Language Planning in Greece: The Role Of English as a Lingua Franca

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Gakoudi, Androniki & Aitsiselmi, Farid. 2002. Language Planning in Greece: The Role of English as a Lingua Franca. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal 10*(1), 55-76. In the nineties the Greek educational authorities have acknowledged that Greek is one of the least spoken languages in the world and that priority should be given to the teaching of English as a lingua franca, in order not to be isolated, because it is the most widespread means of world-wide communication. This shift of status of English from a foreign language to a lingua franca raises a number of political, social and cultural questions. This article explores the concept of lingua franca in the context of foreign language planning in Greece focusing on the cultural issues raised as the result of the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in primary schooling. Some observations are made on the Greek attempts to teach a "neutral" variety of English which does not promote Anglo-American values and recommendations are offered on the educational implications of such an enterprise.

Key words: language planning, langua franca, language education

1. Introduction

There has been a chain of world languages for more than two millennia, each of which has developed in a certain geographical area and has therefore been linked to a certain culture. According to Kahane (1983), Greek in the Hellenistic period (323-146 BC) was associated with the culture of intellectualism in science, philosophy and art. It was used from Rome to Asia Minor until Latin became the language of written

communication in the Western world for seven or eight centuries. The two languages together, embodied in the culture of Medieval aristocracy, travelled from England to the Crusader states while during the Renaissance the 'traditions of the humanist and the knight' were combined through the emergence of Italian language (Kahane, 1983). French prevailed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, originally as the language of the courts and then as the language of diplomacy and bourgeoisie. By remaining the 'distinctive mark of the bourgeoisie' it travelled far beyond Europe, in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa (Kahane, 1983). Thus over the centuries, world languages have spread over different geographical areas by combining a variety of traditions and by being mediated through different cultures.

2. English as a Tool for Global Communication

The world language of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has unquestionably been English. At the moment, the overall situation, as far as the English language is concerned, is diverse, complicated and confusing. This is due to the fact that economy and trade have turned the world global, and English is playing an increasingly important role as the lingua franca for the purposes of communication and understanding one another. Kachru (1990) points out that as a lingua franca, 'English is no longer the exponent of only one culture' and that 'it is perhaps the worlds most multicultural language' (Kachru, 1990). While exploring the overall position of English in several countries, Fishman et al (1996) support the idea that English has been reconceptualised nowadays, 'from being an imperialist tool to being a multinational tool' (Fishman et al, 1996). Moreover, although English is organically connected with a colonial past, it has also become 'the language of anti-British campaigns in Africa or Asia where it was used to foster the revival or development of nationalism' (Kachru, 1985).

According to Penelope (1985), considering language as a tool enables us to objectify it and to treat it as an item for which some uses are

appropriate and others are not. It also enables us to conceptualise language reductively as a mere array of words. (Penelope, 1985). A utilitarian notion of language is thus promoted when language is disconnected from culture and the people using it. Widdowson (1997) refers to English, used as an instrument for the exchange of information mainly in utilitarian and cultural domains, as 'international English', a language which is used for specific professional and academic purposes (Widdowson, 1997). This functionalist philosophy which underpins the concept of English used as a lingua franca, promotes its use as a mere tool or instrument for communication and fails to understand that language is also an essential component of culture and identity.

It has become evident that the new social and economic needs of globalisation are reflected in the educational arena as well. National foreign language policies no longer follow the practice that has been adhered to in the past and which used to be Anglo-centred. They have now adopted different initiatives and developments to tackle the challenges, creating new educational initiatives, enhancements to curricula, and developments of educational techniques. The appropriation of English, as far as language teaching is concerned, is a widespread phenomenon and many national foreign language policies promote appropriated forms of English, among others: *'de-cultured English'* (Adaskou et al, 1990) *'cosmopolitan English'* (Brown, 1990) *'de-Anglo-Americanised English'* (Alptekin, 1993), or simply *'international English'* (Schnitzer, 1995; Strevens, 1980). In each case English has been appropriated in order to fulfil local needs so that learners view the acquisition of English according to the values prevalent in their society.

