

Greek Language Policy, Curriculum and sign language skills

Política linguística grega, currículo e habilidades em língua de sinais

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Abstract: There are many bilingual programs (strong and weak), which, usually, are not discussed in relation to the teaching and learning of signed languages, as certain categorization is employed. The study aimed at fulfilling this gap, by taking a historical-structural analysis of government policy texts in post-dictatorial Greece (from 1980 to the present). The focus is on early childhood education and on the two first years of elementary education. Hence, the study presents and discusses formal language learning choices and programs in Greece, in strong relation to the 2004 Greek Sign Language (GSL) Curriculum for the bilingual education of young deaf children in the kindergarten and the two first literacy years in primary education. In this examination, the GSL skills are analyzed, next to the linguistic objectives of the national curriculum for Greek (as an L1 and L2) and the other spoken languages (majority and minority), considering the contemporary landscape of the deaf students' population in Greece. The focus is on the foundation and comprehension skills, which cross the national language curriculum. As linguistic policies are top-down imposed, following EU directives and global financial changes, the study calls for careful language planning and policy making for GSL as an L1 and L2 minority language, addressing the need for deaf constructing bilingual learners in a multilingual curriculum and through dual language programs.

Keywords: Greek Sign Language. Deaf education. Bilingual programs. Curriculum. Linguistic skills.

Resumo: Há muitos programas bilíngues (fortes e fracos) que, geralmente, não são discutidos em relação ao ensino e à aprendizagem de línguas de sinais, pois é empregada certa categorização. O estudo teve como objetivo preencher essa lacuna, fazendo uma análise histórico-estrutural dos textos de políticas governamentais na Grécia pós-ditatorial (de 1980 até o presente). O foco está na educação infantil e nos dois primeiros anos do ensino fundamental. Portanto, o estudo apresenta e discute as opções e os programas de aprendizagem de idiomas formais na Grécia, com forte relação com o Currículo da Língua de Sinais Grega (GSL) de 2004 para a educação bilíngue de crianças surdas no jardim de infância e nos dois primeiros anos de alfabetização no ensino fundamental. Nesse exame, as habilidades da GSL são analisadas, juntamente com os objetivos linguísticos do currículo nacional para o grego (como L1 e L2) e as outras línguas faladas (majoritárias e minoritárias), considerando o cenário contemporâneo da população de alunos surdos na Grécia. O foco está nas habilidades básicas fundamentais e de compreensão, que estão presentes no currículo nacional de idiomas. Como as políticas linguísticas são impostas de cima para baixo, seguindo as diretivas da UE e as mudanças econômicas globais, o estudo pede um planejamento linguístico cuidadoso e a elaboração de políticas para a GSL como uma língua minoritária L1 e L2, abordando a necessidade de construção de alunos surdos bilíngues em um currículo multilíngue e por meio de programas linguísticas duplas.

Palavras-chave: Língua de sinais grega. Educação de surdos. Programas bilíngues. Currículo. Habilidades linguísticas.

1 Introduction

At least since the mid-nineties, *bilingual education* refers to special school instruction of deaf children through the use of two languages: a signed language (of a deaf community) and a spoken language (of the major community). The term is coined for official (by law) mainstreaming educational practices, in which deaf children are placed in regular schools to receive instruction to fit their specific skills. Thus, apart from the schools for deaf children, which are mostly bilingual schools, education involves the official standard sign language that the deaf child has acquired or is to acquire with his/her entrance at school, and the spoken language in its oral (where applicable) and/or written format. As three linguistic modalities are involved (signed, spoken, and written), the term *bimodal* is also used next to the term *bilingual* (henceforward, BiBi).

Bilingual education exists in different national contexts as a result of different factors (GARCÍA, LIN, MAY, 2017). Initially, it emerged in the context of colonisation and immigration (from the 18th century onwards) and, in more contemporary forms, within the context of political and social movements (e.g., civil rights) for educational inclusion and equality. Due to different sociolinguistic contexts, there are many types of bilingual education programs with different learners (with L1, L2, etc.), language statuses, and educational goals, which Wright and Baker (2017) divide into *strong* and *weak*. The former, leads to *additive bilingualism*, as they aim to the learning of a new language at no expense to the child's maternal or first language (L1), whereas the weak bilingual programs aim at *subtractive bilingualism*, as L2 learning substitutes the child's maternal language, assimilating it into the official language of the major society. In contrast, strong bilingual programs maintain the linguistic differences of the communities involved, promoting cultural pluralism and multiculturalism (BAKER, 2001; WRIGHT; BAKER, 2017).

