*International Journal of Instruction*
*e-ISSN: 1308-1470 ● www.e-iji.net*

*April 2022 ● Vol.15, No.2*
*p-ISSN: 1694-609X*
*pp. 1-18*

Article submission code: 20210421073508

Received: 21/04/2021
Revision: 09/09/2021

Accepted: 02/10/2021
OnlineFirst: 02/01/2022

# Writing Goals in the Instructional Designs of the Greek Preschool Education

**Filippos Tentolouris**
Dr., Department of Early Childhood Education & Care, School of Social Sciences, International Hellenic University, Greece, *ftentolouris@bc.teithe.gr*

The official policy documents of the Greek preschool education adopt a functional perspective of writing (i.e., writing for real communicative purposes) which signals an attempt to align the national language policy with the communicative language policy of the European Union. In this article, the consistency of this alignment is examined by focusing on the compatibility between this functional perspective and the writing goals of the official instructional designs of the Greek preschool education. Using a document-based investigation, 76 instructional designs were collected and analysed through a deductive and a descriptive statistical process of content analysis by calculating frequencies between the writing goals of each design with goals which reflect either the functional-pragmatic view of writing (writing as purposeful communication) or the opposite structural one (emphasis on the autonomous layers of language; phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics). It was found that the structural writing goals, appearing in most instructional designs, diverge from the official functional view of writing focusing on the structural phonological goal of how children can learn to correspond sounds with letters (a main feature of the traditional language instruction). This divergence signals a divergence from the European language policy which simultaneously gives emphasis on key communicative competences and the functional communicative language instruction. Therefore, a prerequisite of the instructional designs for fulfilling the European communicative goals is an epistemological shift from language structure to language function.

Keywords: instructional designs, writing, communicative language instruction, European language policy, preschool education

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last 20 years a reform of the Greek educational system has occurred (e.g. the production of new curricula and teachers' guides) since the experts of the Ministry of Education and the Institution of Educational Policy (former Pedagogical Institute) -the two institutions involved in organizing school practice- have tried to adapt it to the educational policy of the European Union (Georgiadis, 2005; Alachiotis & Karatzia-Stavlioti, 2006; Koustourakis, 2007; Tentolouris, 2021).

**Citation:** Tentolouris, F. (2022). Writing goals in the instructional designs of the Greek preschool education. *International Journal of Instruction*, *15*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.1521a

One of the means, co-financed by the European Union, which was used for helping preschool teachers organize interactive and pupil-based learning contexts, was the initiation of instructional designs (Di Pietro, 1987; Gustafson & Branch, 2007; Dahlke, 2017; Srikongchan, Kaewkuekool & Mejaleurn, 2021). These designs are neither descriptions of how effective instructive practices can be organized in the classroom, as proposed in the frame of High-Impact Instruction (Knight, 2012), nor effective classroom applications based on explicit and detailed evidence of what "works" in specific educational frames (Evidence-Based Instruction, Petty, 2014); instead they are real project work pieces, described by teachers through specific textual themes (as summarized in the following part of this article), which function as examples of effective interactive and pupil-based classroom implementations reflecting the philosophy of this reform.

Specifically, two types of designs were produced: (a) 17 designs with the label "Good Teaching Practices" (https://bit.ly/3dadWBA), as part of a preschool teachers' in-service training programme (www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/), conducted between 2010-2011 and (b) 59 designs, labeled "Digital Didactic Scenarios", which were uploaded in 2015 in the "Advanced Electronic Scenarios Operating Platform" (http://aesop.iep.edu.gr/) of Photodentro, the Greek National Aggregator of Educational Content (http://photodentro.edu.gr/aggregator/). A prerequisite of both instructional designs -for being part of the official educational resources- was their compatibility with the official policy documents (Pedagogical Institute, 2010; Tsalagiorgou, 2015).

In relation to writing, on which I focus in this article, this implied a compatibility with the perspective of "emergent literacy", which focuses not only on how children's preschool literacy experiences affect their learning of conventional literacy but also on how they can effectively promote it (Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Gillen & Hall, 2013; National Center for Families Learning, 2017). Within this perspective a functional, instead of a structural, view of language is adopted, thus language is considered as a communicative medium -how grammatical rules are used and shaped for purposeful communication- and not as an abstract grammatical code, independent of people's everyday use (Hymes, 1974: 79). The basic premise of the emergent literacy approach, underpinned in the former view of language, is that children's realization of the functional-pragmatic use of language motivates them to develop a creative and interactive stance in discovering how literacy "works" in relation to other addressees (Peterson et al., 2018: 502).

Emergent literacy has been introduced in the Greek preschool education in 2006 through a teacher's guide (Dafermou et al., 2006) which is still considered as an official resource for the process of understanding the ways to ground this kind of literacy in practice (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 2019). Additionally, the recent "Kindergarten Curriculum" (Institute of Educational Policy, 2014: 99-103) refers to the emergent literacy approach, emphasizing that teachers should not overtly instruct grammatical rules, on the contrary, they should encourage and help pupils (e.g. becoming their assistants or secretaires) to produce texts with real communicative purposes even, if children produce illegible texts or use unconventional means such as

marks instead of "letters" (see for examples Stellakis & Kondyli, 2004).