Modiano (2000) suggests that English as a lingua franca relates to 'a "neutral" variety of spoken English·which is difficult to locate geographically'. Seidlhofer (2001) sets the foundations for the 'imagined tradition' of the community of English as lingua franca speakers, who have already learnt English as a lingua franca. For him 'the largest group of speakers world-wide, ·learnt English as a lingua franca for communicating with other lingua franca speakers' (Seidlhofer, 2001).

However, the largest group of speakers world-wide actually learn English either as a foreign or a second language with an orientation to grammar analysis, and no specific intercultural communicational goals as such.

Kramschs (2000) defines culture as 'membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings' (Kramsch, 2000). Therefore foreign language national curricula that promote appropriated forms of English aim at rejecting membership in the native speakers discourse communities. Thus appropriation can be seen as a strategy of resistance and challenge to the dominant authority of English. Furthermore, the native speakers norms are not universally accepted since native speaker authority is under impressive non-native speaker challenge (Medgyes, 1994; Graddol, 1999). Many linguists (Firth, 1996; House, 1999; Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001) attempt to provide English with a description of its most extensive contemporary use so that English as a lingua franca will no longer be regarded as a deviation from English as a native language (Seidlhofer, 2001).

3. The Concept of Lingua Franca

According to the *Geolinguistic Handbook* (Gunnemark, 1992), any language can be a lingua franca as long as it is used for 'interethnic communication, that is, a means of communication between persons who have no other language in common'. For *The Concise Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* (on line), a lingua franca is 'an auxiliary language, usually hybrid, [·] used over an extensive area by people speaking different and mutually unintelligible tongues, in order to communicate with one another [·] primarily for commercial purposes'. The Encyclopaedia Britannica draws an interesting distinction between 'pidginized or creolized languages used as linguae francae and "full" languages so used' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14).

In applied linguistics and education (Byram, 1989 1997; Byram & Risager, 1999; Kachru,1990; Kramsch, 1993; Modiano, 2000; Risager,

1996; Seidlhofer, 2001) the term English as a lingua franca refers to a discourse used by non-native speakers to meet their social needs. In that sense, it is a language serving as a regular means of communication between members of different speech communities.

Similarly in sociolinguistics, the term lingua franca refers to any language serving as a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups in a multilingual speech community. It can be 'a world language, such as English, French or Spanish' (Holmes 1992, p. 86) serving as a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups. It can also be an official language or the national language of a country. The term 'lingua franca' is a descriptive phrase for a function of English which can be misleading in that it appears to suggest both an auxiliary language, a trade language and a 'full' language. Moreover, the term lingua franca has various connotations. For Modiano (2000), it conveys totally different ideological implications in that 'the lingua franca establishes an understanding that non-native speakers of English do not necessarily join the native English-speaking societies in their conceptualization of the world, but instead have a culturally distinct vision' (Modiano, 2000).

According to Phillipson (1993), the term 'lingua franca' is 'ambivalent'. It 'is now frequently applied to dominant international languages' while in colonial times 'lingua franca was restricted to dominant African languages' (Phillipson, 1993). As a colonial language, English, has provided many countries, whose population consists of many multilingual speech communities, in South Asia and parts of Africa, with an official language for their administrative cohesiveness. Through its use in such contexts, where native terms would be religious or ethnic markers, English has been used 'to *neutralize* [his emphasis] identities one is reluctant to express by the use of native languages or dialects' (Kachru, 2000). Thus English has acquired the power to offer neutrality in social contexts where native languages and dialects have undesirable connotations.

As a result, for many English non-native speakers, who live in multilingual speech communities, English has been bestowed the

connotative meaning of a neutral language based on the notion that English as a lingua franca can be a 'neutral' language void of meanings that are ideologically charged and controlled by the culture(s) of its native speakers. It is as if English refers to a language without any symbolic power at all or in other words a language which does not evoke any connotations concerning power, authority or political decisions.

Internationally, English has been used as a trade language or as an auxiliary language for commercial purposes and has now become the language of TNCs (Transnational Corporations) (Slowinski, on line) and new technologies (Bollag, on line). It can be argued that 'English as an international language has by definition, become independent of its origins' (Seidlhofer, 2001). The use of English as a lingua franca is based on the presupposition that it can be used as a neutral means of international communication detached from the notion of cultural imperialism that any 'dominant' language is loaded with. Moreover such use of English presupposes its divestment of the model provided by English native speakers.

