International Education Journal Vol 4, No 4, 2004
Educational Research Conference 2003 Special Issue
http://iej.cjb.net

Current Trends of the Linguistic and Cultural Values of the Greek Australian Community in South Australia

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The paper investigates the perspectives of Greek origin people as regards their intention to maintain their ancestral culture within the Australian context of social values. This qualitative research study, influenced by Humanistic Sociology, analyses data collected through questionnaires from first and second generation parents and teachers of high school students, and identifies a shift in the cultural values of the Greek community in South Australia towards an equilibrium of shared Greek-Australian values.

The researcher aims to demonstrate that Greek origin parents, educated in Australia, have incorporated social and cultural values of the dominant culture in their ancestral cultural system and proceeded to the creation of a new personal and ethnic group cultural system, which allows them to maintain a dual identity. This shift, indicative of the need to capture the advantages both cultural identities offer, emerges the logical question:

What is the cultural prognosis for the third generation descendents of the Greek Migrants?

Greek migrants, language, education, assimilation

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE

Research about Greek migrants in an Australian and South Australia school context in particular appears to be limited. The major research efforts were conducted during the early 1970s to the late 1980s, an era, which saw interest in multiculturalism at its strongest. During this time the Australians of second generation Greek origin saw themselves evolving from a marginalized social status and sense of being a so-called 'ignorant migrant' to having a prominent status arising out of a strong ethnic community. Since then Greek migrants have continued to have a passion for proving themselves equal to other Australians in a process of natural assimilation, closely related to living in a cultural context where the dominant culture differs from their own. The authors believe that this has generated a shift in the attitudes and perspectives of second-generation migrants in South Australia. This second generation represents the parents of high school students, and it is the parents' attitudes and perspectives which will have an impact on third generation Australians of Greek origin. Specifically, this is about the latter generation's willingness to maintain or alternate, if needed, what they consider to be Greek ethnic identity and the maintenance of certain Greek cultural values, for example, the language and Greek Orthodox religion.

The research undertaken has been using the sociological framework of Humanistic Sociology to interpret and analyse the collected data. Humanistic Sociology has emphasized the need to accept

human values and activities as facts, just as the human agents themselves accept them. Znaniecki (1969, p.75) points out:

> Construction of a cultural system is mere reproduction of a system already in existence when it is intended to be such by the agent and taken to be such by the other participants, even if the copy is very different from the original.

Cultural phenomena are deeply connected with human consciousness and the way people perceive specific aspects of their culture, heritage or every day life according to their personal or group values (Znaniecki, 1963). Znaniecki and later Smolicz noted that when a person as part of a pluralist society is exposed to more than one cultural system, he or she has the opportunity to adopt values from other cultural systems so as to create what Smolicz has defined as a "personal cultural system of shared values" (Smolicz, 1985). Under this cultural umbrella of shared values, a tradition or cultural heritage is usually influenced and is subjected to changes according the ethic group's or person's needs and demands at a certain time and the consciousness the human actor has of those needs and demands (Znaniecki, 1963). The special value system (group and personal), specific for each cultural group, is defined as core values system. This system identifies and differentiates each cultural group from another although they reside in the same extended cultural context. Core values help each group to be a distinctive ethnic, religious or cultural community. They can also be regarded as one of the most fundamental components of a group's culture (Smolicz, 1999, p.106). Obeying or sharing certain core values indicates membership of a certain group whereas the rejection of these values is equal to possible exclusion from the group. These core values are the basis for preserving both tradition and heritage, and as Smolicz notes (Smolicz, 1999, p.227), "as parts of the cultural process, they have to be actively evaluated by those living today". Each generation can select a certain aspect of its heritage and evaluate, reform or adjust it to current realities. Each succeeding generation evaluates various aspects of its heritage in a new way. Some aspects of one's heritage cease to be of interest, while others become important in terms of sentiment or aspiration. Clyne (1991) also argues that one has to view cultural values according to the terms in which they are meaningful to the group concerned. The researcher who is examining, analysing or interpreting a cultural item or expression of certain cultural phenomena such as language, religion or cultural tradition under the prism of Humanistic Sociology, although trying to be an unbiased observer, has no alternative but to participate in them in order understand how a human agent perceives a certain cultural item or its social expression. This is called the 'Humanistic Co-efficient', the need to interpret all social and cultural activities from the perspective of the actors themselves, not merely that of the outside observer, both Znaniecki (1969) and Smolicz (1999) emphasize.