These programs are not discussed in relation to the teaching and learning of signed languages (BAGGA-GUPTA, 2017). Furthermore, bilingual education is also driven by official political agendas (TEDICK; LYSTER, 2020), which affect the linguistic choices in the official language curricula. In line with this, and by taking a historical-structural analysis of government policy texts in post-dictatorial Greece (from 1980 to present), the paper discusses formal language learning choices and programs, inclusive of the Greek Sign Language (GSL), in the national curriculum. Hence, GSL policy-making is presented next to those of spoken languages, with the aim of discussing their linguistic philosophy and content in the official¹ curriculum. Given the linguistic landscape existing in Greece, the Greek curriculum (with its limitations) is a multilingual curriculum that involves, at least, six spoken languages² and one signed language, the GSL. The importance, then, of constructing deaf bilingual learners in a multilingual curriculum is discussed, following Wright and Baker's (2017) program categorisation. The focus is on early childhood education and the two first years of elementary education.

2 Language policies in Greece

In Greece, an officially stated bilingual education concerns the minority faith (Muslim) schools in Thrace, which is based on transnational agreements between Greece and Turkey. These schools, apart from Turkish students, also accept Pomaks and Roma students and teach through dual programs all the subjects of the national curriculum in Greek as an L2. Religious Studies and Islamic History are taught in Turkish (as an L1), while Arabic and Quran can be an option for study. The following reforms apply to these schools and to the education of deaf children.

¹The term official refers to formal language policies in a national, state, and/or municipal level, and the publication of sign language curricula in accordance with corresponding law passes (see MERTZANI; BARBOSA; FERNANDES, 2022).

²Apart from Greek, the curriculum involves English, French, German, Romani, and Turkish.

2.1 The post-dictatorial period

In 1981, Greece entered the European Economic Community (later known as the European Union [EU]). From this year onwards, following a neo-European modernization agenda (especially in the years 1982-1985), the country established language policies for *standardized demotic*³ Greek as the only language of Greek education. With the Presidential Decree 476/31-05-1980 (Government Gazette 132/vol. A), the curriculum emphasized strengthening pupils' oral and vocabulary skills in kindergarten, since reading and writing were not included in this educational level of the curriculum until the 1989 curriculum reform (Presidential Decree 486/26-09-1989, Government Gazette 208/vol. A). Also, during this decade, the first reception and tutorial/support classes were established in public schools with Law 1404/24-11-1983 (Government Gazette 173/A-24-11-1983) to teach Greek as a second language (L2) to children of repatriated Greeks from abroad (e.g., from Germany, the USA, Canada, Australia). The teaching of oral Greek (through oral/aural approaches) was exercised strongly in deaf education, especially after the passing of Law 1566/85 (Government Gazette A-167/30-09-1985) which integrated special education in kindergarten and primary schools. At this time, deaf education was under the provisions of the Ministry of Health and Welfare, who viewed deaf children as deficient (NIKOLARAIZI, 2000).

2.2 The 1990-2000 educational reforms

Up to the 1990s, Greek education adhered to a Helleno-Christian canon⁴ for building and maintaining the country's national cohesion and identity, mainly

due to events concerning the country's international affairs (e.g., the massive emigration from the Balkans, the ex Soviet Union, Asia and Africa to Greece with demographic and social consequences; the prevention of the recognition of the name Macedonia [current Northern Macedonia] in the northern borders of Greece; the 1996 Greek-Turkish crisis in the Aegean Sea; see KOUSTOURAKIS, 2007). As the country received immigrants, Greece followed European norms of multilingualism (e.g., Council of Europe, 2003; Commission of the European Communities, 2003) and recognised immigrants' right to use their maternal language (L1) privately or in public, although it did not enter the national curriculum.

The 1990-2000 educational reforms aimed at the commodification of the school in the European Economic Zone, projecting a global technical and instrumental education (FLOURIS, PASIAS, 2003; GOUNARI, GROLLIOS, 2012; KAZAMIAS, ROUSSAKIS, 2003; TRAIANOU, 2009), in order for students "[...] to compete in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment" and "to successfully integrate within the European Union" (TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, GROPAS, 2007, p. 3). These reforms were Greece's official demonstration - from across the political spectrum - to maintain the country's EU membership (BOUZAKIS, KOUSTOURAKIS, 2002) in order to benefit from EU funds and support the reform costs (TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, GROPAS, 2007). The 1990s reforms were based, overall, on the decisions of the Lisbon European Council (23-24 March 2000), in which European leaders prioritised educational convergence so that the EU could effectively compete with the USA in the economy (FLOURIS, PASIAS, 2003; KOUSTOURAKIS, 2007).