4. The Cultural Space of Teaching English as a Lingua Franca

English as a lingua franca is seen as another non-standard variety of English and has been embraced as a signal of solidarity among non-native speakers of English. According to Modiano (2000), the various shifts in the usage of English 'bring Europeans and the others [i.e. non-native speakers] closer to a usage which has greater affinity to EIL (English as an International Language), or by definition, the lingua franca' (Modiano, 2000). He argues that the focal point of non-native speakers will no longer be the 'monolingual, monocultural abstraction of the native speaker' (Kramsch, 2000). English as a lingua franca provides English with a totally different identity whereby 'ideal nativeness and claims to ·ownership · must give way to multifarious combinations of language use and membership in various discourse communities more than has been up to now assumed under the label

native speaker' (Kramsch, 2000).

It is important to acknowledge a difference of perspective between Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching English as a Lingua Franca (TELF). Linguists should propose the conceptual framework that will encompass the discourse of speakers of English as a lingua franca. This discourse can either be based on the neutralisation process, but this may lead to the fallacy that English as a lingua franca is a 'neutral' language, or it can constitute an act of resistance to the authority of the English native speaker thus providing lingua franca speakers with a 'third place' (Kramsch, 1993). They will be able to 'perform cultural acts of identity or resistance' (Kramsch, 2000).

English as a lingua franca can be examined as the 'in-between cultural space' (Kramsch, 2000) that non-native speakers have to explore while interacting. It provides non-native speakers with an imagined territory where they can develop their strategy to resist the authority of the native speaker. The latter cannot easily be discerned since 'contemporary English does not have just one defining context but many – across cultures and languages' (Kachru, 2000). Therefore in English as a lingua franca used as a means to enhance mutual understanding and relationships, the importance of cultural awareness cannot be underestimated.

The 'cultural space' of English as a lingua franca can be seen as a 'place' where a struggle for power occurs between non-native speakers of English and the 'native speaker'. These struggles are inscribed into the organisation of many national foreign language policies and EFL curricula where teaching of English as a lingua franca is currently a developing area. The fluidity and contingency of this area is reflected in the relevant language pedagogy which moves away from focus on grammar and language analysis as the goal of teaching to the goal of teaching for communication and in particular intercultural communication. For Kramsch (2000) the: 'ability to acquire another persons language and understand someone else's culture while retaining one's own is one aspect of a more general ability to mediate between several languages and cultures, called cross-cultural, intercultural, or

multicultural communication' (Kramsch, 2000).

5. English in the Context of Greek Education

Since 1964 the provision of state education in Greece has been free at all levels of education and all Greeks are entitled to enjoy nine years of compulsory education from the age of six at primary and lower secondary levels. Although attendance after the age of sixteen is not compulsory, the majority of Greek students carry on to upper secondary school, as there is no selection involved. Selection procedures are transferred towards the end of secondary education with intense competition for entry into higher education.

The Greek educational system is characterised by its centralised structure in terms of its organisation and operation with the central regulation of primary and secondary school curricula and their homogeneous application to all schools. To this end, specially devised textbooks are published by the National Organisation for the Publication of School Textbooks. Privately owned schools, operating in the big urban areas of the country, are obliged by law to follow the national curricula of the state schools and to use the same textbooks. They are also inspected by state education advisers. Teaching staff for both primary and secondary education are degree holders and in their majority non-native speakers, graduates of Greek universities where they are taught how to teach Standard English focusing on Received Pronunciation (RP).

In 1992 the teaching of English was introduced as a compulsory subject in the Greek primary school curriculum. The Greek minister of education stated that the rationale underlying this policy is that foreign language learning 'contributes to mutual understanding, exchange of ideas, values and cultural traits, but it also establishes the development of economic relations' (cited in Mitakidou, 1997).

