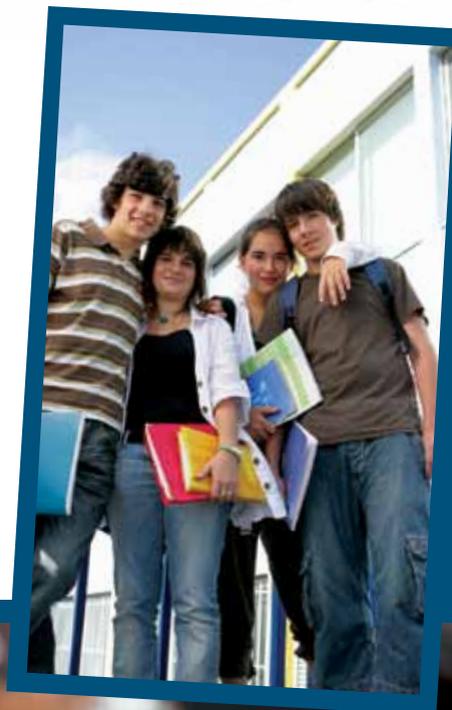Bessie Dendrinos, Keti Zouganelli, Eudokia Karavas

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING
In Greek Schools

European Survey
on Language Competences

ΙΕΠ

B. DENDRINOS, K. ZOUGANELI & E. KARAVAS

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN GREEK SCHOOLS

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PREFACE

This volume discusses data drawn from the "European Survey on Language Competences" (ESLC) –a challenging research project, funded by the European Commission, in order to provide comparable data on the foreign language proficiency of secondary school students across Europe and to serve as an indicator of progress towards the objective of improving foreign language learning in European schools. While it provides a brief description of this pan-European enterprise, it focuses on findings in Greece which are then compared to findings in other countries. It presents, discusses and interprets data regarding achievement on a language test, especially constructed with a view to measuring the level of students' proficiency in two foreign languages, as well as data from questionnaires intended to gather information about contextual factors which impact foreign language education in Greek state schools.

The construction of high-quality instruments and tools for the sake of this European Survey, data compilation and analysis, as well as the rigorous reporting of outcomes were all painstaking and methodologically complex tasks. The energy, time and resources involved in this costly enterprise were worth it, however, given that for the first time ever we were provided with statistically representative results, which will possibly have an effect on language education policies and practices at national and supranational levels, with a view to developing multilingual European citizenry.

The *Final Report of the European Survey on Language Competences,* released by the European Commission in 2012, presents findings from all participating countries and makes broad-spectrum comparisons, documenting firstly that different European educational systems yield very different outcomes insofar as language learning is concerned and secondly that conditions for language learning and teaching are very different in each member state.

A detailed analysis of the Survey findings in each participating country was, in most cases, the responsibility of a national agency or local organisation which was assigned the role of National Research Coordinator (NRC) to carry out the research locally, under

the direction of the ESLC project team. Therefore, the human, technical and financial resources available to the NRC impinged on the quality of the local research, but especially on data management, analysis and interpretation which fed each National Report, for which individual countries were responsible. The fact that NRCs in the various countries had very different resources available to them and that some had no financial means to subsidize the strenuous work and expertise required for data analysis was responsible for the great variability among National Reports. Moreover, the discrepancy among National Reports was due to the fact that no prior requirements or specifications had been issued by either the Commission or the SurveyLang project team.

In a few cases, such as that of Greece, the organisation that undertook the task of data management and the writing of the National Report was different than the NRC. Specifically, the agency that conducted the Research and acted as NRC in Greece was the late Pedagogical Institute –a state organisation which used to act as an educational policy counselling body to the Greek Ministry of Education. As this organisation was about to cease operating, its resources and funding were totally insufficient at the time that the data became available, the ensuing task of data management was undertaken by the RCeL (Research Centre for Language Teaching, Testing and Assessment) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, thanks to which the Interim National Report was prepared and produced.[1]

The Interim Report constituted the first important step for what is now a complete product: our final National Report, which focuses on the Greek findings compared also with those from the other participants. In addition to a detailed analysis of findings from the assessment of student performance, it contains a lengthy discussion concerning the impact of contextual factors on language learning in Greece and recommendations for language education policy in Greece. It also suggests a more effective pursuit in future of the European vision to monitor European students' foreign language proficiency.

While the Interim Report, prepared by me and by Keti Zouganeli, who led the research project in Greece, as a research associate of the Pedagogical Institute, this final report is enriched by the involvement of Kia Karavas, especially because of the analysis she made of the contextual factors in learning languages in school in Greece. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for joining the Greek project team and to express appreciation for her substantial input.

The cost for the laborious work on data analysis was fully undertaken by the RCeL (Research Centre of Language Teaching, Testing and Assessment) of the University of Athens, with funding through the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013 from the European Union and the Greek state. The RCeL staff devoted time and energy to discussing the research project, reflecting on ways of analysing data and assessing the validity of the findings. In the initial phase of data analysis the involvement of Dr

1   See: (www.rcel.enl.uoa.gr/collaborations/surveylang.html/).

Voula Gotsoulia was valuable both for this project and for another RCeL project she is collaborating on –namely the 'Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum', which aims to introduce norms and standardized criteria for the description of language proficiency levels of Greek speakers of foreign languages. Dr Anastasia Lykou, the statistician who analysed all the data and cross checked it later, contributed significantly to the interim but also to the final National Report. Other senior and junior researchers gave of their time and energy for this report. I wish to thank them all and especially Dimitris Kokoroskos, Maria Laftsidou and Maria Stathopoulou. I also want to thank Christina Lykou who copy edited the Greek version of the report.

The Greek version of this work, on the flip side of this volume, is not a translation of the English. Actually each version has a somewhat different content because it is addressed to a different audience. The Greek text is addressed mainly to language education researchers, foreign language teachers and policy makers in Greece. Therefore, it describes the European project, presents a summary of the Greek findings, discusses the main conclusions and makes recommendations for foreign language education reform.

The English version is an extended report of the results of the European project in Greece, prepared for those who commissioned the project, those who were involved at different levels of this research across Europe and for language education researchers in the participating countries. Divided into five sections, the English version of the volume first provides an overview of the ESLC project and how it was conducted in Greece, including the challenges that the Greek team faced in various stages of the research. The second section discusses the outcomes of the language test administered to lower secondary school students to determine their level of proficiency in the two languages tested in Greece –English and French. The third section presents the results of the questionnaires completed by students, language teachers and school headmasters – questionnaires intended to explore factors which may impact on language teaching and learning. Findings from these questionnaires are discussed in relation to thirteen policy issues which were identified prior to carrying out the Survey and served as a basis for the development of questionnaire items. Finally, the fourth section investigates the relationship between various contextual factors and language proficiency. Using relational statistics and regression analyses, the effect of contextual factors investigated through the questionnaires (i.e. the onset of language learning, languages offered, teacher training, socioeconomic background of students, etc.) on students' levels of proficiency is highlighted. The fifth and final section makes a round up the most important findings and makes suggestions for further investigation on a European level.

In concluding this prologue, the authors of this volume would like to make a point of saying that we deeply appreciate the fact that the Greek Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), a newly founded organisation which replaced the Pedagogical Institute,

has accepted to adopt this National Report and collaborate in its publication. We feel that it is important to have IEP's support, given its crucial role in decisions regarding educational policy, in developing strategies for education in school and supervising the implementation process. This means that some of the recommendations which will be made as a result of this study could perhaps be taken into consideration for the improvement of foreign language education in Greece.

Bessie Dendrinos
Athens, December 2013

Chapter 1

THE ESLC PROJECT: CHALLENGES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1.1 An Overview

The ESLC is a project initiated and organised by the European Commission, which set out to make a valid and reliable appraisal of students' foreign language proficiency in EU member states and provide participating countries with comparable data on good practice in language teaching and learning. SurveyLang, the multinational consortium that carried out the Survey, consisted of eight organisations with expertise in the fields of language assessment, questionnaire design, sampling, translation processes, and psychometrics. The SurveyLang project began in 2008, the investigation was carried out in 2011, and the main findings were published in 2012.[1] The brief description that follows draws information from both the *Final Report of the European Survey on Language Competences* and the *Technical Report of the European Survey on Language Competences*.

The investigation entailed (a) the assessment of levels of achievement in foreign languages in European secondary schools and (b) the exploration of the relationship between language proficiency and contextual factors in which language teaching and learning takes place. The Survey as a whole, however, was intended to be used as an indicator to measure progress towards the objectives of improving foreign language learning in the EU. In fact, the Survey was the outcome of a long debate among EU member states about the importance of making the learning of two foreign languages starting from an early age a requirement for every EU citizen. This debate commenced with the European Year of Languages in 2001 and has had great impact on language learning policies across Europe.

Over 53,000 students participated in the Survey –students from 14 European countries but 16 entities in all, since all three of Belgium's linguistic communities were involved in the study. The target group was students aged 15, in their last year of lower secondary education (ISCED2),[2] or the second year of upper secondary education (ISCED3). In each participating entity, students were tested in two out of the five most widely taught European languages, i.e., English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

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1   For detailed information visit: www.surveylang.org.

2   The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) is used to define the levels and fields of education. For a description of ISCED levels see: OECD (1999). Classifying Educational Programmes —Manual for ISCED-97. Implementation in OECD Countries, 1999 Edition. Paris: OECD.

The foreign language proficiency of students participating in the Survey was assessed through language tests, the development of which entailed a methodologically complex process, requiring intensive collaboration among the members of the SurveyLang testing group.[3] As described in the ESLC Technical Report (2012), once a language testing framework was chosen to serve the aims and objectives of the project, the testing group was involved in developing initial specifications, a set of draft task types and a draft test which was piloted. Once feedback from all relevant stakeholders was gathered, it was reviewed, together with the analysis of the pilot results, before further developing the initial specifications into final item writer guidelines and agreeing on a collaborative test development process to be shared across the five languages. The final step was to undertake an item development programme in order to develop language tests for the Main Study, the results of which had to be comparable across the languages tested in all participating countries.[4]

The tests were designed to assess performance in Listening and Reading comprehension, as well as writing. Speaking was excluded due to concerns as to the practicality of testing it in Writing. Approximately 1,500 students per language were tested in each participating entity. This in effect meant that in each of the 16 countries there were two groups of students: those tested in the first foreign language (here referred to as *target* language), which was almost invariably English. The other group of students was tested in the second *target* language, the most common one being either German or French.

Among the key requirements regarding the tests, which were to finally be available in both paper-based and computer-based formats, it was determined that test performance should be interpreted with reference to the scale of the Council of Europe as presented in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR 2001), to ensure comparability of results:

C2	Mastery	Proficient User level
C1	Effective operational proficiency	
B2	Vantage	Independent User level
B1	Threshold	
A2	Waystage	Basic User level
A1	Breakthrough	

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3   The language testing group included Cambridge ESOL, Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP), Goethe Institut, Università per Stranieri di Perugia and Universidad de Salamanca.

4   As explained in the ESLC Technical Report (2012: 12), in order to "ensure that the items used in the Main Study were fit for purpose and of the required level of quality, the language testing team produced and trialled a large number of items over the course of the development programme. Over 100 tasks were piloted in 2008 in order to finalise the test specifications and agree on the most appropriate task types to be used in the ESLC. The team then produced over 500 tasks (2200+ items) which were then exhaustively trialled through the Pretesting and Field Trial stages before the best-performing items were selected. For the Main Study, 143 tasks (635 items) were used across the five languages."

As the European Commission has said that, ideally, all students in European member states should have reached B (Independent User) level of language competence by the time they finish their compulsory schooling, i.e. lower secondary school (ISCED2), the tests prepared by the SurveyLang testing group, previously aligned to CEFR, were designed to assess performance at levels A1-B2 of the CEFR. Test takers that failed the A1 level test are complete beginners and their proficiency is described as 'Pre-A1' level.

In order to assess the impact of contextual factors on language learning and to gain a fuller understanding of the various contexts in which language teaching and learning occurs, questionnaires were developed and administered to students, language teachers and headmasters. The questionnaires were organised around a number of language learning policy issues identified as being of interest to the European Commission (e.g. onset of language learning, use of ICT, teacher training and teaching methods). Students were asked to respond to questions about their language knowledge, experiences and other background factors, which made available information on how demographic, social, economic and educational variables affect language proficiency across the member states. Teachers of the language tested in each case were also asked to complete a questionnaire which aimed at supplying information on teacher training, in-service training, foreign language teaching and availability of resources for language lessons. The questionnaire that the participating school principals were asked to complete provided information on school size, intake, resources and organisation, as well as information concerning the foreign language programme, the time allotted to foreign languages in the school curriculum, and strategies used to encourage language learning in school. Finally, the NRC responsible for administering the Survey in each country also completed a questionnaire, providing more general information about language teaching and learning in the country in question.

While many of the documents prepared by the SurveyLang project team needed to be translated, the most demanding task was to localise and translate the context questionnaires to the languages of the participating educational systems. Good translation and ensuring the quality of all educational system questionnaires and documentation was essential to the overall success of a multilingual project like the ESLC, where international comparability is the key requirement. It was, therefore, crucial to ensure that the translation process did not introduce bias likely to distort these comparisons. ESLC, therefore, recruited and trained national translation teams, but also implemented strict translation procedures which are fully described in the Technical Report. Basically, however, it was the responsibility of the SurveyLang team to provide the source documents in English (the working language for the project), to set translation standards, to provide the necessary guidelines and manuals, checklists and tools, and to check on the quality of the output.

Before starting the Survey, an elaborate sampling scheme had been developed. Schools in all participating countries were systematically sampled to ensure representation of the whole student body. The goal, described in detail in the ESLC Technical Report, was to have a minimum of 71 schools and at least 1772 students per language, in each participating entity, in order to meet the sample precision requirements. The student sample in each participating school was an average of 25 students per target language. Both small and medium size schools were involved in the sampling frame. In order to minimize the risks of resulting in a lower overall sample size in terms of students and also to safeguard representation of schools of all sizes, disproportionate allocation of samples across strata based on size were allowed. Also, in some cases the number of students to be selected within each sampled school was increased to make up for the loss in student sample size due to the selection of relatively smaller schools in the school sample. For each sampled school in the Main Study (implemented in February-March 2011) two replacement schools, of similar size characteristics, were assigned from the sampling frame at the time of the selection of the main sample.

The brief description, so far, does not begin to capture the complexity of this immense *multilingual* project, designed to collect information not only about the language competences of young Europeans but also about language learning, teaching methods and curricula.

The ESLC has been characterised by the SurveyLang project group as a collaborative effort in which 53000 students across Europe took part, assisting the European Commission to establish a European Indicator of Language Competence to monitor progress against the March 2002 Barcelona European Council conclusions. These conclusions called for 'action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age' and also for the 'establishment of a linguistic competence indicator' (European Commission 2005). As the Commission (European Commission 2005) states, the decision to launch the ESLC 'arose from the current lack of data on actual language skills of people in the European Union and the need for a reliable system to measure the progress achieved'. The ESLC was therefore initiated by the Commission with the aim that: 'the results collected will enable the establishment of a European Indicator of Language Competence and will provide reliable information on language learning and on the language competences of young people' (European Commission 2007a) as well as providing 'strategic information to policy makers, teachers and learners in all surveyed countries' through the collection of contextual information in the background questionnaires (European Commission 2007b).

1.2 The Survey in Greece

Major changes have recently been introduced in Greece, aiming at providing more hours and enhanced opportunities for foreign language learning within state schools and at facilitating the achievement of the European objective for multilingualism and plurilingual citizenry. In line with European developments in ELL (early language learning) and EU policy recommendations, the Greek Ministry of Education introduced English as a Foreign Language in the first and second grades of public all day primary schools in 2010. The programme, which has come to be known with the Greek acronym 'PEAP', was developed within the context of a funded project entitled 'New Foreign Language Education Policy in Schools: English for young learners' and was implemented experimentally in about 1,000 primary schools throughout Greece. In addition, a new curriculum for foreign language teaching in schools, the Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum, was developed in 2011 within the framework of the new National Curriculum. The IFLC is *common* for all foreign languages that are currently offered in Greek state schools, i.e. English, which is the so-called 'first' foreign language taught in Greek schools, and also French, German, Spanish, and Italian, referred to as 'second' foreign languages, comprising an integrated framework applying to both primary and secondary education. More precisely, the new Curriculum adopts a generic approach to language learning and the use of foreign languages for communication and is intended to apply to all languages that may, at some time, be included in the school curriculum (either as compulsory or as optional). This in itself constitutes a major breakthrough, since until recently languages were treated in the Greek school curriculum as separate, clearly defined subjects and curricula for each foreign language were developed adopting different aims and promoting different approaches to language learning. Foreign language curricula for primary education were developed independently of curricula for secondary education, adding to the incoherence and lack of systematicity of foreign language education in Greece. With the IFLC, foreign language learning, teaching and assessment conforms to the six-level scale comprising the European standard for language proficiency specified by the Council of Europe. With descriptors for each level of language proficiency that are matched against the CEFR, during the piloting phase of its implementation, the administrative practice of assigning students to levels on the basis of their language proficiency, on the scale set by the Council of Europe, has been instituted. Many more changes are also taking place, including attempts to create and adopt a well-articulated foreign language education strategy and to set standards for foreign language curricular policy and practices.

However, at the time that the Survey was administered in Greece, the foreign language situation in state schools was different from what it is today, in a variety of ways. As such, during what henceforth we shall be calling the 'Greek Survey', English was the first foreign language to which students were introduced –they still are– and it was offered on a compulsory basis from the third grade of primary school onwards for

three hours a week (whereas now it is offered in nearly 40% of the schools from the first grade). Primary schools, obliged to introduce a second foreign language in the fifth grade, were allowed to choose between French and German –the selection being dependent on a variety of factors, including teacher availability and parents' choice of a language that they wanted their children to learn. Italian and Spanish were added to the existing second foreign language options offered in the first form of lower secondary school, so that the school could choose between French, German, Italian and Spanish as their second foreign language and offer that language for three hours a week. If human resources were available and parental/student choice required it, ISCED2 students could choose from among more than one second language in their school. In some areas of northern Greece, Russian and Turkish were and still are available as electives instead of German, French, Italian and Spanish. Finally, in upper secondary school (ISCED3), students could choose to study any two of all the languages offered in their school, as English was no longer compulsory. With the most recent reform, the foreign language is a choice subject in upper secondary school, and the school has a choice of English or any other foreign language for which teachers are available.

The hours that any single language is offered in the Greek state school are too few to bring all students up to Independent User level, since it has been estimated by the CEFR that 400-500 guided study hours are required for someone to achieve B1 level of language proficiency in a foreign language, and 600-700 study hours so as to reach B2 level. The study hours in the school programme –in conditions which are far from ideal in the average state school– do not suffice for students to reach B2 level proficiency in the first language, which is the minimum goal for the children of the average Greek family. For the second foreign language, the situation is even less favourable because there is a lack of continuity in curricula, syllabuses and materials from one level of education to the other. As a matter of fact, the design and the implementation of the foreign language programmes that schools have had up until now is quite complicated and rather ineffective.

Nevertheless, the results of the SurveyLang tests show that the majority of Greek students are at the Independent User level (B1 and B2 on the 6-level scale of the Council of Europe) in English which is one of the languages tested; i.e., the first *target* language (as it is referred to here). However, a closer cross-examination of contextual factors, such as teaching time and learning conditions, indicate that these results are not the outcome of language study within the school alone, but can be attributed to additional language teaching support in private tuition classes, usually evening language schools, which are a popular phenomenon in Greece. Results in the second language tested seem to support this claim. Proficiency level in the second target language, which Greece chose to be French, is rather low, possibly because fewer students have support teaching outside of school.

The reason that Greek parents send their children for support teaching after school hours is because many of them believe that they need to spend more time than the school curriculum provides on learning foreign languages. They are convinced that while English is urgently needed for international communication, their children need other languages as well –especially those which will 'get them a job.'[5] Generally speaking, foreign languages are very important for the present generation of Greek parents –the Greek language being one of the least widely spoken languages outside of Greece– and this finding has been confirmed by European surveys (Eurostat 2010, European Commission 2006) and surveys carried out in Greece (e.g., Androulakis 2008). Private language institutes are a burgeoning business in Greece, being almost exclusively oriented towards preparing students for language certification exams. A recent survey reports that there are 6,564 foreign language schools in Greece with 510,575 students, the vast majority of which (448,822) are preparing for English language certificates.[6] This financially expensive practice reflects parents' perennial lack of trust towards the quality of foreign language provision in Greek public schools and is a result of their deep-seated belief that foreign language instruction equals foreign language certification. The 'mania' for foreign language certification by Greek parents explains why so many low income families pay for their children to have language support classes after school. This of course creates an additional problem in school foreign language classes because students have substantially different knowledge and communication skills in the target language –a problem which is not dealt with easily by the teacher when the infrastructure of the school does not help differentiated teaching. Although efforts are being made by the state to support foreign language programmes in schools, adverse contextual factors do not help achieve these goals, and this has a negative impact on foreign language teachers, who are often blamed by parents and students for the schools' failure to deliver the desired results. It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education has begun to reassess the implementation of the foreign language programmes and the allocation of time devoted to languages in schools.