The members of the Greek-Australian community of Adelaide included in this research study seem to follow a similar path leading to a cultural system of overarching core values, to an Australian-Greek values equilibrium. They have moved from the custom of ritually following Greek customs to incorporating in their everyday life more mainstream Australian cultural aspects and values. A prime example of this shift is the role of language. The Greek language, previously regarded as the Greek community's core value, currently is confronted with a tension between maintenance and alteration that has arisen after the first 50 years of Greek migration to Australia. Now the resilience of the Greek community in South Australia is threatened by the voluntary abolition of both language and cultural identity. Currently, the first generation Greek migrants, who constitute the natural basis of cultural, religious and linguistic maintenance, is disappearing. Their second-generation offspring, whether Australian or Greek-born, have completed their education in Australia and increasingly perceive themselves as Australians more than Greeks, whereas their parents were proud of being known as 'Greeks'. This perception of the second generation seeing themselves as Australians has naturally affected not only the language used in

everyday life but also the customs, which maintain Greek cultural identity. Papademetre (1994a, p.515) has earlier supported this idea by stating that:

> this new identity has been undergoing a periodical modification influenced by external socioeconomic exigencies in the context of social changes, educational opportunities, and professional practices over time.

Smolicz and Secombe (1981) in their research conducted during the early 1980s proved that Greeks at that time perceived their language as one of the core values of their ethnic identity and that maintaining the language was significant in preserving Greek traditions and culture. Clyne (1991) points out that Greeks until 1996 seemed to maintain their native language at home much more than any other ethnic group that migrated during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Papademetre (1994b), through the research he conducted in South Australia and Tsolakidou (1995) in her research on 'Code Switching' in Victorian Greek families, have shown that in the contemporary Greek Australian family the Greek language is now what Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) has defined as a subordinate language to English, at least as far as the second generation is concerned. They created their own idiomatic 'Greek-Australian' language. According to Papademetre this logogenesis is just a result of incorporation of English words into the Greek language and vice versa. The findings of the present research are compatible with the participants admitting that their existing knowledge of Greek is at a junior primary level and they feel restricted by the limited vocabulary needed to communicate with the first generation parents in everyday communication. The trend to code-switching and mixing languages is also apparent in their responses.

Not much research regarding the role and influence of education on the preservation of ethnic language and culture has been conducted specifically in South Australia. Papademetre and Routoulas have conducted research from 1993-1999, one of the last periods of study about Greek migrants. To the best of this author's knowledge, it is the only other study interested in parents' perspectives on their children's education, an issue that often worries many parents of Greek ancestry. In particular, the parents claim that the language currently being offered in the curriculum does not interest those who want to learn Greek at school. This was not the case ten years ago and this is due to the perpetual changing of educational policy that now favours other ethnic languages. Papademetre is aware of the shift in language learning and the ideological discourse on multiculturalism in Australia. In his study he examines the extent to which this shift affects the "personal attitudes and perspectives of bilingual and bicultural Australian born and educated parents of Hellenic background with regard to the education of their children" (Papademetre and Routoulas, 2001, p.134).

The undeniable problem about research into the teaching and learning of Greek language and culture in Australia, across all levels of state-funded education, is that research until now has focused on the socio-cultural and linguistic ambition of immigrant parents and their children to maintain their ancestral culture and language. This was a major issue during the 1970s and 1980s when multiculturalism was the aim of education policies. Twenty years later, Papademetre and Routoulas indicated that the interviewees feel "the odds are still there for the bilingual education". The present research identifies a problem in the third generation's reluctance to arrest the decline and resilience of Greek language and culture in Australia. The researcher has approached parents and teachers of students who are attending Greek language classes at state and independent schools. She is investigating the impact of parental aspirations on their children's education. Parental aspiration is extremely significant for families of Greek origin and the pressure put on children to follow a certain path was and according to the researcher's findings is still extremely serious and intense. It varies from aphorisms like "of course my child has to go to the university" to the more modest "of course I would like him or her to go to the university but I let him or her to choose profession". Marjoribanks (2002) in his latest book on family background, environmental

and individual influences on adolescents' aspirations, titled *Family and school capital: Towards a context theory of students' school outcomes*, has investigated the role of parents' concerns on whether their children intend to continue schooling or drop out. He has demonstrated that children of Greek origin are very much influenced by their school and in terms of further education-related choices are mainly influenced by their mothers. It is further proof that parents play a role in their children's attitude to education, and education-related issues are very important to Greek families.

RESEARCH AIM, METHOD AND INSTRUMENT.

The important sociological question that this research seeks to answer is: Has the Greek community in Adelaide shifted from considering language as one of its core values assisting its survival, to a different status where it believes that language is no longer a valuable cultural item and could or should be replaced by the English language? If so, does this shift indicate that another value will be the core one, for example religion, historicity or cultural awareness, or does it indicate an unreserved assimilation process that drives the local Greek community to desert its ethnic values on favor of the pluralistic society's value system, thus abolishing its ancestral identity?

This research is based on the hypothesis that since education is a significant method of enforcing the dominant culture on those educated into the system, the second generation of migrants of Greek origin will eventually lose their willingness to maintain Greek language and culture in a process of natural assimilation. Initially, the multicultural context they live in will allow cultural and linguistic ethnic characteristics to be preserved, which inevitably will fade when the first generation is gone and the second generation perceives itself as being part of the establishment. At this point the will to maintain the ancestral language and culture has no meaning should the former ethnic group live under an umbrella of cultural values shared between the constantly weakening traditional ones, and the prevailing ones in the context where a person lives and is educated by.