The minister of National Education and Culture acknowledges that 'Greek is one of the least spoken languages in the world' (Pedagogical Institute, 1997), and that priority should be given to the teaching of

foreign languages with English receiving first priority because it is 'the mother tongue of several largely populated countries both European and non-European, whose peoples enjoy a high level of technological, economic and cultural development' (Pedagogical Institute, 1997). Furthermore, it is 'one of the most widespread means of world-wide communication in the field of finance and trade, as well as art' (Pedagogical Institute 1997, p. 65). Foreign language learning is, then, a political, social, economic as well as cultural concern according to the Greek Ministry of Education and Culture. In 1997 the Greek Ministry of National Education and Culture published a document both in Greek and in English which outlines the curriculum for the teaching of English as a compulsory subject in the fourth, fifth and sixth years of primary education (10-12 year olds) and the first, second, and third years of secondary education (12-14 year olds). This document outlines the national priorities and defines, in very broad terms, the aims for the teaching of English.

The importance of English instruction in Greek primary schools is reflected in the amount of hours devoted to it in the national curriculum timetable as compared to other subjects. English typically occupies three hours weekly, that is almost one third of the hours that Modern Greek is taught and only one hour less than mathematics. The significance of English in Greek compulsory education is a reflection of the role of English in Greek society where it is widely present in the contexts of tourism, entertainment, business and academia. However, in deciding on the availability of hours devoted to the teaching of English another factor was also taken into consideration: learning English will allow Greek students not only to 'transact with people from various nationalities'. It will also give them the opportunity to 'give their fellow communicators motives to comprehend Greek culture and learn the Greek language' (Pedagogical Institute 1997, p. 67).

6. The Role of English in Contemporary Greek Society

In Greece, for the past fifty years at least, knowing a foreign

language was considered part of an individuals spiritual cultivation. Nowadays, English has been become a necessity for competition in international markets and access to the European Union job market: 'Opportunities for knowledge, jobs, and advancement may be open to English speakers and closed to others' (Slowinski, on line). A look at the Greek daily press will reveal a large number of job advertisements which are addressed to English-speaking candidates because for many international companies, competence in English is an essential requirement.

The Greek educational system has also helped propel the English language forward at an astonishing rate because it had been taught as a school subject in secondary education many years before it was introduced as a compulsory subject in primary schools. Furthermore, in Greece, it is common practice for students to attend English courses in private language institutes (known in Greek as 'frontistiria') or to take private tuition in English because their parents fear that the curriculum in the state schools does not prepare them for internationally recognised examinations in English. In addition, although the Greek government has not instituted a graduated set of English language examinations for employment of civil servants or teachers, its personnel policies have encouraged language acquisition by employees. A system of allowances and salary rewards for language training has supported this expansion of the English language. However, although foreign languages have been taught in state secondary schools for almost forty years, no Greek official test has been introduced to certify the Greek students level of competence in English. This gap, in the exam-oriented Greek society, is filled by the examinations set by foreign educational institutes such as the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) or governmental bodies such as the British Council, attracting thousands of examinees every year. For example, Prodromou (1992) maintains that about 45,000 candidates per year take the UCLES exams in Greece (Prodromou, 1992). These exams have become an indispensable part of Greek social life and culture.

TV, computer games and pop music are major sources of English,

embedded in a culturally bound context with which children in Greece become familiar well before they encounter the language as a school subject. Most childrens TV programmes (US produced cartoons i.e. Ninja turtles, Disney cartoons, Hercules etc) are English speaking and very few of them are dubbed. The spread of Information Technology and the explosive growth of the Internet have fuelled the expansion of English even further. Many young Greeks have grown up listening to English and American songs (mostly rap and hip-hop) with English lyrics and several advertising campaigns use English-only slogans. The titles of several Greek magazines (Close Up, Down-Town, Know-How), most private TV channels (Star, Telecity) and radio stations (Energy, Love Radio, Capital Gold) are in English as well. American films and TV programmes are distributed in large numbers both on state and private Greek TV channels and Greek cinema centres. The culture of popular entertainment and mass consumerism in Greece has become to a surprisingly large extent Anglo-American. Multiplex cinemas are built in areas on the outskirts of big cities where American type fast food (Applebees and McDonalds) is also available and where the feature films are in English providing another reason for Greeks to study English.

7. English in Greek Primary Education

The objective of English language teaching in Greece is to 'allow students to communicate with native English speakers on the one hand as well as with individuals of different nationalities who use English as a common language code, on the other'. Thus the Greek educational authorities acknowledge that Greek students 'learn English so as to use it as a lingua franca'. To achieve this goal they suggest not to emphasise the cultural elements which characterise those countries where English is the native language. 'On the contrary', they recommend to 'highlight the international elements of the English language'. (Pedagogical Institute, 1997).