1.3 Challenges faced by the Greek ESLC team

In each participating entity the role of the NRC and the team managing the Survey locally was crucial because, upon signing a relevant agreement, they had to implement all the procedures specified in detail by the SurveyLang project team, i.e., to recruit, hire and train additional staff necessary for the project, and check the quality of every step taken.

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5   The claims above are documented in surveys conducted as part of a research project aiming at a renewed language education policy for Greece. For more information on this project, carried out by the RCeL of the University of Athens, visit http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/englishinschool/

6   http://www.esos.gr/article/frontistiria/510.575.

In Greece, the unforeseen closure of the Pedagogical Institute (P.I.) –due to the economic crisis– to which the task of NRC had been assigned was a dramatic event and it meant that the local project had to be carried out despite the lack of personnel and funding. Basically, this was made possible because of the voluntary work that qualified foreign language teachers and school advisors were willing to undertake. Their contribution was decisive because the problem created ultimately did not impact in any way on the quality of the implementation of the Greek Survey, nor on the validity of the outcomes.

1.3.1 Challenges in the sampling process

Finalising the Greek school sample was a laborious and time consuming process for the Greek ESLC team for a number of reasons, besides the one already mentioned immediately above. To mention a few, it should be said that the beginning of the sampling process coincided with schools closing for the summer vacation and intense efforts had to be made in September so that the Greek project team catch up with their counterparts in other countries. However, at the beginning of a new school year, when schools are in an administrative upheaval, it is very difficult to get them to become committed to the project because they are unsure about teacher appointments, teacher timetabling, class schedules and book distribution procedures. Another difficulty had to do with winning teachers over. This all taking place at a time when the Greek crisis had begun, some teachers were suspicious though it was not exactly clear what or whom they suspected for what. They had misgivings about participating in a European project at this time, and were sceptical about taking on one more extra task at a time when they were experiencing major cuts in their salaries. There were also some teachers who felt that their students would respond negatively to more testing: "One more test in addition to all those they normally have to sit for in school..." they exclaimed. Finally, the Greek Survey was being carried out at a time when teacher evaluation programmes were beginning to become compulsory in Greece and teachers reacted with mistrust toward any kind of review, suspecting that it was an indirect way of being evaluated for the work done in the foreign language class. The scepticism was made explicit by some and implicit by others. During the project, one school actually dropped out of the effort. The underlying mistrust became visible when the ESLC Student Questionnaire was administered because it contained questions about the class language teacher and the quality of his/her teaching. A great many teachers suspected this questionnaire to be an underhand way of assessing them as teachers, and –given the demands imposed on Greece to discharge state employees– serve as an excuse for them to lose their job.

To overcome the unwillingness of teachers to take part and set the country's participation in the ESLC in jeopardy, the foreign language school advisors were recruited by the Greek ESLC team. They were asked and they willingly functioned, on a voluntary basis, as disseminators of the principles and the practices of the Survey, encouraged and finally convinced their teachers to undertake the responsibility of carrying out the

Survey in their schools. The schools' reluctance to take part in the Survey and the negative attitudes of groups of students to the context questionnaire are documented in the low percentage of response rates for Greece, presented in Table 1.1 below.

	First target language			Second target language		
	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%
Belgium (German Community)	0	9	100.0	0	9	100.0
Estonia	0	79	100.0	8	98	92.5
Spain	0	78	100.0	0	82	100.0
Croatia	0	75	100.0	1	76	98.7
Slovenia	2	71	97.3	3	89	96.7
Malta	2	55	96.5	2	55	96.5
Bulgaria	3	74	96.1	2	75	97.4
Portugal	3	72	96.0	0	76	100.0
Sweden	3	72	96.0	3	71	95.9
Belgium (Flemish Community)	5	70	93.3	2	72	97.3
Poland	8	81	91.0	8	71	89.9
France	7	67	90.5	4	70	94.6
Belgium (French Community)	8	70	89.7	5	55	91.7
Netherlands	9	66	88.0	11	66	85.7
Greece	18	57	76.0	24	55	69.6

Table 1.1 Number and percentage of participating schools per country and target language

According to SurveyLang's Technical Standards, (ibid) response rates for schools are defined as at least 85% of sampled schools and response rates for students as at least 80% of all sampled students. The table above shows that the criterion of 85% participation at school level is comfortably met in all other jurisdictions but Greece, which is found at the last position of the table with a response rate of 69.6%.

On the basis of the sampling procedure designed by the SurveyLang project group for all countries, the Greek student sample for the Main Study consisted of 113 schools and approximately 3,200 students. However, at the time of the Greek Survey, a total of 2,972 Greek lower secondary school (ISCED2) students in their last year of studies, took the test in 112 schools. A little over half of these students and specifically 1594 sat for the test in English in 57 schools. The remainder of the students, and specifically 1378, sat for the French exam in 55 schools.

1.3.2 Translating the questionnaires

In cross-lingual, cross-cultural studies, overcoming language barriers and using appropriate language and translations often play a key role in securing cross-cultural comparability (Brown and Harkness 2005). Achieving semantic comparability in questionnaire translation has been considered by some to be the most difficult step in the translation and adaptation of questionnaires.

Cultural norms, values and experiences influence respondents' interpretations of questions. Cross-national surveys are likely to contain questions which do not resonate with or match the societal reality in some of the participating countries. According to Brown and Harkness (ibid) questions that are not seen to address what respondents consider to be the relevant aspects of a topic are problematic and respondents might not be motivated to process all the information presented in the question. Moreover, poor translations of good questions mean respondents read and respond to a question they should not have been asked, whereas technically well-translated questions that are understood differently in different cultures are equally problematic. According to Arffman (2012) many international cross cultural surveys and educational achievement studies suffer from the unanticipated effects of *unwanted literal translation*. This refers to translations that are rendered word for word and strive to stay formally (e.g., lexically and syntactically) as close to the source text as possible with the result that the target text becomes odd, unnatural, and cumbersome. Unwanted literal translation threatens the validity of international achievement studies, because it slows down and complicates the reading process, thereby increasing the cognitive load imposed on respondents; a considerable amount of working memory, time, and effort needs to be devoted to decoding and making meaning of a test/question when it is odd, unnatural, and cumbersome. Cognitive Survey methodologists have proposed various strategies and techniques to overcome this problem among which is the selection of translators with a perfect command of the target language, an excellent command of the source language experience in the target culture and with students in the target population, knowledge of the subject matter, and familiarity with questionnaire development.

The ESLC context questionnaires translated in Greek for students, school principals and language teachers contained instances of word-to-word translations, rendering language awkward and providing culturally odd questions. Actually, questions inappropriate for the Greek context were not changed or omitted. This is particularly evident in the results of questions (see section 3.1.1.) regarding the onset of foreign and target language learning, in which there was great variability in student responses due to the phrasing of the question and the meaning of "foreign language" in relation to Ancient Greek for Greek students.

As the questions were not changed in Greek to reflect the Greek language teaching and learning scene, including the private tutoring reality, the findings may not always reflect the reality. Nor were questions that the students may have found offending altered (i.e., concerning their socioeconomic background or their family's educational background, social status, etc.). Given that no specific policy recommendations could be drawn from this kind of data, one wonders why so many sensitive personal questions were actually necessary since they were not used in many national reports and indeed in the SurveyLang Final Report.

The inherent difficulties of achieving semantic comparability between questionnaires and establishing the functional equivalence of terms and notions, could perhaps have been overcome by a much more varied and qualitative approach to survey design, but it was not. In the future, perhaps cross national questionnaires could be complemented with other methods so that a more complete understanding of the language learning and teaching landscape in various European countries can be obtained (Ashton 2013, Jones 2013).

1.4 Greek Survey participants' profile

The Main Study of the European Survey on Language Competences in Greece took place in March 2011 according to a plan designed by the Greek ESLC coordination team and the SurveyLang group. In each of the participating schools the sampled students were tested in two of the three skills examined in the Survey (i.e. Listening, Reading, Writing) and answered a contextual questionnaire. Contextual questionnaires were also completed by the English and French language teachers as well as the school principals in the Survey schools. The findings on the Greek students' language proficiency are presented and discussed in Chapter 2. This section focuses on an overview of the findings from the analysis of the contextual questionnaires and presents some basic characteristics of the context of the Greek Survey.

1.4.1 School and student data

Almost 3,000 students in the last year of lower secondary school (ISCED2) from 112 schools throughout the country took part in the Survey. In 57 of the schools, 1,594 students were tested in English and 1,378 students in 55 schools were tested in French. The vast majority of the schools (84.7%) were state schools. Only 15.3% were private schools. This piece of information should be taken into account in the interpretation of results, since private schools offer extra foreign language classes and various language learning opportunities apart from their normal school lessons. Half the schools that participated in the Survey are urban schools and half are rural schools, as the figure below shows:
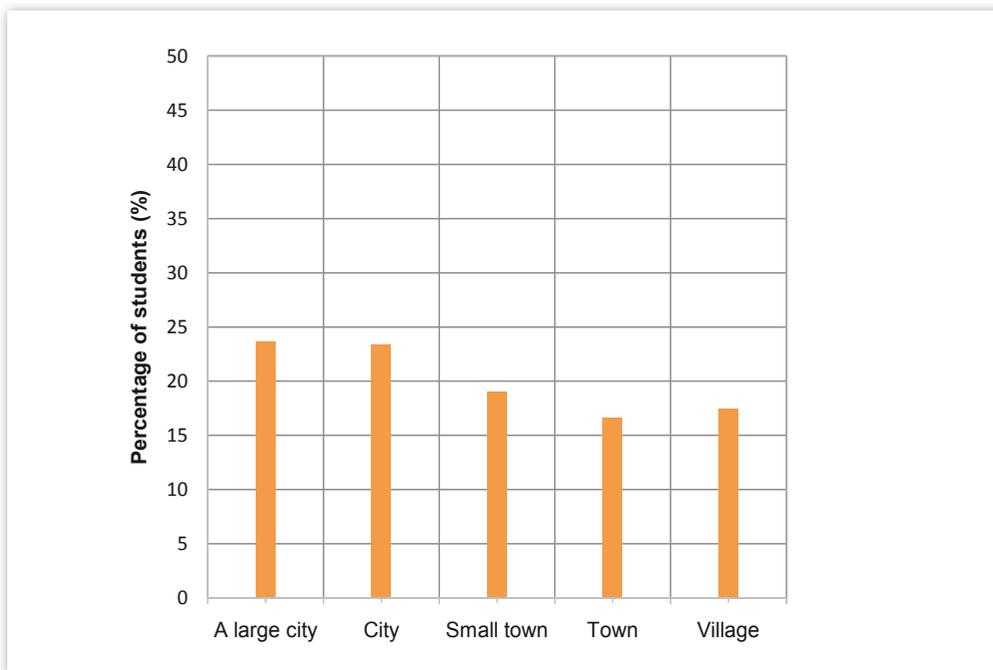
Figure 1.1: Location of schools

1.4.2 Students' ethnic background

The vast majority of students (90.5%) who participated in the study were born in Greece and have lived in Greece for their entire life (94.1%). The great majority of the students' mothers (80.91%) and fathers (84.97%) were also born in Greece and they have had a high school education. Specifically, only one-third of the parents do not have a school-leaving diploma and one third have completed tertiary education. As a matter of fact, 33.7% of the mothers and 32.2% of the fathers have a university degree.

1.4.3 The parents' employment status

The parents of the students that participated in the Survey were by and large employed at the time that the Survey was carried out, in 2011. The peak of the severe economic crisis Greece is facing had not surfaced yet. Therefore, 73.5% of their fathers and 48.7% of their mothers had full time employment, 13.43% and 13.38% respectively had part time employment and a much smaller number (9.73% and 5.59%) were either not employed at the time but were looking for a job, or were either occupied at home (28.11% of the mothers and 7.61% of the fathers) or were retired.

1.4.4 Students' ICT literacy

Though until recently Greece is reported to have low ICT literacy, the majority of the tested students (88.9%) reported having access to a personal computer at home that they (can) use for schoolwork, while a similarly large percentage of students (85.1%) reported having access to the Internet for school work.

1.4.5 Language learning competence and attitudes to language learning

Survey students believe that they are quite good at learning languages and the majority of them also believe, as shown in the figure below, that their parents are rather good (though they see their mothers as better than their fathers in language learning) and that Greeks in general have a knack for learning foreign languages.
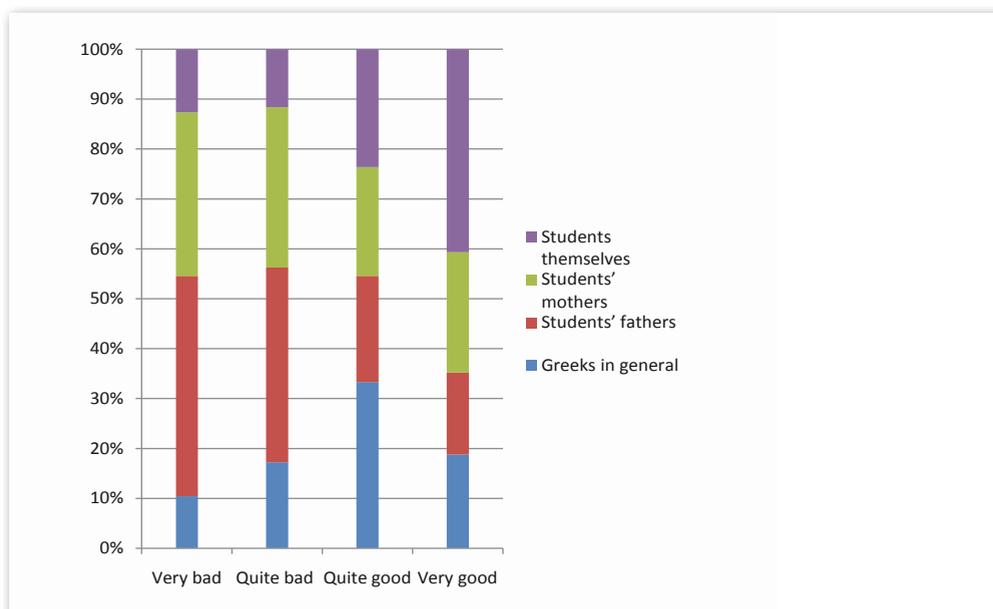
Figure 1.2: Perceived competence at learning foreign languages

Survey students seem to have a rather positive attitude towards language courses in school, though the majority like their Greek lessons most. In middle school their Greek 'language' lessons focus on their developing academic writing skills (they learn how to write an essay) and on the study of literary texts. They also like to learn other languages particularly the target languages or the languages tested, i.e. English and French, as becomes obvious from the figure below:
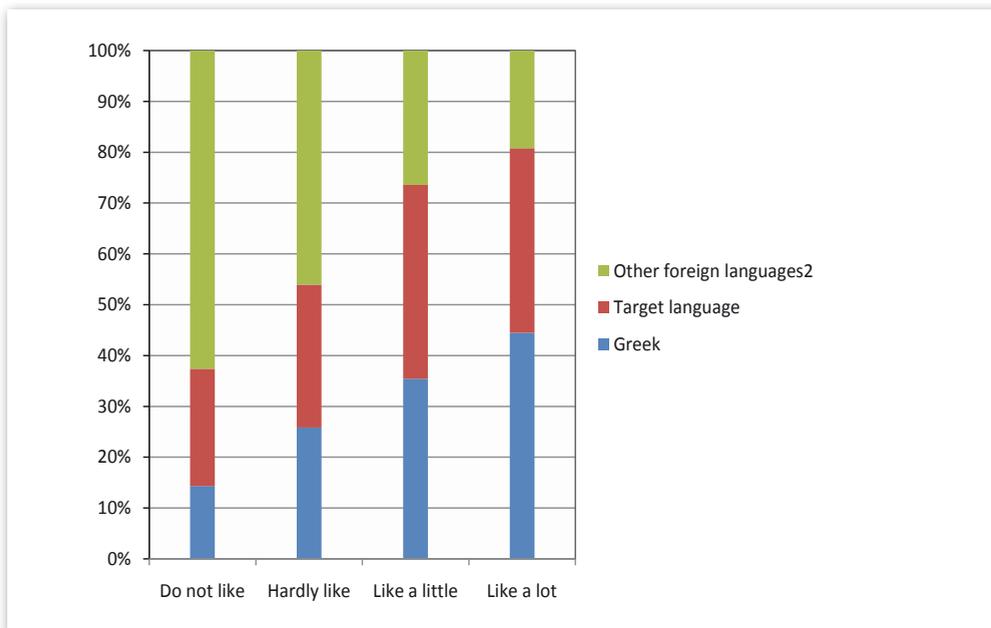
Table 1.3: Students' attitudes towards language learning at school

We are assuming that the rather negative attitude towards the learning of "other" foreign languages is linked to lessons in day school, not with foreign languages other than English or French. The Eurobarometer (2012) factsheet shows Greeks to be in high demand of foreign language learning,[7] and we are fully aware of how much Greek families spend to send their children to evening language classes. Among the languages that young people learn outside of school, in foreign language centres, German is in high demand and so is Spanish and Italian. Russian is increasingly in demand too, and so other languages that may be a professional asset, such as Arabic and Chinese. However, there is the general feeling that one does not really learn foreign languages in day school for various reasons, the most important of which is that the foreign language lesson grade does not count for scholastic studies later. Foreign languages are still considered 'second class' courses in the Greek school curriculum.

1.5 Teacher data

Questionnaires were also completed by language teachers in the Survey schools and specifically 166 of them. From these, 99 were teachers of English (64%) and 67 teachers of French (36%). The vast majority of these teachers were female (93.8%), between 35-44 (38.6%) and 45-54 (35.3%). On the whole, they were well experienced and, therefore, well adjusted in the profession. Only 17.9% of these teachers were

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7   http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/eurobarometer/e386-factsheets-el_en.pdf

young (25-34 years old) and at the beginning of their teaching career. The rest were experienced teachers with an average of 15 years of teaching experience.

The size of the classes they taught was normal –and in some cases really good. As shown in Figure 1.4, on average, French language classes have fewer students than English classes. Most of the French teachers (40.7%) reported having 11 to 15 students in their classes, while nearly a third of them (28.2%) have 16 to 20 students. Most English classes (52.5%) have 21 to 30 students, while 20% of the classes have 16 to 20 students.
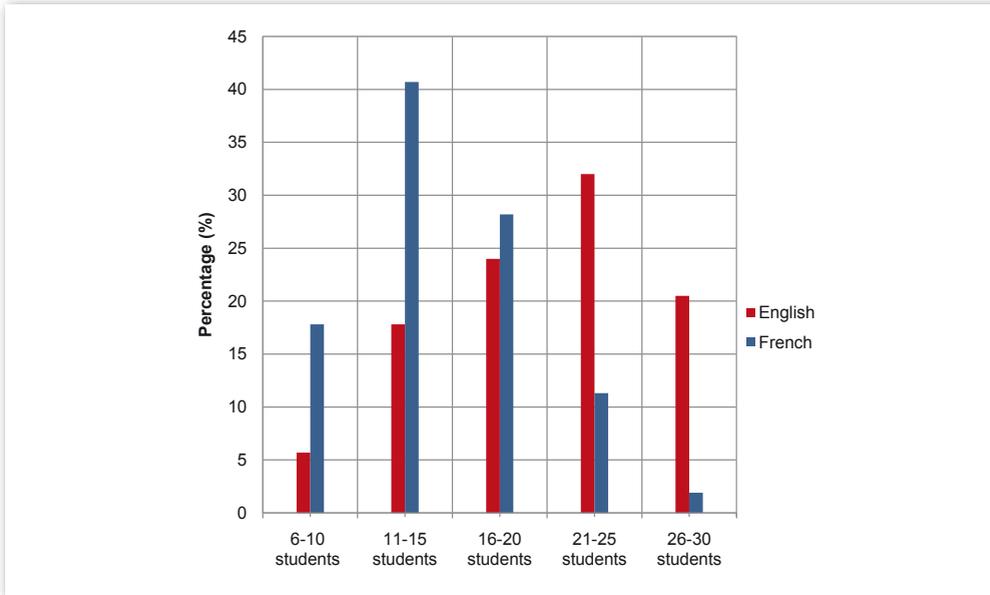
Figure 1.4: Teachers' reports of class size

Chapter 2

GREEK STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

This chapter focuses on the results of the Survey language test administered to about 3,000 Greek students to determine their language proficiency at the age of 15. The discussion is around a quantitative presentation of data concerning how many of the sampled students managed to achieve Independent User and/or Basic User level of proficiency, in English and French (which are here referred to as the target languages). It is to be noted that English is the first foreign language taught in Greece, as in most other European countries, and French is one of the foreign languages offered in school at a later stage than English, but also the second language that Greece chose to test students in. French is therefore the second target language of the Greek Survey.