This view of literacy has also been introduced in many European countries (Tafa, 2008; Smidt et al. 2012; Garbe et al. 2015), signalling the attempt of those who design the European educational policy to promote language as use for communication -and not as grammar- in both mother tongues and foreign languages (Karatzia-Stavlioti, 2002). According to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 (see also Chalkiadaki, 2018 and Council of Europe, 2020), communicative competence -effective use of language in different social situations- has been considered an important social competence in the globalized environment of the 21st century and in the linguistically heterogeneous European societies.

While the alignment of preschool language activities, focusing on language as communication, with the corresponding European policy of language is explicitly mentioned in the recent official "Kindergarten Curriculum" (Institute of Educational Policy, 2014: 9), Greek preschool teachers, as also happens with teachers in other European and non-European countries (Ure & Raban, 2001; Lynch, 2009; Lambirth, 2016; Sturk & Lindgren, 2019), seem to have a quite different conceptualization of writing in early years; they mainly give emphasis on children's engagement in the correspondence between sounds and letters (e.g. spelling) believing that this can help them organize "a solid ground" aiming at the accurate learning the written language in the following school years (Kondyli & Stellakis, 2005; Stellakis, 2012; Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2020).

Therefore, an important question which is raised is whether the instructional designs of the Good Teaching Practices and the Digital Didactic Scenarios include goals of writing which are compatible with the official functional (pragmatic) perspective of language as use in real communicative situations, promoting, thus, at the same time the European language policy. The investigation of this compatibility can contribute to an on-going discussion about how coherent policies on writing instruction can be organized on the basis of specific criteria at the European Union and at an international level (Ivanič, 2004; Rios-Aguilar, 2013; Peterson et al., 2018).

## METHOD

The general purpose of the study presented in this article is the exploration of the relation between the writing goals of the official instructional designs with the functional orientation of writing as it appears in the current official curriculum of the Greek preschool education (Institute of Educational Policy, 2014) and the teacher's guide of 2006 (Dafermou et al., 2006), which promote the educational policy of the European Union. This purpose can be specified in the following two objectives which in turn guided the analysis and the presentation of its findings:

1. The extent to which the instructional designs of the Greek preschool education adopt functional writing goals.

2. The specific layers of language on which these designs focus when they do not follow functional goals.

To achieve the above purpose, a document-based investigation (Lankshear&Knobel, 2004; McCulloch, 2004; Scott, 2006) was conducted. Specifically, all the instructional designs (76 in total) -17 "Good Teaching Practices" and 59 "Digital Didactic Scenarios"- were collected constituting the population of the research presented in this article.

The former designs constitute a unified corpus which was produced by both teachers and experts of the Pedagogical Institute (replaced by the Institute of Educational Policy in 2011) while the latter designs are divided into three groups: (a) 17 "exemplary", (b) 29 "optimal" and (c) 13 "sufficient" scenarios. The first group was produced by experts of the Institute of Educational Policy while the second and the third by teachers, after an official invitation was sent to all schools calling them to submit their proposals. These proposals were assessed by anonymous reviewers and depending on their score, some of them were selected; the score of the "optimal" was 70 to 100 points and this of the "sufficient" 50 to 69.5 points.

Each design has a specific textual structure consisting of: (1) general information of these designs (e.g. authors' names, time duration), (2) the basic learning goals and their compatibility with the curricula of preschool education, (3) the teaching strategies and the material which were used, (4) the activities which were organized and the specific writing goals they aim to fulfil, (5) the methods through which these designs were assessed for their effectiveness and (6) copyright issues (authors' statement that they provide open access to their texts).

The fourth of the above parts was the textual space where the goals of writing activities of each institutional design were investigated. The analysis of this space was based on a deductive analysis (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995; Krippendorff, 2004; Hoffman et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2018) of relating the writing goals with the structural (grammatical) or the functional (pragmatic) view of language (as summarized by Hymes, 1974 and Leech, 1983).

According to the former view, language is regarded as a mental phenomenon -a genetic linguistic inheritance of human beings- which can be decoded as grammar in the following layers: (a) phonology: which sounds (phonemes) constitute each language and how these are transcribed into letters (graphemes), (b) morphology: how words are constituted from smaller parts, e.g. parts which show singular or plural), (c) syntax: how words are organized in sentences and (d) semantics: what words or sentences mean, e.g. how words can be synonyms (words with the same meaning) or antonyms (words with opposite meaning). The "translation" of this view into practice means that children first learn the rules of each layer and then they apply these rules in the production of oral and written texts (from rules to function).