Two main questions arise from the language policy that the Greek

authorities aspire to implement and their answers are not apparent in the English language curriculum of the Greek primary education. Firstly it is not clear whether this policy means that the emphasis should be placed on teaching low order general language skills focusing on basic communicative abilities. Secondly the origin of the social and cultural aspects to be included in English language teaching is not clearly defined nor is the way in which these materials should be dealt with in the classroom. When selecting teaching material the issue of representation and representativity is always a difficult one to resolve. Kramsch (2000) defines representation as the way a culture 'expresses itself, or is expressed by others, through linguistic, visual, artistic and non-artistic means' (Kramsch, 2000). Since the concept of lingua franca implies a multicultural, multilingual society, this problem can only be more complex to solve.

Fun Way English is a series consisting of three students books (FWSB), *Fun Way English 1, 2 and 3*, their corresponding Teachers books (FWTB), as well as Workbooks and cassettes all of which are specifically designed for the teaching of English to 10-12 year-olds in a classroom context. It was produced by a working party of Greek teachers of English, primary school teachers and illustrators, appointed by the Greek Ministry of Education. It is the final and revised form of previous experimental material published in 1993. *Fun Way English* -as the title suggests- aims at making learning an interesting and enjoyable experience. Each students book is divided into ten units each addressing a different aspect of the lives of its 'international lively main characters' (FWTB 1, p. 8). Each unit consists of a number of lessons addressing different issues or activities that would be of interest to the Greek students who 'are trained to feel as equal members of the universal school community' (FWTB 1, p. 8).

The listening material includes the tape scripts of the picture stories and the listening exercises. The students are exposed to the voices of young native English speakers of their age because 'it is important for the pupils to develop good pronunciation habits' (FWTB 1, p. 9). A conventional view of ELT is adopted, whereby a 'prestige' accent is

promoted. 'Good pronunciation habits' refer to the Received Pronunciation (RP) 'used by a minority of speakers in Britain [it] developed in the nineteenth century in the public schools and universities, and was associated in the 1930s and 1940s with BBC newsreaders' (Cox, 2000). Furthermore 'this accent is not used as the model of English pronunciation in British schools, since speakers may be rightly proud of their regional pronunciation, which identifies where they come from' (Cox, 2000). Thus the Greek materials have missed the opportunity to highlight a feature inherent to international English: non-prestigious accents of various native and non-native varieties.

In many ways *Fun Way English* has moved away from the monocultural Anglo-centred way of teaching English and has gradually appropriated the teaching material for an international context where English is used as a common language code. In other words, the Greek authorities have implemented a policy (which is a reversal of recent traditions in English language teaching) based on English as a lingua franca to be used in multilingual settings in the global environment. By presenting a variety of symbolic cultural references not exclusively anchored in the Anglo-American culture the Greek policy-makers aspire perhaps to counter the cultural pervasiveness of the language. The Greek policy could be regarded as an act of cultural resistance stemming from the fear that the local culture may yield to the dominant culture of the foreign language. Indeed, the content of most EFL materials used in Greece has been criticised for being characterised by 'monocultural and ethnocentric views about language' (Prodromou, 1992).

The present proposal of the Greek authorities is highlighting that the international elements of English is the most suitable way to fulfil the educational, cognitive, emotional and linguistic goals of raising understanding of and reducing prejudice towards other cultures and peoples. According to Robertson (1996), the 'internationalisation' of the curriculum contributes to developing a 'new solidarity' among non-native speakers (Robertson, 1996). English language teaching can improve intercultural relationships if the teaching of culture(s) becomes

an integral part of the subject.

