

**LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION AND ITS AFFECT IN CYPRUS  
ISSUES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITY AND INTERETHNIC  
RELATIONSHIPS**

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**Prospects for the future**

**I. Introduction**

*“ Cypriots and no Cypriots. Do not dare to ask us, if we are Cypriots! We would take this as an insult. Why? Because in Cyprus the only thing that is Cypriot is the donkey.”*

Rauf Denktas, former leader of the Turkish Cypriot community

(Kilzilyurek 1999a, 1999b, p. 36 quoted in Loizides, 2007, p.173.)

*“ The [ Cyprus ] flag has its defenders. In the summer of 1990. .. Glafkos Clerides, told the author [ Monteagle Stearns ] that the flag of Cyprus is the best of the world' '. When asked why, he replied, “Because no one would die for it.”*

Glafkos Clerides, former President of the Republic of Cyprus

(Stearns1999, p.172 quoted in Loizides, 2007, p.173.)

Despite their humorous communicative style(at least for the second), both statements reflect a mutual public admission that issues of citizenship and identity have been raised within both communities of the island. Literally, citizenship implies membership to a political community. More specifically, Hall et.al.(1998) define citizenship as “ *a state based on membership applying equally to al its members from which certain rights an d obligations proceed*”(p.302) Although both terms, citizenship and identity, define membership, citizenship differs from identity in a sense that the latter is personalized, individual and deeply psychological and relates to the “sense of we are”. It does not necessarily determine citizenship in post-modern societies and it has little to do with

issues of statehood and the legal and constitutional framework on which a state is established.

For all those familiar to the “Cyprus problem” or the “Cyprus question” the two former leaders' statements would seem less paradoxical since ambiguity concerning identity and obviously statehood has been variously expressed among Turkish and Greek Cypriots through the press and public speech. Language chosen by politicians or policy makers is neither neutral nor accidental. Policy and language are strongly interrelated since words can occasionally act as “loaded pistols” as Jean Paul Sartre remarked. Both language and politics (or policies) have to do with power. Beyond their linguistic attributes as units of world conceptualization, words function as dynamic bearers of power. We all witnessed through the Greek media, a single word "συνωστίζονται" (sinostizonte- get crowded at the ports of Smyrne), with its semantic and pragmatic features, becoming the actor in a political serial which had as a result withdrawing Repousi's (Professor at the Aristotle's University of Thessalonica) Elementary History books from both the Greek and Greek Cypriot curriculum, two years ago (see Economist.com., March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007).

Discourse thus, incorporates the visions of leaders and gives voice to the ideological framework they represent. In Cyprus, discourse in its various forms conceptualized the various ideologies underlying political speech since the establishment of the Cyprus Republic. A discourse of conflict radically emerged especially after the 1974 division of the island. Due to the war trauma the Greek Cypriots suffered, that particular kind of discourse permeates all levels of public and individual speech from press to poetry and

literature and influenced educational and language policies lied down to Greek Cypriot schools.

However, Education is the field where children acquire knowledge and skills to become citizens of the Cypriot state. Tollefson(2002) argues that the choice of language to be used in public domains as education is the most difficult question that a multicultural and multiethnic society has to address .Discourse constitutes the medium through which education specifies its outcomes and promotes learning. Children and educationists are exposed to discourse systematically either this concerns oral communication or written speech through texts books, literature, curricula and circulars.

If we accept that language itself entails the power to shape peoples' collective conscience and ethos, then issues of language policy and planning should be crucial in a multicultural and multiethnic state as Cyprus, since *“language is not a mere medium of reality. It is partly constitutive of that reality.”* (Addis, 1997, p.138 quoted in Tollefson, 2002). However, the field of language policy and especially educational language policy and planning is a rather novel endeavor since educational language policy has been somehow *“a covert policy as it has never been clearly articulated in an official declaration or decree nor is it presented in any specific, official, state document or regulated by law ”* (Papapavlou and Pavlou, 2007).