The researcher in this paper presents the findings of the investigation of multiculturalism and identity, language, education and careers, and bilingual or bicultural upbringing of children. The research was designed to investigate the perceptions of parents and students who are attending Greek language classes at high school and the impact of the education system, when the Greek language is offered as LOTE, on the ethnic awareness of the ethnic group. The present sample has already made the conscious decision to maintain Greek language, culture and heritage, at least at a higher level of ethnic awareness compared to those who are not attending Greek language lessons. A follow-up research study that will include students and parents of those students who are not attending Greek language classes in South Australia would be useful in supplying more knowledge about the future of the Greek language, culture and ethnic awareness.

The method used to collect data was a questionnaire. The researcher took all the necessary precautions to safeguard respondents' anonymity and answers were returned to the Department of Education at the University of Adelaide. The questionnaire included a number of questions that helped the researcher identify the group of respondents. The second part of the questionnaire included eight open-ended questions, where the respondent could outline personal perceptions and ideas. This assisted the researcher to collect valuable cultural data. An alternative strategy appeared in that those people, who were more willing to reveal their identity and not just provide a written answer, could discuss their personal views on the issues outlined in the questionnaire. The interviews were mainly conducted in English combined with some Greek Creole language, while some interviewees spoke solely in Greek. The targeted group of respondents consisted of all Greek or non-Greek parents of high school students attending Greek classes in all those Adelaide state high schools that offer Greek LOTE, and in the independent St. George College, the only private school with Greek in its curriculum. The research commenced during Term 3 in 2002 and

was completed by the end of Term 2 in 2003. The parents were approached through their children and the researcher distributed the questionnaire personally. The parents' questionnaire was distributed to over 100 individuals. Yet only 35 of them returned it and 18 more chose the interview method to communicate their ideas. This sample is not enough to justify a quantitative research approach, but as far as Humanistic Sociology is concerned it is very significant that these people, by having decided to provide insights freely, were eager to contribute. Their contribution is extremely significant because they are the human actors who play a role in social actions, which they perceive as crucial for their future in Australia. As well, those who did not respond to the questionnaire provide us with adequate evidence for a humanistic interpretation, since they are providing us with information regarding current trends and the perspectives parents have on their children's education about Greek culture and on preserving their heritage. Regardless of their individual beliefs and perspectives – the reader will be able to judge them accordingly, since they will be presented as they were uttered – we can claim that they include all the possible scenarios and they are a sample worthy of being investigated.

ANALYSIS

The Quantitative Approach: Descriptive Statistics and Their Input

To begin with, we have to admit that it is amazing yet not surprising that this small sample of those 53 parents and teachers who have responded to our request, represents the whole spectrum of people who are involved in one way or another in preserving the Greek language and culture in South Australia. These respondents are people from a non-Greek background married into a Greek family, or people of Greek origin having a spouse who is non-Greek. They are couples of first generation adult Greek migrants or children of migrants, who were born in Greece but finished their education in Australia, or they represent an Australian-born person of Greek origin. Some of them are very much interested in maintaining their heritage while some are not. Most people in our sample (89%, that is 47 out of 53 respondents) were born between the late 1950s and early 1960s. The place of their birth is not statistically significant. Forty-three per cent (23 out of 53 respondents) were born in Greece and 30 out of 53 (46%) are Australian-born. The findings are consistent with the Australian Census statistics since 1968 concerning the age and place of birth of respondents of Greek origin. Our respondents, the parents of senior high students, are in the 35-46 age group and they are either first or second-generation migrants, since their parents migrated mainly during the 1950s and 1960s. Regardless of the respondents' place and date of birth, 60 per cent come from a traditional Greek family with 3-5 children, whilst only 20 per cent belong to a two children family. A similar percentage (19%) had more than five siblings and up to ten children in the family. These findings reflect the ethos of the Greek family, namely, to have as many children as possible, since they are said to be 'a blessing from God'. In terms of the respondents' ethnographic categorization, the place of birth of their siblings is distributed similarly to their own place of birth: 43 per cent of siblings were born in Australia and 45 per cent were born in Greece. The remaining 12 per cent were born elsewhere such as Cyprus and Turkey.

Crosschecking the language used to communicate with the family (parents, siblings, spouse, children and friends) the statistics reveal the following information. The percentage of respondents communicating in Greek with their fathers was 81 per cent (that is 43 out of 53), while 83 per cent (that is 44 out of 53) of respondents speak Greek to their mothers. If their parents are alive they see them very often. The attitude that they have regarding the language they use when speaking to their parents indicates the level of the Greek language they have mastered, enabling them to communicate effectively with their parents.