In their attempt to appropriate English, the Greek Pedagogical Institute envisages school as a particular international domain, the members of which form a distinctive discourse community who use English as 'a common language code' (Pedagogical Institute, p. 66) to meet their social needs. In doing so, the members of this community choose to talk about the same topics and interact using the same style. To put it differently they share the same 'discourse accent' (Kramsch, 2000). It is also assumed that students can identify with the characters portrayed in the books because they share the 'common social space' and 'common imaginings' (Kramsch, 2000) of this universal school community. In other words, they share a set of cultural practices. For example, they are 'children of the world' (FWSB 2, p. 23-32), have their school paper (FWSB 2, pp. 33-42), go to fancy dress parties on carnival days (FWSB 2, pp. 43-52), play jokes on April Fools Day (FWSB 2, p. 19-28), have penfriends (FWSB 2, p. 41-51) or Euro-friends (FWSB 1, p. 103-113) prepare yearbooks at the end of the academic year (FWSB, 2 p. 52-60), organise school shows (FWSB 1 p. 53-62), or go on holidays (FWSB 1, p. 83-93) to name but a few. The Greek policy-makers adopt a synchronic view of culture which is currently shared by the members of the universal school discourse community which might lead to the deceptive belief that the culture of the community is homogeneous.

Sharing a language as a common communication code does not presuppose sharing ways of interpreting and understanding reality. Members of the same discourse community of a particular international domain, such as school, will not necessarily share a 'common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting' (Kramsch, 2000) when using the language in other social domains of their everyday life. In her analysis of the cultural elements contained in *Fun Way English* Gakoudi (2001) found that a wide range of countries and cultures were effectively mentioned in the course-books. However, when she examined more closely the number of cultural references in the teaching materials, she found that 69.5% of the cultural information

contained in the *Fun Way* Teachers Book, refers to institutions and facts pertaining to the civilisation of the countries where English is a native language, mainly the United Kingdom, the USA and Australia. The images of the various countries always presented in colourful maps throughout the three students books, with flags or landmarks, and the information given, fulfil the general educational goal of cultivating the students self-awareness as individuals and members of a national community, as well as members of an extended, or world-wide community. Nonetheless, this goal is not compatible with the general educational goal of 'cultivating their [the students] appreciation of the difference of character among individuals, social groups and nationalities, so as to achieve an understanding and appreciation of the values, beliefs and opinions of others, while aiming at communication and co-operation with them' (Pedagogical Institute, 1997).

The persistent focus on the presentation of flags, nationalities and landmarks results in promoting other countries as places where one might spend a holiday. It is as if these countries serve as small stops in the students journey and they, as young tourists do, see things but they are kindly requested not to touch. Byrams idea on students viewed as tourists (Byram, 1989) lends itself admirably to this particular context. More importantly teachers' manuals contain no suggestions as to how cultural information should be used in their classes it.

Even though the Greek ministry argues that 'the present curriculum might differ significantly from traditional curricula which were centred on the course contents' (Pedagogical Institute 1997, p. 71), it resembles traditional curricula in that it confines itself to a mere transmission of 'cultural information' or 'input' favouring 'facts over meaning' (Kramsch, 1993). The adverse effect of this tendency is that Greek students are not given the opportunity to understand the 'attitudes, values and mindsets' (Kramsch, 1993) of the speakers of the language in question. In order for the students to achieve this, they have to be helped to understand the concept of cultural 'otherness' and not to experience it merely as a tourist. Greek authorities may successfully respond to this issue only if they find answers to the problem of

equitable and appropriate delivery of 'cultural information'. The use of English as a lingua franca in national curricula, as a means to enhance mutual understanding and relationships presupposes that the importance of critical cultural awareness cannot be underestimated.

Students judge English culture by inappropriate standards, either seeing it from a 'tourist viewpoint' (Byram, 1989) or relating it to the sociocultural context of the particular neutral international domain of the universal school community mentioned earlier. However as Brown (1990) contends 'there are no contexts of language use which are value-free, quite independent of any cultural background' (Brown, 1990). Policies on English as a foreign language can be successfully implemented only by formulating clearly set objectives, providing the required teaching methodology and most importantly, defining *the* English to be taught. The paradigm of TELF will be a promising alternative to the existing disciplinary bases of TEFL on the condition that it encompasses an understanding of cultural boundaries and attempts to enable students 'to acquire another person's language and understand someone elses culture while retaining ones own' (Kramsch, 2000).

