Students' Subjectivities vs. Dominant Discourses in Greek L1 Curriculum

Eleni Katsarou and Vassilis Tsafos

COMMON
GROUND

Students' Subjectivities vs. Dominant Discourses in Greek L1 Curriculum

Eleni Katsarou, University of Crete, Greece
Vassilis Tsafos, University of Athens, Greece

Abstract: The basic aim of this paper is to specify in what extent the current L1 curricula of compulsory education in Greece incorporate students' subjectivities (their lived experiences, views, beliefs, their interpretation of the world) fostering agency or opt for the reproduction of the socially dominant discourses (national culture and language). Adopting the theoretical framework of multiliteracies (The New London Group 1996, Cope & Kalantzis 2000) that proposes a pedagogy that opts for processes providing students with access to knowledge without them having to erase or abandon their different subjectivities, we define curriculum's properties that promote a dialogue of dominant ways of knowing and other marginal discourses and form a curriculum culturally open yet socially purposeful (Cope & Kalantzis 1993). After conducting qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000; 2003) of the current L1 curricula, we reached interesting conclusions: while in lower grades (pre-school education and primary school) the curriculum seems to allow students to express both personal experiences and their views (although this orientation is somehow undermined by the same curriculum) promoting variety and diversity - up to a certain extent, in secondary education, where the framework becomes more restrictive due to specific reasons that are analysed, pluralistic practices have no place not even as intentions and the dominant discourses have to be learned and reproduced. Of course, by reproducing socially acceptable patterns, the student effectively reproduces world views reflected and social relationships embodied therein (Luke 1996).

Keywords: Students' Subjectivities, Dominant Discourses, Multiliteracies, Pedagogy of Pluralism

Introduction

THIS PAPER STUDIES the L1 curriculum for Greek compulsory education, focusing on managing students' subjectivities on the one hand and socially dominant discourses on the other. More specifically, the present looks into how the curriculum approaches language and language teaching and to which degree it promotes dominant discourses or allows students' subjectivities to be revealed, realised and developed. That is whether L1 curriculum suggests ways that stimulate students to utilise their life situations, perspectives and experiences in order to construct and recognize their own subjectivities and consequently their creativity or is mainly aiming at nurturing the students' ability to understand, assimilate and therefore reproduce dominant discourses. Interestingly, the role prescribed for students by the curriculum points to the kind of people and citizens our society wants students to become. Is it a creative, active role that allows students to view and promote variety and diversity as natural, becoming able to critically interpret the events in their lives in relation to broader society? Or is it a passive role that promotes the acceptance of the established and taken-for-granted meanings of the dominant culture, thus supporting its reproduction?

COMMON
GROUND

Theoretical Framework

By "subjectivities" we mean students' various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their different lived experiences, interests and abilities, their familiar discourses and personal voices (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993: 79-80). In particularly postmodern societies, the world is a complex, multicultural, multilingual and multimodal place in terms of meaning making (Kress, 2003) and no representation is a neutral process. Rapidly emerging modes of communication, increased cultural diversity, and the students' changing identities mark dramatic changes. In a pluralistic world void of certainties, constantly challenging the dominant normative culture and language, school cannot afford to ignore or eliminate subjectivity, which reflects this diversity. On the contrary, the educational system ought to allow students to realise and express both personal experiences and their created and/or recreated and reformed views, i.e. their differing ways of perceiving and interpreting the world. A pedagogy of pluralism is therefore required, promoting variety and diversity and permitting deviations from the dominant discourse and culture, encouraging students to develop the necessary skills for speaking up, negotiating and critically shaping their lives (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001). That is, a pedagogy that opts for processes providing students with access to knowledge and to ways to conquer it without having to erase or abandon their different subjectivities (New London Group, 2000: 18-19).

Yet even in such a multi-faceted world, schools should provide students with easy access to dominant discourses, to the culture of schooling and the language of schooled literacy, to the discourses leading to the acquisition of social goods (Gee, 1996, 5). This requires easy access to objective and universal knowledge, to the single culture of western canon (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993: 78-84). By gaining access to society's most powerful discourses and genres, students maximise their chances for social integration (particularly if they belong to socially challenged groups). Most importantly, this access may help students understand, critically approach and challenge dominant discourses, in order to revise them and/or emancipate themselves from them. Otherwise, as discourses are imbued with values, beliefs and social relations, an uncritical participation in them co-opts people to these values, beliefs and social relations (Ivanič, 2006).