The data is presented in such a way so that comparison is possible between the achievements of Greek students and those of students in other countries. The numerical tables contain the distribution of students from countries and show the levels of proficiency students of each country have achieved. 'Low proficiency' countries are at the top and 'high proficiency' countries are at the bottom. In skimming through the findings, the reader will note that the variability in achievement across countries is striking. There is also salient variability within the same country between first and second target language proficiency. This finding is significant and may be an interesting object of investigation, while it is likely that it will create a context for an implicit European language education policy and hopefully for explicit national policies.

2.1 Students' performance in the first foreign language: English

2.1.1 Reading comprehension competence

As shown in Table 2.1, Greek students performed above average in the first target language –English. The percentage of students recognised as having achieved B2 level proficiency in reading comprehension (30.2%) is slightly higher than those at any other level of proficiency. If the percentage of B1 level students (14.9%) is added to the B2 level, we find that nearly half the student population in Greece is at Independent User level (45.1%) in reading comprehension. Compared with the other participating countries, this is not a bad record, since there is a higher percentage of Greek students who have a B2 level reading comprehension competence than the students tested in ten of the countries (the UK and France being at the top of the low performers), and lower than only Sweden, Malta, the Netherlands and Estonia

However, the percentage of Greek students who have Basic User (A level) proficiency is also higher than desired. Specifically a total of 42.4% are A level achievers, with a 27.2% at only A1 level proficiency. The most alarming finding is that 15.2% of the Greek students tested are below A1 level, which nevertheless brings Greece in the middle of the mediocrity ladder in learning first language. At the very top of this ladder are the UK, France, Poland, Portugal Spain and Bulgaria that have even higher percentages than Greece of achievers who are below A1 level.

Participating jurisdiction	First foreign language	% of students at CEFR level				
		Pre- A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
England	FR	22.1	57.5	11.2	6.6	2.6
France	EN	28.3	49.0	9.6	7.0	6.1
Poland	EN	20.2	40.8	12.6	11.1	15.2
Portugal	EN	20.2	40.8	12.6	11.1	15.2
Belgium (Flemish)	FR	12.2	45.4	17.9	14.4	10.1
Spain	EN	18.0	40.7	11.8	11.8	17.6
Bulgaria	EN	23.1	32.2	11.1	10.2	23.4
Belgium (French)	EN	9.7	42.0	17.1	16.5	14.6
Croatia	EN	16.1	30.5	13.2	14.8	25.4
Belgium (German)	FR	9.6	34.2	18.0	18.1	20.1
Greece	**EN**	**15.2**	**27.2**	**12.5**	**14.9**	**30.2**
Slovenia	EN	11.6	29.3	12.5	15.4	31.3
Estonia	EN	7.1	23.5	9.1	13.5	46.8
Netherlands	EN	3.7	20.8	15.3	22.5	37.7
Malta	EN	3.9	10.2	7.1	15.7	63.1
Sweden	EN	1.4	9.6	8.3	15.1	65.6

Table 2.1: Students' reading comprehension competence

2.1.2 Listening comprehension competence

As shown in Table 2.2, the results in listening comprehension in the first target language are analogous to those for reading comprehension. Nearly half of the tested Greek students were identified as Autonomous User level achievers in listening comprehension (a total of 46.5%). However, similar to the reading comprehension test results, an alarming 40.5% of the students appear to be at A1 level or below in listening comprehension.

Interestingly, whereas various studies have shown that listening comprehension tests are quite difficult (Graham 2004 and 2006, Arnold 2000, Goh 1997 and 2000) –more difficult actually than reading comprehension– we see, in this case, that the percentage

of students who performed at B level proficiency on the listening test is slightly higher than in the reading test (i.e. by 1.4 units). This interesting finding is corroborated if we look at the total percentage of students at A1 level or below (40.5%), which is slightly lower than that in reading comprehension (42.4%). Compared with the other sixteen participating countries, Greek students' listening comprehension performance is higher than nine European countries and lower than just six.

Participating jurisdiction	First foreign language	Percentage of students % at CEFR level				
		Pre A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
England	FR	30.5	46.6	15.2	6.7	1.0
France	EN	40.6	33.5	12.3	8.0	5.6
Spain	EN	31.9	31.5	12.6	11.9	12.0
Belgium (Flemish)	FR	17.3	41.0	21.4	15.2	5.2
Poland	EN	23.0	25.9	12.9	14.9	23.3
Belgium (French)	EN	18.2	36.4	18.9	15.4	11.2
Portugal	EN	23.0	25.9	12.9	14.9	23.3
Bulgaria	EN	23.0	25.4	12.1	14.9	23.3
Belgium (German)	EN	10.7	28.8	20.5	20.8	19.2
Greece	**FR**	**18.5**	**22.0**	**13.0**	**17.9**	**28.6**
Croatia	EN	11.5	17.9	14.3	21.7	34.6
Estonia	EN	9.7	17.0	9.9	15.7	47.6
Slovenia	EN	5.1	14.9	12.9	22.3	44.9
Netherlands	EN	2.5	10.5	10.0	17.7	59.3
Malta	EN	2.5	3.9	7.1	14.9	71.6
Sweden	EN	0.7	3.3	5.5	13.9	76.6

Table 2.2: Students' listening comprehension competence

2.1.3 Writing competence

Table 2.3, implies that Greece is among the high performing countries in writing production. A little over half of the tested students performed at Autonomous User level in writing –a total of 52.9%. In comparison with the other countries, the Greek percentages at B2 level achievement are higher in writing than in eleven other participating countries and lower than in only four.

However, what is rather surprising here is that Greek students seem to achieve higher results in writing than in the two other skills tested in the Survey. The percentage of students who are at B level in writing (52.9%) is higher than students who are at B level either in reading (45.1%) or in listening (46.5%) comprehension. Moreover, the

percentage of students at A1 level and below in writing (24.8%) is much lower than the respective results for reading (52.4%) and listening (40.5%).

Participating jurisdiction	First foreign language	Percentage of students % at CEFR level				
		PreA1	A1	A2	B1	B2
England	FR	35.9	40.2	13.4	7.6	2.8
France	EN	23.7	37.6	23.2	12.9	2.7
Belgium (Flemish)	FR	19.5	36.7	22.2	15.7	5.9
Poland	EN	18.7	35.5	23.2	18.8	3.8
Portugal	EN	18.0	32.7	22.7	21.2	5.4
Spain	EN	15.4	32.6	25.1	18.9	8.1
Bulgaria	EN	15.3	27.7	24.5	24.7	7.8
Belgium (French)	EN	5.8	29.1	36.3	25.8	3.1
Belgium (German)	FR	7.6	25.3	25.8	23.7	17.6
Croatia	EN	5.5	21.8	27.7	34.9	10.1
Slovenia	EN	1.1	20.7	30.2	37.5	10.4
Greece	**EN**	**6.6**	**18.2**	**22.4**	**33.1**	**19.8**
Estonia	EN	3.4	18.5	18.4	30.8	28.9
Netherlands	EN	0.4	9.5	30.0	48.3	11.7
Sweden	EN	0.2	5.8	18.6	47.6	27.9
Malta	EN	0.5	5.4	11.4	36.2	46.5

Table 2.3: Students' writing competence

This result is surprising because higher performance in writing is unusual. The relevant literature tells us that candidates tend to do better in comprehension tests than in production tests, especially in writing which is considered one of the most difficult aspects of testing (Alsamadani 2010, Khaldieh 2000, Weigle 2004). However, this result may be attributed to the types of writing tasks students were tested in. Namely, in the writing test students were requested to provide either an informal email (e.g. describing their family, narrating an accident) or a letter of application. Greek students are well versed in these two text types since writing tasks in school textbooks are dedicated to various forms of letter writing, and the extra support lessons that students receive after school hours are focused almost exclusively on preparing students for well known certificates in which letters and emails are staple diet. In other words, the text types and related communicative purposes (describing, narrating, declining an invitation) that the Survey writing test asked student to produce are very familiar to Greek students, since these are text types students have been practising for the majority of their language learning career.

2.2 Students' performance in the second foreign language: French

This section presents sampled European students' attainment in the second foreign language tests. As already mentioned, the second target language for Greece was French, as was the case in two other participating countries – Portugal and Spain. While English was the first foreign language tested in the vast majority of the countries (i.e., in thirteen out of sixteen), there were four other languages tested as second foreign languages: French, German, Italian and Spanish. English was tested as a second language only in German-speaking and Flemish-speaking Belgium.

A finding, which was actually expected with regard to the second language and which is comparable with most participating countries, is that student performance in the second foreign language is significantly lower than in the first foreign language due to contextual factors, the most important being when the second foreign language is first offered in school and the number of guided study hours devoted to the second language in the context of the school curriculum. In all countries, the second language starts later than the first, and fewer hours are devoted to it in most cases. In Greece, as pointed out earlier in this report, second foreign language teaching (which may be either French or German) begins later than first foreign language teaching and fewer curricular hours are devoted to it at both primary and secondary school levels.

2.2.1 Reading comprehension competence

As shown in Table 2.4, the majority of Greek students tested for French were identified as Basic Users in French. This finding is not surprising, given the few hours devoted to the second foreign language in school and various contextual factors to be discussed later. Nevertheless, it is distressing that a high proportion of Greek students (35.3%) have pre-A1 level reading comprehension competence in French, 54.5% have A1 or A2 level competence, and just 10.3% are Autonomous Users of the language in reading comprehension.

When readers examine the aforementioned findings with the proportion of students in other participating countries who are underachievers in second foreign language reading comprehension, they will note that Greece is among the countries with the highest percentages in low level reading comprehension competence in the second target language, though Sweden, England and Poland (in that order) are even worse.

On the whole, the results for second foreign language proficiency are disappointing. The total percentage of students diagnosed at Pre-A1 level in all countries is high in eight out of the sixteen entities (roughly from 16% to 41%), and so is the total percentage at A1 level of reading comprehension proficiency (roughly from 37% to 51%). Moreover,

performance at B2 level of reading comprehension proficiency in the second foreign language is rather low as a whole in the countries. In only one entity (Flemish-speaking Belgium) more than half of the student population (63.2%) who participated in the survey was diagnosed at B2 level in second foreign language reading comprehension.

Participants	Second foreign language	Percentage of students % at CEFR levels				
		Pre-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
England	DE	36.0	51.1	7.1	4.4	1.4
Poland	DE	41.0	45.9	7.0	3.6	2.4
Sweden	ES	24.2	57.0	11.8	5.6	1.4
Greece	**FR**	**35.3**	**44.6**	**9.9**	**6.0**	**4.3**
Croatia	DE	29.5	46.4	10.9	7.8	5.3
Portugal	FR	19.6	52.2	14.0	9.4	4.8
France	ES	18.1	51.6	16.0	10.2	4.1
Slovenia	DE	20.5	43.5	13.1	9.1	13.8
Bulgaria	DE	24.5	38.8	11.9	12.0	12.8
Belgium (French)	DE	14.0	45.1	16.9	12.2	11.8
Estonia	DE	16.9	41.2	14.6	14.7	12.7
Malta	IT	16.4	37.9	11.9	9.9	23.8
Spain	FR	5.4	34.8	18.9	20.8	20.1
Netherlands	DE	3.1	25.4	17.7	24.9	28.8
Belgium (German)	EN	2.8	24.4	20.1	22.6	30.2
Belgium (Flemish)	EN	1.7	9.8	8.7	16.7	63.2

Table 2.4: Students' reading comprehension competence in the second foreign language

2.2.2 Listening comprehension competence

As one can see in Table 2.5, the findings for listening comprehension in the second foreign language are very consistent with the findings for reading comprehension proficiency. Here again, the majority of Greek students tested (39.5%) performed at A1 level proficiency. This finding and the fact that a high percentage of students performed at Pre-A1 level (37.1%) gives an alarming message about second foreign language learning in Greek schools but also in other countries.

Only a total of 23.3% of the Greek students tested performed at A2 level and above in the listening comprehension French test. Specifically, 12.5% performed at A2 level, 7.8% at B1 level, and only 3% at B2 level.

These findings are comparable to those in Sweden, Poland and England, where performance in listening comprehension is low. The picture is somewhat different in other countries, most of which have high percentages of students who do seem to have achieved A1 level listening comprehension proficiency in the second foreign language. However, it is disappointing that in all countries, with the exception of Malta, the Netherlands, the German-speaking Belgian community and the Flemish-speaking Belgian community, less than half of the students tested performed at Independent User level in the second foreign language.

Participating jurisdiction	Second foreign language	Percentage of students % at CEFR levels				
		Pre-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
Sweden	ES	37.1	50.4	9.5	2.4	0.5
Poland	DE	44.7	41.1	8.9	3.8	1.5
England	DE	27.7	50.4	15.3	5.7	0.9
Greece	**FR**	**37.1**	**39.5**	**12.5**	**7.8**	**3.0**
France	ES	19.3	54.0	16.7	7.3	2.7
Portugal	FR	25.2	47.1	16.6	8.8	2.4
Croatia	DE	22.9	44.7	16.1	9.6	6.7
Spain	FR	19.9	43.6	17.9	13.1	5.5
Bulgaria	DE	25.1	36.3	16.1	12.1	10.3
Estonia	DE	15.1	38.4	22.0	15.2	9.3
Slovenia	DE	12.4	39.7	19.9	14.3	13.8
Belgium (French)	DE	12.9	38.8	19.9	14.9	13.4
Malta	IT	17.5	24.1	12.7	16.0	29.7
Netherlands	DE	1.4	15.4	23.2	33.1	26.9
Belgium (German)	EN	3.8	12.9	19.4	31.6	32.2
Belgium (Flemish)	EN	1.0	5.4	6.3	15.0	72.3

Table 2.5: Students' listening comprehension competence in the second foreign language

2.2.3 Writing competence

As the reader can see in Table 2.6, more than half of the tested student population has basic proficiency in writing production in the second foreign language, which for Greece is French. The minority (i.e. 15.5%) performed at Autonomous User level (8.5% at B1 level and 7.0% at B2 level), and the majority (i.e. 35.5%) performed at Basic User level (24.4% at A1 level and 11.1% at A2 level). A little below half the student population that was tested (i.e. 49%) performed at pre-A1 level. This situation is similar to the situation in six other countries, although Greece is one of the three with the greatest percentage of students at pre-A1 level in the second language –the other two being Sweden and Poland.

From the table below, it is obvious that Greek students' performance in writing production in the second foreign language is comparable to, yet lower, than that in reading and listening comprehension, which is to be expected since production is more 'difficult' than comprehension. Although in reading and listening well over half of the students achieved A level, in writing only 35.5% managed to achieve the level. A much greater percentage of students are at pre-A1 level in writing than in the other two skills tested.

Comparing the findings relating to Greece in this section to all other countries, it is interesting to note that Greece shows significant variability in student performance. While it has the greatest number of pre-A1 level performers, it also is among the six countries out of the sixteen with the largest percentage of students with B2 level writing proficiency in the second foreign language.

Participating Jurisdiction	Languages	Percentage of students % at CEFR levels				
		Pre -A1	A1	A2	B1	B2
Sweden	ES	45.5	43.4	8.7	2.1	0.3
Poland	DE	44.8	38.4	9.9	4.7	2.2
England	DE	26.1	54.8	13.1	5.0	1.0
Portugal	FR	31.7	47.8	12.5	6.2	1.8
France	ES	24.3	48.6	19.2	6.6	1.3
Croatia	DE	19.9	49.8	19.6	8.1	2.6
Greece	**FR**	**49.0**	**24.4**	**11.1**	**8.5**	**7.0**
Bulgaria	DE	23.9	41.9	18.0	11.1	5.1
Slovenia	DE	8.6	48.4	23.8	11.7	7.5
Malta	IT	30.8	25.9	20.3	17.9	5.1
Estonia	DE	10.0	40.6	27.7	14.9	6.7
Spain	FR	7.2	38.1	28.5	18.9	7.4
Belgium (French)	DE	4.4	33.5	33.0	20.9	8.2
Netherlands	DE	0.9	27.6	40.3	25.6	5.6
Belgium (German)	EN	0.0	9.1	34.2	47.4	9.3
Belgium (Flemish)	EN	0.2	6.3	21.1	56.2	16.2

Table 2.6: Students' writing competence in the second foreign language

2.3 Greek students' proficiency in both languages

It is clear from the data in the previous Table 2.6 and from Figure 2.1 below that nearly half the Greek students tested performed as Independent Users in the first foreign language (B1 or B2 level), namely English, in all three testable skills: 46.5% have B level listening comprehension proficiency, 45.1% B level reading proficiency, and 52.9% B level writing proficiency.
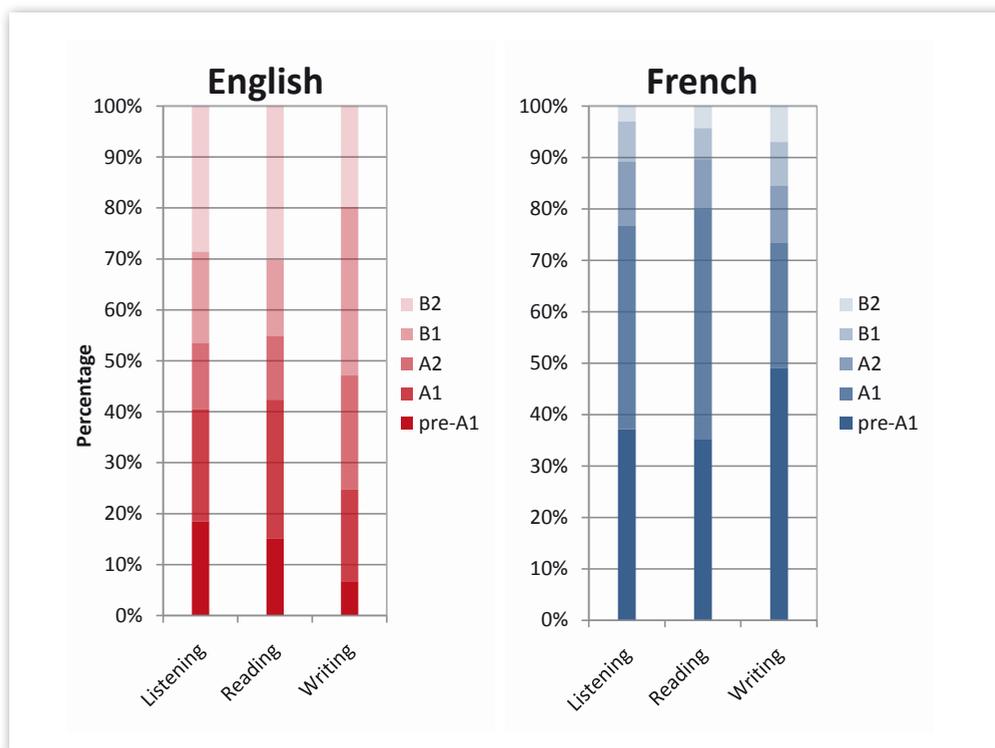
Figure 2.1: Students' language proficiency in both languages

That is, half the tested student population is able to communicate in a range of contexts and cope with problems of everyday life easily and with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The rest of the students, excluding the 13% who were diagnosed at pre-A1 level, are at Basic User level (A1 or A2) in all three skills in English.

The picture is quite different when it comes to the second foreign language, as already discussed. The percentages of students who are Independent Users of French are very low (10.3% reading, 10.8% listening, and 15.5% writing), and well over one-third of the students are at pre-A1 level in all three areas of competence (35.3% reading, 37.1% listening, 49% writing). The highest percentage of students tested (nearly half) have Basic User proficiency in French (54.5% reading, 52% listening, 35.5% writing).

On the basis of the aforementioned findings, it is clear that Greek students seem to develop their proficiency in the first foreign language, but not in the second –at least not in the second language chosen for them to be tested. This is a finding that is true across Europe, though some countries clearly do better than others in foreign language teaching and learning in school.

A peculiar finding is the recurrent pattern of relatively higher performance in writing in both target languages. A higher percentage of students achieve a B level in writing in

English and in French than in listening and reading. That is, students in general seem to do better in writing than in reading or listening comprehension, as shown in Figure 2.1. In order to examine this trend more closely, one should note that in the context of the European Survey writing was assessed on the basis of two criteria, referred to as 'Communication' and 'Language': "Communication" addresses the question: how successfully is the task fulfilled in terms of communicating the content of the information required? Specific aspects to consider under this criterion are: How many of the content points are dealt with clearly? How well are the points expanded? Is the style appropriate given the purpose of writing and the addressee?

On the other hand, "Language" addresses the question: how adequate to the task is the vocabulary, linguistic organisation and accuracy? Coherence, vocabulary, cohesion and accuracy are specific aspects of language considered in the context of this criterion.