8. Conclusion

When setting educational aims, the Greek foreign language policy-makers aspire to influence the teaching of English, (the language of colonisation and imperialism) so that it is presented as a neutral activity. They seem to maintain that the complex processes of globalisation or exposure to Anglo-American culture that affect many aspects of the lives of Greek students will be neutralised. The functionalist conceptualisation of English as a lingua franca, can be considered as the most unrealistic feature of the current language policy since it relies on the existence of a neutral language which would serve as a vehicle of escape from English/American ideology. By not being given the chance to experience a meaningful confrontation with the target culture(s), students do not develop their cultural literacy. They learn only the denotative meaning of the words. If the Greek authorities

aim to effectively appropriate English in the primary education system, they cannot shirk the responsibility of facing the challenge of a pedagogy capable of addressing the complex problems of equitable and appropriate delivery of cultural information. This goal will be missed as long as the education authorities focus on the grammatical features of the language without regard for its cultural functions. The myth of a decontextualised and vacuous language can exist only in the isolated and incubatory world of the (Greek) primary classroom.

English should be taught by bringing it into confrontation with other cultural codes/modes of English. The 'third culture' (Kramsh, 1993; Robertson, 1996) produced in the classroom would be a product of the interstices opened up between the local and target culture(s), which in our case are the other English-speaking cultures. Thus, Greek students can actively participate in re-drawing the landscape of EFL by subverting its native-speaker dominated discourse. This process requires the staging and building of dialogue between the ingrained dominant aspects of English and oppositional or differential elements from other English speaking cultures. If the curriculum fails to do so then there is a danger of creating a counter-culture in school classrooms that might offer an illusively satisfying version of reality, eventually leading to a false autonomy: an autonomy confined to the private domains of a school so close but at the same time so far away from intercultural communication. Rather than being wishfully neutralised, words may be explored in the conflictual meaning they acquire in different cultural contexts. Thus students will become conscious members of a discourse community being aware of the 'intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole' and empowered to successfully 'engage in cultural exchanges across boundaries that are both co-operative and conflictual' (Waters, 1995). Language learning should be connected to the world outside of school not only to make learning more interesting and motivating to students but also to develop the ability to use knowledge in real world settings. Thus students need not only to be informed about some cultural facts but also to be made conscious of the kinds of values language carries and the options between different sets

of values that the students should be able to compare and consciously choose from.

The curriculum for English as a lingua franca should also establish a dialogue between the local and target culture(s) and students should be presented with and instructed into the conflict and struggles among the multiple Englishes. Thus the Greek foreign language policy could be pioneering and not utopian or guilty of escapism while pursuing a programme that attempts to uproot the language from its history of cultural domination. The positive potential of the Greek policy-makers gesture is dependent precisely on transcending the problem after fully working it out first. The Greek policy-makers have to put the issues of world domination, colonialist and imperialist heritage, the reproduction of symbolic power, the reproduction of Britain and USA as metropolitan cultures, and Greece as periphery, on the table. The results of such interactions may help students create a more powerful and empowering third culture in their classrooms and will enable teachers to fight linguistic and cultural imperialism effectively. To achieve these goals, however, it is most important in teacher training to develop teacher awareness of the new agenda for the teaching of English because they are not taught how to integrate creatively their background knowledge into their teaching of English as a lingua franca. Devising appropriated material is very important but it is equally important to inform teaching methodology accordingly because a book can always be used in a different manner from the one conceived by its authors. It is of utmost importance that teachers are given guidance for the organisation of interventions aimed at raising the awareness of the dialectic relation between the local and the target culture(s) so that students can be liberated from the hegemonic discourse of 'institutionalised English Imperialism' (Phillipson, 1993).

The complexities that the teaching of a language as a lingua franca entails have to be taken into consideration and the farther aims of a national foreign language policy have to be clarified. For this purpose the 'international elements' (Pedagogical Institute 1997, p. 66) of English have to be defined. The students contact with English is carried out

through a semiotic system that includes sounds, accents and codes but also symbols and images. This is a fact that policy-makers cannot ignore or put aside. The challenge for Greek foreign language policy will be to approach English as a medium of education and consciousness raising. It would be a valuable added by-product of learning English if Greek students consciousness were raised as to the role of English in promoting the hidden ideological content of EFL material which can enhance stereotyping in a quite subconscious therefore extremely dangerous way.

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