³Demotiké, the common language, opposed *Katharevousa*, the 'purified' language (used in public service, administration, legal or medical matters, in government dominated media and education). In the late 18th century, the latter was developed by some influential scholars and the Church with the intention to "purify" (from the noun καθαρός [clean] < Καθαρεύουσα) the Greek language of its non-Hellenic characteristics (e.g., Turkish words), which had been acquired over the centuries. This linguistic form has been supported by the church and conservative governments, and rumors have that it was used to prevent students from lower socioeconomic classes from continuing their studies in high school and college. In contrast, Demotiké incorporates the changes that occurred over the centuries, and mostly corresponds to the language spoken by most Greeks. It was supported by liberal governments that promoted its use (through standardisation) as the only language for Greek education.

⁴The educational focus (demonstrated in the official textbooks and learning materials) was on mixing ancient Greek and Christian Orthodox religion, which had a continuous influence on Greek Education and its purposes. For example, up to the 1990s, the Greek schools presented the Christian Orthodox faith only (TRAIANOU, 2009), a phenomenon that is still met in the Greek communities abroad. Overall, this type of education adhered to a limited and reconstructed history, with a certain emphasis on the classical times and the ancient Greek of that time, rather than on other Greek (Mycenaean, Ptolemaic, Cypriot, Coptic etc.) and with certain humanistic bias.

Law 2413/17-06-1996 (Government Gazette 124/vol.A) set the foundations for intercultural education with the establishment of intercultural schools, and reception and support classes for students with little or no knowledge of Greek (a continuation of the 1980's reform), especially for students of foreign nationality, apart from the co-ethnic returnees (Presidential Decree 13/17-06-1996, Government Gazette 124/vol.A.; Presidential Decree 015/18-01-1996, Government Gazette 9/vol.A). Based on art. 34, these schools and classes followed the national curriculum with adaptations and a significant degree of autonomy (since they were not obliged to cover the entire curriculum) to support students' needs. Additionally, intercultural schools could provide courses on the language and culture of the country of origin of the foreign student (bound to the EU directive 77/486/EEC regarding the education of students of another EU member state and the obligation to provide immigrant students with mother-tongue classes).

In line with the above EU policies, Greece also followed UNESCO's (1994) inclusion policy with the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* after the *World Conference on Special Needs Education* in Salamanca, Spain (7-10 June 1994), which required regular schools to serve all children and provide sign language access for deaf students.

In line with these reforms, the Ministerial Decision Γ1/58/10-02-1999 (Government Gazette 93/vol.B) passed *The Greek Curriculum in Early Education and Primary School* (in Greek: Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών της Νεοελληνικής Γλώσσας στην προ-Δημοτική Εκπαίδευση-Νηπιαγωγείο και στο Δημοτικό) with a focus on emergent literacy. This, on the basis of the Salamanca policy, will dominate deaf children's language classes via the use of GSL. The Unified Curriculum required pupils (deaf and hearing) to become aware of the social dimension of writing and its importance in communication through their text production.

2.3 From 2000 to the present

The introduction of the Unified Curriculum defined the content that must be covered during the compulsory school years in a way that resembled the UK National Curriculum (TRAIANOY, 2009). This curriculum was modified in 2001, and the term *interdisciplinary* was added to its title, emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching (apart from the intercultural one). This also involved the *Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Curricula for Foreign Languages* (Government Gazette 1366/vol. B/18-10-2001; Government Gazette 1373/vol. B/18-10-2001). Thus, language learning promoted the concepts of literacy, multilingualism and multiculturalism as key pillars of students' cognitive and social skills. This curriculum focused on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills that students needed or would need in order to become actively integrated in the multicultural context of the EU and to understand people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including that of deaf people and their signed languages.

GSL was recognised by the Law 2817/2000 (Government Gazette 78/vol. A/14-03-2000) as the official language of the deaf people (hence, as L1) only in the field of education, resulting in the adoption of a segregated model (special day schools and integrated units) of language education.