Thus, contemporary education that takes account of sociocultural conditions, and meets contemporary needs should offer access to meaningful social action but also a critical awareness of how identity is discoursally constructed. Moreover, education ought to develop processes enveloping both students' subjectivities and socially dominant discourses. Starting with students' own experiences and discourses, teaching should negotiate with dominant discourses before returning to the discourses of difference, giving students the opportunity to advance in their learning by constructing new understandings. Thus the role of Pedagogy is to develop an epistemology of pluralism (New London Group, 2000: 18). The pedagogy of multiliteracies, in which teachers help students better negotiate the complexities of emergent forms of everyday life, labour and culture, could answer to this challenge.

The Study

Research Aim and Material Under Study

In order to investigate the Greek educational policy towards students' subjectivities and dominant discourses, we decided to study the L1 curriculum. In fact, we looked into three curricula, corresponding to the three rungs of compulsory education in Greece: Preschool, Primary School and Junior High School. These three curricula constitute three distinct prongs of a common Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework (henceforth CTCF). Each curriculum comprises two parts. The first part presents the course's general principles and goals. The second part, more specific and practical, details the content to be taught, objectives and teaching methods recommended for each subject. An important difference between Primary and Junior High School curriculum should be noted; the former includes literature teaching as a genre, integrating it in the teaching of the native language, while the latter distinguishes between native language and literature, with two different curricula for two different subjects.

We chose to study the Curriculum because it much more than a pedagogical text and is certainly not neutral. As a text, it implies social practices and institutions, cultural products and anything created as a result of human action and reflection (McEwan, 1992: 64). As an official and institutional text that reflects educational policy, its study could reveal how the curriculum is developed in terms of planning and implementation, teaching and evaluation in every-day real school life (Pinar, 1996: 791). And as a political text, the curriculum can be understood only if it is socially, economically and politically contextualised (Carlson in Pinar, 1996: 244). An L1 curriculum is a particularly political text, in the sense that it presents certain social discourses as dominant while ignoring others, thus eliminating voices that are considered as less valuable to be heard in school.

In this context, the L1 curriculum was studied in order to investigate implied discourses and reveal the relationship between the use of diverse recourses and the production of curriculum knowledge, student subjectivity and pedagogy (Jewitt, 2008: 357).

Educational Context

The Greek school system pursues homogeneity. It is a national curriculum centered school system focusing on the content taught and using the same homogenised educational material for all students throughout the country. In secondary education, the outcome of teaching is controlled through exams, gradually turning schools into exam-tutoring centres (Skourtou & Kourtis-Kazoullis, 2003: 1329-1330). These conditions call for a standardisation of teaching, which on the one hand supports and is supported by the standard Modern Greek language, while on the other hand endorses Greek civilization, which is promoted as the dominant civilization due to its classical past (Fragoudaki & Dragona, 1997).

The curricula under study, composed by consultants at the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute, an advisory body to the Greek Ministry of Education, without the contribution of classroom practitioners, were published in 2003 (Official Government Gazette 303, issue b, 13 Mar. 2003). The Ministry advertised them as an innovation based on the cross-thematic principle they purportedly implemented. These curricula form an integrated and homogenised whole, common to all schools in Greece, reaching them in a ready-to-apply form.

The homogeneity and centralisation of the Greek educational system poses strict limitations to the curriculum, making the issue under study even more important: in multicultural and multilingual Greek society, where communication consists of complex interactions between multiple agents, can a national, homogenised, one-size-fits-all language teaching curriculum include the world's pluralistic nature, discourses and subjectivities?