Figure 2.2 shows the Greek students' performance in writing in both languages according to each assessment criterion and to the overall assessment formed by the combination of the two criteria.
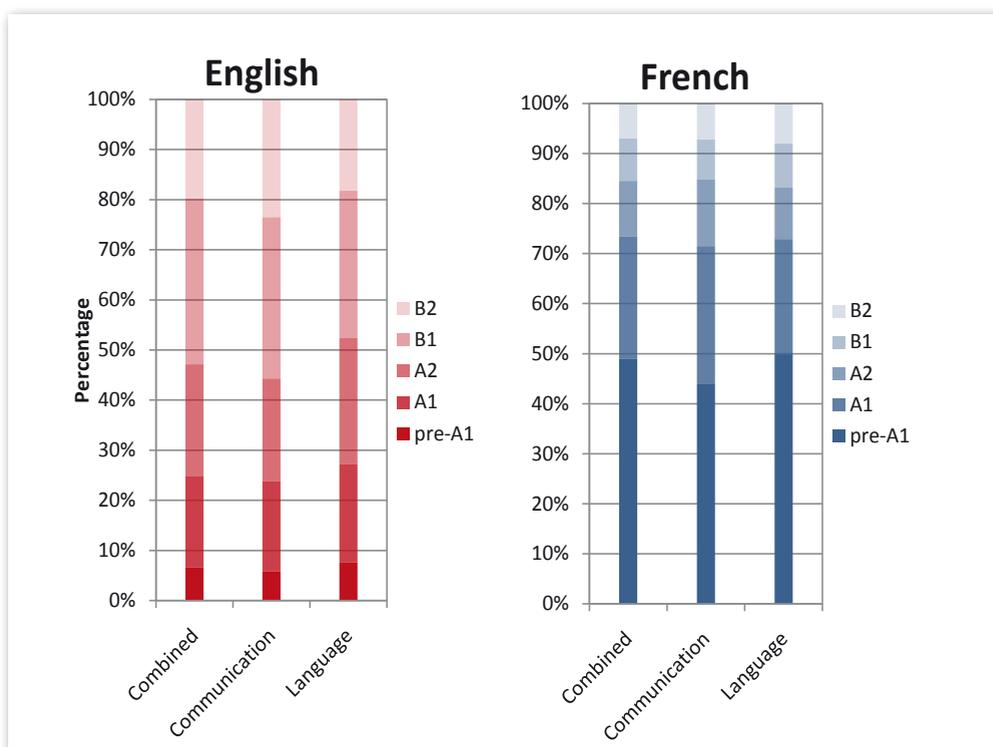

Figure 2.2: Students' writing competence in both languages

A close look at the percentages for each criterion separately shows that Independent Users of English are capable of getting the message across rather appropriately,

though not always accurately –grammatically speaking. The percentage of students who can produce meaningful language in English is higher than that of students who can use language accurately (55.7% and 47.6%, respectively). The opposite seems to be true for Basic Users of English. A1 and A2 level students seem to be able to produce equally accurate and appropriate language (25.2% and 19.5%, respectively), while the percentage of students who can express themselves meaningfully in writing at a basic level is lower (20.5% for A1 and 18% for A2).

Evidence about writing competency in French tells us that generally students do not show significant differences between producing meaningful texts and synthesizing them accurately and appropriately. Independent Users of French seem to do slightly better at language (16.8%) than at communication (15.2%), while at the level of Basic User more students (40.9%) write meaningful texts than accurate ones (33.3%). However, differences between Basic Users and Independent Users are trivial. The most alarming finding for French is that 49% of the students are below A1 level in writing.

2.4 Greek students' performance and the European average

In this part of the chapter, information about Greek students' performance in the first and the second target languages is provided through Tables 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9. The tables also include the proportion of students across Europe who achieved each CEFR level. In order to facilitate the readers' understanding of what the language user is expected to be able to do with the language at each level, the descriptors suggested by the CEFR are given in a separate column. The brief description accompanying each table discusses the achievements of students in Greece and the average across all entities (i.e. the European average) in both target languages.

2.4.1 Reading comprehension competence

The figures in Table 2.7 confirm that language learning is wanting across EU member states. Nearly half of the tested students (46%) are elementary (A1 level) or beginners (-A1) in the first target language. Greece's percentages conform to this norm, though it can be pointed out that it has a lower than the European average at A1 or -A1 level achievers. The Greek average is 42.5% whereas the European average is 46%. Greece also ranks higher than the average at Independent User level, since 45.1% of the Greek students' were B1+B2 level whereas the European average is 42%.

Where the second target language is concerned, however, there is bad news. The proportion of Greek students at Independent User level (10.3%) is alarmingly lower than the European average (28%) and the proportion of students below the level of the Basic User (35.3%) is nearly double the European average (18%).

Overall, Greece compares very well with the European average for the first target language but not for the second, and this is an issue which needs to be investigated further. Whereas Greek students are above the European average in reading in English across almost all levels, the opposite is true for French. The differences were significant at all levels for the second target language. Although in all participating countries the proportion of students who are at A1 level or below is high, in Greece there are almost double the number of students who fail to reach the level of Basic User in the second target language.

CEFR Level	Language	Greece	European Average	Level Descriptor
B2	1st	**30.2%**	28%	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad, active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms.
	2nd	**4.3%**	16%	
B1	1st	**14.9%**	14%	Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field of interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
	2nd	**6.0%**	12%	
A2	1st	**12.5%**	12%	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary.
	2nd	**9.9%**	14%	
A1	1st	**27.2%**	32%	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.
	2nd	**44.6%**	40%	
Pre-A1	1st	**15.2%**	14%	No CEFR description.
	2nd	**35.3%**	18%	

Table 2.7: Students' reading comprehension competence in both foreign languages

2.4.2 Listening comprehension competence

The performance of students tested in listening comprehension for achievement in the first and the second target language is similar to their performance in reading comprehension. As Table 2.8 shows, 46.5% are at Independent User level in English, 35% at Basic User level, and only 18.5% are total beginners. In French, the picture is different. The majority, i.e. 52% are at Basic User level, 37.1% are total beginners and only 10.8% are at Independent User level.

Compared with European averages, Greek students compare quite well to the European average especially for the first foreign language but also for the second.

On the whole, Greek students' listening comprehension proficiency in the first language is comparable to the European average.

Where the second target language is concerned, Greece is outperformed by other countries in all levels except A1, and this fact indicates that contextual or other factors that have to do with the choice of the second language need to be examined in some depth.

CEFR Level	Language	Greece	European Average	Level Descriptor
B2	1st	**28.6%**	30%	Can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar and the direction of the talk is sign-posted by explicit markers.
	2nd	**3.0%**	14%	
B1	1st	**17.9%**	15%	Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives.
	2nd	**7.8%**	13%	
A2	1st	**13.0%**	13%	Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment) provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.
	2nd	**12.5%**	16%	
A1	1st	**22.0%**	24%	Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning.
	2nd	**39.5%**	36%	
Pre-A1	1st	**18.5%**	17%	No CEFR description.
	2nd	**37.1%**	20%	

Table 2.8: Students' listening comprehension competence in both foreign languages

2.4.3 Writing competence

Greek students' writing performance in both first and second target language writing seems to be higher than the European average. Also, the proportion of Greek students who have elementary level writing competence in both languages is lower than the European average. So, for example, as one can see in Table 2.9, Greek students who have B2 level competence in writing are 19.8% whereas the European average is 13%.

Likewise, 33.1% Greek students have B1 level writing, when the European average is 27%. As already pointed out, the proportion of Greek students who have A2 and A1 level writing competence are lower than the European average, but it should be noted that those who have beginner level writing competence are significantly lower. Whereas 6.6% of the Greek students are at pre-A1, the average European proportion is 11%.

The outcomes from the assessment of Greek students' writing competence are particularly good, when compared to the European average, for the first target language in particular, but they are wanting when it comes to the second target language. Percentages at almost all levels are lower than the European average, except for B2 level writing where Greek students' competence is slightly higher, i.e. 7% vs. The European average which is 5%. One of the most disappointing findings here is that 49% of the students who took the writing test in the second target language seem to be at total beginner's level, i.e. pre-A1, when the European average is 20%.

CEFR Level	Language	Greece	European Average	Level Descriptor
B2	1st	**19.8%**	13%	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. Can express news and views effectively in writing, and relate to those of others.
	2nd	**7.0%**	5%	
B1	1st	**33.1%**	27%	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. Can write personal letters and notes asking for or conveying simple information, getting across the point he/she feels to be important.
	2nd	**8.5%**	17%	
A2	1st	**22.4%**	23%	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'. Can write short, simple, formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need.
	2nd	**11.2%**	22%	
A1	1st	**18.2%**	25%	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form.
	2nd	**24.4%**	36%	
Pre-A1	1st	**6.6%**	11%	No CEFR description.
	2nd	**49.0%**	20%	

Table 2.9: Students' writing competence in both foreign languages

2.5 Overview of findings

2.5.1 First target language proficiency

On the basis of the information above, it is clear that the percentage of Greek students who are at Independent User level in the first language that is English in Greece, is comparable to the European average. The proportion of students who have B level reading and listening comprehension competences is more or less equal to the proportion of students in other European countries. It just seems to be a little higher in writing production, but this result needs to be investigated further because it does not make absolute sense. The investigation will revolve around the type of test administered and the reliability of the assessment procedure of students' scripts.

Also, based on the findings presented in this chapter, it becomes clear that there is a small but noticeable proportion of Greek students who are below A1 level in the first target language, though they have supposedly studied the language in school for years. This finding is not totally unexpected, of course. Despite the fact that state school English language teachers are well qualified and experienced and that many of them do a very good job in less than ideal teaching conditions (some of which will be examined later, when discussing the contextual factors), the Greek school system continues to view the foreign language as an 'inferior' course to hard core subjects like Maths, Greek and Physics, but also inconsequential when compared to subjects such as Religious Studies and History; i.e., school subjects which are linked to the formation of national identity and ethnic consciousness. Naturally, there is a variety of other factors, including cases where English is a third language for students. Note that in the biodata examined in the first chapter we have about 10% of the students who are not Greek born, and about 20% of their parents. There is also a percentage of students who did not take the Survey test seriously, because the grade on the test would not count towards their scholastic record. This was reported, in several cases, by the participant foreign language teachers. Evidence on some students' indifferent attitude to the test was also provided by the scripts they produced where the answer to the given task was just a drawing or a funny comment. It has to be stressed here that the time of the Survey coincided with the beginning of a period of severe fiscal measures in Greece, which made a great proportion of the citizens sceptical about Europe and sometimes be opposed to anything that was conceived as "dictated" by the EU.

2.5.2 Second target language proficiency

With regard to the second target language which was chosen to be French in Greece, Greek students are outperformed by their counterparts in most participating countries. However, it should be noted that generally students across Europe did not perform as well as expected or desired in the second target language. All in all, data from the

test results illustrate that Greek students' performance in English is quite close to or above average compared with the European average performance at the highest levels for all tested competences, while the case is reversed in the second target language, where Greece does not compare well with the other countries and a high percentage of students fail to achieve A1 level in French. This finding is distressing yet not surprising. Though Greece chose French as the second target language, mainly because French, which used to be a prestigious foreign language in Greece especially in the second half of the 20th century, is still taught widely in Greece due to the availability of French state school teachers, is no longer a language that young people or their parents want to learn because they tend to think that it will not be an employment or professional development asset. As foreign language teaching and learning is tightly linked to economic growth and employability –concerns recently stressed in connection with language learning in Europe by the European Commission– German seems to be an upcoming language among the young and their parents in Greece, despite the fact that older generations still have negative feelings towards the German language, viewed as the language of the occupation of Greece by the Axis Powers from 1941 to 1944.[1]

One language that was not so negatively affected by the country's involvement in the occupation of Greece is Italian –the language of the neighbouring country which continues to be fairly popular among Greeks and considered rather easy to learn. Interestingly, research by university experts involved with the national foreign language exams in 6 languages for the State Certificate of Language Proficiency shows that candidates who are successful on the B level exam in Italian have had at least 2 years less of studies than in English. Finally, one other language gaining increasing popularity is Spanish, a language that about ten years ago was not widely taught in Greece, even in the evening language schools, with low private tuition fees. Recently, Spanish seems to have been gaining momentum in Greece, and though it was an elective second language course in school at the time the Survey was carried out in Greece, the schools that offered it (like Italian) were too few to be warrant that Spanish (or Italian) be selected. German is still offered in fewer schools than French, due to the smaller proportion of teachers in the state school sector. However, perhaps if German were chosen as the second target language by Greece, the results might have been different.

Most certainly the choice of second language in each country has a lot to do with results in test performance. For example, the high percentages of students performing at B level in German and the low percentages in A level or pre A level performance in the Flemish speaking community of Belgium certainly has to do with the fact that Flemish or otherwise Belgian Dutch is a Germanic language and there are many similarities,

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1   These feelings lasted for generations after the liberation because the occupation brought about terrible hardships for the Greek civilian population since 300,000 civilians died in Athens alone from starvation, tens of thousands more died because of reprisals by Nazis and collaborators, and the country's economy was ruined.

as well as intercomprehension once the language student develops inter-language awareness. The success of Maltese students on the Survey test is also very much related to first and second language choice, since English (Malta's first target language) is not actually a *foreign* language in Malta but a co-official language of the country, along with the country's national language which is Maltese, the vocabulary of which contains about 15% English words. The second target language choice of Malta, which is Italian, also explains high success rates on the test of Maltese students. Maltese, which is descended from an Arabic dialect that initially developed in Sicily contains vocabulary half of which is borrowed from standard Italian and Sicilian.

Taken all the above into consideration, it may be worthy of attention to point out that the school language of students tested in all European countries uses Latin script, including Maltese (the only Semitic language written in the Latin script in its standard form). The only exception is the Greek language, the only independent branch of the Indo-European family of languages, and one which of course does not use the Latin script. So, it may be a bit ironic but certainly interesting that Greek students seem to perform better in writing in both target foreign languages than in any other skill tested.

2.6 Variability in foreign language proficiency

The Survey testing outcomes certainly have confirmed what we have all suspected for years but had never documented through research providing valid and reliable comparable data. All of us have known for years that there is significant variability in young Europeans' foreign language proficiency across Europe. This variability, which concerns levels of performance in the five most taught languages in different European member states, is caused by great many factors, which include language-related, social, ideological, historical, attitudinal, extrinsic-motivational and educational contextual factors. So, if we as Europeans set as our goal to try and even out the variability across Europe so that, by the time students finish their compulsory schooling, they have achieved independent user level in one language and basic user level in one more out of the five dominant languages of Europe, we should realise that we are taking on an incredibly demanding task.

Most of the extra-educational factors which impact on foreign language teaching and learning are nearly impossible to overturn. However, it is possible to persistently aim at shaping, for example, new attitudes to languages and to using these languages for work and study, at providing social and educational incentives for language learning, but this takes time, strategic action and of course money. What is almost impossible to do is to change socio-cultural conditions and beliefs, and to re-write European history – though some interesting efforts have been made. How does one make the English believe that languages other than English are also important and that learning foreign languages

will be to their benefit? How does one go about convincing others that all languages are equal but some are more equal than others and therefore worth learning?

Perhaps easiest to change are factors directly related to the educational institution, the school infrastructure, language education policy, the languages curriculum and the curriculum as a whole –particularly the importance with which the school curriculum treats languages, so that language is learnt in school and youngsters are not obliged to follow extracurricular language instruction in order to learn languages. The educational system and other public interest organizations within countries but also within the EU can provide opportunities for student, teacher and trainee mobility across Europe, with programmes such as Erasmus plus, with European programmes such as e-twinning, etc. A more extensive discussion on these issues will be held in chapters 4 and 5.

2.7 Concerns about data collection across countries

According to Lynn 2003:324) "in the absence of clear standards, where data collection is undertaken by different organizations in different countries it is likely that methods will differ substantially". Within the ESLC clear standards were certainly set for the development of the testing instruments (Jones 2013, Robinson 2013). Some of the test results though, especially in relation to the results of the context questionnaire were rather unexpected and difficult to interpret. For instance, as is the case with students' performance in the second target language in many other jurisdictions, Greek students' performance in French, the second target language, is significantly lower than students' performance in the first target language. The vast majority are at A1 level and below (76.6% Listening, 79.9% Reading and 73.4% Writing) which is a quite alarming result especially when one takes into account the following findings from the context questionnaires:

- ❖ 52.9% of the students tested in French stated that they started learning the TL before the starting grade at school,
- ❖ 52.2% stated that they attend extra language lessons outside school,
- ❖ target lesson time is the same for both languages,
- ❖ French language teachers are more experienced, report to have participated more in in-service training and to have received more incentives to do so than their English colleagues,
- ❖ more French language teachers have been trained in the use of the CEFR and ELP than English teachers, and
- ❖ on average there are fewer students in French language classes than in English classes.

Another rather bizarre finding relates to students' performance in the skill of writing. Whereas for students tested in English, writing seems to be their best performing skill (over half, 52.9% achieved B level in writing in English), for students tested in French it

is their worst performing skill with nearly half (49%) of the students being below A1 level in writing and a quarter of the student sample at A1 level (see Table below).

LEVEL	ENGLISH			FRENCH		
	reading	listening	writing	reading	listening	writing
B2	30.2	28.6	19.8	4.3	3.0	7.0
B1	14.9	17.9	33.1	6.0	7.8	8.5
A2	12.5	13	22.4	9.9	12.5	11.2
A1	27.2	22	18.2	44.6	39.5	24.4
Pre-A1	15.2	18.5	6.6	35.3	37.1	49

Table 2.10 Students' performance in the three tested skills across levels in the two TLs

Another interesting finding is that although students tested in English seemed to be quite consistent in their performance in reading and listening across levels, their performance in writing seems erratic. Generally, it appears that students are more proficient in production (i.e. writing) than in comprehension (i.e. reading or listening). This is particularly surprising taking into account findings from the teacher questionnaire regarding English and French language teachers' teaching approach (see Figure 3.24 on page 74). Teachers of both target languages stated that they placed little if any emphasis on writing in their language classes.

Students' high levels of performance in writing have been interpreted in previous sections of this report in relation to the types of writing tasks students were tested on (email, postcard, letter). However, the erratic performance of students in writing in relation to their performance in other skills, may well be due to the assessment criteria, as well as to the script rating process.

Chapter 3

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS FROM THE ESLC: FINDINGS

As already explained, the main purpose of the Survey was to provide participating countries and Europe as a whole with comparable data about the level of foreign language proficiency students in European schools have managed to achieve by the time they finish their compulsory education. This knowledge could then serve as the background against which European objectives for the improvement of foreign language proficiency of young Europeans could be set. An equally important purpose of the Survey was to provide comparable information about the context in which foreign language teaching and learning takes place in each of the participating countries. Assuming that the factors to be investigated were in some way related to student achievement in their foreign language study in school, the SurveyLang team prepared the tools (questionnaires) with which to draw information on a number of issues that are thought to have positive or negative impact on student achievement and ultimately on students' level of foreign language proficiency. Since the findings could lead to a series of recommendations for more effective language education policies, the contextual factors that the Survey focused on are considered 'policy issues'.

Thirteen of these *policy issues* were identified prior to carrying out the Survey, and they served as a basis for the production of sets of questions included in the questionnaires. The respondents were three different groups of stakeholders: students who had also taken the test, the foreign language teachers and the school principals of the participating schools in each country. The factors, and so-called policy issues, on which data were gathered, are the following:

1. Early language learning
2. Diversity and order of foreign languages offered
3. Informal language-learning opportunities
4. Schools' foreign language specialisation
5. ICT to enhance foreign language learning and teaching
6. Intercultural exchanges
7. Staff from language communities
8. Language learning for all
9. Foreign language teaching approach
10. Teachers' access to high quality initial and in-service training
11. A period of work or study in another country for teachers
12. Use of existing European language assessment tools
13. Practical experience

The section that follows presents the findings from the context questionnaires in Greece, and each policy issue is discussed separately. The Greek findings are compared to those of other countries, as these are reported in the final report published by SurveyLang.

3.1 Early language learning

In March 2002, EU heads of state and government called for 'at least two foreign languages to be taught from a very early age' [1] the reason being that early language learning (ELL) helps youngsters develop positive attitudes towards other cultures and languages, directly and positively affects the academic and personal development of children and can result in faster language learning, improved mother tongue literacy skills and better performance in other areas. Many countries have become aware of the advantages of ELL and are implementing relevant programmes.

Details about ELL programmes in Europe have recently been collected through European Commission initiatives such as the Polyglotti4EU[2] ELL questionnaire, which was administered to teachers and other grass-roots actors. The findings from this questionnaire as well as from the MELT (Multilingual Early Language Transmission) project will feed into the Polyglotti4EU Language Observatory and serve as input for various actions and events.[3] In several EU countries, through projects such as ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe) – a transnational, longitudinal study of the introduction of second/foreign language learning in primary school classrooms in seven European countries, but also through the work of scholars in Early Foreign Language Learning and the English for Young Learners field[4] (Tragant 2010).