Today, there is consensus among the parliament parties about the country's political future. The European prospect along with the re-unity (not accidentally the term replaced

liberation which is still used by quite a few political groups) of the country are unambiguous aims. It could be argued thus, that language policy and educational planning have an important role to play since “ *planning is the instrument of leaders who desire to change the society*” (Wernstein quoted in Riley, 1996, p.111)

In view of the above, I will attempt a critical insight to the contribution of language policy or “non policy” in promoting inter-community relations during the post-independence years. Furthermore I will explore ways in which language educational policy may promote interethnic relations in a “euro -Cypriot state”.(characterization according to Kazamias educational reform report 2004)

## II. Language Educational Policy -The context in Cyprus

The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960 after a long period during which the island had been a British colony. The population of the island consisted of Greek Cypriots(orthodox), Turkish Cypriots(Muslim), Maronites, Latines (Catholics) and Armenians. The Greek and Turkish Cypriot population of Cyprus constitute two separate communities implying that both parts have equal political status whereas the Latines, Armenians, and Maronites are referred to as minorities of the Greek Cypriot community .

According to the 1960's constitution Cyprus is a state with two official languages that is Greek and Turkish. It is worth mentioning that despite the fact that the Latine and Maronite minority constitute diverse ethnic groups, they use the Greek language probably because they have been through the process of language loss through the ages. However, in 2002 a Maronite only public primary school was established in Nicosia(Lakatamia-Agios Maronas school). According to the school program primary school children can attend lessons(1 teaching period per week) on their mother tongue which is a variety of Aramaic language and was used among members of the community in Kormakitis village. The Armenian minority supports the Armenian language which is viewed as the distinctive characteristic of their identity. The government sponsors the Narec school in Nicosia where students are taught the Armenian language, history and Geography.

The 1960's constitution entrusted education of the Greek community to the Greek Community Council and education of the Turkish community to the Turkish Community Council and not in the government, which had a bi-Communal character. The delegation of power from the Greek Community Council to the Ministry of Education, was founded in 1965 based on the law of necessity, after the inter-communal armed conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot in 1963 which led the two communities to partial segregation. Ever since, the Ministry of Education has the responsibility for the education of Greek Cypriots. In other words, the Ministry of Education undertook the duties of the Greek Community Council. Accordingly, constitutional, legislative and administrative forecasts allow the formulation and the application of clearly Hellenocentric education (Persianis and Poliviou, 1992).

Education in Cyprus has always been monolingual since the establishment of the Republic. Monolingual Education implies the kind of education in which a single language is used as a medium of instruction. The outcome in monolingual settings is the learning of a single language. In particular, Standard Greek language is taught in all sectors of public primary and secondary schools. It is worth mentioning that Greek Cypriots are dialectal speakers and the students' mother tongue is actually Greek Cypriot dialect.

The Ministry of Education followed a policy of replicating the Greek Ministry of Education policies concerning language issues. To date, the policy as far as textbooks are concerned provides for the use of textbooks arriving from the Greek Ministry of

Education. More specifically, within the Primary sector, teachers used a series of textbooks named “I glossa mou”(My language) from 1984 until 2006. In 2006 the Greek Ministry of Education introduced an other series of textbooks based on genre and communicative approach which are used by teachers in primary sector until today.



### III. Language , identity and citizenship in Cyprus

Language is more than simply a mode of communication. The language(or languages) each of us speaks function as a bearer of ideas, concepts, beliefs and attitudes. It relates to culture that is the ever changing values, traditions, social and political relationships shared and transformed by a group of people (Nieto, 1999). Culture and language interrelate and therefore, being a member of a linguistic community implies membership to a cultural community as well. The way one expresses thanking or grieving, contempt or applause, for example, does not reflect merely a linguistic act but also a cultural. Culture permeates all levels of linguistic performance and it is a defining feature of who we are. In Grant's(1998) terms language and culture constitute “ *markers of identity*”(p.41) Language and the culture beyond, along with the crucial role of religion constitute the basic elements defining one's ethnic identity, ethnicity or nationality. In Jewish tradition and Christianity people started to perceive themselves as “others” just when they began to speak different languages while building the Babel tower.

That particular “otherization” of people according to linguistic and religious cultural features of identity generated the idea(l) of nation while loyalty towards the nation is referred to as nationalism. Joshua Fishman, a distinguished sociolinguist discusses the relationship that bonds together language and identity suggesting that very commonly nations invested their territory under the slogan “ *language equals nationality and nationality equals language*” (quoted in Dedaic,M., Nelson, D., eds, 2004,p.3).