Methodology

Needing a research tool to help us identify the stated priorities of compulsory education and reveal implicit political perspectives latent in the curricula, we chose qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; 2003), considering it appropriate for analysing the perceptions reflected by L1 curriculum on the students' role in the educational process. We used thematic coding and analysis, (Ayres, 2008: 867). Based on the fundamental concepts on students' subjectivities and dominant discourses that emerged from the literature review, we composed a lists of themes anticipated to be found in the curricula. We then studied the three curricula and concluded on the following coding categories, through a process in which theme development and coding facilitated each other:

1. Students' subjectivities

- Inclusion of students' individualities (subjectivity, different language and culture) in the curriculum's orientation and recommended practices.
- Emphasis on expressing lived experiences, particularly multimodal student experiences in contemporary multicultural and multilingual societies.
- Acknowledgement of the world's pluralistic nature in the polysemy of diverse texts (with different discourses, representations, perceptions and interpretations of reality).

2. Dominant discourses

- Promotion of a single culture, the national one, which is presented as unique because of its link to Greek Antiquity, berth of the Western civilisation.
- Emphasis on the homogeneity of Modern Greek, with no social, geographical or age-related differentiations.
- Deductive teaching of a universal and objective knowledge.
- Promotion of society's most common and powerful genres and discourses, as language models for students.

Having scanned all three curricula for elements of the above categories, throughout the analysis we considered the relevance of each theme to the research question and to the curricula as a whole, keeping the developing analysis integrated. We were also concerned with the relationship among categories, studying the orientation chosen, the coexistence of categories and the dominance of certain themes. We thus concluded to the central axes of our study, around which the findings are presented.

Findings

From Diversity to Homogeneity

Both the General section of CTCF and the attendant curricula bring up other cultures and languages, indeed with an interaction and enrichment tone. Indicative of the curriculum's overall direction is the general principle that refers to the strengthening of different language identities in a multicultural society, stating that "*the Greek society's make-up shifts incessantly enriched with individuals and carriers of different languages and cultural traditions, resulting in more cultural diversity, a state of affairs that can be considered healthy in the light of reinvigorating the dominant traditions*" (p. 3736). In fact, according to CTCF, "*The safe-guarding of [...] the collective, international, [...] character of social cohesion in open, pluralistic societies support[s] the common future goal of European Education*". The goal stated in the General Introductory part of the Junior High School Curriculum (p. 3779), re-garding the preparation of students to "*live as citizens in a multicultural Europe*", follows naturally.

In practice, this intention is not implemented, but remains rhetoric, since there are no provisions for the teaching of native language to alien students in Primary or Junior High School. Besides, the only teaching guideline provided by both curricula to help alien students attend Greek language courses is individualised teaching (p. 3774; 3792). Yet there are no explicit guidelines on how to implement individualised teaching in a classroom of 25-30, operating with homogenised teaching methods and educational materials. So this guideline is cancelled out by the very curricula including it.

From the Discourse of Respect of Individuality to the Discourse of Assimilation; Accepting the Superiority of the Greek Language and Culture

The only element reminding us that we live in a multicultural society is the discourse of re-spect for "others" – aliens, non-Greek speakers – dispersed throughout the curricula. For instance, there is the goal that students ought to "*appreciate and respect the other person's language and live harmoniously with non-Greek speakers*" (Primary, p. 3749), or to "*appre-ciate their cultural traditions whose key constituent and backbone is language, at the same time having respect for the language and cultural values of other peoples*" (Junior High School, p. 3778). However, even this discourse is undercut by the discourse of integration, conformance and acceptance of the dominant language and culture, and indirectly of the dominant discourse. The Greek language, for instance, "*is recommended as a medium for the integration of foreigners in this society*" (Primary, p. 3745).

Of course, the imposition of the dominant linguistic culture forces both alien and Greek students to toe the line, since Greek students, too, use multiple and divergent intralinguistic variations and different dialects that enhance the dominant language's internal polymorphism. So, language appears as one for all, i.e. the standardised Modern Greek language. The refer-ence to "*the many years of evolution and wealth of dialect forms of the Greek language*" (Junior High School, p. 3789) remains generic and vague, not specifying these dialect forms, nor stating more specific goals, nor recommending any activities.

References to the superior traditional culture embedded in the Greek language indicate the same orientation. In Primary School Curriculum the Greek culture must be experienced

through language for students to "*adopt a positive stance towards it"* (p. 3749). Indirectly, this language is presented as the carrier of an important culture that should be assimilated. Combined with other curricula parameters, this culture is the most important one to assimilate. Thus, the study of language seems to preserve part of old ideological constructs about "superior" and "inferior" cultures, or "chosen" and "inadequate" languages (Fragoudaki, 2001).