With the Ministerial Decision 21072a/Γ2/13-03-2003 (Government Gazette 303/vol.B), the curriculum included the principle *Strengthening of cultural and linguistic identity within a multicultural society* (in Greek: Η ενίσχυση της πολιτισμικής και γλωσσικής ταυτότητας στο πλαίσιο μιας πολυπολιτισμικής κοινωνίας), where the term *multicultural* was added to intercultural education. To this end, English was introduced in the full-day primary school as an immersive and enriching unit for children's further development of their competencies in the verbal and written language, considering communication in various linguistic and cultural contexts. A year later, the BiBi curriculum for deaf education was published (Ministry of Education; Pedagogical Institute, 2004),

introducing for the first time the GSL as an L1 and subject of study in the official curriculum of compulsory education (kindergarten, primary, and secondary education) (MERTZANI, 2019; 2022), and Greek as an L2. The GSL curriculum was modified and updated up to the second-grade level in 2008 (KOURBETIS; KARIPI, 2021). In 2005-2006, the pilot implementation of the teaching of a second foreign language (French or German) in the last two classes of primary education started.

In 2011, this multicultural curriculum went through another reform via a pilot study, which led to the 2014 curriculum. Both reforms focused on *multiliteracy*⁵ and the social dimension of language, emphasizing text production beyond the boundaries of the school classroom (mainly online). To this scope, young children were introduced to language through ICT and to *critical literacy*⁶, by producing their own multimodal texts in certain communication contexts of cultural and linguistic diversity. Thus, language learning involved: language as communication, language as a system, and textual organization of

language. Furthermore, there was a terminology shift, replacing, for instance, the traditional terms “speaking”, “listening”, “reading” and “writing” by “the production and understanding of spoken language” and “the production and understanding of written language” correspondingly.

In 2007, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD, 2007) called for governmental measures to facilitate sign language learning, promote the linguistic identity of the deaf community, the recruitment of teachers with sign language specialisation, and the training of professionals and staff at all levels of education. The Law 4074/2012 ratified the CRPD and the Optional Protocol thereto, guaranteeing the human rights of persons with disabilities and deaf citizens of the country. The Ministerial Decision 100371Δ3 (Government Gazette 2103/B/19-06-2017), depending on the students educational needs, passes GSL teaching as compulsory in the timetable of special schools for the deaf.

Table 1: Examples of multilingual communication objectives

A.1.3 Multilingual Communication	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
i. Encouraging the use of languages in the understanding and production of oral texts	To recognise words and phrases in the mother tongue and other languages that relate to basic functional and educational needs (i).	To use codes from two and/or more languages to communicate using elements of verbal and non-verbal communication (i).	Appreciate the importance of language knowledge and use in today's multicultural society (i).
ii. Encourage the use of languages in the understanding and production of written texts	To identify key elements of non-verbal communication that may vary according to the cultural context (similarities and differences) (i). To identify the written codes of languages and the similarities and differences between them (ii).	To narrate texts from the narrative tradition of the culture of origin in any language they wish using elements of verbal and non-verbal communication (i). To write in their mother tongue and in other languages, depending on their developmental level, different notation systems, and types of writing (ii).	To pursue intercultural communication through appropriate verbal and non-verbal practices (i). To feel proud of their linguistic and cultural origins (i). To participate/cooperate in reading activities (books/myths) from different cultures (ii).

Source: Elaborated and translated by the author based on Penteri, Chlapana, Meliou et al. (2021, p. 34-35).

⁵Firstly, the term *multiliteracy* is associated with the ever-increasing variety of important ways of constructing meaning and communicating, especially in digital environments. The written text combines and interacts with the word, with visual, audio, kinetic or spatial elements. Thus, meaning is increasingly constructed by combining a variety of symbolic systems multimodally. Secondly, meaning is constructed according to particular communication contexts, determined by factors such as: different cultures, languages, social groups, learning areas, experiences, etc. (PENTERI; CHLAPANA; MELIOU et al., 2021).

⁶Critical literacy involves practices of interacting with information. It encourages students to question texts (e.g., by analysing authors' intentions, exploring multiple perspectives) (PENTERI; CHLAPANA; MELIOU et al., 2021).

On September 7, 2017, the bill of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity (in Greek, Εργασίας, Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης και Κοινωνικής Αλληλεγγύης) passed the implementation of the CRPD. In art. 65, par. 2, the GSL is recognised as equal to the Greek language, stating that the State shall take measures to promote it and meet all the communication needs of deaf citizens.