On the contrary, from a functional point of view, language is a societal phenomenon since people use language within different social situations. Therefore, starting from the pragmatic layer of language which focuses on how meaning is constructed in people's communicative performance, the grammatical rules of the above four layers serve different communicative goals and are simultaneously affected by them. For example,

talking appropriately in a specific situation, e.g., a discussion in academic setting, cannot be reduced to the application of grammatical rules but it presupposes a kind of fitting grammatical rules to those cultural values which are presupposed as commonly accepted by the participants about how they should behave appropriately in a linguistic manner in this setting. Therefore, the starting point of children's instruction should be the communicative goals of their texts and how they can be accomplished through grammatical rules (from function to rules).

The process of relating the writing goals of the instructional designs to the goals of the above layers of the structural view of language or the pragmatic layer of the function alone was conducted in four steps. In the first step each instructional text was read several times and those texts which included descriptions of activities with goals of writing, employing either handwriting or electronic writing, were identified. Those which did not include writing goals were excluded from the initial quantity, reducing thus the final quantity from the 76 to 44 instructional designs. As Table 1 shows below, writing seems to be an important parameter in the official designs of the Greek preschool education, since more than half of these designs encompass writing activities; three quarters (70,59%) of the Good Teaching Practices and half (54,24%) of the Digital Didactic Scenarios.

Table 1
Frequency of writing activities included in the instructional designs, in percentages and total numbers

| | With Writing activities (% and n) | Without Writing Activities (% and n) |
|---|---|---|
| Good Teaching Practices (n = 17) | 12 (70,59%) | 5 (29,41%) |
| Digital Didactic Scenarios (n = 59) | 32 (54,24%) | 27 (45,76%) |

In the second step the identified goals of the writing activities of each instructional design, were paired with the layers of language, as can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2
Examples of relating writing goals of the instructional designs with the views of language

| Example of Writing Activity | Goal of Writing | View of Language |
|---|---|---|
| (Students are asked to complete missing syllables in words about animals in danger of extinction in a worksheet.)<br>"Complete the missing syllable in the word "turtle". __tle, tur__ " | Relationship between sounds (phonemes) and letters (graphemes) | Structural<br>Phonological Layer |
| (In a worksheet, students are called to write sentences through the following word classes which had been used in a previous activity.)<br>"In the story we used conjunctions, prepositions and adverbs. Try to make sentences using:<br>a) The conjunction "but"<br>b) The adverb "after" and<br>c) The preposition "with"" | Sentences as a group of interconnected words to express propositions. | Structural<br>Syntactic Layer |
| (Students are asked to write the name of some vegetables (lettuce, onion, potato) and fruits (strawberry, tomato) in an electronic exercise.)<br>"Write the name of the plant, after you find the correct word in the reference poster of the classroom." | Specific words as hyponyms of the superordinates "vegetables" and "fruits" respectively which in turn are hyponyms of the superordinate "plants". | Structural<br>Semantic Layer |
| "We decided [the teachers and the students engaged in a project about earthquakes and volcanoes] to produce an earthquake safety poster for our classroom". | Production of a specific text-type with a specific communicative purpose | Functional Pragmatic Layer |

In the third step, in relation to the goal or goals found, the instructional designs were divided -as a whole, having the Good Teaching Practices and the Electronic Didactic Scenarios separated and within the three subgroups of the latter instructional designs- in the following three general categories for the purpose of fulfilling the first research objective (the extent to which the instructional designs adopt functional writing goals):

1. *Functional*: if the instructional design encompassed goals of writing with a pragmatic orientation.

2. *Structural* if the instructional design included goals of writing with a phonological, morphological, syntactic or a semantic orientation.

3. *Mixed* if the instructional design included goals of writing with both the functional and the structural orientations. For example, in an instructional design about oral hygiene, the first activity concerned a structural-oriented goal (phonological), since students copied relative words, provided by the teacher, on the computer by corresponding print to digital letters on the keyboard layout, while the second activity

concerned a functional (pragmatic) goal, the writing of a fairy tale which then was printed and bound.

Finally, the structural and the mixed instructional designs were divided further - separating between the Good Teaching Practices and the Electronic Didactic Scenarios as well as within the three subgroups of the latter instructional designs- in categories in relation to their writing goals for attaining the second research goal (the layers of language which the non-functional instructional designs focus on). For example, a phonological category corresponds with structural designs which include only phonological writing goals while a phonological-pragmatic one corresponds with those mixed instructional designs which contain both kinds of writing goals.

Moreover, specific taxonomies were produced for these divisions and frequencies were calculated through a descriptive statistical perspective. To assure the greatest possible validity in the results of the analysis emerged from these taxonomies and frequencies, I was assisted by a second relative researcher, as proposed in content analysis (Berelson, 1984; Krippendorff, 2004; Peterson, 2012), who worked independently with the data, after we had developed a mutual understanding of the different stages of analysis. We defined a 75% agreement as an index of mutual reliable analysis -succeeded in the third stage of data analysis- while the mismatches were discussed and agreed upon.