Even where the curricula refer to "*interactions between peoples, reflected in their languages*" (p. 3778), they purport not to highlight cultural and linguistic exchanges, but to prove the superiority of Greek language and culture. How Junior High School Curriculum treats interaction between peoples is a telling indicator. The general goal is that "*students realise that interactions between peoples are reflected in their language*", assigned to the following specific curriculum goal (p. 3780): students ought "*to recognise and justify the influences of other languages on Modern Greek*". Yet in the curriculum's practical part, specifying goals for each teaching unit (pp. 3780-3791), this goal is replaced by a specific objective (p. 3759): the student ought "*to become aware of the multitude of Greek words used across all fields of knowledge in the most important European languages*", accompanied by the following sample activity: students spot "*Greek words or foreign words with a Greek root*" in texts "*(essays, medical, biological, technical etc.) authored in English, French, German, Italian etc.*", effectively implying a superiority of Greek standard language and hence Greek culture. Indirectly, curriculum authors equate rich vocabulary to cultural superiority (Kakridi-Ferrari, 2001: 106).

From Reinforcing Students' Voices to Muffling Them

Associating language with students' lived experiences and emphasising the expression of their personal experiences could destabilise this approach of imposition and standardisation. Truly enough, the Preschool and Primary School Curricula explicitly state that their planning "*takes into account each child's individuality, interests and needs*" (p. 586) and recommend "*the experiential involvement of students in various forms of spoken communication*" (p. 3749). In Primary School, such is the attention paid to a student's individuality, needs, interests and inclinations, that the Methodology section gives teachers the green light to replace up to 25% of textbook content with other content, "*if topical and interesting for the students*" (p. 3773).

In fact, this freedom implies a different literacy viewpoint that intends taught texts to have (or be able to carry) meaning for a certain group of students, not for the ideal utopian out-of-this-world language user. Students' experiences and interests are related both to the social processes they are involved in, their respective repertoire of linguistic expressions, and to ideological positions with respect to social practices. It's a choice that allows students to investigate the diverse contexts of their lives, putting them at the core of the curriculum (Ajayi, 2008: 212).

In Preschool and Primary school curricula, several points promote the teaching method based on the students' lived experiences, with Preschool Curriculum stressing that *the educational process should be based on children's earlier experiences*", (p. 587) so that students could "*produce short texts based on the world they have experienced* " (p. 593). Both curricula recommend giving children the chance to express their views and positions, to develop and express *"ideas and emotions"* (p. 587), to announce *"personal experiences, thoughts, desires, plans"* (p. 3746). This strengthens the students' idiolect, their personal way of expression,

while also opening up the prospect for them to shape their life theory in a tolerant environment: "*The Curriculum should reinforce self-consciousness and autonomy*" (Preschool, p. 587); "*[The student] becomes confident in his/her personal writing and unique style*" (p. 3747).

The following excerpt on Reading is particularly indicative of the acceptance of polysemy and the students' right to shape and express their personal voice: "*he/she expresses a personal, substantiated view on what he/she has read [...], is in a position to put his personal world into words*", (Primary, p. 3748). This becomes more explicit with literature teaching, stressing that our world's pluralistic nature emerges through literature that "*allows for different world viewpoints and perspectives, enriches the students' perception of the world, expands their horizons, supports the understanding of difference and growth of tolerance*" (p. 3745). The Primary and Preschool Curricula urge teachers to invite students to complete and infer "*the story's plot and ending*" or "*unfinished stories [...], in order for them to [...] create an own version (creative narration)*" (p. 594). These practices could allow students to express different perceptions in the classroom. Thus, taught texts are signified neither in line with the teacher's view nor according to the socially dominant view, but in agreement with what each receiver-student believes.

Yet in the Primary and Junior High School curriculum, the restricted list of decontextualised grammar phenomena to be taught invites a deductive teaching of rules, a transfer of objective knowledge (Kostouli, 2002). This guides students to conquer the linguistic norm, implying that any deviation constitutes incorrect use, not an alternative linguistic practice. Indirectly, students perceive that their success in school and society depends on their ability to use norms properly.

