training. This system is supported with the use of SMG textbooks brought from mainland Greece to educate Cypriot children who are strongly encouraged to think of themselves as "Greeks" by heritage and education. Although the GCD-speaking child uses GCD at least for some time, soon acquires the notion that Standard Modern Greek, in which school lessons will be conducted, is the "correct" language. This is true even in the most inaccessible villages in the mountains, but to a lesser extent.

With regard to the use of the dialect in the classroom, we must establish that both students and teachers are all conversant with GCD, and for almost all of them, the GCD is their mother dialect and the natural dialect of thought and expression. At the same time, students and teachers understand clearly that they are expected, through educational policy (which has relegated GCD to a museum exhibit) and the language of the teaching texts, to use Standard Modern Greek in the learning process and must write in SMG, whether they like it or not, as the Cypriot Dialect is not taught in its written form – in fact, GCD in written form is most uncommon. Parents, students and teachers are aware that the skilful use of SMG (and to a certain extent English) is essential to the future success of the child, both professionally and occupationally. All are socialized from an early age to believe that the GCD is to some extent "incorrect" when used in the public sphere, and they know that others measure their worth by their ability to communicate effectively in the standard variety, both orally and in writing. Just how powerful the inhibition against the use of
GCD for public communication can be is demonstrated by residents of rural areas and older people who suddenly become tongue-tied and incoherent when forced to participate in meetings or other public events in which SMG is the accepted medium of communication.

The study

Data collection instruments and participants

In order to find answers to the questions posed, the researcher examined data collected by means of three distinct instruments, namely questionnaires, guided interviews with teachers, and taped lessons. It was thought that this combination would give an as-accurate-as-possible picture of a necessarily complex situation. The data is part of a larger corpus used in the project reported in Fousias (2006).

Questionnaires

The first research question focuses on the similarities and differences between the Nicosia district teachers who participated in the Pavlou and Papapavlou (2004) study and the teachers from the Larnaca district (both the town and the rural area). Therefore, the Pavlou and Papapavlou 2004 questionnaire was employed (pp. 119-121 in this volume). The questionnaire was completed by a total of 98 teachers from twelve different schools, eight rural and four urban. Of the 98 questionnaires, 54 were completed by the teachers from the rural schools and 44 by the teachers from the urban schools.

Guided Interviews

To elicit teachers’ views with regard to their own and their students’ use of GCD in the classroom and their attitudes towards the dialect in general, 11 teachers were interviewed. The structured interviews with the participating teachers were tape-recorded.

Transcriptions of taped lessons

To provide a more complete picture of what actually happened in the classroom, providing further evidence to support or to refute teachers’ claims made either in the questionnaire or guided interviews, a number of lessons from the 3rd to the 6th forms were taped and transcribed. An equal selection of lesson recordings was made from each of the four grade levels, from both male and female teachers, and from several different types of urban and rural school populations.
The four subject lessons taped were Modern Greek, History, Science and Mathematics, which seemed to represent the core of the academic part of the syllabus. Altogether, the teachers provided a total of 21 taped lessons of 40 teaching minutes each (on average), which were transcribed and examined carefully for all instances of dialectal use. Certain lessons were found to be unsuitable for further analysis either because of the quality of the recording or because the lesson consisted predominantly of teacher talk.

**Results**

**General findings from the questionnaires**

The analysis of the questionnaires yielded the following results.

With regard to their personal use of the GCD, teachers report that they pay a moderate amount of attention to the linguistic code they themselves use for speaking, attempt consciously (but moderately) to avoid use of the GCD during lessons, and correct themselves much of the time when they use the GCD during lessons. However, they noted that they consciously use the GCD to create a relaxing and more pleasant classroom atmosphere, and when they want to approach and talk to pupils having difficulties. The dialect is also often employed to explain more complex concepts and theories. Finally, the dialect is avoided when reprimanding pupils. Teachers reserve most of their personal use of the GCD for interactions with colleagues outside the classroom.

As for their reaction to the students’ use of dialect, teachers report the following practices. First, although they correct the students who use the GCD during discussions on the subject of the lesson, they are quite tolerant of language choice when the students express themselves. Teachers are much less tolerant when students use the dialect in writing and they report that they definitely correct the students when they do so. And even though they correct students who use GCD in instances as indicated above, they do not readily think that this is a reason for negative evaluation of a student’s overall performance.