All these studies are providing information about European countries which are increasingly implementing ELL programmes for additional (not just for 'foreign')

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1   European Council, 2002, Presidency Conclusions, Barcelona 15-16 March 2002. Retrieved from: www.european-council.europa.eu/council

2   Poliglotti4.eu is a project promoting multilingualism in Europe –the result of the deliberations of the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism. Its website (http://poliglotti4.eu) reports on best practices in language policy and language learning, and provides stakeholders with a powerful toolkit for benchmarking and enhancing their activities in non-formal and informal education and learning sectors. The project is funded through the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

3   One important event organized, taking into account the ELL questionnaire findings, was the Poliglotti4 Experts Workshop on the topic of ELL. The Workshop was hosted by the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, part of the Fryske Akademy, in the city of Leewarden Netherlands, in February 2012. Among the participants were researchers, policy-makers, members of the European Commission, Consortium members of the Poliglotti4.eu project, and network members of the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism.

4   Tragant, 2010, ELLiE-Early Language Learning in Europe: Multilingualism in Europe: on the political agenda. University of Barcelona. Retrieved on 16 Jan. 2014 from http://www.ellieresearch.eu

languages, about good practices available in Europe and other parts of the world, which conditions need to be improved, etc.

In the context of enhanced ELL in Europe, Greece is one of the member states that has introduced both the first and second foreign language in primary school. In fact, as of 2010, Greece has begun offering the first foreign language, which is English, in the first grade of primary school, as already mentioned in the introductory section of this report (http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/peap/en).

3.1.1 Onset of foreign and target language learning in Greece

Before discussing the data on the start age of language learning, the reader should know that the ESLC named 'foreign' any language taught in school (modern or classical) which is not the students' home language.[5] They named target language each of the two languages on which the students of each country would be tested – in the case of Greece English and French.

This part of the Survey was concerned with finding out how early foreign language learning starts in each participating country and what is the relationship between the start age and the success in learning the two target languages.

At the time of the Survey, foreign language teaching for all Greek students in state schools began in the third grade of primary school (age 8). However, individual students' experiences varied with regard to the onset of foreign and target language learning. The reasons for the variability are (a) the learning of languages other than the five target languages included in the ESLC, and (b) support teaching outside the school context in Greece.

In Figures 3.1 and 3.2, the reader can observe the aforementioned variability, since the figures show which percentage of students started foreign and target language learning in which school grade (at ISCED level). The vertical axes show the school grades and the horizontal axes the percentage of students. The bars are presented separately for the students who were examined in English or in French and correspond to the percentage of students who started foreign or target language (TL) learning in each grade. For most of the students (46% of those who sat for the English test, and 47.1% of the students who sat for the French test) their first foreign language lessons began at ISCED1 level 3, which is the time when English as a foreign language is first introduced in Greek public schools. The variability in the responses of students tested either in English or in French in relation to the onset of foreign language learning in terms of ISCED level may

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5   Classical languages were included thinking that students who have knowledge of Ancient Greek or Latin are at an advantage over others because such knowledge can facilitate the learning of other, modern languages.

be due to the phrasing of the actual question in the Student Questionnaire. Students were asked to state at which ISCED level they were offered foreign language lessons at school. There are two problems with the particular question, one of which relates to its phrasing and the other to the structure of the question. The term *foreign* is problematic for various reasons. For one thing, for immigrant family students all languages, including Greek, may be considered 'foreign'. Secondly Ancient Greek is considered a 'foreign' language for students of other European countries but not for Greeks. Ancient Greek is considered part of the Greek cultural heritage and a means of gaining greater insight into the Modern Greek language. It is a compulsory subject at school, offered from ISCED2 level 1 to ISCED3 level 1 for more hours a week than any other language except Modern Greek. Therefore, the term *foreign* is inappropriate because Ancient Greek, which is taught to all students in school, is certainly not a foreign language for them, like Latin or like English. The responses to questions referring to 'foreign' languages have compromised the relevant data. Finally, there was a problem with the question itself. Since students were asked to tick all educational levels that apply to their onset of foreign language learning, in essence a student could potentially tick all levels or one/two (if the term *"foreign"* language was understood as *"target"* language).
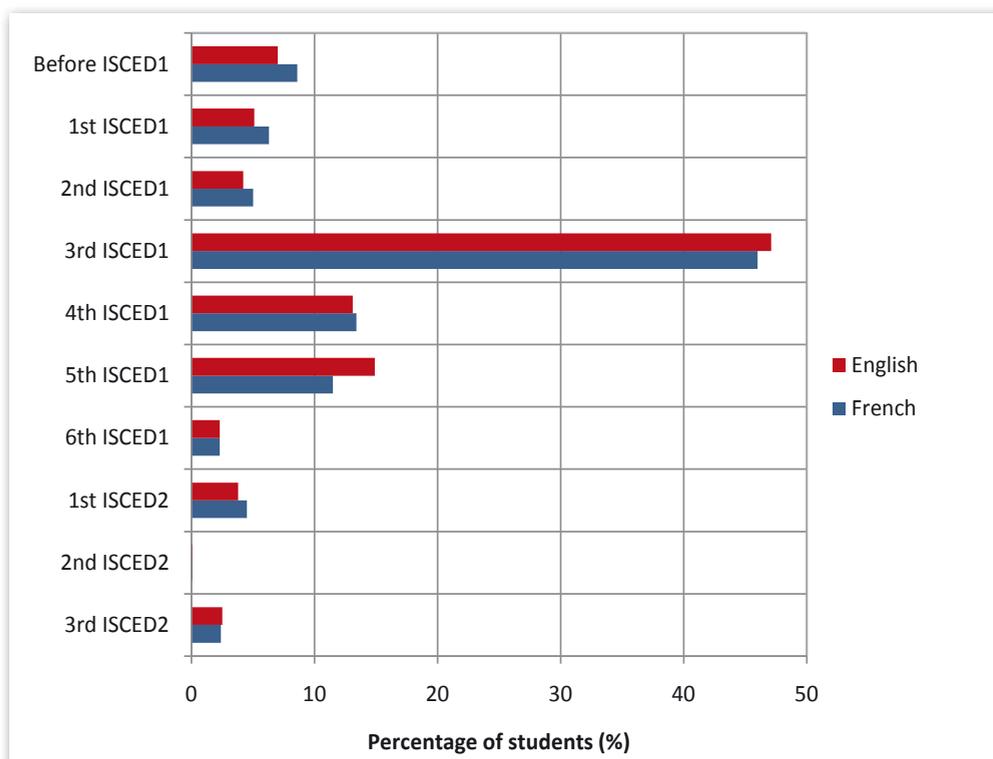

Figure 3.1: Onset of first and second foreign language learning

There is also variability as regards the onset of target language learning between the students tested in English and in French. The majority of Greek students seem to have

started learning target languages in the third grade of primary education (ISCED 1). In general though, the onset for French for most of the students (33.4%) is later (ISCED 5) than that for English language. Almost half of the students examined in English started studying it in the third level of ISCED 1, whereas, around 30% of the students examined in French also started it at this level, even though this is not the level at which the second foreign language is introduced in Greek public schools. Slightly higher is the percentage of students (33.4%) tested in French who were involved in French language learning for the first time in the fifth level of ISCED 1.
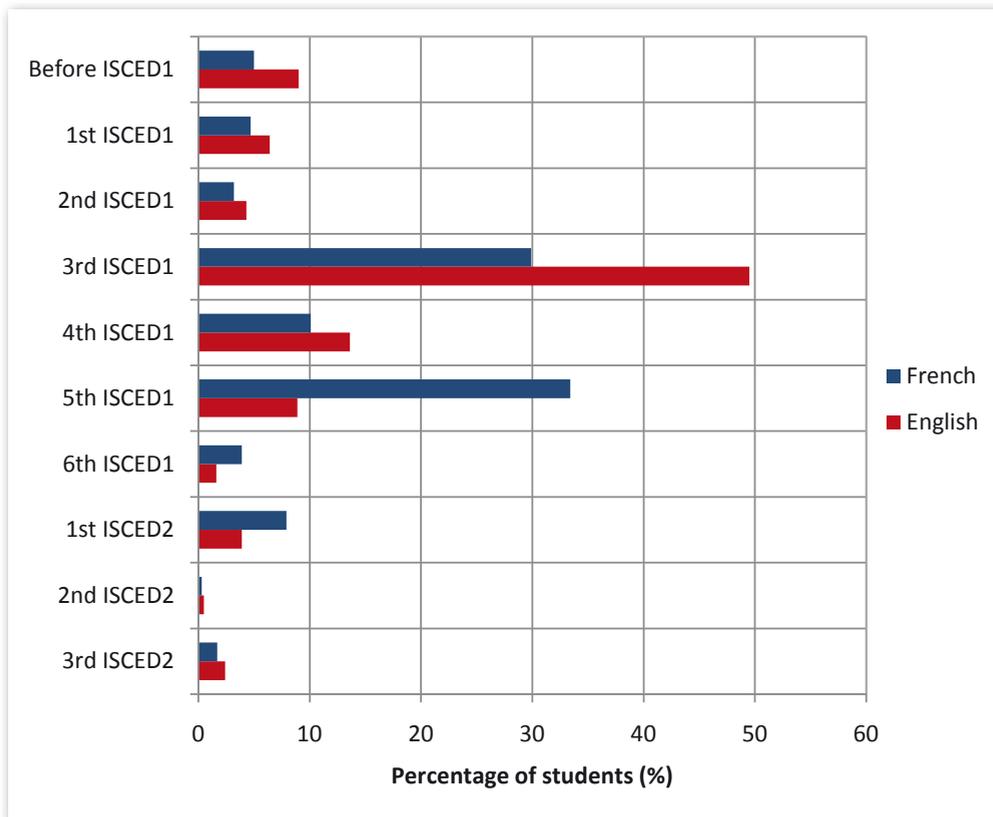

Figure 3.2: Onset of TL learning

This is actually the level at which French (or German) as a second foreign language is formally introduced in the Greek educational system. This variability in the onset of French language learning provides evidence of the fact that much foreign language learning in Greece takes place outside the public education system −mainly in private language schools. Noticeable are the percentages of students who started learning English at a lower ISCED 1 level (Level 2, 1 and before ISCED 1). For 19.7% of the students tested in English, foreign language lessons in English started before the third grade of primary school (ISCED1 level 3), which is the time when English is introduced in Greek public primary schools. Therefore, for this rather high percentage of students,

their first contact with English as a foreign language took place in the context of either a private school or a private language school. For a smaller percentage of students (8.4%) who were tested in French, their first contact with the target language began at lower levels than that at which the second foreign language is formally introduced in Greek public education.

The onset of foreign language learning in Greece is above the average, as mentioned above and reported in the SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 55). As a matter of fact, Greece is one of the four entities where the onset of foreign language learning is in the third grade, the other three being Estonia, France and Sweden.

3.1.2 Time spent on foreign and target languages learning in Greece

In general, there is no significant difference between the weekly teaching time and the learning time for tests and homework for the first and the second target language. Table 3.1 displays the mean values of the foreign and target language lesson time per week, the standard errors of the means and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals (CI), as indicated by the answers which the students of English and French TL gave in the relevant students' questionnaires (SQ). Instead of giving a single value for the mean, the confidence intervals provide a lower and an upper limit for the mean, which indicate the uncertainty of the mean estimate. In particular, the 95% CI are interpreted as follows: If the sampling is repeated, the calculated confidence interval will encompass the true mean in 95% of the cases. The standard error expresses the standard deviation of the sample means over all possible samples drawn from the population.

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
FL lesson time per week	English TL	5.07	0.12	(4.84 - 5.31)
	French TL	5.04	0.12	(4.80 - 5.27)
TL lesson time per week	English TL	2.29	0.06	(2.17 - 2.41)
	French TL	2.21	0.06	(2.09 - 2.31)

Table 3.1: Time spent on foreign and TL weekly

As can be seen from the Table, on average the weekly lesson time spent on foreign languages is higher than the time spent on target languages, since foreign languages include the target languages and other foreign languages that the students may be learning, as well as ancient languages. No great differences are observed between the mean values and the confidence intervals of the students who were examined in English or in French, indicating that there is no difference between the two student populations and their weekly lesson time for foreign or target languages. The results coincide with the foreign language learning situation in Greek public secondary schools. Students who sat for the tests in English and French were at ISCED2 level 3. In Greek public schools, English and French at this level of education are each offered two hours

a week. Ancient Greek is also offered as a compulsory subject for three hours a week on average. It should also be noted that, according to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012:56), in Greece and in three other countries (Portugal, France, and Estonia) there is hardly any difference in the lesson time dedicated to target language learning as reported by each target language population.

Table 3.2 shows the mean value, the standard error and the 95% CIs of the learning time the students spend on preparing for target language tests. Both the students tested in English and those tested in French reported spending a similar amount of time preparing for language tests, which is around an hour and a half prior to taking the test. The time Greek students seem to spend preparing for tests in the two target languages is very close to the European average.

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
TL learning time for tests	English TL	1.40	0.03	(1.35 - 1.46)
	French TL	1.36	0.03	(1.30 - 1.42)

Table 3.2: Time spent preparing for TL tests

Figure 3.3 below presents the learning time spent on target language homework as reported by the students. The vertical axis shows the percentage of students, and the horizontal axis shows the time spent on homework.
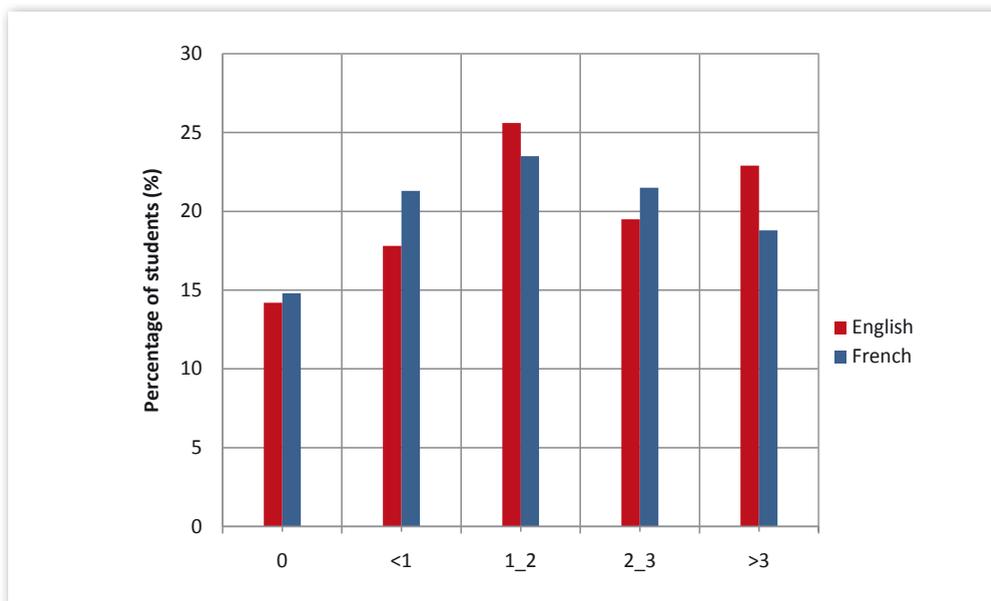

Figure 3.3: Time spent on TL homework

Students who sat for the English test reported spending slightly more time on homework for their English classes than their French counterparts did. More than a quarter of the

English students reported spending 1 to 2 hours on homework a week (vs. 23.5% of French students), while 22.9% reported spending more than three hours for homework (vs. 18.9% of the French students). This rather high percentage of students spending a substantial amount of time studying for their first target language at home may have included study time required by the private language institutes most students would have been attending.

No great differences are observed between the amount of time spent preparing for tests in and on homework for English and French. Yet, it is interesting to note that the SurveyLang Final Report (2012:56) highlights the fact that Greek students spend more time on homework for the two target languages than do students in all the other countries.

3.2 Diversity and order of foreign languages offered

The number and variety of languages included in and/or excluded from the school curriculum is an interesting political issue which has been discussed by various scholars, particularly in the context of multilingualism that the European Commission has been promoting. Multilingualism, on the other hand, is a stimulating concept which, however, is often narrowly defined merely as 'knowing at least two foreign languages in addition to one's mother tongue', whereas multilingual studies –an exciting new academic field– has seen multilingual practices involving intercomprehension, translanguaging, interlingual mediation and much more.

In the context of the Survey, the target foreign languages are the five dominant European languages, which are the most widely taught languages in schools –with English continuing its reign over all other languages. Therefore, when the issue of diversity is posed, it is mainly measured against these languages, though other languages come into play because Ancient Greek and Latin were counted as foreign 'foreign languages' also.

For Greece, especially, the inclusion of Ancient Greek in the curriculum is not the same as for other countries. It is studied not as a separate language, as a 'foreign' language, given that it is the source for Modern Greek. It is therefore studied as a 'variation' of the mother tongue. This is why Figure 3.4 below shows that the percentage of Greek students who have studied at least one ancient languages is 80% - more than in any other country. Of course, this is not by student or school choice. It is because Ancient Greek constitutes a core subject in the secondary school curriculum.

Figure 3.4: Number of foreign languages
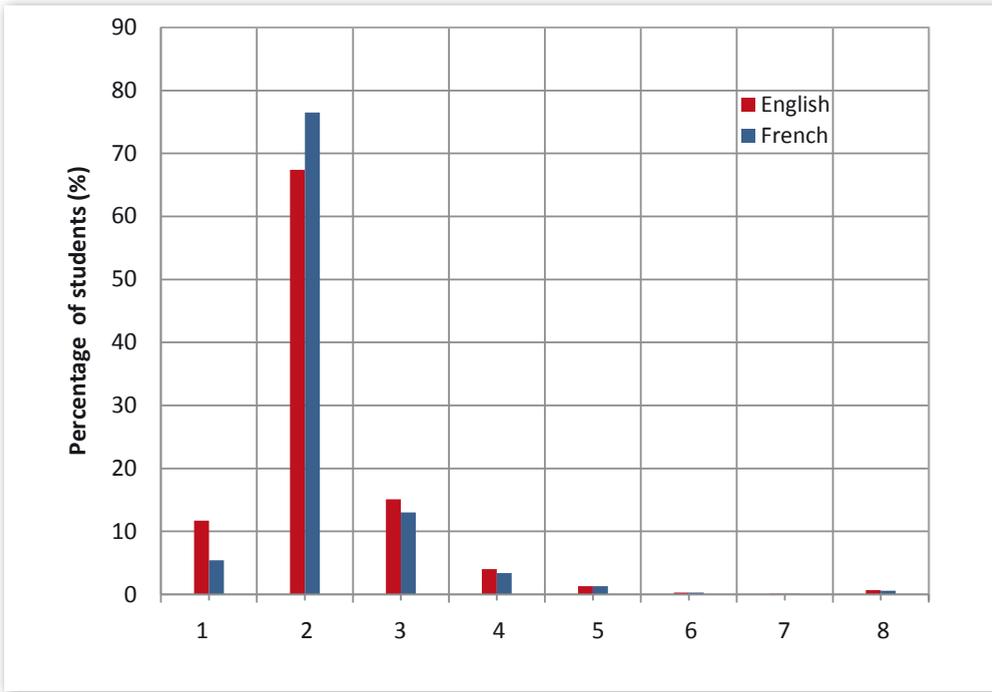
With regard to the foreign languages Greek students know, they themselves claim that they have 'learnt' two. What is interesting to note in Figure 3.5 below is that a slightly higher percentage of students of English claim that they 'know' other modern foreign languages –besides the ones they are studying at school.
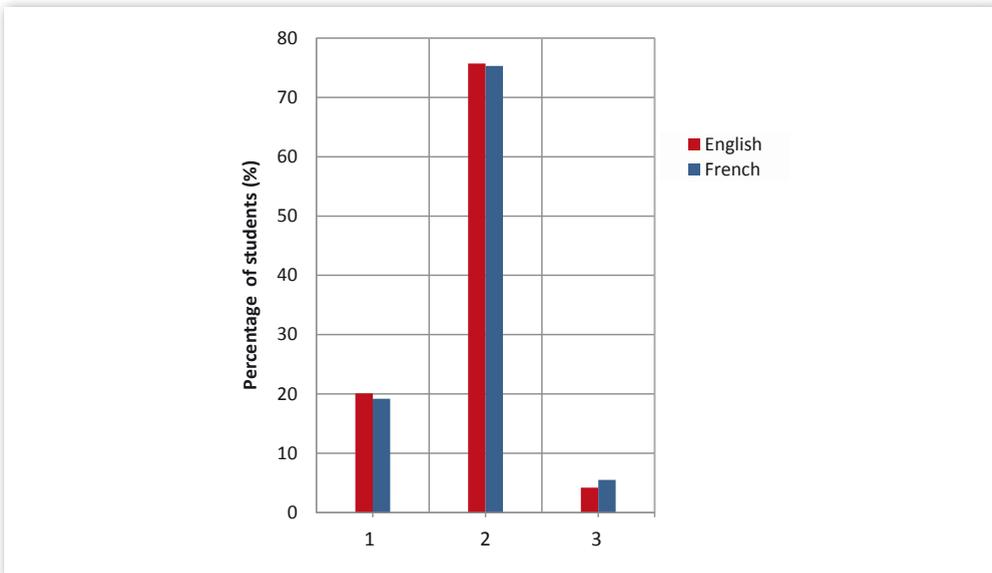

Figure 3.5: Number of modern foreign languages learnt

At the time the Survey was carried out, it was possible for students in the Greek school system to take two languages out of the five included in the curriculum.[6] But the foreign language that they start learning first is English, as shown in Figure 3.6, and it is a compulsory subject for all students.
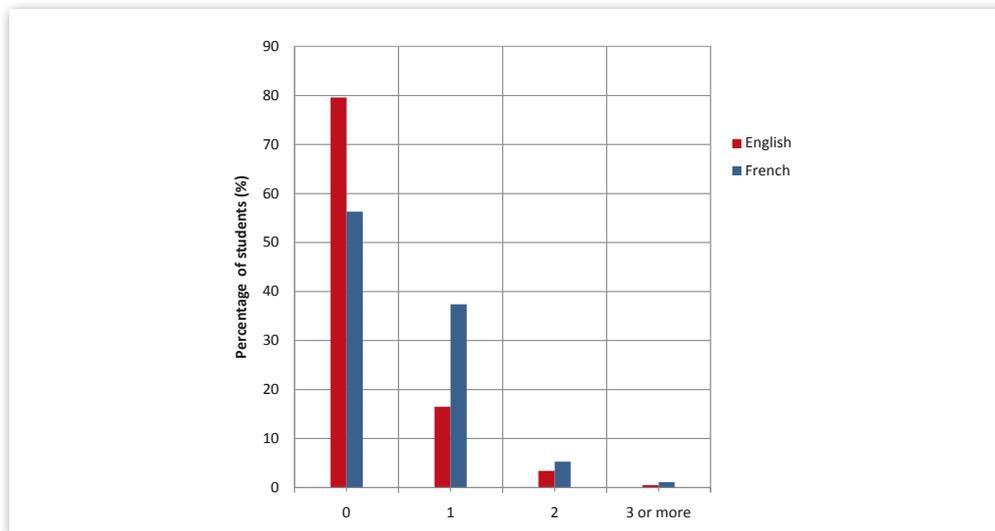

Figure 3.6: Number of foreign languages studied before each TL

A very high percentage of students learning English (79.6% to be exact) reported that they had no prior experience of learning another foreign language when they started learning English in school. A lower percentage of students studying French (56.3% to be exact) reported having no prior foreign language learning experience.