From 2014 onwards, up to the latest reform in 2021 (Ministerial Decision 161038/Δ1, Government Gazette B 5877/15-12-2021; Ministerial Decision 13646/Δ1, Government Gazette B687/10-2-2023; PENTERI; CHLAPANA; MELIOU et al., 2021), the national curriculum integrated in early education (in pre-school, kindergarten, and in the first year of primary education) *multiliteracy* and *digital literacy* next to traditional literacy⁷. In compliance with the EU principle that all European citizens should have three languages (e.g., Council of Europe, 2001, p.168; 2003, p. 8; Commission of the European Communities, 2003), English was introduced as the compulsory first L2 from the third year in primary school (ca. the age of nine onwards), and French or German were introduced as the second L2 (from this third year until the end of secondary school). At the same time, immigrant languages had little functional value at school.

Following similar philosophy and objectives, the 2021 curriculum introduced new thematic areas (e.g., robotics, entrepreneurship, environmental protection) with the aim to respond “to the conditions shaped by the modern Greek social and educational reality in the context of its European perspective” (PENTERI, CHLAPANA, MELIOU, et al., 2021, p. 4). Towards this aim, emergent literacy is blended with literacies from the previous curricula, and with new ones, like *visual* and *digital literacy*. Interestingly, the language communication component of the previous curriculum is now termed *multilingual communication*, under which pupils are encouraged to use their maternal language (apart from Greek) for verbal and text production.

3 Sign language skills in the language curriculum

The above reforms demonstrate that in early 2000 GSL entered the national curriculum, when other spoken languages started to appear as L1 (e.g., Romani as a historic minority language in Greece), and as L2 (e.g., French, German, immigrant languages). Thus, to a certain extent, it appears that the Greek curriculum allows children (deaf and hearing) to acquire additive bilingualism, since, up to 2004, it promoted subtractive bilingualism in minority⁸ education in general, and in deaf education in particular (through oral/aural approaches). The 2017 recognition strengthened GSL's position in the national curriculum as an equal language to Greek, and in the 2021 curriculum, GSL can be met under the multilingual communication objectives (see Table 1) and the new forms of literacy such as visual, digital, and multiliteracy. At this point, it is worth noting that in the 2004 GSL curriculum, the general educational curricula (meaning, the national curriculum overall) are considered *flexible* (Ministry of Education; Pedagogical Institute, 2004, p. i), a term referring to the possibility to differentiate their objectives so as to meet deaf students' needs. Such flexibility leaves space for considering certain objectives of multilingual communication, visual literacy, and multiliteracy as applicable to GSL, enriching in this way its existing curriculum content.

From the 1990s onwards, the study of spoken language curricula concerns both (i) the foundations of language and (ii) comprehension of selected written texts (see Table 2). In the first strand, the focus is on verbal communication skills (e.g., listening, speaking, strategies to understand and communicate meaning in formal and informal settings for various purposes and audiences), and on reading and writing (e.g., conventions for reading and writing, reading and writing sentence structure, grammar, capitalization and punctuation, cohesion, paragraphs, various genre

⁷ Usually limited to the teaching of the four language skills: speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

⁸ To present (2023), Romani, the Roma language in Greece, has never entered the national curriculum. The educational policy is oriented towards the integration of Roma pupils in mainstream schools, following assimilation strategies with EU funding.

texts). In the first years of literacy (in kindergarten and the first year of primary education), this latter strand concerns the skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, and print knowledge (e.g., graphemes, orthography) of those languages that have a writing system to represent them (MERTZANI, 2022). For example, in the Greek educational context, the Roma minority does not have an official writing system for its Romani, and the Greek alphabet is used to represent it (phonetically). This is a similar case to GSL that does not have a writing system and in certain cases, Greek glosses are used to represent signed phrases in GSL classes (see KOURBETIS; KARIPI, 2020; HOFFMEISTER; KARIPI; KOURBETIS, 2022).

Regarding the comprehension strand, students learn foundational knowledge and skills to understand a variety of texts by authors with diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences. Furthermore, students need to demonstrate an understanding of the patterns, features, and elements of style associated with various text genres, as well as to apply comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, listening to, and viewing a variety of texts, including digital and media texts, by creators with diverse identities, perspectives, and experience, in order to understand and clarify the meaning of texts. Comprehension involves high cognitive and critical skills to deepen understanding of texts and to analyze how various perspectives and topics are communicated and addressed in a variety of texts, including digital, media, and cultural texts.