It would seem that the monolingual school policy applied both in Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schools in the post independence period emerged out of that particular ideological doctrine. Specifically, the hellenocentric character of education was recognized by the agreements of Zurich - London on which the Republic of Cyprus was established. The agreements entrusted education of the Greek community in the Greek Community Council and education of the Turkish community in the Turkish Community Council and not in the government, which had a bi - Communal character (Persianis, P. 1994). The monolingual and monocultural community school aimed at reproducing a single language and a single culture that is Greek for the Greek Cypriots and Turkish for the Turkish Cypriots. The educational language policy laid down to schools served as the vehicle ensuring the "survival" of each community's ethno linguistic origins and strengthening the bonds between the dialectal speakers of Greek and Turkish correspondingly towards the metropolis homeland that represents the nation.

Karyolemou (1999) discusses the constitutional provisions for the country's language policy in 1960 referring to the 3 to 7 proportion applied for public sectors as the broadcasting. However, things seemed to be much dissimilar with regard to the educational sector since Education did not follow a similar pattern. The author (op.cit) speculates that the settlement of 3 to 7 could have contributed in the creation of a bilingual state and therefore a bilingual society. The creation of a bilingual social culture was however, prevented by the existence of two separate educational systems which replicated to a large extent the educational systems of Greece and Turkey aiming at the maintenance of national awareness:

*“Initially, the existence of two separate educational systems that repeated to a large extent the educational systems of Greece and Turkey aimed at maintaining national awareness . However, they were not common for the two communities and therefore, national diversity was emphasized and increased”(Karyolemou,1999,p.1 )*

It would seem that the doctrine of “language equals nationality and nationality equals language” prevailed to establish a reciprocal ethical norm implying that “*detachment to one's language was considered to be a sign of devotion to the ethnic group from which he/she came from. That particular fact led to establishing and strengthening linguistic segregation*”(Karyolemou,1999,p.1)

Nonetheless, the concept of nation is in fact “ an imagined community” and membership to a national group is thought to be “ an imagined membership” too( Anderson, 1991; Billig,1995 cited in Blackledge,2005). In other words, some people might feel to be Greeks even if they live thousands of miles away from the “metropolis homeland” and in fact they have the right to do it. However, in the case of Greek and Turkish Cypriot Educational language policy, monolingualism did encourage membership to that imaginary concept but as Dedaic and Nelson(2004) put it, neighboring people are not imaginary; they are real. One could argue thus, that the monolingual policy of separatism as prescribed according to the 1960's constitution, was used as a medium to secure “otherness” that is, an us and them approach between the cultural and ethnic groups of the island instead of promoting intercultural understanding. Coulby(1998) views that “*to have access to one neighbor's culture is to be able to understand something of their*

*language, religion philosophy, law and science*”(p.319) It could be argued however, that access to that particular cultural context was denied within the Public Education. Schooling, was not viewed as the field where students would have developed certain pluralistic friendly attitudes either was it regarded as the place where future citizens would have constructed their identity as members of a multiethnic-multilingual and multicultural society.

The use of language as a resource was rather absent in educational policy and planning during the post-colonial period. In a sociolinguistic analysis of the language choice in Cyprus Karyolemou(1999) mentions the following:

*“ unbalanced and limited forms of bilingualism often emerged at the lower social layers, especially in regions where members of the two communities were in contact. Nevertheless, bilingualism remained a personal and to a large extent functional and instrumental affair and was never extended to the whole population”. (p.2)*

In other words, bilingualism appeared as a low level communication(probably pidgin variety) whereas a high level academically based bilingualism was out of question, an approach which had little contribution to fostering cross fertilization and massive access to each community's cultural worldview. Since bilingualism was not, at least officially sought in education, the communicative needs especially at the highest levels of the society were covered by English which was prepared enough to become a linguafranca for the island.

It becomes quite obvious that the monolingual school served as the means through which the two communities could have achieved the survival of Greek and Turkish ethnic identity. However, one could probably question the wisdom of one such a policy which was after all a result of the compromise the two communities accepted after the London – Zurich settlement . It could be argued , that such a policy was at least paradoxical since in a newly established state, emphasis should have been placed on creating conditions for inter-cultural communication and understanding and promoting “ Cypriotism ” that is a Cypriot identity. However, that particular approach would seem unfeasible if we take into consideration the reciprocal nationalistic visions shared by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot. It is within this particular nationalistic context that Rauf Denktas views “Cypriotism” more or less as an attribute to be embarrassed of.