French is the second most frequently offered language in schools because of French language teacher availability. It is introduced as the second language in the fifth grade of primary school, along with German. The school has a choice as to which language to offer and its choice depends on student (or parent) preference and availability of teachers – those who already have tenure within the school system are preferred over short contract teachers.

3.3 Informal language learning opportunities

Learning happens anywhere and at any time. The home, the community, the world are the 'classroom' for informal learning and the 'teachers' are parents or other family members, friends and acquaintances and since the 20th century old and new

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6   As mentioned earlier in this volume, the languages offered in schools at that time were English, French and German in primary and secondary education. In secondary education it was possible to continue with these three or continue with English and start Italian or Spanish instead of French or German. This is no longer possible. As teachers stopped being hired in the public sector as of 2011, Italian and Spanish are no longer offered.

technologies. We learn because of our desire to know how to make, do or say something, because someone takes the opportunity to share their knowledge or wisdom with us, or because we watch TV, listen to the radio, or go online. Learning one's mother tongue or a second language in its natural environment (e.g. children of immigrant parents) are excellent examples of informal learning, which is of course a lifelong process. It is in this context that the Survey sought to find out what type of informal language learning opportunities the participating students have had. They were asked about the language spoken in their home environment, the proficiency of their parents in target language, how often students use the target language at home and their general exposure to the two target languages in their immediate environment. They were also asked about travel opportunities in which they might have a chance to use the language they are learning, and whether/how often they use traditional and new media.

Figure 3.7 shows the percentage of students who are speakers of one, two, three or more languages. The majority of the Greek students (82% to be exact) were monolingual Greek speakers. Only a small percent (14%) claimed to be bilingual.
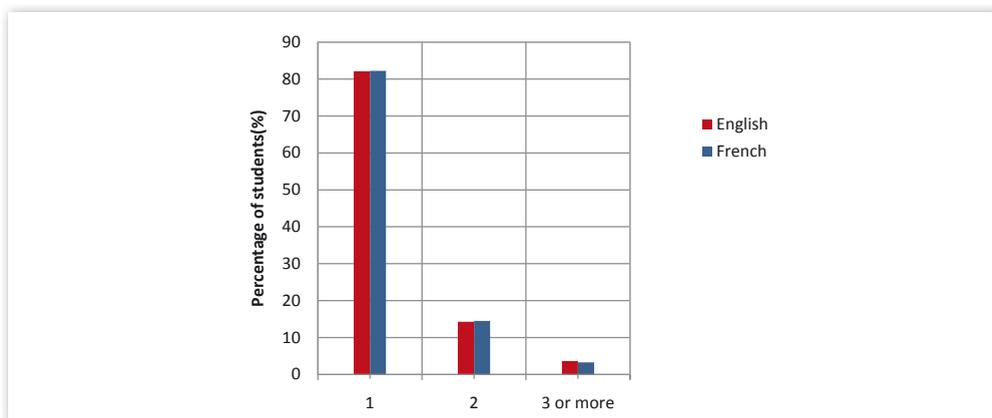
Figure 3.7: Number of students' first languages

There are a multitude of studies, showing the positive impact on language proficiency of informal language learning environments (parents and the home environment). As such, the Survey included questions to students about whether their parents had some proficiency in the two target languages –English and French. The findings are presented in Figure 3.8 below and we see that only 1/5 of the parents have nil knowledge of either English or French and that 4/5 have some knowledge (of English more often than French), which ranges from a little to very well.
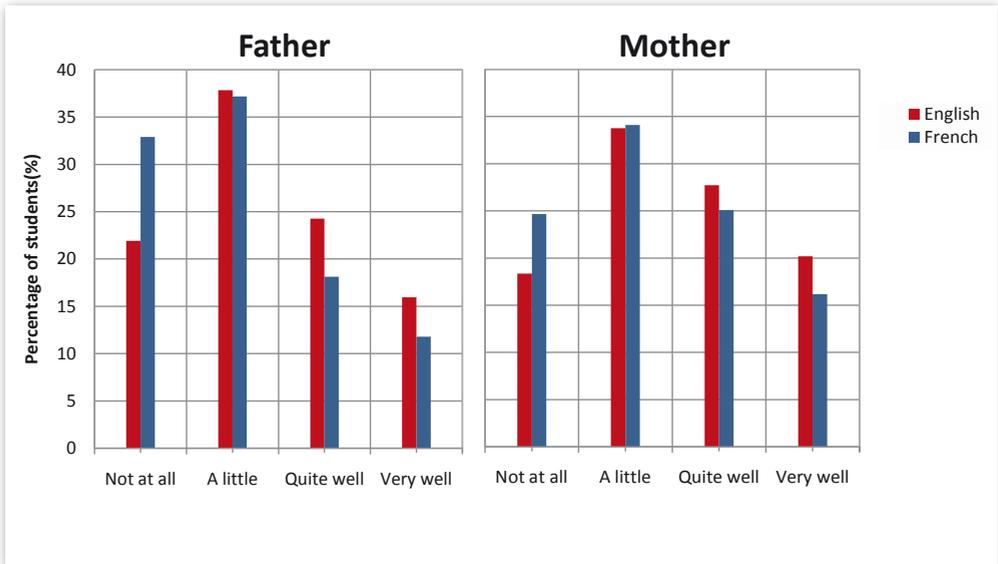
Figure 3.8 Parents' knowledge of each TL

If parents know the target language being learnt even a little, it is more likely that students will have a positive attitude toward that language and that more opportunities of use at home will surface –or so the team carrying out the Survey assumed. Nevertheless, students were also asked directly about use of the target language at home but their responses (presented in Figure 3.9) show no direct correlation between parents' knowledge of the language and its use at home. The majority of the Greek participating students (72% to be exact) said that they do not use the target language at home. Only about one-third of the students stated that they use it.

Figure 3.9: TL use at home

Of course, one wonders what students understood when asked if they use the target language at home. Did they understand that the question regarding 'use' referred to comprehension and not only production –watching Anglophone programmes on TV, watching videos of interest on youtube? Did they understand that it was not referring to having lessons with a tutor or doing your homework at home? Did they understand that they were being asked about the foreign language on which they'd been tested or were they responding with regard to English or 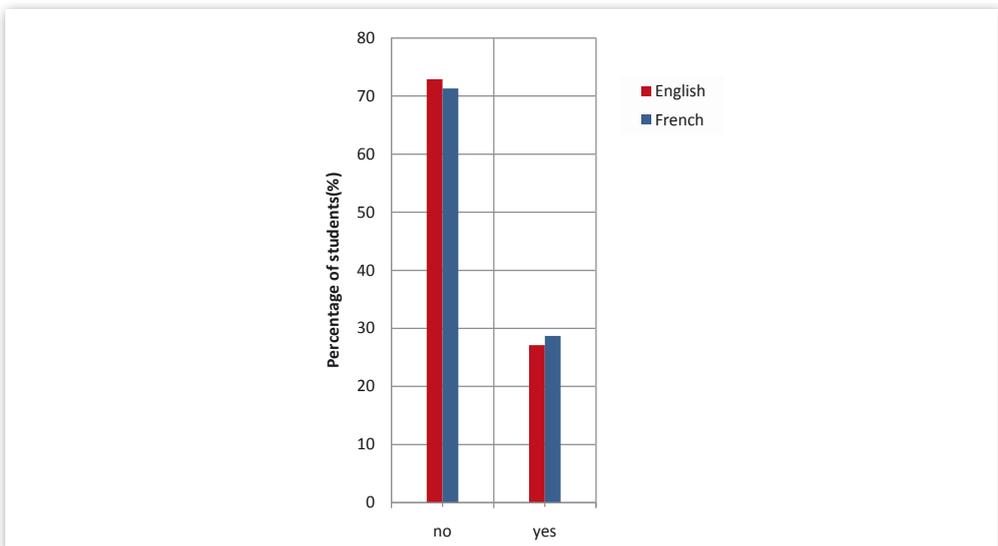even another language? What makes us think that maybe there was some misunderstanding because students responses seem to say that French is used at home a little more than English (though the difference is very small), but this is false information, since 90% of the foreign films, series and programmes on Greek TV are in English (with Greek subtitles),[7] and there is frequent use of English by students on the internet.

This information is presented in Figure 3.10 which shows students' exposure to the target languages outside school (i.e., at home or elsewhere in the community).

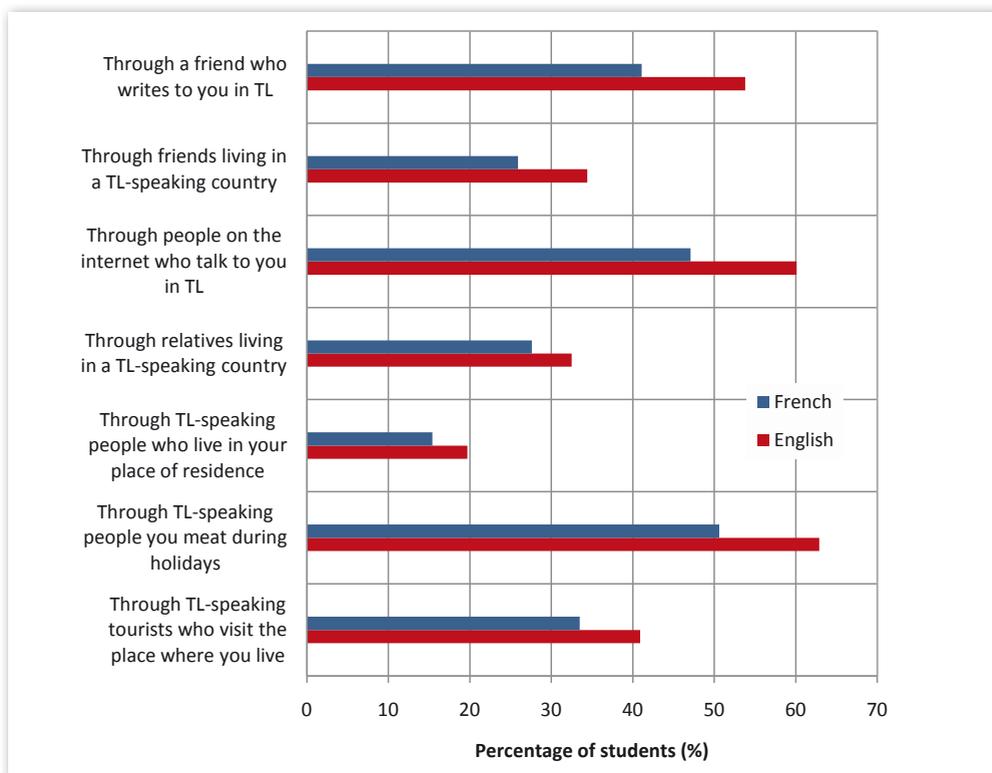Figure 3.10: TL exposure outside school

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7   All TV programmes in a language other than Greek are subtitled rather than dubbed. So, one hears a lot of English when watching TV in Greece, some French, but quite a bit of Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese and Turkish because of the imported soap operas. Programmes intended for young children who cannot yet read are the exception, as these are dubbed.

The information visually shown here confirms that the Greek respondents are more frequently exposed to English than to French. A higher percentage of students studying English (i.e. Greek students who took the ESLC English test) reported exposure to the target language in different ways, such as talking to people from abroad during their holidays (62.9%), talking to people on the internet (60%), and communicating with a native speaker friend (53.8%). Conversely, French students generally seem to have fewer opportunities for target language exposure than do their English counterparts.

Information by students saying that the home environment exposes them more to English than to French is also shown in Table 3.3 below and it is fact that English rather than French is the main language in the Greek landscape, and English is the language with which the media is dominated.

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
TL exposure through the home environment	English TL	3.01	0.07	(2.87 - 3.16)
	French TL	2.39	0.09	(2.21 - 2.57)

Table 3.3: TL exposure in the home environment

English is also the language to which Greek students are more frequently exposed through the traditional and the new media –more than they are exposed to French. Table 3.4 below provides a summary of Greek students' exposure to the two target languages through the media. But Greece is not unique in where English is concerned, because according to the SurveyLang (2012: 58) this seems to be the case in most European countries that participated in the Survey.

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
TL exposure and use through traditional and new media	English TL	2.35	0.03	(2.29 - 2.42)
	French TL	1.73	0.06	(1.60 - 1.85)
TL exposure and use through visits abroad	English TL	0.99	0.05	(0.89 - 1.09)
	French TL	0.87	0.04	(0.79 - 0.96)

Table 3.4: TL exposure through the media and visits abroad

Table 3.4 also provides information about exposure to the target language through visits abroad. As we see, no great differences are observed between the two target languages. As both mean values are low, we understand that Greek students say that they are not frequently exposed to either of the target languages through visits abroad. As a matter of fact, the SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 57) places Greece (along with Bulgaria, Spain and Poland) among the countries where students have the fewest opportunities for informal language learning through travel.

3.4 Language friendly schools

Concerned with actions relevant to creating a language-friendly school –i.e., a school where different languages are heard and seen, where speakers of all languages feel welcome and where language learning is encouraged[8]– attention was turned to schools with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes. According to the Council of the Europe (2008), CLIL, which refers to the teaching of a school subject through the medium of a foreign language, is thought to be an effective means of improving language learning. This is why the Survey investigated which schools offer CLIL opportunities and found that it is quite frequently offered in schools of the German and the Flemish Communities of Belgium, but also in Estonia and Malta (above 30%). This is of course quite understandable, since Belgium is an officially multilingual federal state, and Belgians must be able to communicate across the linguistic communities of their country. Language learning has special political and social significance in Belgium whose educational systems attempt to reinforce learning of the other Belgian languages. In officially monolingual countries such as France, Greece and Croatia, fewer than 10% of the schools offer CLIL. In Greece, in particular, only bilingual schools, which are often private organisations sometimes established by inter-country agreements, offer CLIL. In state schools it is not possible to offer subjects such as maths or science in a language other than the official language, i.e. Greek. However, some schools are beginning to offer a 'mitigated' type of CLIL as the music or art teacher, for example, sometimes work with the teacher of English to have students do projects, using English as the means of expression.

The whole issue of 'pure' CLIL is politically sensitive not only in Greece but in many countries –especially when CLIL ends up being a key to the use of English primarily as a means of instruction at secondary school and tertiary level. As this practice spreads, it raises questions concerning pedagogy and scholastic achievement, because it is in fact likely that the latter will suffer as a result of the use of a language that is not the students' own.

Of course, CLIL is not the only 'language-friendly' action for the SurveyLang team. Schools are considered language-friendly when they offer students many languages to choose from and provide opportunities for learning beyond normal requirements, when they offer extracurricular activities related to languages, make an earlier start with foreign language learning, devote more teaching hours to languages and have smaller language classes. According to the Survey, the most language-friendly schools are in the German Community of Belgium, in Estonia and in Slovenia whereas Greece and Croatia have the fewest language friendly schools.

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8   This is how a 'language-friendly school is defined in the ESLC Final Report (2012: 54)

Yet, at the time that the Survey was carried out in Greece, secondary schools did offer both English and French teachers opportunities to form classes with a relatively small number of students grouped according to their level of language competence. Also, according to school principals, some schools (21.8% for English and 21.1% for French) were able to provide target language enrichment or remedial classes (Figure 3.11).
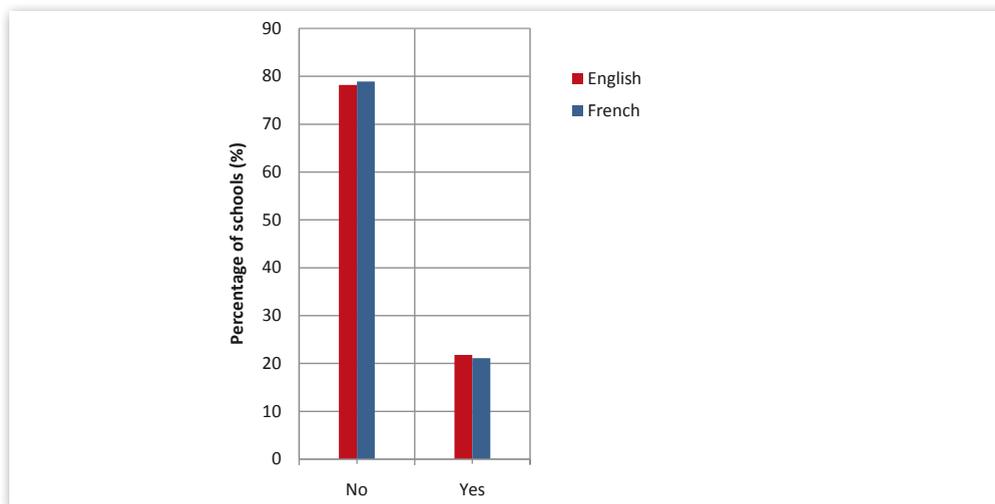
Figure 3.11: Provision of TL enrichment or remedial lessons

This is probably not true any longer. Since 2011, due to the economic crisis in Greece, a significant number of state school teachers have either been laid off or retired and not been replaced, leaving state education with a limited number of teachers. The shortage has, of course, had significant impact on class size, on the provision of support classes and of any additional learning opportunities.