**A comparison with the Pavlou and Papapavlou 2004 study**

Even though the findings were, in general, similar to the Pavlou and Papapavlou 2004 study, some areas of moderate disparity were also identified. According to the results, fewer Larnaca-based (LB) teachers discourage students from using the GCD during the lesson than Nicosia-based (NB) teachers, and fewer LB teachers correct students when the students express themselves in the GCD. This may be explained by the fact that the Larnaca-based survey included a substantial number of rural schools where the dialect is more frequently used.
and therefore more tolerated. Along the same lines, a greater number of LB teachers are more tolerant when a student uses the GCD in oral production rather than in his/her written assignments and fewer LB teachers pay particular attention to the code used when the student provides correct answers. Overall, one can say that LB teachers are more tolerant of the use of the dialect in the school environment.

**Guided interviews**

The guided interviews yielded information that corroborated the findings of the questionnaires but at the same time provided additional information that presents a better picture of the situation. When talking about reasons for using the GCD, the teachers explained that they do so to encourage the children to participate in the lessons. They found that use of the GCD was necessary in cases where students were not able to respond using SMG. In these instances, the use of the GCD prevents the children from becoming discouraged, allowing them to express themselves freely in their own language and to say what they wish to say, so that they can develop their ideas and give their opinions.

The use of the GCD, therefore, encourages discussion and conversation regarding the lesson and its topics and helps the teacher to offer the children greater understanding of the concepts presented. According to the teachers, the GCD is also used to tactfully correct the Greek-language usage of the children, express general solidarity with the members of the class, and create a warmer more open classroom atmosphere. When correcting the children using the GCD, it was done in a way that did not make them feel bad; that is to say, students are told that there is a GCD word and an SMG word for the same concept, but that when they write they are to use the SMG word.

With regard to their own use of the GCD, the teachers stated that they were aware of using the GCD in the classroom since it was necessary to help the children to understand certain new ideas and that they often used the GCD naturally without always being aware of using it.

**Transcribed Lessons**

The last kind of data, and often the most interesting, is provided by the transcriptions of the taped lessons. The main question here was whether the subject taught had any bearing on the use of dialect. It was hypothesized that the kind of lesson taught would influence the behaviour of both the children and the teacher. It was further expected that the teaching of Modern Greek, specifically in its SMG form, would markedly restrict the use of GCD during those lessons. In order to provide evidence supporting or refuting this hypothesis, 21 lessons
had been transcribed, as specified in Table 1. Out of these 21 lessons, however, only 12 were analyzed for the purpose of this study, the reason being the quality of the recording or because the lessons consisted predominantly of teacher talk. There were no science lessons in this group.

Table 1: Transcribed Lesson distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Male / female teacher</th>
<th>Urban / rural</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>M (3), F (3)</td>
<td>U (3), R (3)</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (3) 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2) 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (1)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>M (1), F (2)</td>
<td>U (0), R (3)</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2), 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; (1)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Greek</td>
<td>M (3), F (4)</td>
<td>U (3), R (4)</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2), 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2) 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2), 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>M (3), F (2)</td>
<td>U (3), R (2)</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2), 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (2) 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (1)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>M (10), F (11)</td>
<td>U (9), R (12)</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (7), 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (6) 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (6), 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; (2)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to establish the extent of dialect use in the four different lessons, all instances of dialect use were counted based on the researcher’s familiarity with the two codes. To some extent, however, the whole verbal interaction was carried out in the GCD because of the underlying GCD phonology which is present even in dialect versions which approximate the SMG. Therefore, it is not possible to indicate unequivocally where a Cypriot dialectal accent is not being used by the speaker. In light of that, we counted as instances of GCD use the cases where the language used was clearly a reflection of the GCD lexicon, syntax or morphology. In the case of phonology, highly salient features such as palatalization and gemination were counted.