The reciprocal nationalistic views affected educational policies during the post-colonial Greek and Turkish Cypriot education. It is worth mentioning that as an instant reaction to colonialism, the Greek Cypriot Educational Council excluded the teaching of English as a foreign language for a period of four years (1960-1964) arguing that :

*“not only should there be a pause to the limitation of the Greek language as a mean of thought and expression , but also the promotion of Greek language whose use had so much suffered during colonialism should be of major importance.”*  
(Persianis and Poliviou,1992, p.151)

It would seem that this initial reaction reflects a view of linguistic purification from all those linguistic inferences loaned by English and which affected the Greek Cypriot

idiom. It is a view of language as a static entity which is far from the actual reality about languages of the world. It reflected also, a linguistic vision of purification through which manipulating language would result manipulating peoples hearts towards loyalty to the idea of nation. It ignores nevertheless, the fundamental linguistic principle that languages or dialects/idioms/vernaculars as forms of weak varieties are constantly object to evolution. One might assume, that what was obviously inspired of was a policy of linguistic homogeneity towards the dominant standard Greek of that period. However, *“policies attempting to ensure that everyone speaks the same language variety are no more realistic than policies requiring everyone to be the same height”*.(Lippi-Green, 1997 quoted in Tollefson 2002)

As a result, this particular language ideology gave rise to an educational non policy or a “borrowed” policy-planning from the Greek Ministry of Education which has been providing the Primary Sector with language text books until today. The use of Greek national text books has been recently questioned (Reform report,2004). Expanding the use of national textbook to another state, could be questioned since planning of any kind should take into account the needs and special features of the learners as well as the aims of education especially in a newly established state. In a country where both the Turkish and Greek Cypriots are dialectal speakers of Greek, the bi-dialectal(characterization according to Yakoumetti, 2006,Papapavlou and Pavlou, 2007) or diglossic according to others( Arvaniti, 2006; Moschonas 1996, 2002), linguistic and cognitive repertoire brought by the primary students to their schools was ignored in terms of planning for developing competence in the standard variety. It could be

assumed, however, that the two dialects that is the Greek Cypriot dialect and the Turkish Cypriot dialect were mutually influenced due to the exposure of one language to the other in the past. However, the intention of exploiting the common culture beyond the two bi-dialectal communities was totally absent.

Karoulla-Vrikki quoted in Papapavlou and Pavlou, (2007), surveyed the language policy practiced in Cyprus from 1960 up to 1997. The author (op.cit) provides insight to the ways each government dealt with the dialect in terms of education throughout the years. Her paper attempted to demonstrate that in the domain of Greek-Cypriot education from 1960 to 1997 language policy aimed at either Hellenization, which emphasized Greek ethnic identity and reflected language policy in ethnic nations or Cypriotization, which emphasized Cypriot state identity and reflected language policy in civic nations. It is quite uncertain however, whether the debate between hellenocentrism or Cypriotism effected any change in language policy and planning in primary education during that period. It was not until the early nineties that occasionally language sensitive ministry officials (supervisors) talked about ending the “incriminating” of dialect use in children’s oral speech in view of the arising trend for the communicative approach in language teaching.

In 2004 a committee of distinguished academics set the framework for educational reform for a “Democratic and Human Education in the Euro-Cypriot State / State of Justice”. Furthermore, the committee suggested that reforming the aims of Education should include among others, the European dimension in Education and education for

Democratic citizenship.(educational reform report,2004). If Democracy as a political culture entails respect for individual and minority rights and therefore participation in decision making, then issues of language planning become highly important in such a political culture.

Especially today, that Europe designated the year 2008 as the year for “Intercultural dialogue”, language policy issues may be essential for Education in Cyprus. Challenging the existing position that intercultural dialogue is about gathering factual information about others, a culture which led to a multicultural folkloric Education, Evanoff (2001) provokes the existing perception by suggesting Habermas’s view that intercultural dialogue is about equipping “*citizens to make choices themselves on the basis of accurate information and open dialogue in which every opinion gets a fair hearing*”. The author furthermore suggests that intercultural dialogue may be such, so that it “*seeks to eliminate hierarchical power structures which allow various forms of domination to persist*”.(p.6) A genuine dialogue thus, according to the author (op.cit) is about challenging the “*hierarchical forms of communication with privilege elites over non-elites*” in multiple contexts as international relations, racial, gender, ethnic/linguistic minorities, urban/rural people, social class, etc. In other words, intercultural dialogue implies equipping people with the skills for communication in a context of equality of opportunities so that they are enabled to participate in decision making processes in their future lives.

