

## **ICT FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING**

### **“Exploring individual bilingualism of Albanian immigrant children in Greece: what the language biographies tell us”**

**Urania Sarri**

Title of original qualitative research:

"The impact of L1 in bilingual immigrant Albanian students in the Greek primary school system"

**Focus:** The effects of Language contact between Albanian and Greek

- childhood individual bilingualism
- migration context

**Aims:**

- increase knowledge on how the individual is affected by the demands globalization
- expand our understanding of
  - this particular ethno-linguistic group,
  - the linguistic/social phenomena of language contact and shift
  - issues in the area of bilingualism and migration

**Research questions:**

- What are the patterns of communication used by the participants with people of the same linguistic group within the home and school environment?
- What are the incentives, the rationales and the conditions these patterns of communication stem from?
- Which factors determine language choice for the group of young Albanian immigrants?
- How does the students' linguistic background affect second acquisition?

**Research context:**

- 8,5% -11% of the population are immigrants
- 72 % of immigrant students are Albanian
- intercultural education
  - but,
- implicit assimilation into the host culture
- Greek society is affected by stereotypes/ historical 'traumas'

(Gropas &Triandafyllidou, 2011)

**Research Methodology:** Language Biographies

- a better picture of the participants' background, an insider's view
- identify their resources and needs
- resources of understanding how people experience second language learning
- expand our understanding on Second Language Acquisition.
- reveal connections between learning procedures and learning phenomena
- constitute the intermediate level between the macro-level of sociolinguistics and the micro-level

(Nekvapil, 2003; Pavlenko, 2007; Busch, 2012)

### **Rationale for selecting the Language Biographies approach:**

The role of the individual speaker in the study of language contact situations.

### **The research participants:**

Immigrant Primary School students aged 8 to 11

- early bilinguals (EB): born in Albania and came to Greece before the age of three years old
- late bilinguals (LB): came to Greece at an older age, first/second or third grade
- labour immigrant families
- monolingual mainstream classes
- 

### **Evaluation:**

Issues regarding the participants' patterns of communication:

- Is there an L1?
- Home language: *Albanian* with the first generation, Greek in all their other interactions/contexts
- Albanian is only practiced at home
- Greek is used everywhere else: motivation to use Albanian at home

However...

- difficulties communicating in Albanian
- claiming maintenance of Albanian for symbolic reasons (pride for their origin, solidarity to their family, or reaction to the native population's xenophobia)
- an indication of their own attitude towards Albanian

### **Factors that determine the participants' language choice:**

- preference for the use of Greek is often initiated by the parents
- lack of exposure
- lack of confidence due to low level of proficiency
- peer pressure
- integration to the mainstream society , acceptance
- No preference for an Albanian-speaking teacher
- Self-rating of proficiency in Albanian arbitrary, or of symbolic function?
- No positive impact of group-concentration on the maintenance of Albanian

### **External factors that affect the maintenance of Albanian:**

- **Geographical proximity** is a factor of motivation to maintain Albanian
- **The Latin alphabet** has enhanced the learning of Albanian regarding writing and reading skills
- **The role of the satellite television:** a factor of language transmission
- 

### **Conclusions**

Final question:

*how does the students' linguistic background affect second language acquisition?*

- problematic characterizations/ terms in a migration context (L1/L2, mother tongue, home language, competence )  
(Garcia, 2009; Blommaert, 2010)
- Greek is the dominant language: asymmetrical bilingualism  
→ subtractive bilingualism → attrition, shift  
(Romaine, 2010; Garcia, 2009; Wei, 2000)

- Language choice is affected by
  - language status
  - peer pressure
  - frequency of input of the societal language  
(Hickey, 2010; Yamamoto, 2001; DeHouwer, 2009)
  
- indications of attrition and possibly shift: linguistic competence in Albanian is declining due to
  - age
  - educational
  - psychological
  - sociopolitical reasons  
(Gogonas, 2009; Mai, 2006, Grosjean and Li, 2013 )
  
- no real effort by parents to maintain/transmit Albanian- social mobility
  
- Albanian is only motivated when children communicate with the previous generation only at home, often with problems
  
- Subjects meant to indicate maintenance of Albanian for symbolic reasons (solidarity to their family and to the cultural/linguistic group )
  
- lack of self confidence due to low proficiency in Albanian is a factor for using Greek

Last but not least,  
 difference between what participants think is happening -or were eager to admit- and  
 what is actually happening:

**the importance of linguistic biographies as a tool for research**

“The answer to the puzzle of our repertoires is in our biographies and the wider  
 histories of the communities in which we live.”

(Blommaert, 2010:105)

**REFERENCES**

- Blommaert, J. (2010) The Sociolinguistics of Globalization (Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact). Cambridge University Press. Kindle Edition
- Busch, B. (2012) Language biographies – approaches to multilingualism in education and linguistic research. In Busch, B., Jardine, A. and Angelika Tjoutuku, A., Language biographies for multilingual learning. PRAESA – Occasional Papers No. 24
- DeHouwer, A. (2009) Bilingual First Language Acquisition. Multilingual Matters, Kindle Edition
- Garcia, O. (2009) Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective. Wiley Publishing. Kindle Edition
- Gogonas, N., (2009) Language shift in second generation Albanian immigrants in Greece. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, Vol. 30, No. 2.

- Gropas, R., Triandafyllidou, A., (2011) Greek education policy and the challenge of migration: an 'intercultural' view of assimilation', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 14:3,399-419
- Hickey, R. (2010) *Language Contact: Reconsideration and Reassessment*. In Hickey, R. (Ed), *The Handbook of Language Contact*. Blackwell
- Matras, Yaron (2009). *Language contact*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Nekvapil, J. I. (2003). Language biographies and the analysis of language situations: on the life of the German community in the Czech Republic. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. Volume 2003, Issue 162, pp.63-83;
- Nicola Mai (2005): *The Albanian Diaspora-in-the-Making: Media, Migration and Social Exclusion*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31:3, 543-561
- Pavlenko, A. (2007) *Autobiographic Narratives as Data in Applied Linguistics*. *Applied Linguistics* 28/2: 163–188. Oxford University Press
- Romaine, S. (2010) *Contact and Language Death* . *The Handbook of Language Contact*, Hickey, R., (eds) Wiley-Blackwell
- Wei, L. (2000) *The Bilingualism Reader*. Routledge