## FINDINGS

In relation to the first research objective (the extent to which the instructional designs adopt functional writing goals), less than half (40,91%) of the instructional designs in total encompass goals of writing with a functional-pragmatic orientation, as shown below in Table 3, while two thirds of these designs (31,82% & 27,27%) encompass either structural goals of writing or mixed goals (a functional-pragmatic orientation with a structural one; phonological, syntactic or semantic).

Table 3
Frequency of the functional, structural and mixed writing goals in both instructional designs, in percentages and total numbers

| Orientation of the writing goals | Instructional Designs with Writing Activities (% and n) |
|---|---|
| Activities with Functional Writing Goals | 18 (40,91%) |
| Activities with Structural Writing Goals | 14 (31,82%) |
| Activities with Functional and Structural Writing Goals | 12 (27,27%) |
| Total | 44 (100%) |

However, in the procedure of comparing the orientations of the writing goals separately in the Good Teaching Practices and the Digital Didactic Scenarios, some important differences can be noticed. Specifically, as we can see in Table 4 below, although the activities which encompass mixed goals (functional and structural) seem to be equivalent (25% in the former designs and 28,12% and in the latter designs respectively), an important difference appears in relation to the writing goals with a functional-pragmatic orientation, since the percentage of these goals in the Good Teaching Practices is almost the double (66,67%) compared to the goals of the Digital

Didactic Scenarios (31,25%). On the contrary, the structural goals of writing are five times fewer (8,33%) in the Good Teaching Practices in relation to these of the Digital Didactic Scenarios (40,63%).

Table 4
Frequency of the functional, structural and mixed writing goals in the instructional designs separately, in percentages and total numbers

| | Activities with Structural Writing Goals (% and n) | Activities with Functional Writing Goals (% and n) | Activities with Mixed Writing Goals (% and n) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Good Teaching Practices (n = 12) | 1 (8,33%) | 8 (66,67%) | 3 (25%) |
| Digital Didactic Scenarios (n = 32) | 13 (40,63%) | 10 (31,25%) | 9 (28,12%) |

If we narrow our attention to the three groups -"sufficient", "optimal" and "exemplary"- which constitute the Digital Didactic Scenarios (Table 5), it can be noticed that in the first group the percentages of activities with structural (40%), functional (40%) and mixed writing goals (20%) seem practically to converge while the percentages of these activities are exactly the same (33,33%) in the second group. On the contrary, the percentage of activities with structural writing goals appears to be dominant in the "exemplary" designs (66,66%) in comparison to the activities with functional (16,66%) and mixed (16,66%) writing goals.

Table 5
Frequency of the functional, structural and mixed writing goals within the three groups of the digital didactic scenarios, in percentages and total numbers

| | Activities with Structural Writing Goals (% and n) | Activities with Functional Writing Goals (% and n) | Activities with Mixed Writing Goals (% and n) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sufficient (n = 5) | 2 (40%) | 2 (40%) | 1 (20%) |
| Optimal (n = 21) | 7 (33,33%) | 7 (33,33%) | 7 (33,33%) |
| Exemplary (n = 6) | 4 (66,66) | 1 (16,66%) | 1 (16,66%) |

The second research objective of this article refers to the non-functional layers of language on which the structural and the mixed instructional designs focus. Specifically, concerning the activities with structural writing goals in the Good Teaching Practices and the Digital Didactic Scenarios in separate, as shown in Table 6 below, the former designs include only one activity with semantic writing goals, while most of the latter designs (61,54%) present phonological ones.

Table 6
Frequency of the structural goals of writing in the instructional designs separately, in percentages and total numbers

| | Structural View of Language | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Phonological (% and n) | Syntactic (% and n) | Semantic (% and n) |
| Good Teaching Practices (n = 1) | | | 1 (100%) |
| Digital Didactic Scenarios (n = 13) | 8 (61,54%) | 2 (15,38%) | 3 (23,08%) |

Examining the structural writing goals which appear within the three groups - "sufficient", "optimal" and "exemplary"- of the Digital Didactic Scenarios (Table 7), it can be noticed that half or more than half of these groups (50%, 57%, 75%) contain writing activities with a phonological orientation. This signals that this orientation is the most dominant in relation to the other structural orientations (syntactic and semantic) found in the writing activities of these groups.

Table 7
Frequency of the structural goals within the three groups of the digital didactic scenarios, in percentages and total numbers

| | Structural View of Language | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Phonological (% and n) | Syntactic (% and n) | Semantic (% and n) |
| Sufficient (n = 2) | 1 (50%) | | 1 (50%) |
| Optimal (n = 7) | 4 (57,14%) | 1 (14,28%) | 2 (28,57%) |
| Exemplary (n = 6) | 3 (75%) | 1 (25%) | 1 (16,66%) |

Finally, as it can be shown in Table 8, in relation to the activities which encompass mixed goals of writing (structural and functional ones), the percentage of the designs within the Good Teaching Practices that include pragmatic and semantic goals is the double (66,67%) compared with the one which refers to mixed pragmatic and phonological goals (33,33%), but this emerges from an extremely limited number of designs (n = 3). In contrast with the singular "sufficient" and "exemplary" Digital Didactic Scenarios, the "optimal" ones, which include mixed writing goals, are more but do not seem to have any important difference concerning the orientations of the goals which they combine. For example, the designs which combine pragmatic and phonological goals of writing have the same frequency with those which combine pragmatic and semantic ones (28,57% in both).