Therefore, explicit language educational policy and planning in today’s Cypriot Public Education constitutes the bedrock of any effort to promote intercultural understanding on a basis of equity between the two communities of the island.



If today, we declare intercultural education, an education for equity and human rights then issues of dialectophone children should be reconsidered since besides the dialects role in defining one's identity, there are several issues to be discussed concerning the role of dialect in the learning of standard variety. If intercultural education is about equity and rights and more specifically, linguistic rights (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas,1995)then issues of employing the dialect which is the naturally acquired mother tongue of Cypriots, in their standard language education should be taken into account . Empirical support on the positive effect of employing the use of the Cypriot variety in teaching the standard Greek language is given by Yakoumetti(2006) who argues that the intended and systematic comparison of the dialect to the standard (structures vocabulary, syntax and phonology , pragmatics, etc), through the use of specifically designed teaching material, can raise the linguistic awareness of elementary school students and consequently raise their performance in standard Greek. The recognized and explicitly valued role of dialect within the educational system has been found to promote attaining higher academic skills in standard varieties in Anglophone settings (Cheshire,2007).

The above findings might be highly interesting in view of the annual media discussion on the falling standards to the final Lyceum exams (Παγκύπριες εξετάσεις) in Modern Greek language. In a recent discussion on television (ANT July, 3<sup>rd</sup> , 2008) a panel of politicians and ministry officials were literally mourning for the Cypriot students' "failure" in Modern Greek lesson blaming(some of them) the inadequate instruction of students in ancient Greek. However, none of the participants in the panel mentioned a

single word concerning the bi-dialectic setting in which students are raised and educated. Bi-dialectism or diglossia was treated therefore, as non existing. Probably a reference to the issue would raise undesirable questions of identity, something which could put the guests of the panel at risk of losing face.

Nevertheless, as long as we accept that language “dresses up” our thought and worldview, then one could possibly argue that the Cypriot dialect itself constitutes the basic identity marker for Greek Cypriots. I will attempt to recall my memories as a student in Greece in the early 90’s. The initial contact and interaction with the young students at the University made me go through a process of cultural shock as I demonstrated anxiety whenever I had to get into a conversation. What frustrated me most was the fact I had to pretend laughing when listening to their jokes and anecdotes. It took me two years to alter not merely pronunciation and lexis choice which was the easiest part but also pragmatics concerning the word ordering in conveying certain meanings. I also had to alter extralinguistic features of my utterances like movements. It was very funny when I had to say “pardon”, I would have to change the classic polite Cypriot and Greek «ορίστε», to the slang /e/! while the corresponding Cypriot rural slang respond is /a/!. It was a code switch not much dissimilar to the one employed when speaking in a foreign language. Whilst being at the metropolis of Hellenism I felt like a stranger. Probably 12 years of instruction in standard Greek were not enough to cover the social distance between me and the university community. It was only until contact, interaction and competence in the vernacular shared among the university community was acquired, that I felt less of a distance.

Through the personal narrative of my experience I would like to discuss two hypotheses:

-Ethnic identity may indeed be an imaginary identity. People acquire social identities which are mostly cultivated through contact, integration and communication.

-My own narrative could possibly raise questions around the dialectal Turkish Cypriots who might negotiate their identities in a similar manner. Furthermore, I am challenged to assume that two dialects used by the two communities for such a long period before the separation might have been mutually influenced in a way that would create a common extralinguistic culture; a culture which could be exploited to promote focusing on similarities instead of differences and which could contribute in establishing a common culture and therefore a common social identity.

The formation of identity however, is quite a complex and long term process referring to one's conscious identification with a specific group sharing together a common background either this is ethnolinguistic or social. People acquire multiple identities. One might, for example identify him/herself as a female or male,(gender social), as professional, as a middle-class (socio-economical), as gay or a straight (sexual), as a Greek (ethnic), as Cypriot (linguistic). In society homogeneity is hardly the case. People differ variously and according to their own individual characteristics they construct multiple identities. Swartz (1998) discusses the formation of identity arguing that people identify themselves with groups when the distinctive feature of the group is highly valued within the norms of a particular society.