Regardless of the respondents' place and date of birth, as well as their siblings' place of birth and number of siblings in the family, 33 out of 53 respondents (62%) communicate with their siblings

in English. It is also noteworthy that of the remaining 20 respondents, 12 answered that they used Greek and the remaining eight admitted that they used Greek Creole. It is further noteworthy that those who answered that they communicate with their siblings only in Greek were all born in Greece, and in fact their parents are still living in Greece. In other words they are first generation migrants with a strong connection to Greece.

However, when it came to the language used at home to communicate with their children, the ones belonging to the third generation, as many as 87 per cent admitted that they speak English or the 'GrEnglish' Creole language. The same percentage emerged when respondents revealed this is the language they used with their spouse if they were of Greek origin. Participants were also asked to identify their social circle and to reveal the ethnicity of their friends as well as the language used to communicate with their friends of Greek origin: 31 out of 53 (59%) spoke only English with their friends and another 19 per cent (10 out of 53) used Creole. Not surprisingly the same 12 respondents who had earlier indicated that they speak Greek with their siblings, stated that they used Greek solely with their friends. Figure 1 illustrates the language used by participants with their close family or friends of Greek origin.

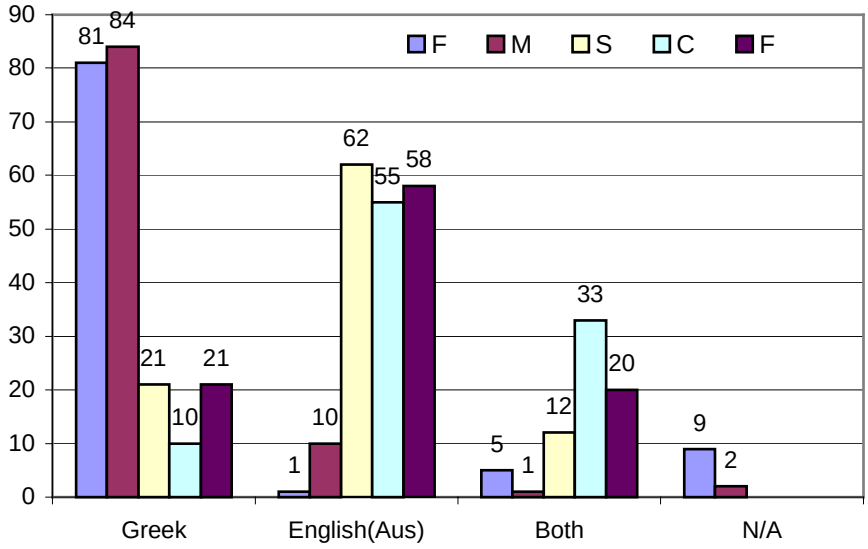

Figure 1. Language used with family/social circle

The columns in Figure 1 titled N/A refer to the answers of those participants who stated that their father or mother is deceased. Therefore they have not answered the question about them. As we can see the main language spoken by the respondents to their parents is partly Greek and partly the Creole language. It is surprising, however, that there are few people who admit that they communicate with their mothers in English and not in their mother-tongue. All these respondents are Australian-born and university graduates. This language preference is very well detailed in the literature. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) has demonstrated that there are migrant mothers who prefer their children to communicate in the mainstream language and not in their ethnic language, so that they can excel in their studies.

The choices and preferences our respondents have shown for English is, according to the dictates of Humanistic Sociology, a significant and most important social action that leads to a reversal of the language being used. This specific act is crucial because the attitude of these representatives of the intermediate generation plays a very significant role in the preservation or otherwise of their ancestral language, culture and heritage. It must be remembered that a multicultural society such as Australia offers the freedom not only to preserve ethnic diversity but also to ensure that ethnic traditions flourish. The researcher therefore investigates in the three research leads undertaken,

first, the personal choices of the human cultural agents, second, the role of the education system and policies in forming these choices, and third, the total assimilation of migrants into the cultural values of the society in which they have been brought up. The data collected and their analysis indicates that the more the respondents have gone through the education system, the more Australianised and assimilated they have become, sharing more cultural values with the Australian Anglo-Saxon context rather than their own ancestry.

A very interesting outcome arose when the educational level of the respondents and the language they used at home was crosschecked. Those respondents (6 of 53) who have no education at all, even Greek, and have never been through the Australian education system, speak mainly Greek at home (5 of 6) or Creole (1 of 6). Those who finished primary school in Greece and were not educated in Australia (4 of 53), similarly speak either Greek (3 of 4) or English (1 of 4). This scenario changes when we discuss the findings from those who attended and finished secondary education in Australia (20 of 53). Only three out of these 20 speak Greek at home and, not surprisingly, these people had migrated to Australia when they were teenagers. Six out of the 20 spoke in Creole and 11 out of the 20, or 55 per cent of those with secondary education, communicated solely in English at home. It should be noted that the Creole language in its structure and vocabulary tends to be more English than Greek. Regarding those people who have had tertiary education (23 of 53), the critical finding is that many Greek language teachers are included in this category. Half of them (12 of 23, or 48%) speak only English at home, another 40 per cent (10 of 23) speak the Creole language and only one out of the 23 university graduates used only Greek at home. The comparison between the language spoken at home and the education level is provided in Figure 2.