The GSL curriculum implemented these two strands in its objectives (MERTZANI, 2022; 2023), based on earlier curricula of the learning of American Sign Language (ASL) as L1 (MERTZANI, 2019; MERTZANI, TERRA, DUARTE, 2020), and following the exclusive phonological and morphological aspects of GSL. For example, the reading skills did not refer to reading the GSL writing system (as there is no any), but to the reading of its signs on visual, multimedia material (see KOURBETIS; KARIPI, 2021; HOFFMEISTER; KARIPI; KOURBETIS, 2022). Thus, reading (e.g., recognising, decoding, coding, analysing) the parameters of signs (handshapes,

location, movement, etc.), and small or larger selected signed texts. Skills involved in the comprehension strand are easily met, as is the case of any language minority curriculum (MERTZANI, 2022).

The communication skills in the GSL curriculum are twofold. They focus on the acquisition of daily communication skills, since the majority of deaf children come from hearing, non-signing families; and on the academic development of the child's communication skills, since the latter are used for academic knowledge attainment and demonstration of such knowledge attained (see PLAZA-PUST, 2016, p. 44) across the national curriculum (e.g., during the classes of the schools' units).

Currently, as is the case of spoken language curricula, the GSL curriculum functions in a non ethnocentric but multicultural context, next to highly technical skills (e.g., ICT skills). Thus, GSL is also tied to serve multimodally future global financial and technological changes, as it serves the learning of spoken languages, and the learning of visual and digital literacies. In addition, considering the aforementioned flexibility of the general curriculum, the spoken language curriculum can also serve the GSL, especially its objectives of multilingual communication, visual literacy, and multiliteracy, considering contemporary uses of GSL that blend languages and modalities (e.g., word and sign boundaries; navigation in multimodal texts; punctuation marks in both languages; notational modes of text types and 'permanence').

Table 2: Language foundation and comprehension skills in the language curriculum

Foundations of language	<i>Verbal and non-verbal communication</i>	<i>Reading and writing</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective listening skills • Listening strategies for comprehension • Speaking purposes and strategies • Oral and non-verbal communication strategies • Word choice, syntax, and grammar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonemic awareness • Alphabetic knowledge • Phonics: grapheme-phoneme correspondence • Word-level reading and spelling: phonics knowledge • Word-level reading and spelling: orthographic knowledge • Word-level reading and spelling: morphological knowledge • Vocabulary • Reading fluency: accuracy, rate, and prosody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntax and sentence structure • Grammar • Capitalization and punctuation
Comprehension	<i>Understanding and responding to texts</i>	<i>Comprehension strategies</i>	<i>Critical thinking in literacy</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using foundational knowledge and skills to comprehend texts • Text forms and genres • Text patterns and features • Visual elements of texts • Elements of style • Point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prereading: activating prior knowledge • Prereading: identifying the purpose for reading, listening, and viewing • Monitoring of understanding: making and confirming predictions • Monitoring of understanding: ongoing comprehension check • Monitoring of understanding: making connections • Summarizing: identifying relevant information and drawing conclusions • Reflecting on learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literary devices • Making inferences • Analyzing cultural elements of texts • Perspectives within texts • Analysis and response

Source: Elaborated by the author.

4 Further considerations

The reality of deaf education and sign language teaching at schools is somehow similar among the EU member-states (see KRAUSNEKER; BECKER; AUDEOD; TARCSIOVÁ, 2020). This similarity nowadays even intersects the national curricula due to the EU's directives of various language policies (European Commission; European Education and Culture Executive Agency et al., 2023; European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice,

2017; European Commission; European Education and Culture Executive Agency et al., 2012). In line with this, the Greek curriculum (as demonstrated) has followed other member-states in the development and content of their curricula (e.g., the UK), as well as movements away from oral approaches in deaf education from the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. The GSL curriculum in 2004 and the 2021 curriculum have arrived as a result of such developments. The interplay among the two curricula comes to fulfill the special needs of the heterogeneous deaf student population.