Children are in a process of developing identities. If developing a Cypriot identity (either Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, Armenian, Latine or Maronite) implies membership to that particular multiethnic and multilingual mosaic, then the extent to which linguistic pluralism is recognized and valued in the society and more specifically, within the educational system might affect the students' will to identify themselves with the group as a whole. However, there is little evidence to illustrate the Greek Cypriot students' attitudes or even knowledge towards or about the Armenian, the Latine and the Maronite community and their cultural and linguistic background.

As far as the Greek Cypriot children are concerned, research indicates that children construct the Turks as 'Others=Enemies' (Ioannidou 2004; Philippou 2007). More specifically, Spyrou (2006) quoted in Zembylas and Karahasan(2006) argues that *"Greek-Cypriot school education is to a large extent nationalistic and relies upon the image of the Turk/enemy as the primary Other for the construction of G/C children's identity.* The author (op.cit) work indicates the following:

*"Greek-Cypriot children are unable to deal with the more complex, hyphenated categories of " Turkish-Cypriot" or " Greek-Cypriot." In fact, school education promotes the use of more inclusive categories such as "Greeks" or " Turks"at the expense of more synthetic or hybrid ones such as "Greek" and "Turkish-Cypriots"(p.23) .*

Similarly, the author (op.cit) documents several negative stereotypes that are encouraged in school education and show the absolute categorization of the Turk as an enemy, barbarian, uncivilized, aggressive and expansionist. The above findings may occur on one hand, because of the partial Greek Cypriot aspect of the events provided though the discourse of " DEN KSEHNO"(DON' T FORGET) and on the other hand,

due to the isolation of the two communities. De Jong(1997) argues that “ *the lack of exposure to other languages and cultures may easily result stereotypic images of ethnic groups*” (p.57) Negative stereotypes however, may well be a form of racism which is far from the elements of the declared European culture.

Fishman(1997) suggests that “ *the antidote to ethnocentrism(including antiethnic ethnocentrism which may be just a supercilious and biased as is ethnic conditioning) is thus, comparative cross-ethnic knowledge and experience, transcending the limits of one's own usual exposure to life and values*” (p.337) Therefore, If a Cypriot identity is to arise out of the need for political stability , it should evolve as a result of contact and integration between members of the various ethnolinguistic groups whose homeland is actually Cyprus. In that sense, a Cypriot identity **would not emerge to replace ethnic nationalism with an other kind of antiethnic nationalism or ethnic conditioning** as Fishman (1997) puts it , but it would ideally come out of membership based on social grounds of conduct and therefore knowledge. Nevertheless, it would seem that linguistic and mostly cultural and yet physical segregation seemed to be again in 2002 a barrier to the development of inter cultural understanding and communication in view of the fact that a “ Maronite only” public school was established in Nicosia according to requests of the representatives of the Maronite community in 2002. At this point, it should be noted that empirical evidence illustrating the community’s (religious minority) choice to support a monocultural segregated school is rather absent and remains an area to be investigated.

In societies where conflict on the basis of cultural - religious-linguistic features of the population exists, i.e. Northern Ireland, the contact hypothesis has provided the basis for measures which aimed at reducing conflict ( see Cairns & Hewstone 2002 ) and had provided the academic framework for integrated schools that is, schools attended by ethnically, linguistically or religiously diverse populations. It should be noted however, that despite of the 21 years devoted to the endeavor of reducing conflict through an integrative school culture , in 2001 less than 5% of all primary and secondary school pupils in Northern Ireland were enrolled in those schools(Claire Mc Glynn et al, 2004). Obviously, the rest attend the traditional separate catholic and protestant schools.

In Slovenia, the multilingual and multicultural population of Prekmurje, may provide us with interesting data casting light to the effect of an integrated bilingual school setting in improving inter -ethnic relationships. Jørgensen (1997) cites the research work of Novac Lucanovits according to which the bilingual program applied in that particular multiethnic area had a positive affect both on the students' and their parents' attitudes towards each other and the formation of a bi-cultural identity. The Hungarian language used by minorities in that particular region was not viewed as a threat to the construction of a Slovenian identity . Instead, through a two way bilingual program, minority students were given the opportunity to keep their ethnic origins while at the same time the majority population was given the opportunity to access the minority language and culture. The author (op.cit) goes on to comment on Lucanovits's findings suggesting that:

*“ If the two way bilingual education system in Prekmurje supports and develops the students' Bicultural bilingual identity, we are certainly dealing with an instrument of peace” (p.85)*

The “Contact Hypothesis” opens the way to current research data concerning the role of bilingual education in preventing conflict. The hypothesis suggests that:

*“ intergroup contact – which takes place under the conditions of equality and cooperative interdependence while allowing for sustained interaction between participants and allowing for the potential forming of friendships – might help alleviate conflict and war traumas between groups and encourage change in negative intergroup attitudes”*  
(Allport, 1954; Amir, 1976; Pettigrew, 1998 quoted in Bekerman and Shhadi, 2005 ).