Junior High School Curriculum almost entirely ignores students' individuality, interests and personal experiences. Thus, the surprising statements in the *Teaching Methodology* section of the curriculum (pp. 3792-93) sound fake, namely that one of the three key pillars for teaching language is "*the appreciation and organisation of structures, functions and mechanisms already brought by the child from home (mother language), which together make up language communication*" and "*the students' language experiences are respected, utilised, enriched and organised by using language creatively*". This empty rhetoric includes no recommendations on how to implement this in a classroom characterised by homogenised teaching, a defined syllabus and a single textbook for the whole country. No guidance is offered as to how to utilise, manage or even respect students' subjectivities, at least empowering them; on the contrary, the curriculum promotes the teaching of the Greek language system and structure, in its common, homogenised form.

Since Junior High School L1 Curriculum is not concerned with teaching Literature, and the official pedagogical/educational discourse seems to acknowledge the power of Literature to construct alternative perspectives of reality, each text seems to have a single meaning, the transmitter-intended one, and the student should get it. The curriculum declares this explicitly among its general objectives (pp. 3787-3788): students ought "*to develop the capacity to perceive the values contained in the speaker's or writer's messages, depending on the pragmatics and semantics of the latter's language (metaphorical, irony, allusion etc.)*". This, however, ignores the meaning that receivers can attribute to the text, according to their experiences, view of the world, sociocultural context of reading etc. At a time when messages are more multimodal than ever, and hence carry more meanings than ever, the curriculum tries to highlight a single meaning. This intention is also evident in its unilateral reference

to polysemy (p. 3798). Although the polysemy phenomenon is looked at, and could give opportunities for studying the means that add polysemy to language and/or its uses in specific sociocultural settings, the curriculum presents polysemy in its narrowest sense, as "*word polysemy*", and it is taught with the following objectives: "*the student [ought] to appreciate that the meaning of a word depends on and shifts to a large extent with its context*", and "*be in a position to perceive the meaning of words depending on context*". Word context, however, is narrowly conceived in terms of the word's linguistic surroundings and communication conditions.

Students' Multimodal and Multicultural Lived Experiences

These curricula apparently don't focus on the students' multimodal and multilingual-multicultural lived experiences, even though both alien and Greek students, living in a multicultural environment, come to school richly endowed with such experiences and quite familiar with new technologies. Even the multimodally oriented Preschool Curriculum, with various explicit or implicit references to multimodality, offers little encouragement to make use of students' multimodal and multicultural experiences. For instance, only a single remark in the Preschool Curriculum suggests that educators should encourage children "*to describe to others how they collect material for collage and how they make it*", while in the Reading section teachers should invite children to get acquainted with their literate environment, as they "*come into contact with product packaging they know (e.g. milk cartons, bags)*" (p. 593).

   The picture is the same, if not worse, in the Primary and Junior High School Curricula. There are implicit references to multimodality and to our multicultural and multilingual world and teachers are encouraged to use multimodal material when teaching, ("*small ad, telegram, simple map,* […] *advertising poster...*", p. 3770). However, there are no multimodal text production activities by students. Yet multimodal text production could help students-producers negotiate words, images, graphics, video and multimedia digitized culture, see them as complementary, not as oppositional and realise how diverse modes create the world's diverse views. As for multiculturality, the only activity proposed by Primary School Curriculum regarding other languages is the suggestion for classrooms with foreign students to form "*mixed groups that, assisted by their families, could look for words with common roots, correspondence of syntax between ways of greeting ...*" (p. 3769).

Conforming to Communication Circumstances vs. Challenging socio-Cultural Practices

It could well be supported that students' personal voices are heard in variations, in the context of communication setting changes. And communication circumstances emerge as the major force shaping language in these curricula. Students should therefore be capable of recognising circumstances in order to respond to them, modifying their language accordingly (at production), or comprehending the message intended by the transmitter (at reception). What is the student's personal contribution to language production, by nature a very creative process? How is the student's "voice" heard? Some general objectives in Junior High School Curriculum provide the answer (p. 3788): students ought to "*express themselves well, orally and in writing, using their personal style, and modify their language in the communicative*

context, employing morphosyntactic and vocabulary resources". So a process of modulation is proposed, necessary for the development of communication skills.