Table 8
Frequency of the mixed writing goals in the various groups of the instructional designs, in percentages and total numbers

| | Mixed View of Language (Structural & Functional) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pragmatic and Phonological (% and n) | Pragmatic and Syntactic (% and n) | Pragmatic and Semantic (% and n) | Pragmatic, Syntactic and Semantic (% and n) |
| Good Teaching Practices (n = 3) | 1 (33,33%) | | 2 (66,67%) | |
| Sufficient (n = 1) | 1 (100%) | | | |
| Optimal (n = 7) | 2 (28,57%) | 1 (14,29%) | 2 (28,57%) | 2 (28,57%) |
| Exemplary (n = 1) | | 1 (100%) | | |

To sum up, most of the writing goals of the instructional designs of the Greek preschool education as a whole (without the division between the Good Teaching Practices and the Digital Didactic Scenarios) show a structural orientation (Table 3).The functional writing goals appear mostly in the former instructions compared with the latter (Table 4)while the less functional writing goals can be found in the writing activities in the "exemplary" scenarios within the Digital Didactic Scenarios (Table 5). The most frequent structural writing goals within the Digital Didactic Scenarios are those which correspond to the phonological layer in the structural view of language (Table 6). Narrowing our attention to the structural writing goals among the three groups of the Digital Didactic Scenarios, the phonological ones seem to be the dominant ones in all groups of the Scenarios, even in the "exemplary" scenarios which were produced by experts of the Institute of Educational Policy (Table 7). Finally, despite the dominance of these writing goals in the instructional designs of the Digital Didactic Scenarios, their combination with the functional-pragmatic goal in the mixed instructional designs is not the most dominant combination compared with the other ones, e.g. pragmatic with syntactic goals (Table 8).

## DISCUSSION

From the findings presented in the previous part of this article, it can be argued that the instructional designs of the Greek preschool education in relation to the view of language which their writing goals try to accomplish, constitute a kind of an epistemological continuum; on the one extreme those which include structural writing goals (e.g. writing syllables in incomplete words), on the other extreme those which encompass functional ones (e.g. writing collective fairy tales) while in the middle there are those which mix both kinds of writing goals.

This entails a different relationship with emergent literacy approach which has been adopted in the current official curriculum (Institute of Educational Policy, 2014) and the teacher's guide of 2006 (Dafermou et al., 2006). The instructional designs with the functional writing goals are compatible with these policy documents while those which include structural writing goals are incompatible, signaling older curricula (those

produced in the decades of 80's and 90s) which emphasized the structural-phonological view of language (Chatzisavvidis, 2002: 35-36). The mixed instructional designs (working on both directions from function to rules and vice versa) seem to be an attempt of bridging these two types of curricula.

At the same time, these relationships create important relations of compatibility and incompatibility with the language policy of the European Union (Council of Europe, 2020; Beacco et al., 2016) which adopts a view of language as communication. This view can be facilitated through a communicative language instruction (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1998) which focuses on purpose-driven interaction in social contexts, as happens with the emergent literacy approach, adopted in the recent official policy documents; "it involves learning not just the composition and the construction of linguistic text, but also by whom, how, when, at what speed, where, in what conditions, with what media and for what purposes texts are 'written'" (Ivanič, 2004: 235).

On the contrary, the structural writing goals seem to be incompatible with what is at stake in the European language policy because they constitute a fundamental feature of the traditional language instruction (Ivanič, 2004). This kind of instruction appeared in the 19th and the early 20th century promoting a language learning based on the acquisition of sequential and autonomous skills; children first learn how to correspond sounds with letters, then how to form words (morphological skills) and sentences (syntactic skills), and finally how to expand their vocabulary (semantic skills). Therefore, language is isolated from real communicative situations, constituting a type of knowledge that should be learnt instead of used for communicative goals.

Since traditional language instruction was dominant in the curricula of the Greek preschool education until 2000, it is not accidental that one of its fundamental features - a structural view of language- is reproduced in both the structural and the mixed instructional designs. This view of language is still common among teachers in different educational setting in and out of Europe (Ure & Raban, 2001; Lynch, 2009) and in the case of the Greek preschool education this is considered as an outcome of teachers' lack of a specialized training in issues of the functional writing in the emergent literacy approach (Stellakis, 2012).