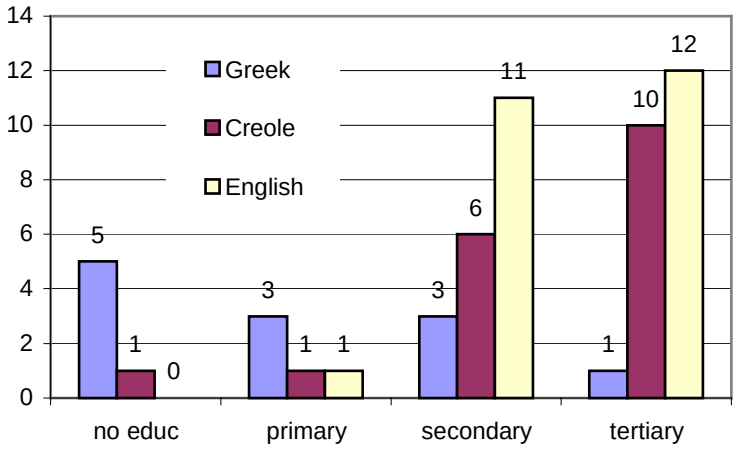

Figure 2. Educational level and language spoken at home

The importance of the language used at home as the main method of communication is very important in whether the next generation will preserve it. Should the second generation parents choose not to use Greek at home because it does not answer their needs any more, naturally their offspring are not expected to talk in Greek since they do not have the oral and aural interaction necessary to maintain what was once considered their mother-tongue. Yet we have to keep in mind that the respondents have chosen and sent their children to a school offering Greek. This has to be interpreted as meaning that in their statements they are trying to maintain Greek language and culture in their offspring. The irony, however, is that they are not endeavouring to pass it on to their children themselves.

It is also interesting that a significant number of respondents admit that when communicating with their siblings, or friends and children of Greek origin, they use the Creole language that has been created, using words where they could not recall or did not know the Greek word when they tried

to speak to their parents. Eventually, as Papademetre has proved, this need has become a living logogenesis process that has created a third language, what Smolicz refers to as an Identity language (Smolicz, 1979a). This language reflects exactly their needs and mental processes. As they revealed in their personal statements and as we will read later, this intermediate and transitional generation does not feel totally Greek or totally Australian. One respondent wrote very vividly:

> *I feel that I am two different people. In the morning I am dressed up in my Australian professional character and go up there, to work. When at home, I am the true me, the one who gets angry very easily and forgets the anger quickly, the one who speaks loud and swears in Greek all day long. Yet I am not Greek, I could not live there! Probably I am better here, since I have been educated here, but I cannot escape all the time. Sometimes they can tell that I am different and I have noted that sometimes at work, people who cannot pronounce my name, seem to look at me differently.*

In this research it emerged that six of the participants who had not attended any schooling. Five people admitted that they followed Greek culture and traditions, while one person conceded to using a mixture of both cultures. Three out of the four followed Greek traditions while one used both cultural systems. It is not surprising that the responses about cultural maintenance are identical with the responses given about the language used at home. Of those who attended high school in Australia and responded that they used English, the same 11 people admitted that they preferred Australian culture and traditions even when celebrating Easter and Christmas. The same applies to those who finished their tertiary education. The numbers are similar. Those 12 speaking English at home enjoyed Australian culture, the ten speaking the Creole language used a Creole cultural system, and the one person who spoke Greek at home followed Greek traditions. A comparison between the language spoken at home and education level is provided in Figure 3.

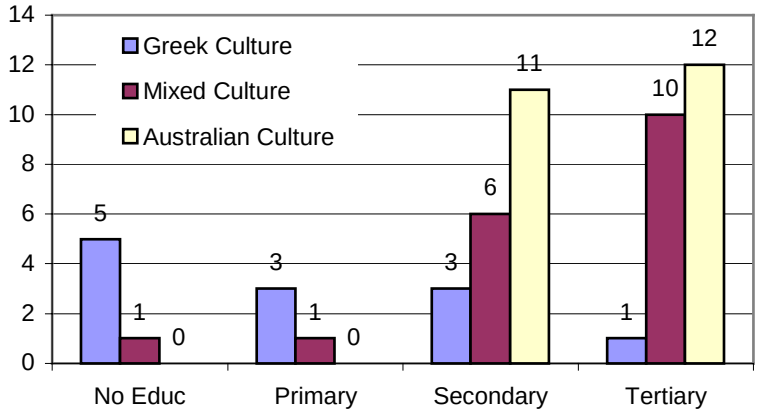

Figure 3. Educational level and cultural maintenance

In order to understand education's influence on the maintenance of their ethnic identity, participants were also asked to measure the factors they considered significant for their identity, and demonstrated what they considered more significant by numbering in importance each factor. The factors mentioned were the following: marriage and baptism according to the Greek Orthodox religion; Greek history; the people's character; the Greek language; Greek cuisine; and Greek cultural expressions such as songs and dances, whether traditional or contemporary. They had the option of naming other factors they felt they identified with. Their responses were categorized according to their education level and the results of this cross-tabulation are presented in Figure 4. The non-educated or the less educated placed a lot of weight on their 'Greekness' and the factors mentioned above. Those who were more educated, however, considered as more significant to their identity the factors of social status, social acceptance and career, to name a few.