There are still some limitations that constrain the application of the GSL curriculum (as of other sign language curricula; see MERTZANI, 2023b), such as the lack of learning materials (see KOURBETIS; KARIPI, 2021; HOFFMEISTER; KARIPI; KOURBETIS, 2022). Just recently, the Department of Special Education in the Institute of Educational Policy published GSL-based materials for the deaf child's overall literacy learning (Ibid.). This lack also affects the conduct of the child's academic evaluation, which, up to date, follows Greek-based only (hence, oral-based and written-based) assessments.

There is also an estimated small number⁹ of deaf signing children, a fact that puts the GSL curriculum as a secondary option to follow (GSL is a compulsory subject of study in the special schools only) in the inclusion classes of the mainstream schools where there are only one or two deaf students. This is not the case though for the special schools (see above), in which the policy is to provide a language base for deaf children (and in certain cases, for their parents), by focusing on the development of their GSL skills, before proceeding with other study subjects according to the national curriculum. It is common knowledge that it takes up to (maximum) six months for a deaf child to acquire GSL, when he/she is in a rich signing environment (e.g., with peers, or school staff, who are fluent signers). Thus, communication skills (for daily communication) are acquired fast, and the deaf child can proceed in the academic learning of the GSL skills.

5 Discussion

The Greek reforms demonstrated in this study were also imposed top-down, by the EU to its members. In the name of modernization and fiscal credibility, the Ministry of Education complied with the EU directives and modified a cumulative body of local knowledge. For example, the value of local

⁹Based on my personal communication (on 20 July, 2023) with Dr. Marianna Hatzopoulou, the Head of the 2nd KE.D.A.S.Y (B), Local Assessment and Support Centre in Athens; and Spyridoula Karipi, the Headteacher in the Deaf School of Argyroupolis-Athens, an old registered number of deaf students in Greece is 469, inclusive of signing and non-signing students.

communities as carriers and transmitters of cultural traditions has decreased (MERTZANI, 2022; 2023b). In the 1980s, although an ethnocentric focus was maintained, the language curriculum addressed mainly the teaching of a standardized demotic Greek, which, in turn, neglected the use, learning, and transmission of local dialects and languages, cultures, and traditions¹⁰ that are strongly connected to agricultural practices. Additionally, Greece's entry into the EU accelerated the changes in the teaching of English with the expectation that this language could contribute to the modernisation of structures and the upgrading of Greek reality. Thus, the imposed language policies were driven by such an economic and global agenda that favours international spoken languages rather than GSL and/or other historic minorities.

However, from the 1990s, more languages were added, and the focus was shifted to the multimodal use of language (e.g., through translanguaging) in the digital era, which resulted in reduced teaching of the linguistics of languages. This goes in a direction that is opposite to current findings showing how teaching the grammar of spoken and signed language in a comparative setting can be effective to improve the linguistic competencies of deaf students (to mention a few: MILLER; LEDERBERG; EASTERBROOKS, 2013; BENNETT; GARDNER; LEIGHNER et al., 2014; KOULIDOBROVA; KUNTZE; DOSTAL, 2018; CALDWELL-HARRIS, 2021; HOFFMEISTER; HENNER; CALDWELL-HARRIS; NOVOGRODSKY, 2021). Furthermore, the objectives of digital literacy and multiliteracy are transversal to most language learning objectives, with an obvious

¹⁰In this decade, the promoted discourse viewed dialects as a speech to be avoided and an inferior language, used by the 'peasant', a word coined to mean the illiterate person. Those who spoke a regional dialect were marked by that cliché, a phenomenon that impacted the future of the remaining dialects in the regions, resulting in the eclipse of Greek linguistic variety and folklore knowledge with the passing of community members. Its teaching was also restricted by the official religion (Orthodox Christianity) which did not allow the learning of certain customs as they were characterized as negatively pagan. Dialects spoken outside of Greece and are still alive (e.g., Pontic in Russia and Asia Minor; the Greek dialect in Cappadocia; South Italian Greek in Calabria and Salentina; the Marioupolitic or Hellenocrimaic in Ukraine; the Sarakatsan in Bulgaria; the Cypriot Greek) had never entered in the official national curriculum. The same applies for the dialects spoken within Greece. This again means that the deaf child never learns and is in contact with this aspect of Greek, orally and/or written.

emphasis on written language. The teaching of printed literacy in deaf children is already been raised (see HOFFMEISTER; CALDWELL-HARRIS, 2014; CALDWELL-HARRIS, 2021), with international research prioritising the learning of signed languages for children's successful academic progress, also in the case of deaf children with cochlear implants (for example, HOFFMEISTER; CALDWELL-HARRIS, 2014; KOULIDOBROVA; KUNTZE; DOSTAL, 2018; CALDWELL-HARRIS, 2021; HOFFMEISTER; HENNER; CALDWELL-HARRIS; NOVOGRODSKY, 2021).