Yet this process cannot stop here; life is not a linear process, nor can life experiences be broken into discrete moments and behavioural bits. Moreover, the action of communication is not accomplished by enhancing the ability to consume and produce messages. What should follow is the students' involvement in language activities that bring out the social dimension and nurture other critical skills, allowing students to develop a more personal stance. It is perhaps more useful to think of students as being engaged in a constant process of contextualising, rather than think of 'context' as a separately describable entity. In this case, comprehending or producing a text could be a personal expression, after realising how a personal "voice" is socially constructed. Thus, teaching becomes "*a caring, flexible representation of the different aspects of reality in which students experience the whole and reflect on self and others*" (Papastephanou & Koutselini, 2006: 162). Otherwise, "personal style" would mean responding to specific communication circumstances and teaching would be a simple delivery of transformed skills and procedures.

Conclusion – Discussion

Dominant Discourses vs. Students' Subjectivities

The findings presented so far indicate that the curricula under study acquaint students with dominant discourses (either standard Greek or the discourses fit for the communication circumstances), while teaching pigeonholes these elements into organised systems, aiming to familiarise students with their reproduction. These curricular choices are undoubtedly very useful to students, as to produce language students must first enrich the language resources available to them and systematise knowledge obtained through use. Besides, the school's aim is in part to bring students in contact with dominant discourses, offering the means for their study (Hasan, 1996).

The problem with these curricula is that they are limited to these choices only. They are not complemented by sociocultural critical framing (New London Group, 2000: 34-35). Indeed, it is revealing that critique is scarcely mentioned associated with communication circumstances: "*Given suitable communication circumstances, he/she orally expresses judgement and comments, e.g. about a concert attended, a theatre production, a textbook or literary work, and so on*" (Junior High School, p. 3788), without any reference to the sociocultural context that. Transformation activities are also oversimplified, dealing with language structures (e.g. "*transforms appropriate texts from active into passive voice and vice versa*"; *"turns direct questions into indirect speech and vice versa, performing the changes required*", p. 3788), without the attendant analysis of social concepts and meanings formed by the linguistic choices of language users. Challenges to the social structures that cause the emergence of specific genres, or the need to transform them, are nowhere to be found.

In conclusion, we can claim that, without situated practice that would utilise, enrich and reshape students' experiences, without critical framing to connect meanings to the social context that produced them, and without transformed practice in which students would transpose designs of meanings between contexts reforming them in the process, this particular curriculum could easily become a curriculum for reproduction of and conformance with dominant discourses.

43

Differences between the Three Curricula under Study

The three curricula under study clearly outline a course of restricting students' subjectivities and reinforcing dominant discourses, from preschool to lower secondary education. Lived experiences are present in the Preschool and Primary School Curricula, related to social processes and their respective repertoire of linguistic expressions, but completely absent in Junior High School. The creative use of Literature proposed by Primary School Curriculum and the recognition of language's power to construct versions of reality if viewed as a sociocultural phenomenon is dropped at Junior High School, when the teaching of Literature is completely disassociated from the teaching of the native language.

The creative use of Literature in Primary School curriculum reveals the power of language to construct reality versions, brought to fore with specific teaching practices. Reinforcing this pluralistic orientation could be the Primary School Curriculum's stance on utilising student "voices", i.e. different ways of perceiving and interpreting the world. In such a pluralistic context, the communication approach could also diverge, since communication may not necessarily equate to norms to be conquered by students, but to a process of signifying the surrounding world and forming positions and views; a process developed in school, not merely to get through lessons, but primarily for students to pose, via language, issues and problems, and gradually conquer modes that will lead them to personal interpretations of their, or others', experiences.

However, the attempt of the Pre-school and Primary curricula to reinforce students' subjectivities is cancelled out by the whole structure of the Primary and Junior High School curricula, with their disjointed, decontextualised grammatical and syntactic material, which allows educators to limit language teaching to conquering norms, making students approach language as a static product. In such a language teaching context, students must not only renounce their subjectivities, but also accept the specific sociocultural hierarchies reflected in the standard language. So they are invited to assimilate the dominant discourses, reflected in the normative use of the language, renouncing their different cultures and modes of meaning making.