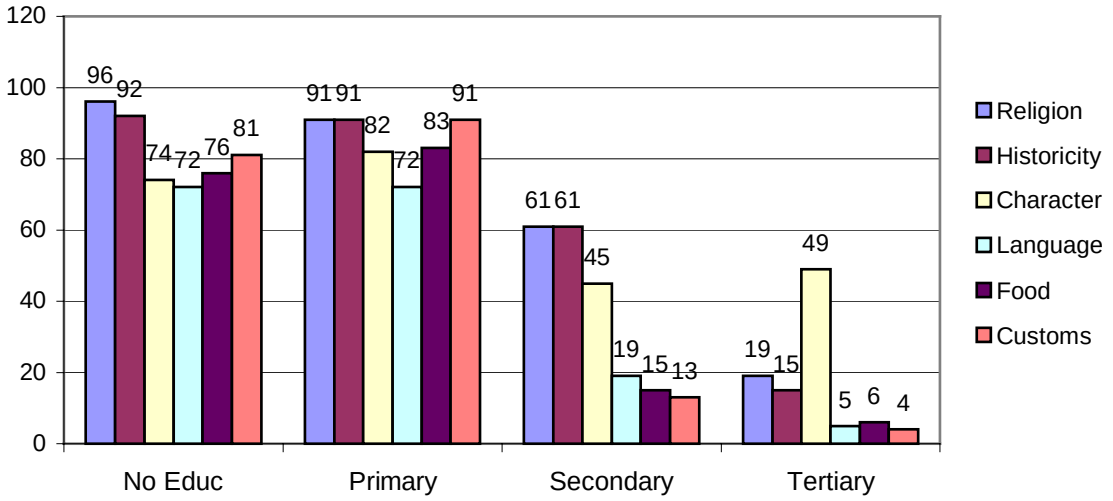

Figure 4. Cultural aspects identifying people's 'Greekness' according to education level

It is interesting that the only factor that university graduates felt identified them with any so-called 'Greekness' was their character, mentality and temperament, or in their own words, "*my Greek blood*".

The Contribution of the Qualitative Tradition: Cultural Data

Respondents' Self identification Revealed by Personal Statements

The respondents participating could be divided in two subgroups under the main criterion of place of birth. The first group could be categorized as first generation migrants and the other one as second-generation migrants. In both groups there were respondents who taught Greek at all the levels of education and in ethnic, state or independent schools. This made it imperative to have another category that could offer a more profound approach since it may be necessary to use the input of respondents who fit the two roles simultaneously. We will use as our first step this group's perspectives and personal statements to interpret those factors that have affected this shift in the process of teaching, learning and maintaining the Greek language.

Teachers have a say in the Greek language

The specific subgroup is able to contribute its experience as bilingual, bicultural and often bivalent participant observers in the process of teaching Greek language and culture in state and community schools. They are important Greek language teachers and parents of Greek origin who have children attending high school Greek classes. This means that more than anyone else they have an idea of the factors generating the noticeable shift to the Creole (GrEnglish) language and culture. It will ultimately lead to the Greek community being totally absorbed and assimilated into the dominant cultural system in Australia. The majority of teacher or parent respondents were first generation migrants who migrated as teenagers during the late 1960s and 1970s. They have been educated in Australia and all of them, except for a few ethnic schoolteachers, are university graduates. The few parents who insist on speaking Greek with their close family, children and friends belong to this subgroup. When they were asked the reason for the problems that Greek language and culture are facing in schools with falling student numbers at all education levels, they blamed government education policies.

> *Generally there is little importance placed on learning a second language in the Australian educational system. Australians seem to think that English alone is enough to see you through life, a very isolationist attitude. Also, the educational system seems*

> *to follow the economic trend of the times. Since our trade partners are closely linked to Asia, these are the languages pushed in schools today. Not everyone is going to have a keen interest in learning an Asian language.* (T3, Respondent 12)
>
> *I don't have the impression that Greek or languages for that matter have a high priority at the school I'm currently at. After Year 9 most students abandon language learning.* (T16, Respondent 31)
>
> *European languages such as Greek are no longer seen as important or valuable as Asian languages are today. This is also reflected in the school curriculum. Even when such languages are part of the curriculum not enough emphasis is placed on them in terms of timetabling.* (T 17, Respondent 50)