Furthermore, the EU directives from 2000 onwards came when the US passed the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) (replaced in 2015 by *The Every Student Succeeds Act*), which stipulated schools (with punitive measures) to demonstrate annual progress reports. From this time onwards, there was an increasing international demand to measure students' progress through country performance and standardized tests and reports (e.g., PISA, OECD). In this context, deaf children's progress evaluations took into consideration their reading and writing skills only (HOFFMEISTER; CALDWELL-HARRIS, 2014; KOULIDOBROVA; KUNTZE; DOSTAL, 2018; HOFFMEISTER; KARIPI; KOURBETIS, 2022). Such evaluation procedures reveal a trend for national policies that aim at instituting a European centralized education (and by extension, a global one). As a result, other knowledge (traditional or not) may be seen as inferior and/or irrelevant in the promoted curriculum, as is the case with the GSL curriculum which is optional in mainstream education.

The large flows of refugees have created an even more complex situation in Greece's language policy decisions. The country has received unequally a large immigrant population in analogy to its aging demographic population and in comparison to the one that EU members have accepted from the 2000s onwards (MERTZANI, 2023a). Interestingly, while Greece was implementing intercultural reforms, EU members (e.g., France, the UK, and Germany) were shifting their policies away from multilingualism and interculturalism (CATARCI, 2014). Thus, considering

the large number of immigrant languages involved, there were no EU member states that were prepared to implement Directive 77/486 of the European Communities. The 2021 language curriculum adopted principles of critical pedagogy and literacy, which favour the use of different languages during classroom time. Additionally, this large flow of immigrants also brought deaf children with linguistic experiences with signed languages other than GSL (Personal communication with Spyridoula Karipi [see also footnote 7], 18 July 2023) or none. Additionally, the GSL curriculum is not prepared, nor designed, to accommodate such special educational conditions.

Multilingualism and language rights need careful review, as well as the campaign of modernism and the geopolitical networks towards which many countries (including Greece) and their languages are pressed "into a uniform march to progress" (CANAGARAJAH, 2005, p. 5). For example, Greek and GSL are not used as other spoken languages (e.g., English, Spanish, French) and signed languages (e.g., ASL in academic study), and due to their status, a careful study of language policy is necessary. This need is even more demanding nowadays considering the widespread practices of cochlear implantation (CI) and deaf students' enrollment in mainstream schools. Although the literacy performance (in spoken language) of deaf students with CI appears age-appropriate, there is still a wide range of variability (MAYER; TREZEK, 2020, p. 567). In the USA, for example, half of the deaf children with CI in elementary schools have spoken language skills below the 16th percentile (CASELLI; HALL; HENNER, 2020), hence a high proficiency in ASL is necessary (HRASTINSKI; WILBUR, 2016; HOFFMEISTER; HENNER; CALDWELL-HARRIS; NOVOGRODSKY, 2021).

A high sign language proficiency requires stronger bilingual structures. Thus, considering the structures of the strong bilingual programs that require approximately 70% of an initial L1 teaching, such approach and practice for sign language learning is rarely fulfilled. Moreover, only a few studies show the amount of time dedicated to sign language teaching in children's schooling (see ORMEL et al. in this volume).

There is a lack and/or vagueness of definition in bilingual provision practices (even when individualized learning plans are followed), since the percentage of L1 education is not specified, and the program to be used is not defined. Exceptions are emerging co-enrollment programs (HUMPHRIES, 2014; ORMEL et al. in this volume), in which bilingual education is applied in a mixed student population, hearing and deaf, through the teaching of signed and spoken languages in dual programs.

6 Conclusion

Globalization has profoundly changed Greek society, and top-down EU policies indicate foreign ways of “doing and being” in Greek language policies. The newest language curriculum promotes multiliteracy and multiculturalism, in which GSL as an L1 has a limited function for a small number of deaf students. Greece needs to question and filter the meaning(s) and significance of its current linguistics policies in relation to the purpose of deaf education and the status of its languages (majority and minority) in the national curriculum. This again needs to be led by evidence-based signed language practice, in which GSL is taught as L1 and/or L2.

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