Of course, in the more restrictive educational framework and standardised testing of Junior High School, there is no place for even the intention of a pluralistic practice. In this exam-centred climate, students can only be consumers, without individuality or diverse experiences. For students to succeed and advance personally, they must learn to use language effectively in communication circumstances. However, by reproducing socially acceptable (i.e. dominant) discourse patterns, students effectively reproduce worldviews reflected and social relationships embodied therein (Hasan, 1996).

The Students' Role

Throughout educational rungs (from Pre-school to Primary to Junior High School), new curricula increasingly limit students' opportunities to construct meaning that reflects their lived experiences, that is to create or remake texts by using, decoding and negotiating all the modes of communication that are co-present in any text (Kress, 2000) thus asserting their own subjectivities. In this way in schools, fixed in monomodal instruction with homogenised curricula and pedagogy, teachers are not invited to create a framework that nurtures students' capacity for reflection and meaning making, that is, critical consciousness and

transformation of their social reality by understanding the social contexts of their lives. Thus the curricula don't seem to treat individual students as transformers, creators and innovators, able to reform the cultural, social and therefore political contexts of their lives. So the role the curricula prescribe for students and future citizens is rather a passive role that promotes the acceptance of dominant meanings and of the dominant discourses that carry them.

References

Ajayi, L. (2008). Meaning-making, Multimodal Representation, and Transformative Pedagogy: An exploration of Meaning Construction Instructional Practices in an ESL High School Classroom, *Journal of Language, Identity and Education,* 7, 3, 206-229.

Ayres, L. (2008). Thematic Coding and Analysis. In Lisa M. Given (Ed.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. California: Sage, 867-868.

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (1993). The Power of Literacy and the Literacy of Power. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The Powers of Literacy*. London & Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press, 63-85.

Gee, J.P. (1996). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in discourses.* London: Taylor Francis.

Hasan, R. (1996). Literacy, everyday talk and society. In Hasan R. & Williams G. (Eds), *Literacy in Society.* London: Longman, 377-424.

Ivanic, R. (2006). Language, learning and identification. In R. Kiely, P. Rea-Dickens, H. Woodfield and G. Clibbon (Eds.), *Language, Culture and Identity in Applied Linguistics*. London: Equinox.

Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodal Discourses Across the Curriculum, *Encyclopedia of Language and Education,* Vol. 3: *Discourse and Education,* 357-367.

Kalantzis, M. & Cope, B. (Eds.) (2001). *Transformations in Language and Learning. Perspectives in Multiliteracies.* Common Ground Publicities.

Kostouli, T. (2002). Teaching Greek as L1: Curriculum and textbook in Greek Elementary Education. *L1 – Educational Studies in Language and Literature* 2, 5–23.

Kress, G. (2000). Multimodality. In Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (Eds.) *Multiliteracies. Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London & New York: Routledge, 182-202.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge.

LeCompte, M. D. & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*. San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative Content Analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,*1, 2, available in the website: http://www.qualitative-research.net (June 2008).

Mayring, P. (2003). *Qualitative Inhaltsanayse*. Weinheim: Beltz.

McEwen, H. (1992). Teaching and the interpretation of texts. *Educational Theory,* 42, 1, 59-68.

New London Group (2000). A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. In Bill Cope & Mary Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies. Literacy Llearning and the Design of Social Futures.* London & New York: Routledge, 9-37.

Papastephanou, M. & Koutselini, M. (2006). Reason, language and education: philosophical assumptions for new curricular orientations. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society,* 14, 2, 149-169.

Pinar, W.F., Reynolds, W.M., Slattery, P. & Taubman, P.M. (1995). *Understanding Curriculum: an Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses*. New York: Peter Lang.

Skourtou, E. & Kourtis-Kazoullis, V. (2003). The Step from Traditional Pedagogy to Transformative. *International Journal of the Humanities,* 1, 1329-1337.

Texts in Greek

Fragoudaki, A. & Dragona, Th. (1997). *What Is Our Country? Ethnocentrism in Education*. Athens: Alexandria.

Fragoudaki, A. (2001). Language corruption and megalomaniac languages. In John Haris (Ed.), *Ten myths about the Greek Language*. Athens: Patakis, 45-52.