However, since this view is also reflected in the "exemplary" Digital Didactic Scenarios which were produced by the experts of the Institute of Educational Policy, it entails that the incompatible structural view of language is not only dominant at the school level but also at the level of the official language policy of the preschool education. This might explain why, although the instructional designs of the Good Teaching Practices precede those of the Digital Didactic Scenarios (the former were produced between 2010-2011 while the later in 2015), they seem to be more consistent with the recent official curriculum and the European language policy. Since different resources of language instruction were organized by different groups which many times have inconsistent conceptualizations (Koutsogiannis, 2017), a "solid ground" of how the functional writing of the emergent literacy approach should be conceptualized in both groups of the instructional designs (the Good Teaching Practices and the Digital Didactic Scenarios), was not organized.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the beginning of the 21st century an attempt for the modernization of the whole Greek educational system was conducted, signalling an alignment with the educational policy of the European Union. This entailed a transition from the traditional school practice, e.g. teacher-centred and textbook-based teaching with extremely limited group work (Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides et al., 1995: 368), to a progressive one, based, among others, on students' creativity, project work and critical thinking (Michalopoulou, 2018; Kokozidou, Goti & Dinas, 2020).

The instructional designs of the Good Teaching Practices and the Digital Didactic Scenarios (descriptions of real and effective classroom implementation) have been considered as one of the means for promoting such a progressive practice because they could be applied by other teachers in their classrooms (after applying the necessary adjustments) or become a stimulus in the production of new ones (Pedagogical Institute, 2010; Tsalagiorgou, 2015). Additionally, these designs aimed to create to teachers a sense that they could be organized as a community for sharing effective classroom practices and simultaneously to function as resources for a kind of an unofficial teachers' in-service training which would enable them to acquire understandings of the new progressive school practice (Pedagogical Institute, 2011).

However, structural goals have been dominating the writing activities of these designs, signalling a divergence from the current official curriculum as well as the teacher's guide. Both adopt a functional view of writing, promoting a European language policy on language as purposeful communication. Therefore, these instructional designs are not teleological means which directly promote this policy, even if they are constructed through consistent steps (Reiser & Dempsey, 2007), since a prerequisite for fulfilling it is an epistemological shift from language structure to language function which has not been completed in most of these designs.

The incompatibility between the structural and the functional writing goals may also be reproduced in the new Aggregator of the Open Teaching Practices (http://photodentro.edu.gr/oep/), recently designed and promoted by the Institute of Educational Policy, where teachers are called to upload instructional designs based on the use of digital open educational resources (none design has been yet uploaded). This can lead to a new epistemological tension; on the one hand, new instructional designs will be accumulated, making the educational policy designers believe that the communicative language instruction and the emergent literacy approach are actually implemented and on the other hand, teachers will find a new official context where they can use their structural views of writing without being aware that these views are actually incompatible with the current official curriculum and the communicative goals that should be fulfilled at the level of the European language policy.

Therefore, the designers of the implementation of the Greek preschool education should take a step back and reflect on the causes of the persistence of the structural writing goals (and especially the phonological ones) in the instructional designs. To fulfill their main goal of aligning the language educational policy with this of the European Union,

specialized in-service training in issues of functional writing instruction (e.g. writing as a process, Sharp, 2016; Popović, 2021) should be organized for preschool teachers which can help them become aware not only of the difference between the structural and the functional writing instruction but also of the need of the latter instruction to be promoted within the European educational policy.

The present article aims to contribute to this awareness by showing the incompatibilities between the official writing goals of the Greek preschool education with those of the official instructional designs. However, the research, as well as its findings presented in this article, is framed by limitations, e.g., if these incompatibilities are correlated to specific variables concerning the teachers and the experts who created the official instructional design, such as their gender or level of education or if behind these incompatibilities, alternative and deep disagreements about the adoption of a functional writing instruction in preschool education might be hidden. Future research thus could be directed not only to an inductive statistical frame which could shed light on the causes of these incompatibilities but also to qualitative interviews which could possibly explain them from the teachers' and experts' perspective.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am deeply indebted to the anonymous reviewers for the *International Journal of Instruction* whose valuable feedback helped me clarify important issues of this article.

**REFERENCES**

Alahiotis, S. & Karatzia-Stavlioti, E. (2006). Effective curriculum policy and cross-curricularity: analysis of the new curriculum design of the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *14*(2), 119–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360600738277

Beacco, J. C., Byram, M., Cavalli., M., Coste, D., Cuenat., M.E., Francis Goullier, F. & Panthier, J. (2016[2010]). *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Berelson, B. (1984). *Content Analysis in communication research*. New York: Hafner Publishing Company.

Bloome, D. & Egan-Robertson, A. (Eds). (1998). *Students as Researchers of Culture and Language in their own Communities*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Chalkiadaki, A. (2018). A Systematic Literature Review of 21st Century Skills and Competencies in Primary Education. *International Journal of Instruction*, *11*(3), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.1131a

Chatzisavvidis, S. (2002). *Η Γλωσσική Αγωγή στο Νηπιαγωγείο: δραστηριότητες για την καλλιέργεια της επικοινωνιακής ικανότητας και του γραμματισμού* [Language Teaching in Kindergarten: activities for the promotion of communicative competence and literacy]. Thessaloniki: Vanias.