A small scale longitudinal study conducted by Bekerman and Shhadi (2005 ) in an integrated bilingual Palestinian-Jewish school (Hebrew and Arabian language), showed that the childrens’ understanding of each other's culture runs deeper than the one found in the monolingual settings. Furthermore, the authors (op. cit) conclude the following:

*“ ... while both participating groups are similar to students in monolingual schools in that they still recognise themselves as ethnically, religiously, nationally divergent, they differ from students in monolingual schools in that they express less of a sense of social distance between the groups” .(p.481)*

However the authors(op.cit) realize that despite the efforts and innovative interventions that took place at this specific bilingual integrated school, schooling itself may be inadequate in fostering changes to the children’s attitudes since the home and family environment might appear to provide feedback for an “us and them” doctrine.

If Cypriots are to live together in a future re-united homeland, then issues of language planning should be reconsidered. Whether conduct and reciprocal bilingualism would work out fostering new social identities for the people of this country remains a question to be answered since there is little evidence about it at the moment. However it is worth noting that recently a considerable number of Turkish Cypriots attend a Greek Cypriot primary school in Limassol (IH Agiou Antoniou) and for which the Ministry of education has provided for the following:

- Undertaking the cost of study for Turkish Cypriot students that study in licenced by the Ministry of Education private schools, pre school nurseries and public primary schools.
- Integration of children of year 1,2,3 in the all day school of IH Agios Antonios Primary school.
- Employment of two Turkish Cypriot teacher at the above school for supporting the teaching of their own culture.
- Employment of one teacher at the above school for the teaching of culture, religious, literature and civilization during the all day school time.
- Differentiation of the curriculum so that Turkish Cypriot students are excluded from Orthodox religious lessons and History while at the same time they receive instruction in Turkish language.

Such provisions could of course be welcomed since the school might give scholars and researchers the unique opportunity to invest a lot of thinking in examining the effects of co-existence in a common school. What kind of attitudes do they really acquire for each



other? How do Greek Cypriot children face the Turkish Cypriot variety used by their school mates? Would they wish to learn it? How does daily communication take place among the linguistically diverse children of the school? What is the effect of this recent kind of schooling on the multilingual community of the school? How does the school and ministry policy deal with equity issues? What is the nature of the identities negotiated there? A range of questions could be addressed and examined since the school itself constitutes a challenge for the future. Would it be really feasible for people who actually live together in mixed villages to attend common schools? The case in Pyla, however, the only mixed village remained to date (UN area), is hardly the case of integrated or bilingual schooling. According to the Ministry of Education, there have been efforts to bring the two school communities of the village in contact but the occupation regime refused to allow them. At the moment there are no bi-communal programs applied, however, it is a prospect which might happen in future time (parliament record, No 23.06.008.03.576)

Despite the governmental provisions to create conditions of trust as far as the Turkish Cypriots are concerned, it would seem that education is still far from the declared reform aims as prescribed by the “wisdom committee” (committee of academics) in 2004. Sponsoring private Institutions to accept Turkish Cypriots students might be indeed a measure to foster feelings of security and trust but Education itself is a public good and a future investment. Encouraging the Turkish Cypriots to attend Secondary Private Schools where the majority of them use English as an instruction language could be solely viewed as a transitional stage to provide Turkish Cypriots

access to their educational rights even if learning takes place through the medium of the English language. It is quite uncertain however, whether this particular neutralizing of the instruction language in elite schools of the private sector would serve the purposes of education in a future re-united country.

The prospect of the re-unity however, is still “on the table” and therefore the role of linguists and scholars as critical thinkers entails “social activism” since as Tollefson(2002) points out “*linguists are responsible not only for understanding how dominant social groups use language for establishing and maintaining social hierarchies, but also for investigating ways to **alter** them*”(p.4)

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