They consider the main reason for the decline in student numbers in Greek classes is the lack of practice in the language at home and the absence of any aural and oral language for the students who are keen to practice. Generally, they complained about the lack of resources and changes in the curricula. Last but not least, many language teachers were not using up-to-date teaching techniques. The lessons therefore were said to be boring and without motivation:

> *Overall in South Australian schools the number of students studying Greek is dwindling. The issue is changing demographics and the changing nature of the Greek community. Most of our Greek students are third generation who speak exclusively English at home; others are from mixed marriages so the desire to maintain the Greek language is not as strong as in the previous generation; that is for those students who spoke Greek at home. This affects the approach a teacher of Greek will take, when teaching Greek in the 2000s*. (T8, Respondent 23)
>
> *Those students are third generation Greeks, whose mother tongue is English and who come from homes where the main language spoken is English. A consequence of this is lack of appeal of the Greek language and may be the reason why people of non-Greek origin, or third generation Greeks do not take up the language. As a result Greek fails to be one of the most common languages studied in schools today.* (T 11, Respondent 26)
>
> *There are, however, teachers that have been teaching for more than 30 years and have not modified or adapted their teaching methods nor topics taught to suit these schools. Some of the lessons given by these teachers do not reflect the modern, vibrant Greece of today. This leaves students with the impression that Greece and Greeks themselves are stuck in time.* (T 7, Respondent 21)
>
> *Unfortunately, the way of teaching is inappropriate. Teaching is without logic. It is not based on a proper curriculum, which is designed by non-Greeks. The Cognition and Metacognition are not even included in the curricula or they are set wrong.* (T18, Respondent 51)

The cultural characteristics of the first generation migrants: Parents

The main period of Greek migration to Australia ended around the late 1970s. The group of participants in our research represents people who were first generation migrants. Young Greek-born migrants either came with their parents or by themselves, or were invited and supported by relatives in Australia, and settled and were educated and they blended in with Australia's multicultural society. It is logical and expected that they still maintain the values which are significant for language and culture preservation. The Greek Orthodox religion, family unit and structure in 2000 still had that distinctive cohesiveness that Smolicz (1979b) identified and discussed. Last but not least they had a cultural awareness that made them feel more Greek than

Australian, but they adjusted successfully. Nonetheless there were a few voices expressing the sense that they "*feel both*" and "*try to have the best from both cultures*":

> *Whilst I feel Australian and am Australian I have a very close affinity with my Greekness. When I am with Australians I know I am different. Also my husband's family is not Greek and this is another way my Greekness 'comes out'. This is not a bad feeling; they are very comfortable with that and I am very comfortable with my Greek identity.* (R5)

> *In my job description I feel more Greek-Australian. As I was growing up it was more Australian-Greek due to peer pressure trying to hide my identity. Now, working with Greek children and understanding true values of being Greek I wouldn't have it any other way.* (R18)

> *I feel more Greek as I grew up in Greece, but whenever I have gone to Greece for holiday I feel Australian as some of my thinking is influenced by the Australian way of life. When you experience both worlds you try and take the best of both.* (R27)

The language they use within their social context and their family (close and extended) is Greek. Since their children are more fluent in Greek compared with third generation children, they consider learning Greek is more a professional advantage and useful for other reasons, such as communicating with relatives in Greece and travelling abroad. They do not see the language as a measure for maintaining the culture. Instead they consider Greek linguistic and cultural preservation are the anticipated outcomes of the strong and cohesive Greek family, which feels obliged to preserve their so-called 'Greekness':

> *Unfortunately I do not speak enough Greek. I only speak Greek regularly to my parents and friends and relatives of their generation. When my children were younger I spoke to them in Greek, however as they got older our topics of discussion became more complex, and they commenced answering in English.* (R 9)

> *Until my first child went to kindy he only spoke Greek with us and it was relatively easy for me to speak Greek with him all the time. However, it became more difficult with our second child because by then his brother had started to speak English with him. In my everyday life I mainly speak in Greek. I speak to my husband in Greek, yet he answers in English. I also would speak in Greek to the children about 60 per cent of the time. They understand everything I say. The older ones find it easier to respond in Greek compared to the younger one, and this seems quite similar in most families.* (R 28)

> *I speak in Greek with parents and my mother-in-law and children do quite well in speaking Greek with grandparents. However, all other relatives and friends of a Greek background speak in English and I have noticed that most of them also speak in English with their children.* (R 33)

> *We speak Greek to our parents on the phone when they call from overseas. We speak to our children mainly in Greek and also Greek to our brothers and sisters, and Greek friends and relatives. We speak English to people who do not speak Greek.* (R 45)

It is interesting that since these people migrated at a time when multiculturalism was at its peak, even now almost 30 years later, they still consider themselves as deprived of a 'fair go' and that they did not have the same chances with others due to their being Greek. They also stated that it still hurt being called a 'wog' as a child. In their responses it emerged that they felt the need to hide their identity.