At this point it might be worth pointing out that, when asked about having extra language lessons in English and French, students gave very different answers than the school principals. According to the former, the percentage who said that they do take extra lessons in English is 57% and 52.2% in French, as shown in Figure 3.12 below.
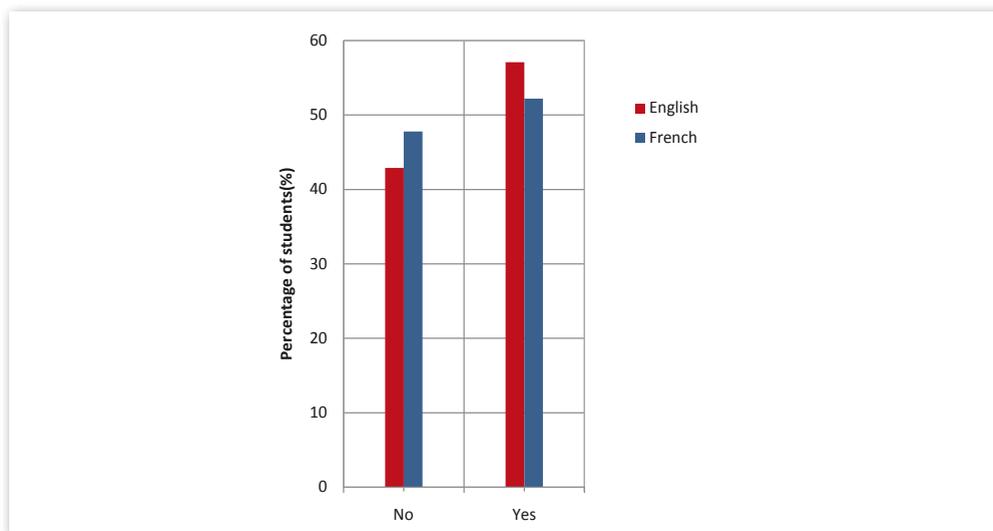
Figure 3.12: Participation inTL language enrichment or remedial lessons

This is, most likely, because students responded to the question having in mind the fact that they take extra private tuition evening classes in language schools. This actually explains why the ESLC reports Greece as the participant country with the highest percentage of students taking extra lessons in both the first and the second target language (2012: 59). And it is true, as mentioned earlier, that a significant percent of the Greek student population learns languages outside the official school system, having lessons during after school hours. Greek parents, as discussed at an earlier section of this volume, are keen on their children learn foreign languages well enough so as to be certified at least at B2 level of language proficiency, preferably at C2 level.

3.5 ICT to enhance foreign language learning and teaching

The use of new technologies is thought to have a positive impact on foreign language learning. Therefore the Survey investigated what ICT facilities schools had at that time and whether these facilities were available to the foreign language teachers and students. The findings summarised in Figures 3.13 and 3.14 below, were not particularly surprising.
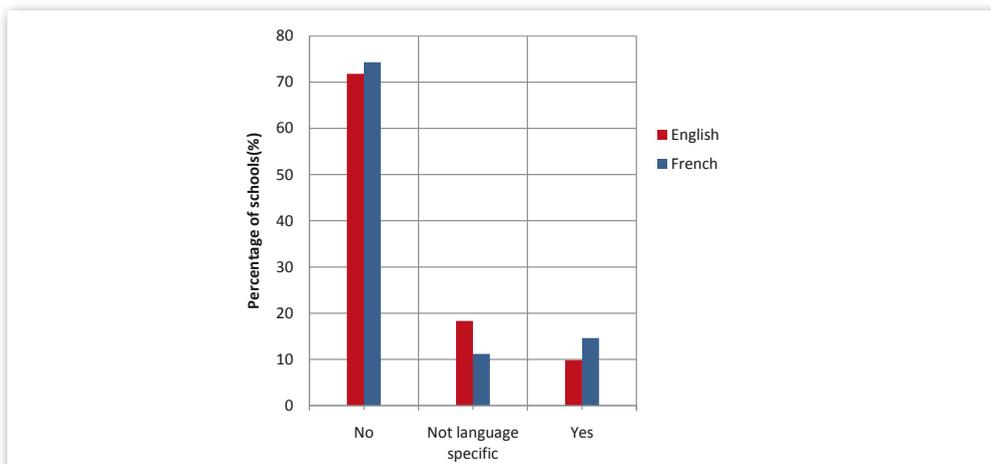
Figure 3.13: Availability of multimedia (language) lab

It is clear that when the Survey was carried out, a significant number of schools in Greece did not have a multimedia lab for the teaching of English (71.8%), nor for the teaching of French (74.3%). But Greece is not the only participant in the Survey lacking multimedia labs that can be used for the teaching of foreign languages. Schools in the French and the Flemish Communities of Belgium, Estonia, Poland and France also experience a lack of such facilities. What is more, schools which do have them often do not make them available to the foreign language teachers and their classes, and when they are made available, the computers are often not equipped with language learning software (18.3% and 11.2% respectively). Finally, the percentage of schools with a positive ICT learning environment (Figure 3.14) is also very low in Greece (about 11% for the teaching of either English or French), as it is in the German and French Communities of Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia and Poland (SurveyLang 2012: 59).
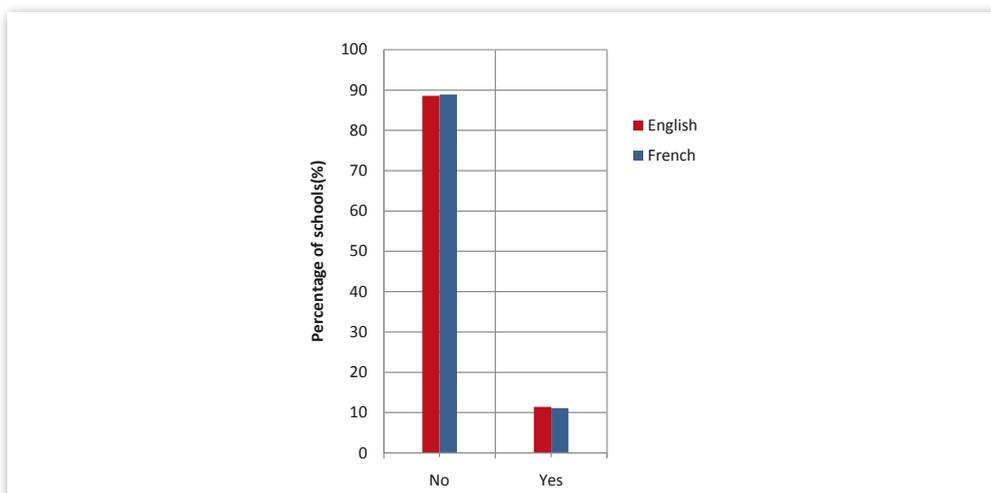
Figure 3.14: Presence of a virtual learning environment in schools

In addition to the above difficulties, nearly all schools in Greece reported having medium to low availability of computerized tests (Figure 3.15). As a matter of fact, SurveyLang ranks Greece very low on this index and compares it to German-speaking Belgium and Croatia because very few of their schools have such software available for the assessment of foreign language competences (2012: 60).
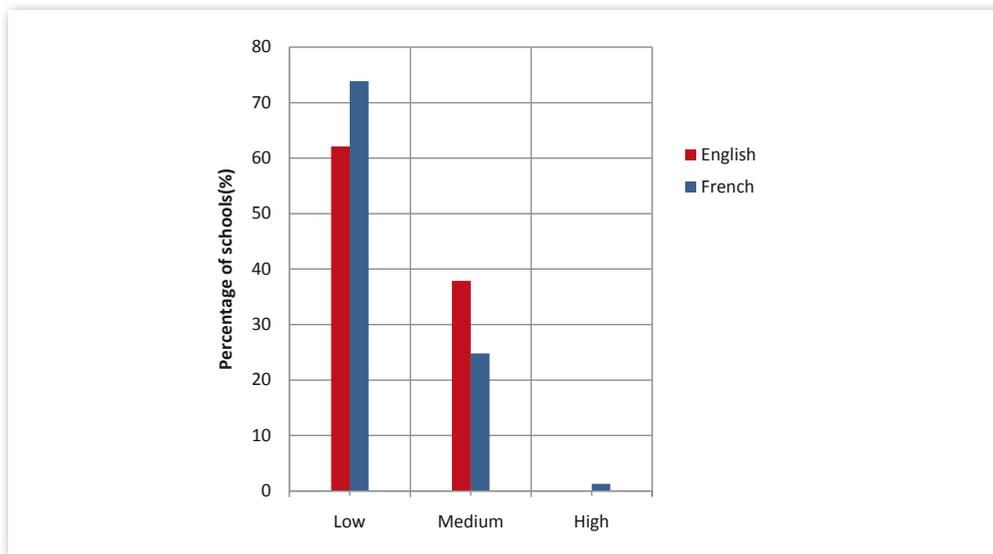
Figure 3.15: Availability of software for language assessment or teaching in schools

Even when hardware and software are available, however, it is not always possible to use them, especially if teachers are 'afraid' to try using them for their classes. Older generation teachers in general, seem to be reluctant to use ICT either in class or outside class in their daily lives. Though the situation is improving as more and more teachers are using ICT. Table 3.5 shows that where Greek teachers of English and French are concerned, they use ICT inside and outside class, despite the fact that these teachers are generally considered to be more 'progressive' than teachers of other school subjects. Note in this table that both mean values are low.

	TQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Teachers' use of ICT outside the classroom	English TL	1.70	0.13	(1.45 - 1.95)
	French TL	1.94	0.18	(1.58 - 2.29)
Teachers' use of ICT in class	English TL	0.89	0.18	(0.54 - 1.24)
	French TL	0.95	0.11	(0.75 - 1.16)
Teachers' use of web content in lessons	English TL	0.84	0.15	(0.54 - 1.14)
	French TL	0.90	0.13	(0.64 - 1.16)

Table 3.5: Teachers' ICT use

The low frequency use of ICT in the classroom may perhaps be explained by the inappropriate infrastructure in Greek schools reported by both teachers and school

principals. We do notice some differences as slightly more teachers of French (0.95) say that they use ICT more frequently in their teaching than do the teachers of English (0.89). Teachers of French also incorporate web content into their teaching more frequently (0.90) than do teachers of English (0.84).[9] We also see a slightly greater number of French teachers using ICT outside of class, but still the numbers are quite low. As a matter of fact, SurveyLang reports Greece among the countries whose foreign language teachers use ICT infrequently, both inside and outside of class. No significant differences between English and French teachers were observed.

What is worth noting here is that, since 2011, foreign language teachers in Greece have been complaining about being excluded from second phase training to use ICT, provided to teachers of various school subjects, with funding through the National Strategic Reference Framework. Whereas the first phase was aimed at developing basic ICT literacy, the second phase is aimed to develop teachers' skills to use ICT in their coursework. It is this second phase that foreign language teachers have been excluded from – not intentionally, but due to ineffective planning.

Foreign language teachers' low use of ICT for their coursework matches, as one would expect, students' low use of ICT in class. However, as we see in Table 3.6, students of both English and French seem to use ICT outside of class quite often – but not for the purpose of language learning.

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Students' use of ICT outside school	**English TL**	2.57	0.03	(2.51 – 2.63)
	French TL	2.50	0.02	(2.45 – 2.55)
Students' use of ICT for FL learning	**English TL**	1.55	0.04	(1.47 – 1.64)
	French TL	1.42	0.05	(1.32 - 1.52)

Table 3.6: Students' ICT use

As we can see in the table above, Greek students of both target languages seem to spend almost twice the time using ICT outside school than for tasks regarding their language learning course. Still, they do have the lowest mean scores for the use of ICT and can only be compared to students from the German community of Belgium (SurveyLang 2012: 60).

3.6 Intercultural exchanges

While there have been several European programmes, such as Comenius and Leonardo, which encourage mobility and student exchange, and projects, such as e-twinning providing opportunities for groups of students from different countries to work together,

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9   This finding is somewhat surprising, given that more schools participating in the Survey with French were reported, by school principals, to have poor infrastructures and ICT availability.

it seems that Greek students are not given the chance to take advantage of them so often. When the Survey was carried out, Greek school principals were asked to furnish information about the funding for student exchange programmes, opportunities they provide for exchange visits by students teachers, and about school language projects made available.

As we see in Figure 3.16, in only a very small percentage of Greek schools are students provided with opportunities to participate in school exchanges. Schools whose students were tested in French tend to provide slightly more funding opportunities for student exchanges (28.4%) than do schools whose students were tested in English (17.1%). According to the final ESLC report, Greece is one of the countries that offers the least funding for student exchanges –the others being Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Sweden. This finding is indeed surprising given that, on the basis of a National Questionnaire, which was also used to gather information for the Survey, Greece appears among the countries whose governments say that they have funds available for intercultural exchanges of students at all levels of education. This means that either communication between schools and agencies that could make funds available is poor, or that schools (and specifically school principals) have no incentives to seek available funding for staff and student mobility. Or, perhaps, it's both.
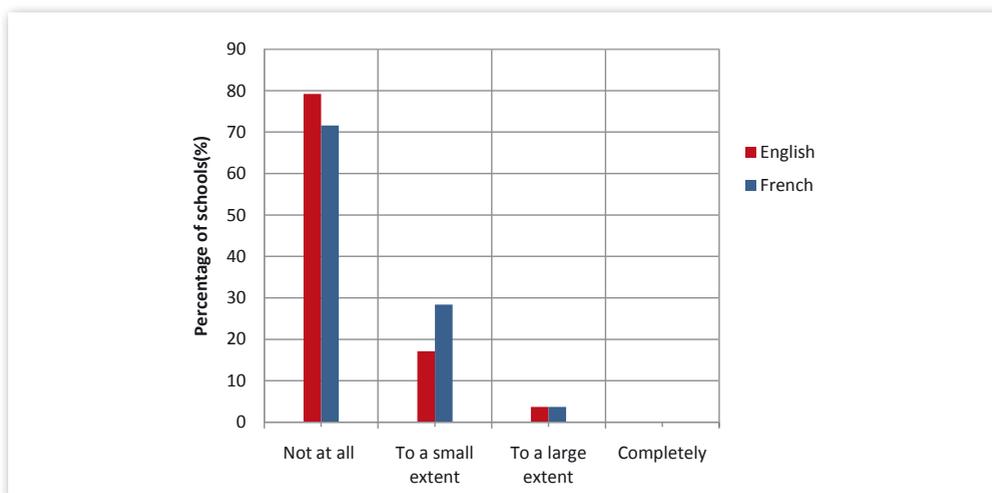
Figure 3.16: Funding of students' exchanges

The extent to which this lack of funding, as reported by school principals, affects opportunities for both Greek teachers and students of both target languages to organise and participate in exchange visits is shown in Table 3.7. Data in the first row relate to the frequency with which students reported having participated in various forms of school/class exchanges. Data in the second row come from the Teacher Questionnaire (TQ) and relate to the frequency to which target language teachers have been involved in the organisation of various forms of class exchanges. The range of values of both

indices is from 0 to 3 and thus, the low mean values and CIs imply low frequency of such opportunities.

	TQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Students' opportunities regarding the TL for exchange visits	English TL	0.45	0.03	(0.39 - 0.50)
	French TL	0.45	0.04	(0.37 - 0.53)
Teachers' opportunities for exchange visits	EnglishTL	0.28	0.09	(0.10 - 0.45)
	French TL	0.31	0.10	(0.10 - 0.51)

Table 3.7: Indices describing opportunities for exchange visits

Greek students of both target languages report very low frequencies of participation in various forms of school exchange. These findings correspond to those reported in the ESLC Final Report, in which Greece, French Belgium, Croatia, Portugal and Sweden are reported to have the lowest frequencies of student exchange. Teacher exchange opportunities are analogous to those of students. Both English and French teachers (with minimal differences between them) seldom have opportunities to organise exchange visits. However, according to the ESLC report (2012:61), Greek teachers do not have the lowest mean scores for opportunities to organise school visits: Croatia, Malta, Portugal and Sweden are in that position, with a mean below 0.25. In general, exchange visits are not organised very often in any of the member states' educational systems, despite the many EU-funded programmes dedicated to this purpose. There is hope that increased European funding, within the context of the new multifaceted programme Erasmus+ will motivate mobility within the EU and that larger numbers of students and teachers will participate in cultural exchange programmes.

Educational exchange is limited even when teachers and students do not have to travel. Table 3.8 sums up students' and teachers' opportunities for collaborative school language projects between schools from different European countries. Data in the first row relate to target language students' frequency of participation in target language related school projects, while the second row relates to the frequency with which target language teachers were involved in the organisation of such projects. When we look closely we see the low mean values and the low frequency of such opportunities for students of both target languages. Similarly, the percentage of frequency of organisation of school projects by teachers of both target languages is also low, although French teachers seem to create more opportunities than do the English teachers.

	PQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Students' opportunities for using the TL for school language projects	English TLr/	0.50	0.03	(0.44 - 0.55)
	FrenchTL	0.50	0.02	(0.46 - 0.54)
Teachers' opportunities for organizing school language projects	English TL	0.36	0.07	(0.22 - 0.49)
	FrenchTL	0.57	0.12	(0.34 - 0.80)

Table 3.8: Indices relating to school language projects

The SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 60-61) states that only Slovenia has a mean score of above 0.6 for this index. For most participating European countries including Greece, the mean score lies at the low end of the scale. As regards teachers' participation in organising school language projects, according to the ESLC Final Report, there are considerable differences in the number of school language projects –such as a language club, language competitions, celebration of the European Day of Languages, or 'pen friend' projects– organised by teachers from different countries. Out of all the participants in the Survey, Greece, the Netherlands and Sweden have the lowest mean scores for this index.

Finally, it is also important to mention that, even though funding available for practicing teachers of all levels of education for exchange and work-related visits, only a very small number of teachers of both languages (1.9% of English and 1.3% of French teachers) reported having participated in exchange visits, as we can see in Figure 3.17. The situation is similar in other European countries according the SurveyLang Final Report.
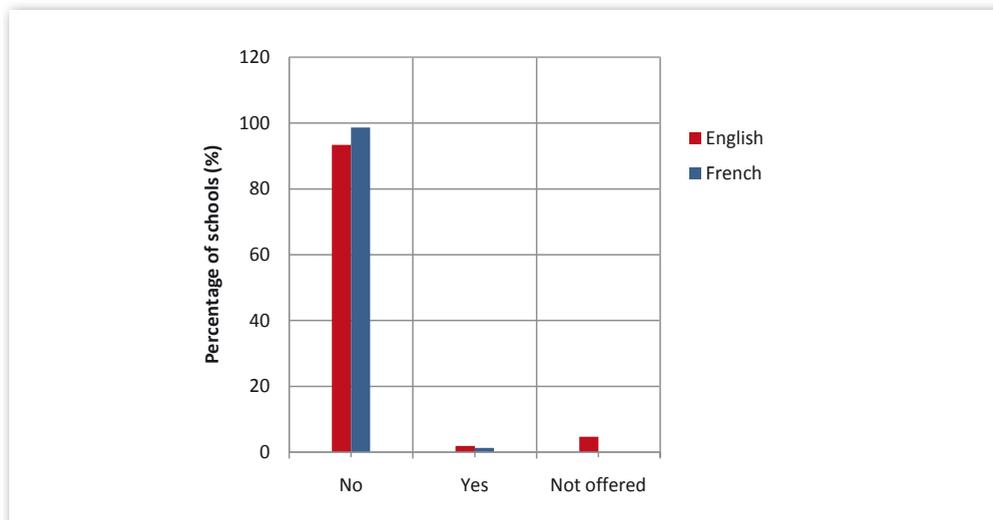

Figure 3.17: TL teachers participating in exchange visits

3.7 Staff from other language communities

While the idea of hosting staff from other countries is encouraged by European programmes, school principals' responses regarding the number of guest teachers who have visited their schools reveal that it is not a practice encouraged in Greece. As we can see in Figure 3.18, the percentage of Greek schools which had guest teachers or any kind of staff exchange visits during the school year 2010-11 is tremendously low. It is 1.1%. As a matter of fact, according to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 61), Greece seems to be the only one out of the 16 participating countries where such practice is almost non-existent.
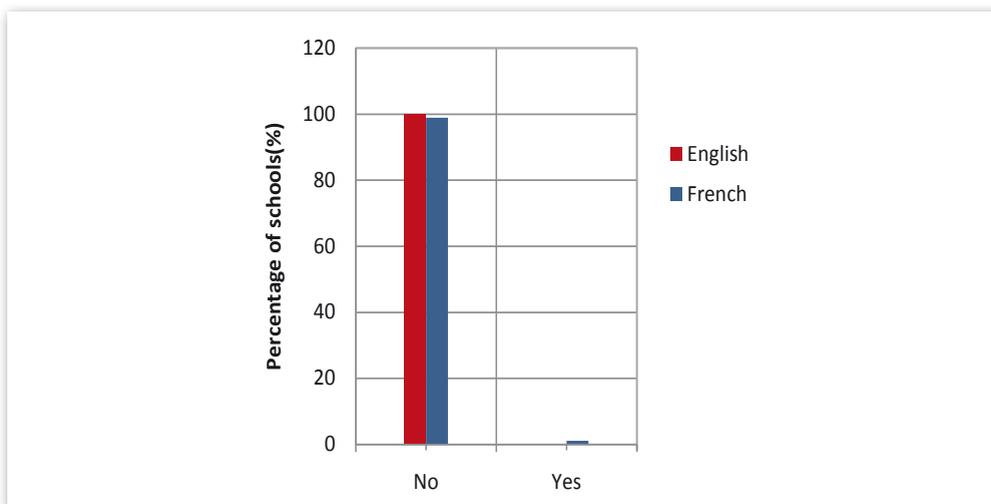
Figure 3.18: Guest teachers from abroad

If we try to explain why Greek schools do not take advantage of staff exchange opportunities, we would probably have to say that it is mainly due to the fact that within the centralised Greek educational system, rules and regulations are quite rigid and make it extremely difficult and complicated to let someone else than the teacher appointed to a particular school to enter a class and be allowed to teach it –especially where classes for subjects other than foreign languages are concerned. Of course, for the latter the language is a problem also –i.e., that it is not likely that many teachers in other countries would be able to use Greek to teach a class. Other than these problems, there is the whole problem of bureaucracy. If a teacher wanted to participate in a staff exchange programme, s/he would have to go through quite a complicated procedure to be given permission to make an exchange visit. It would probably involve too much fuss to be worth his or her trouble. Actually, in order for Greek teachers to participate more in staff exchange visits, the practice would have to be supported and promoted by the Ministry of Education, making such practice easier for everyone involved.