Chlapoutaki, E., & Dinas, K. D. (2020). Teachers' attitudes towards Critical Literacy Pedagogy and the role of their education: international experience (in Greek). *Multilingual Academic Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, *8*(1), 157-170. http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/MAJESS/v8-i1/7016

Council of Europe. (2006). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). *Official Journal of the European Union*. Retrieved 15March, 2021 from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962

Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Dafermou, C.; Koulouri, P. & Mpasagianni, E. (2006). *Οδηγός Νηπιαγωγού: Εκπαιδευτικοί Σχεδιασμοί-Δημιουργικά Περιβάλλοντα Μάθησης* [Teacher's Guide: Educational Planning-Creative Learning Environments]. Athens: Organization for the Publication of School Books.

Dahlke, S. (2018). Connecting the Dots: Backward Course Design, Arts Education, and Teaching the Holocaust. In Traver, A. E. & Leshem, D. (Eds.). *Humanistic Pedagogy Across the Disciplines: Approaches to Mass Atrocity Education in the Community College Context* (pp. 195–208). London: Palgrave Macmillan

Di Pietro, R. J. (1987). *Strategic Interaction: Learning Languages through Scenarios*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garbe, C., Lafontaine, D., Shiel., G., Sulkunen, S. & Valtin, R. (2015). *Literacy in Finland: Country Report, Children & Adolescents*. European Literacy Policy Network. https://bit.ly/3gyqx6f

Georgiadis, N. M. (2005). Trends in State Education policy in Greece: 1976 to the 1997 Reform. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *13*(9), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v13n9.2005

Gillen, J., & Hall, N. (2013). The emergence of early childhood literacy. In Larson, J. & Marsh, J. (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of early childhood literacy* (pp. 3-17). London: Sage.

Gustafson, K. L. & Branch, R. M. (2007). What Is Instructional Design? In Reiser, R. A.& Dempsey, J. V. (Eds.). *Trends and Issues in Instructional Design and Technology* (pp. 10-16). New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Hoffman, J. V., Wilson, M. B., Martinez, R. A. & Sailors, M. (2011). Content analysis: The past, present, and future. In Duke, N. K. & Mallette, M. H. (Eds.). *Literacy research methodologies (2nd Ed.)* (pp. 28-49). New York: Guilford Press.

Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: an Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Institute of Educational Policy. (2014). *Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών Νηπιαγωγείου: Αναθεωρημένη Έκδοση* [Kindergarten Curriculum: Revised Edition]. Athens: Institute of Educational Policy. Retrieved 20 February, 2020 from http://repository.edulll.gr/1947

Ivanič, R. (2004). Discourses of writing and learning to write. *Language and Education*, *18*(3), 220-245. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780408666877

Karatzia-Stavlioti, E. (2002). Η διαθεματικότητα στα Αναλυτικά Προγράμματα Σπουδών: Παραδείγματα από την ευρωπαϊκή εμπειρία και πρακτική [Cross-thematic approach in curricula: examples from the European experience and practice]. *Review of Educational Issues*, *7*, 52–65.

Knight, J. (2012). *High-Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Kokozidou, A., Goti, E. & Dinas, K. (2020). Critical Literacy in Preschool Education Classroom. *Multilingual Academic Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, *8*(1), 183-219. http://dx.doi.org/10.46886/MAJESS/v8-i1/7281

Kondyli, M. & Stellakis, N. (2005). Contexts for learning to be literate: Some evidence for Greek pre-primary education setting. *L1: Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, *5*(1), 3-21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10674-005-4018-3

Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides, G., Mylonas, T., Solomon, J. & Vergidis, D. (1995). Greece: System of Education. In Postlethwaite, T. N. (Ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 362-370). Oxford: Pergamon.

Koustourakis, G. (2007). The new educational policy for the reform of the curriculum and the change of school knowledge in the case of Greek compulsory education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *17*(1-2), 131-146. https://doi.org/10.1080/09620210701433878

Koutsogiannis, D. (2017). *Γλωσσική διδασκαλία χθες, σήμερα, αύριο: Μια πολιτική προσέγγιση* [Language teaching yesterday, today, tomorrow: a political approach]. Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Institute of Modern Greek Studies, Manolis Triandaphyllidis Foundation.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, GA: Sage.

Lambirth, A. (2016). Exploring children's discourses of writing. *English in Education*, *50*(3), 215-232. https://doi.org/10.1111/eie.12111

Lankshear, C. & Knobel, M. (2004). *A Handbook of teacher research: from design to implementation*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Leech, C. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.

Lynch, J. (2009). Preschool teachers' beliefs about children's print literacy development. *Early Years*, *29*(2), 191–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140802628743

McCulloch, G. (2004). *Documentary research in education, history and the social sciences*. London: Routledge.

Michalopoulou, A. (2018). *Προσχολική Εκπαίδευση: Μεθοδολογικές Προσεγγίσεις και Αναλυτικά Προγράμματα* [Preschool Education: Methodological Approaches and Curricula]. Athens: Pedio.