This difficulty relates to the fundamental problem that, in such studies, what should actually be counted are just those cases where, given the choice of a dialectal and a non-dialectal form, the speaker chooses the dialectal form. From such a perspective, one should count the instances where a phenomenon could be manifested and it is not. For this methodological shortcoming with reference to possible instances of code-switching between SMG and GCD, see Pavlou (2006); Papapavlou (2006).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Modern Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher H</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that, for teachers H, C and E, the GCD is used by both the students and the teacher more in the Greek lesson than in History, and least in Mathematics. This pattern is born out by the preliminary results of the rest of the lessons that have been transcribed. This was a rather surprising result since the aim of the Greek lesson was the cultivation of the Greek language, which, in the educational setting under discussion, is synonymous with SMG. Therefore, it was expected that the form of the language considered purest would be used, i.e. the SMG. The reasons for these results may lie in the methodology of teaching and in the demands that the lesson makes in the production of language by the students. In the last few years, the educational system in Cyprus has adopted the communicative approach to language teaching for the mother tongue. In this framework, students are encouraged to focus on speaking, writing, and above all, expressing their thoughts and ideas, rather than on language form. In other words, language functions are considered more important than language structures.

The following example is characteristic of how students use the two codes in the class. The excerpt is taken from a Greek language lesson on a short story entitled “In the traffic jam” by D. Psathas. The words that appear underlined and in italics reflect aspects of the GCD such as phonology,
morphology and the lexicon. The word in bold is an example of hypercorrection, coining a word that does not exist in the standard variety but is created in an effort by the bidialectal speaker to produce a standard form. It is a hybrid form and exhibits features of both GCD and SMG phonology and morphology.

**Student:** Παραπάνω πρόβλημα στη Λάρνακα έχουμε με τα οικικά έργα που φιάζουν λάκκους για να σάσουν τους σωλήνες τον περασμένο μήνα και αναγκάζεται ο κόσμος να πάει που άλλοι δρόμοι και γέμιζαν άλλοι δρόμοι.

**Student:** The problem in Larnaca *is more* acute with the road works where they *dig* the road to *fix* the pipes last month *and* the people have to *go through* other streets and the other streets are jammed.

The History lesson had the second highest frequency of dialectal forms. It appears as though the students’ linguistic contributions to this lesson correspond in frequency of varietal use to the task at hand, which requires both the recitation of memorized facts and the free expression of their own ideas. Students were asked to exhibit knowledge on the subject by recounting what they had studied in the textbooks. Perhaps since these are written in SMG, the students tended to use this code when they talked about their content. In fact, this kind of functional specialization of the GCD and SMG in the classroom resembles the distinction of BICS and CALP as described by Cummins (1980). When the students are expressing their personal ideas they tend to rely more frequently on the GCD and when they are using academic language, to the extent they are capable, on the SMG. The following example is taken from a History lesson on education in ancient Athens. Again, words that appear underlined and in italics are reflections of the linguistic system of the GCD.

**Teacher:** Ωραία. *Είδετε* καθόλου κορίτσια πάνω σ’ αυτό το αγγέλιο; Ναι, Χάρη μου.

**Student:** Όχι, δεν έχει κορίτσια γιατί στο κείμενο μας λέει ότι οι... μόνο τη θύρα εμποδίζει τα γράμματα.

**Teacher:** Ωραία. Και γι’ αυτό βλέπουμε ότι... τι άλλο εκάθετον;

**Student:** Έκαναν τους Ολυμπιακούς Αγώνες.

**Teacher:** Fine. *Have you seen* any girls at all on this pot (this picture of a ceramic)? Yes, Charis?

**Student:** No. There are no girls because the text tells us that only the boys *took* lessons.

**Teacher:** Fine. And what do we see? And what else *did they do?*

**Student:** They *did* the Olympic Games.
The subject that yielded the least dialectal forms was Mathematics. Even if this was not an expected result, it is not difficult to explain. As is the case with registers and jargon, mathematics requires the use of a specific code and/or technical vocabulary. Unlike language lessons, where personal accounts can involve an endless range of topics, and the language needed to elaborate on these topics, mathematics generally focuses on a limited number of issues to be discussed and involves a limited set of lexical items, for example numbers and formulaic expressions. Since this technical vocabulary is first encountered and developed in SMG, the students tend to use SMG in this subject. With regard to technical vocabulary in the GVD, Pavlou, (2006) reports that one of the problems the GCD is facing is the fact that it is not productive any more, i.e. authors, journalists or scientists avoid coining new words on the basis of the GCD lexicon and morphology. What follows is an example of the interaction in a Mathematics class. In this example we witness the use of the same word but in two different forms representing two different (rather basilectal) levels of the dialect continuum.