> Initially it was very difficult to grow up as wog or dago. It took a lot of patience and effort to be part of the Australian culture and fit in. Learning to speak with no minimal trace of Greek accent helped. It is not so difficult now with successful Greeks within the community. (R 4)

> It did not really affect me, since I speak with an English accent and I do not look like Greek. Only my surname was a giveaway, but most people just thought I must be married to one. (R 13)

> Difficult – the English language is difficult to learn and be able to communicate with the general public. A lot of people are not tolerant to people who have difficulty speaking the English language. (R 19)

The cultural characteristics of the second generation migrants: Parents

These are a bilingual, bicultural group with a dual identity and probably bivalent, yet it seems the Australian cultural system is increasingly preferred. They enjoy both cultures and speak of a third culture and a third language – an amalgam of both. Their slogan is 'the best of both' and recently they commenced debates about Greek-Australian culture with a Pan-Australian conference held in Melbourne in April 2004.

> In the 70s the racial conflict was terrible with regards being a pupil at school or finding a job. Even when working, it was very difficult with racism. Nowadays life has changed, the country is more multicultural and have accepted the migrants more so than then. As a child and teenager I found it difficult because I knew I was different than the majority, however, there were enough of us around not to feel too isolated. As I grew older, in my mid to late teens, I began to appreciate this difference and felt proud to come from such a culturally diverse background. (R 15)

> I call myself Australian of Greek parents. Being born in Australia, I've had the pleasure of learning about both the Australian and Greek way of life. I am privileged to be able to combine good qualities from both cultures to create a balanced life and family environment. My upbringing was very strict and structured. I see that Australians are more relaxed and laid back. In my family there are certain limits set with my spouse and children and at the same time there is more open communication, freedom and understanding which has come about from my Australian living environment. (R 41)

Having a marginalized and residual perception of Greek history, culture and language, they declared that they do not care for maintaining their ancestral ethnic identity, since they do not belong completely to it. They consider multiculturalism as a 'given' and that there is no more need for struggle as it has been established. They do not care for any residual knowledge of Greek culture, tradition and history, since they claim they do not need to know all this to be proud of their origins. Finally, they believe that if the children learn the Greek language they will learn Greek culture also. Otherwise they will have a residual view of both and eventually if they do not use it, they will lose it.

> *My allegiance is to Australia first, I feel this is the country that has given me a future, education, etc. I am of Greek parents, first generation and have always been very proud of my heritage. Yet I think I have forgotten many things about the Greek tradition, and there are many things I do not know about Greek history. Yet do the Greeks in Greece know everything I know about Australia? Of course not. I know what I need and that is enough for me*. (R 15)

> *Even though I was born in Australia, I can feel the Greek blood in me and feel proud to have an ethnic background and especially Greek. I like the fact that I have a tradition behind me, and something that I can pass on to my children. As my husband is of Italian background, I do not want to consume my children with only Greek and wish to be fair with their ethnic upbringing. After all the multiculturalism is something people have tried very hard to establish.* (R 43)

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research has been to interpret the social trend of second generation Greeks in Australia: they are moving away from Greek language and culture and creating a blended Australian-Greek culture. Will this trend of putting aside the ancestral values and living under a cultural and linguistic equilibrium continue, because it is based on the social needs of the Greek community? Or, is it a temporary sign of resilience in the face of total assimilation and could it or should it be readily replaced by English language and culture?

The target group of the second research phase was the high school students who were attending Greek classes. They belonged mainly to the third generation. A better reading of the parents' generation and their attitudes towards both Greek and Australian cultural values, their perceptions and choices regarding their cultural and linguistic heritage, are considered essential and potentially illuminating for the purposes of this project. Humanistic Sociology has one significant principal:

> When a group is changing values, it simply alternates tradition and evolves cultural identity according to current needs.

This approach explains the shift happening in the Greek community. Eighty per cent of participants in the parent and teacher questionnaire claimed that since they spoke English within the family or social circle, and shared Australian customs and habits, to identify themselves as Greeks had become increasingly difficult. Those who have gone through the education system and been born in Australia do not feel to be Greeks at all. They admit, however, that they are not either completely Australians, although they have tried hard. This is why they speak for a third culture. Those who have had a limited education seem to retain more of the Greek culture and language compared to those who have finished secondary or tertiary education. Those who are educated do not care for residual knowledge of Greek culture, tradition and history. They believe that they have the best of both worlds. They identify themselves as Greek through common codes implanted in their character. They feel that the education they have gone through within the Australian school system has helped them to feel part of Australian society. Their education has influenced the mentality, attitudes and approaches they have in their social lives.

These findings present the changes that have been noticed in the second generation. It will be interesting to investigate the perspectives and opinions of the third generation. The findings of this research study about students, will also help to the extent that it will offer more data about parents, in the form of comments which students make and about their parents as far as language and cultural identity are concerned.

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