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. (2019). *Εγκύκλιος 136727/Δ1–05-09-2019: Λειτουργία Νηπιαγωγείων για το σχολικό έτος 2019-2020* [Circular 136727/Δ1–05-09- 2019: The function of kindergartens for the school year 2019-2020]. Athens. Ministry Printing Office.

National Center for Families Learning. (2017). *What Works: an Introductory Teacher Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction* (2nd Ed.). Louisville: National Center for Families Learning.

Pedagogical Institute. (2010). *Πρόσκληση Υποβολής Καλών Διδακτικών Πρακτικών* [Invitation for Submitting Good Teaching Practices]. Athens: Pedagogical Institute. Retrieved 10 March, 2021 from www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/index.php/2010-06-02-19-24-10/62-2010-09-14-18-37-29

Pedagogical Institute. (2011). *Μείζον Πρόγραμμα Επιμόρφωσης Εκπαιδευτικών «Πλαίσιο Αναφοράς»* [Teachers' Major In Service Program "Frame of Reference"]. Athens: Pedagogical Institute. Retrieved 10 June, 2021 from https://bit.ly/35yQxXL

Peterson, S. S. (2012). An Analysis of Discourses of Writing and Writing Instruction in Curricula Across Canada. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *42*(2), 260-284. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2012.00589.x

Peterson, S. S., Parr, J., Lindgren, E. & Kaufman, D. (2018). Conceptualizations of writing in early years curricula and standards documents: International perspectives. *The Curriculum Journal*, *29*(4), 499-521. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2018.1500489

Popović, D. (2021). Understanding and Applying Writing Strategies in Third Cycle of Primary School. *International Journal of Instruction*, *14*(1), 963-982. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14157a

Reiser, R. A. & Dempsey, J. V. (2007). *Trends and Issues in Instructional Design* (2nd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Rios-Aguilar, C. (2013). Policy-making in early childhood literacy: Pathways to equity for all children. In Larson, J. & Marsh, J. (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of early childhood literacy* (pp. 96-114). London: Sage.

Scott, J. (2006). *Documentary Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Sharp, L. A. (2016). Acts of Writing: A Compilation of Six Models that Define the Processes of Writing. *International Journal of Instruction*, *9*(2), 77-90. https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2016.926a

Stellakis, N. (2012). Greek kindergarten teachers' beliefs and practices in early literacy. *Literacy*, *46*(2), 67-72. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4369.2011.00573.x

Stellakis, N., & Kondyli, M. (2004). The emergence of writing: Children's writing during the pre-alphabetic spelling phase. *L1–Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, *4*, 129-150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10674-004-1629-z

Sturk, E. & Lindgren, E. (2019). Discourses in Teachers' Talk about Writing. *Written Communication*, *36*(4), 503-537. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088319862512

Lindgren, E. (2019). Discourses in Teachers' Talk about Writing. *Written Communication*, *36*(4), 503-537. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088319862512

Petty, G. (2014). *Evidence-Based Teaching: A Practical Approach* (2nd Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smidt, W. K., Lehrl, S., Anders, Y., Pohlmann-Rother, S. & Kluczniok, K. (2012). Emergent literacy activities in the final preschool year in the German federal states of Bavaria and Hesse. *Early Years*, *32*(3), 301-312. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2011.642851

Srikongchan, W., Kaewkuekool, S. & Mejaleurn, S. (2021). Backward Instructional Design based Learning Activities to Developing Students' Creative Thinking with Lateral Thinking Technique. *International Journal of Instruction*, *14*(2), 233-252. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14214a

Sulzby, E., & Teale, W. (1991). Emergent literacy. In Barr, R., Kamil, M. L., Mosenthal, P. B. & Pearson, P. D. (Eds). *Handbook of reading research, Vol. Two* (pp. 727-757). London: New York: Longman.

Tafa, E. (2008). Kindergarten reading and writing curricula in the European Union. *Literacy*, *42*(3), 162-170. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4369.2008.00492.x

Tentolouris, F. (2021). Conceptualisations of writing in the curricula and the teachers' guides of Greek preschool education: a critical discourse analysis. *The Curriculum Journal*, *32*(2), 269-289. https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.78

Tsalagiorgou, E. I. (2015). *Ανάπτυξη μεθοδολογίας και δειγματικών σεναρίων για τα γνωστικά αντικείμενα της Πρωτοβάθμιας και Δευτεροβάθμιας Γενικής και Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης* [Methodology development and sample scenarios for the subject areas of Primary and Secondary (General and Vocational) Education]. Athens: Institute of Educational Policy. Retrieved 20 February, 2021 from https://bit.ly/35DMBFa

Ure, C. & Raban, B. (2001). Teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy in the pre-

school: pre-school literacy project stage 1. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *2*, 157– 168. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2001.2.2.3

Witkin, B. R. & Altschuld, J. W. (1995). *Planning and conducting needs assessments: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.