**Teacher:** Μάλιστα. Για να δούμε τώρα τα 2/4. Δείτε έχουμε βρει το ¼ που είναι 2 κομμάτια, ποιο παιδάκι μπορεί να μας πεί πόσα κομμάτια είναι τα 2/4. Νικη;

**Student:** Εγώ το βρήκα με άλλον τρόπο. Αγγέλης το σύνολο των παιδιών είναι 20, αν προσθέσεις τα παιδιά που προτιμούν καλαθόσφαιρα και το ποδόσφαιρο το αποτέλεσμα είναι 16. Ες, τα, που σημαίνει τα υπόλοιπα παιδιά που έμειναν προτιμούν το κόλπη.

**Teacher:** Right. Now let us see the two-fourths. *Since* we have found the one-quarter which is two pieces (equally-sized). Which of you children can tell us how many pieces there would be in two-fourths? Niki.

**Student:** I have found the answer using a different method. *Since* the total of the children is twenty, if you add the children who prefer the games volleyball and football (soccer), the result is sixteen. Eh-eh. This means that the remainder of the children prefer swimming.

The above described frequency of dialectal forms in the various lessons does not apply to teacher 1, who is a very dialectal speaker and uses a rather basilectal version of the GCD. He appears to think that he does not need to accommodate his speech to the requirements of the domain. His students may sense that, and they in turn do not adjust their speech.

**Conclusions/Remarks**

Ferguson’s classic model of diglossia implies a strong sociolinguistic norm which strictly excludes the use of certain linguistic codes from certain speech
domains, one of them being education. At the same time, the violation of any sociolinguistic norm attracts sanctions by other members of a speech community, especially those who espouse prescriptivism. The results of this and similar studies, however, indicate that this specific sociolinguistic norm is not absolutely obeyed either by the teachers, who are certainly aware of it and whose duty is to enforce this norm, or by the children, who gradually become aware of it. At the same time, both groups are aware of the consequences of their choices. What drives them then to putting themselves “on the spot”? The answer lies, in my opinion, in the fact that educational system does not fully take into account the students’ actual mother tongue or the effort required to obey the norms of a second linguistic code. Bidialectal speakers, like those described above, must not only think of what to say but also struggle to find the sociolinguistically appropriate form for saying it. This, of course, compromises the quality of the message from the purely cognitive point of view, even though it may sound “improved” when measured against externally imposed sociolinguistic standards. In other words, the students’ efforts to formulate their thoughts in the sociolinguistically acceptable code (which in bidialectal settings means avoiding the use of their real mother tongue and expressing themselves in the code which is more suitable for the specific setting) works to the detriment of the clarity and exactness of students’ expressed thoughts. It is clear that for such speakers, the dialect has a strong influence as a mark of identity as well on the means of expressing themselves. At the same time the SMG is part of the continuum of communication that students find they need to use in order to communicate.

Current language policy relegates the GCD to the status of a museum exhibit which must be guarded because it has a certain cultural value and admired because it has a certain aesthetic quality, but whose actual use is discouraged, especially in certain domains. However the GCD is not, like other museum exhibits, wholly or partly obsolete as a result of technological developments or evolution in the notion of beauty. The GCD is alive and has the potential, if given the chance, to fulfill all parts of the functional spectrum of a language, from writing poetry to discussing scientific notions or operating in an administrative system.

Finally, a comment is in order on the goal of such studies in the present setting. Studies of this nature should not aim at revealing the detrimental use of the dialect in the classroom. Conversely, such studies should send the message that speakers of standard dialects or those who for various reasons act as agents of promoting standard languages should not oppress speakers of the GCD when those speakers want to express themselves by correcting them, frowning on their behaviour, and commenting on their bad language, or even “educating” them about something that linguists consider self-evident: linguistically speaking,
languages are equal, although they may not be sociolinguistically. Research in this area should also have as its main objective the impartial and unprejudiced description of what is really going on in the classroom with the ultimate aim of finding ways for the creative and productive cooperation and symbiosis of the two linguistic codes within the classroom.

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References