Kakridi-Ferrari, M. (2001). Rich and Poor Languages. In John Haris (Ed.) *Ten myths about the Greek Language*. Athens: Patakis, 103-110.

Official Government Gazette 303, issue b, dated 13 March 2003.

About the Authors

Dr. Eleni Katsarou

Eleni Katsarou is a Lecturer of Curriculum Theories and Teaching Methods in the Department of Philosophy and Social Studies, University of Crete, Greece. Her research and writing focus on curriculum studies, teaching theory and pre-service and in-service teacher education. Through a productive interplay between theory and practice and between research and teaching, she tries to approach topics that concern her areas of interest. Teaching mother language (modern greek language) in the framework of literacy is a topic that concerns her much, as she has written educational materials for language teaching many times. She has also written a book and several articles on educational action research and its use in teaching, curriculum development and teachers' professional development.

Dr. Vassilis Tsafos

Tsafos Vassilis, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Early Childhood Education, University of Athens, Greece. He has worked as a Deputy Councillor of the Pedagogical Institute of Greece. His research and writing is particularly informed by teaching theory, cultural studies and curriculum studies. His current areas of research interest include topics about curriculum, methods of teaching, educational research methods as well as pre-service and in-service teacher education. He has written books and articles that try to define the main dimensions in the teaching process and ways of educational research, especially action research.

Please visit the Journal website at http://www.Learning-Journal.com
for further information about the Journal or to subscribe.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS JOURNALS

The International
JOURNAL *of the* ARTS IN SOCIETY

Creates a space for dialogue on innovative theories
and practices in the arts, and their inter-relationships
with society.
ISSN: 1833-1866
http://www.Arts-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of the* BOOK

Explores the past, present and future of books,
publishing, libraries, information, literacy and learning
in the information society.
ISSN: 1447-9567
http://www.Book-Journal.com

DESIGN PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES
An International Journal

Examines the meaning and purpose of 'design' while
also speaking in grounded ways about the task of
design and the use of designed artefacts and
processes.
ISSN: 1833-1874
http://www.Design-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of* DIVERSITY in ORGANISATIONS,
COMMUNITIES & NATIONS

Provides a forum for discussion and builds a body of
knowledge on the forms and dynamics of difference
and diversity.
ISSN: 1447-9583
http://www.Diversity-Journal.com

THE GLOBAL STUDIES JOURNAL

Maps and interprets new trends and patterns in
globalisation.
ISSN 1835-4432
http://www.GlobalStudiesJournal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of the* HUMANITIES

Discusses the role of the humanities in contemplating
the future and the human, in an era otherwise
dominated by scientific, technical and economic
rationalisms.
ISSN: 1447-9559
http://www.Humanities-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of* LEARNING

Sets out to foster inquiry, invite dialogue and build a
body of knowledge on the nature and future of
learning.
ISSN: 1447-9540
http://www.Learning-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of* KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE
& CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Creates a space for discussion of the nature and
future of organisations, in all their forms and
manifestations.
ISSN: 1447-9575
http://www.Management-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of the* INCLUSIVE MUSEUM

Addresses the key question: How can the institution
of the museum become more inclusive?
ISSN 1835-2014
http://www.Museum-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of* INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL SCIENCES

Discusses disciplinary and interdisciplinary
approaches to knowledge creation within and across
the various social sciences and between the social,
natural and applied sciences.
ISSN: 1833-1882
http://www.Socialsciences-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of* ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL,
ECONOMIC & SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Draws from the various fields and perspectives
through which we can address fundamental
questions of sustainability.
ISSN: 1832-2077
http://www.Sustainability-Journal.com

The International
JOURNAL *of* TECHNOLOGY, KNOWLEDGE & SOCIETY

Focuses on a range of critically important themes in
the various fields that address the complex and
subtle relationships between technology, knowledge
and society.
ISSN: 1832-3669
http://www.Technology-Journal.com

UBIQUITOUS LEARNING
An International Journal

Investigates the affordances for learning in the digital
media, in school and throughout everyday life.
ISSN 1835-2030
http://www.ULJournal.com

JOURNAL *of the* World Universities Forum

Explores the meaning and purpose of the academy in
times of striking social transformation.
ISSN 1835-2030
http://www.Universities-Journal.com

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
subscriptions@commonground.com.au