The next issue to be investigated concerns information provided by the English and French teachers who took part in the Survey as to whether the foreign language they teach is their first language (i.e. their mother tongue) or a foreign language for them. And as we can see in Figure 3.19 below for the vast majority of English and French language teachers in Greek schools their mother tongue is Greek. A small percentage of Greek English language teachers report English as their first language (15.7%), and percentages are slightly lower for Greek teachers of French (11.2%). The ESLC final report mentions Greece, Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia and Poland as the countries with the lowest percentage of teachers who have the target language as their L1. One of the explanations for this in Greece is the fact that in order to enter the Greek public service one must be a Greek citizen. There are few English and French nationals acquiring Greek citizenship, even if they live in Greece for some years. This is perhaps the case in other countries with a low percentage of L1 speakers of English and French.
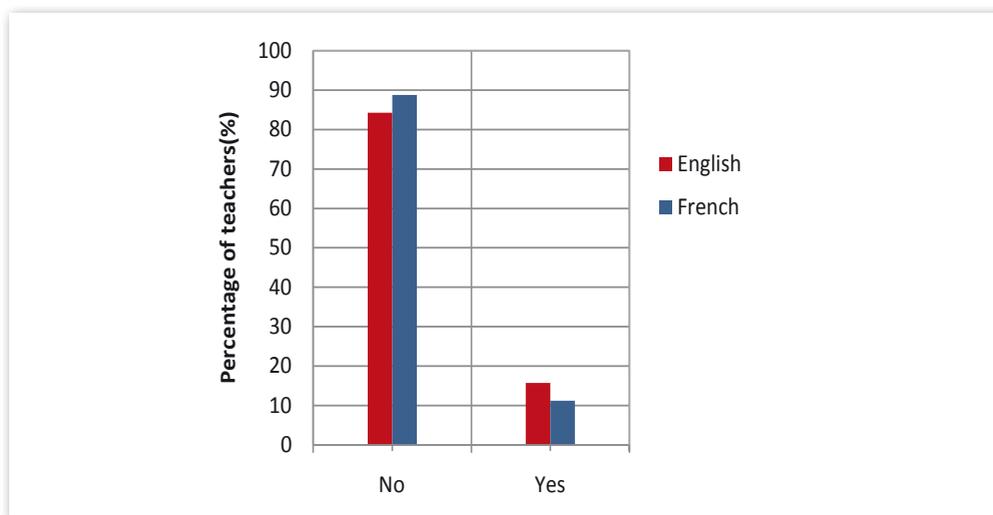
Figure 3.19: Teachers whose L1 is the TL

While Greek teachers of English and French speak the language they teach as a foreign language, they are rather proficient in the language of their subject and they have all received substantial pre-service education on how to teach it as we see in Figure 3.20. As a matter of fact, foreign language teachers in the public sector all have degrees from university departments of Language and Literature which use the foreign language they specialise in as a medium for instruction for language study courses, linguistics, literature and cultural study courses as well as courses in Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching and in the Teaching Methodology of the target language. This is why almost all of them report that they have received special training in teaching the target language as a foreign language, with a fair number also having completed postgraduate studies in the teaching of the target languages either in Greece or abroad. High percentages in

foreign language teacher training are also reported by the Survey for Estonia, Croatia and Slovenia (SurveyLang 2012:61).
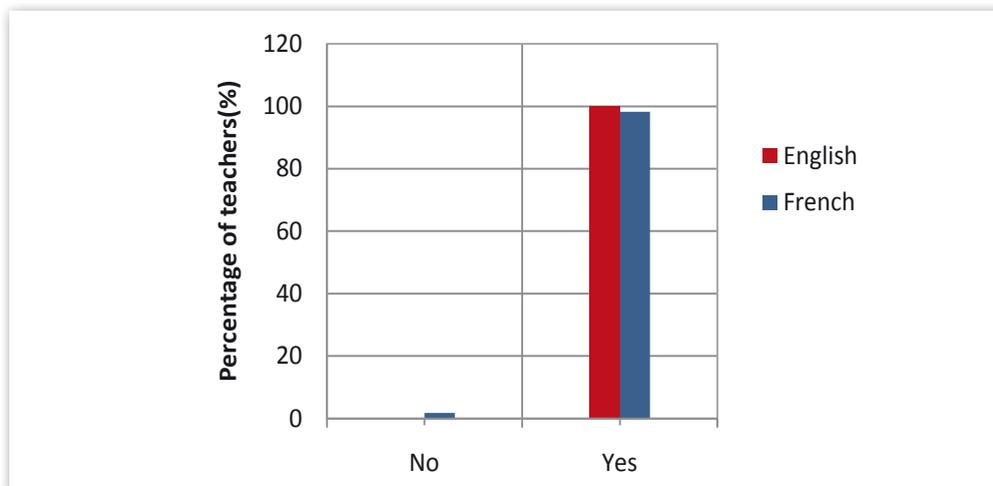
Figure 3.20: TL teachers who have received specialized training

3.8 Language learning for all

In multicultural and multilingual communities, a language-friendly school is one in which speakers of all languages are welcome. Such schools, on the one hand, support integration of students who speak languages other than the language of the host country and, on the other hand, encourage students to learn the host country language. The policy issue 'Language learning for all' concerns the support provided by the educational system to students from immigrant families to learn the language of the host country and their home language at the same time. Information about both these aspects was sought from both school principals and students. Their answers give us conflicting information.

In the SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 62), Greece is reported as one of the nine participant countries in which more than 10% of the first and/or second target language students are from immigrant families and one of the two entities the other being the Netherlands− where less than 30% of the schools offer help to immigrant students to learn the host country language. Flemish- and German-speaking Belgium and Sweden are mentioned as entities where such help is offered by more than half the schools (60%).

More specifically, according to the principals of all schools in the Greek sample, very few of these schools provide extra lessons or some kind of support to help immigrant students master the Greek language, as shown in Figure 3.21.
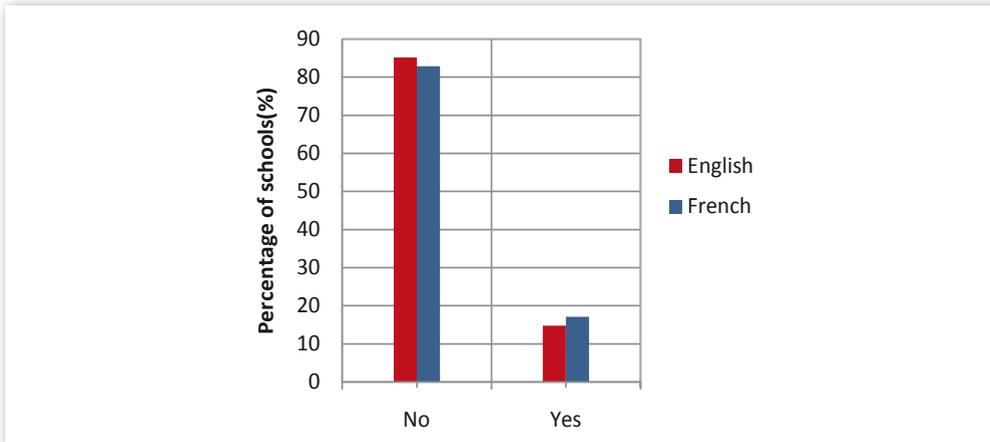
Figure 3.21: Provision for help in mastering host language

What is interesting here is that immigrant students have provided the Survey with different information than the school principals. As shown in Figure 3.22 below, more than 40% of the first generation immigrant students claim to be receiving support in order to master the language of the host country. But it is not clear from their answers if they are receiving this support inside or outside the state school system. The same is true of second generation immigrant students, who were tested in French and English; that is, it is unclear whether they received support through the state school system or outside of it. As would be expected, second generation immigrant students receive less language support than first generation students. They obviously need it less.
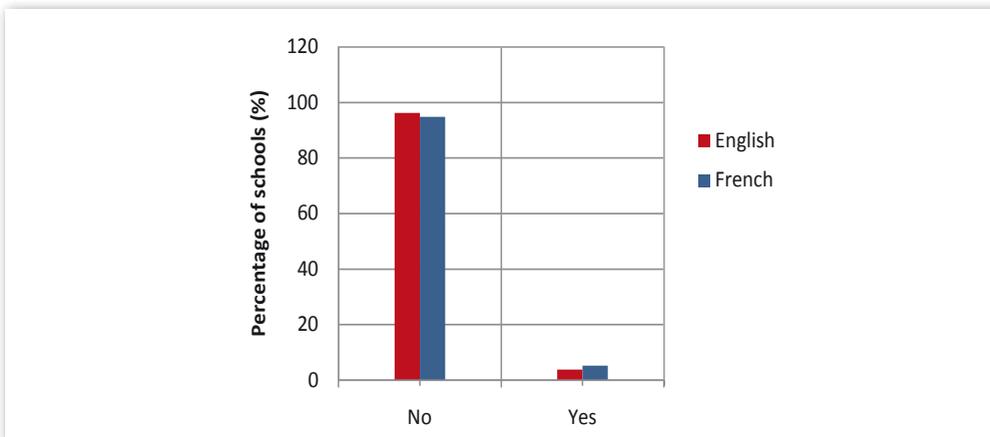
Figure 3.22 Immigrant students who received help in mastering the host language

Another interesting point here is that a fair number of first and second generation immigrant students say that they have received formal education in their 'home'

language. As shown in Figure 3.23, more than 28% claim to be receiving formal education in their language of origin.
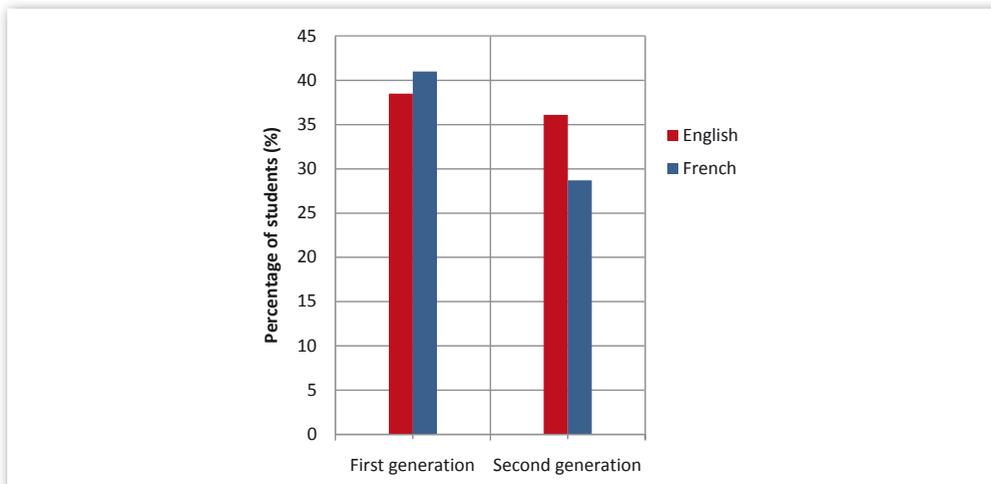
Figure 3.23: Received formal education in language of origin

On the basis of these findings, SurveyLang reports Greece and Sweden as the only countries that offer so many opportunities to immigrant students to receive formal education in a language other than the official language of the host country. However, the difference is that the information about Sweden offering opportunities to students to access formal education through their language of origin is provided by the school principals' responses. For Greece, on the other hand, the information is provided by students. This leads us to believe that students misunderstood both the question about support for mastering the host language, mentioned earlier, as well as the question about support in their home language for curriculum subjects.

The misunderstanding could be a result of how the question was posed to them. Whereas in the principal's questionnaire, the question about this point clearly mentions the school (e.g., What kinds of extra classes does your school offer to students?) in the students' questionnaire the question does not specify if the support they are being asked about is provided in the context of the school. Therefore, the students could be getting the support from home or their community specified. Hence the different types of information given by the school principals and the students.

With regard to the issue of schools offering lessons in the immigrant students' home language, we –the authors of this volume– are not aware of any schools in Greece (especially public secondary schools) 'offering lessons' to first or second generation immigrant students in the language of their origin. As mentioned at an earlier section of this volume, there are a few bilingual schools in Greece –semi private or private organisations– which operate with the Greek curriculum but give great emphasis on a

particular language (so we have the French school, the German school, or the American College of Greece) offering extra hours of the language in which they 'specialise' and doing CLIL courses. There are also other 'foreign' schools which have been established on the basis of inter-country agreements and have been given operate with the curriculum of another country (so we have the Polish, the English, the Romanian, the American school). Some of these are bilingual schools and some are purely non-Greek language schools. But these schools are certainly not the norm; they do not constitute examples of 'regular' schools where immigrant students can access curricular knowledge in their mother tongue, like in some schools in say Sweden where bilingual children in the first years of primary school can access education in their family's tongue. Nor are they cases like those in England, where it is possible for a school to choose to offer bilingual children a community language, as a kind of 'foreign' language.

3.9 Aspects of foreign language learning, teaching and use

3.9.1 Aspects of language learning considered important

Since the 80s, when the Communicative Approach to foreign language teaching and learning became popular in Europe, especially for English as a foreign language, attention shifted from linguistic to communicative competence. Teaching methods propagated were to help foreign language learners develop their ability to understand and produce messages, rather than concentrating on getting learners to produce grammatically accurate sentences and essay type texts with sophisticated vocabulary. In the late 80s, beginning of the 90s, the attention of the foreign language academic and teaching community was turned to multilingualism and language contact, to teaching foreign languages for the development of inter-comprehension skills and for intercultural awareness. Intercultural approaches to teaching and learning were experimented with, and as foreign language teaching and learning was becoming increasingly important in a globalised world, where plurilingualism is crucial, attention has increasingly been centred on quantifiable communicative performance in listening and reading comprehension, in writing and oral production, on cultural awareness and familiarisation with target language literature and not only on grammatical and lexical competence or pronunciation.

Greek teachers of English and French were asked about which aspect of language learning they think is most important and they stress most in their teaching. Their responses are presented in Figure 3.24 below, where we see the dots representing the mean value of each index that describes the emphasis that a teacher places on each aspect of teaching. A negative value on the index indicates that the teacher emphasizes this aspect less than others, and a positive value indicates that the teacher emphasizes this aspect more than others.
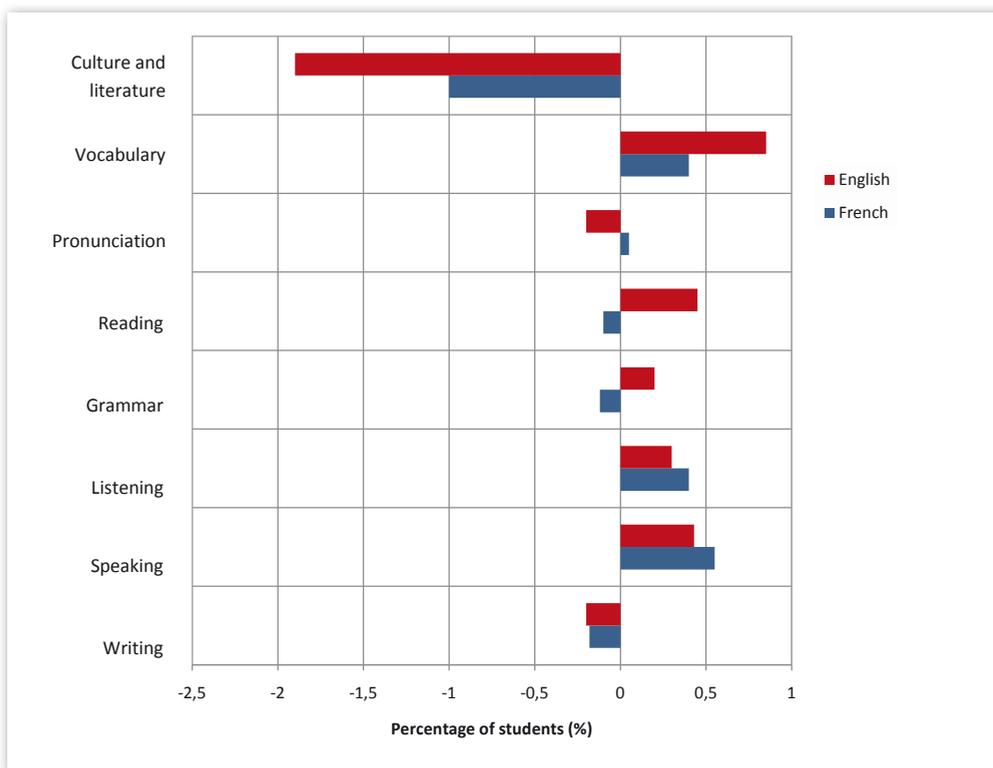
Figure 3.24: Relative emphasis on aspects of language teaching

What we notice if we look closely is that teachers of both languages agree that speaking and listening comprehension are important for someone learning a foreign language, but teachers of English give priority to reading comprehension. Teaching new vocabulary is important for teachers of both languages, and especially for teachers of English. It is interesting that the teaching of vocabulary is particularly important for all the foreign language teachers who participated in the ESLC, reading, listening comprehension, and writing are considered somewhat less important for them, according to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012:63). In Greece, teachers of French tend to focus more on grammar and reading comprehension than teachers of English do, whereas other European teachers tend to focus on grammar least of all. On the other hand, although literature and culture are aspects of foreign language teaching that teachers of both languages focus on least of all, teachers of English do not concern themselves with these aspects at all, just like all the other European teachers of languages.

Greek teachers of both English and French concern themselves consistently with listening, speaking and writing and writing practice, but they claim that speaking comes first and then comes listening comprehension. Writing comes last in their classes, as in other European foreign language teachers who favour the same competences and

in that order. According to SurveyLang report, in most educational systems, the least emphasis is placed on writing and the most on speaking, followed by listening.

3.9.2 Use of the TL and references to L1

Other aspects of foreign language teaching that all teachers and students were asked about regard target language (TL) use in the classroom, and use of comparative analysis between the L1 and the TL techniques. Table 3.9 presents the Greek students' responses, who claim that both English and French teachers compare TL and L1 (structure and use) occasionally. The frequencies reported by Greek students are very similar to the European average (SurveyLang 2012:64).

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Perceived emphasis on similarities between known languages	English TL	1.57	0.03	(1.51 - 1.63)
	French TL	1.56	0.03	(1.49 - 1.63)
Teachers' use of TL during TL lessons	English TL	2.63	0.07	(2.50 - 2.77)
	French TL	2.42	0.04	(2.34 - 2.50)
Students' use of TL during TL lessons	English TL	1.78	0.06	(1.66 - 1.90)
	French TL	1.56	0.05	(1.47 - 1.65)

Table 3.9: Students' responses on comparative analysis and use of L1

Teachers and students were also asked about the use of the TL (as opposed to the students' L1). Table 3.9 above shows frequencies of use by teachers and Table 3.10 by teachers and students. As we can see in Table 3.9, Greek students report that their language teachers use the target language regularly during language classes, though English is reported to be used slightly more often than French –a finding also similar to the European average in terms of TL use by the teacher. But, they report less frequent use of the TL in the classroom by them, though students of English tend to use English more than French students use French in the class. This finding is similar in all European countries, where the first foreign language is used in class more than the second.

In Table 3.10, where we see the teachers' views on the same issue, we discover that Greek teachers of English and French say that they use the TL fairly frequently in their classes. However, students' perceptions of the teachers' use of the TL is different from what the teachers say. As a result we could perhaps say that in fact English teachers do use the TL more frequently than French teachers do (mean values and 95% CIs for English are higher than the values for French in Table 3.12). Furthermore, when teachers report on students' use of the target language, the frequencies of use of the two languages are different (Table 3.10): English students are reported to use the TL more frequently than French students, a claim supported by the students themselves (Table 3.9). Actually, according to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012:63), second

foreign language teachers in Greece, and their colleagues in Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal report that students speak the TL infrequently in class.

	TQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Teachers' use of TL during TL lessons	EnglishTL	2.94	0.09	(2.76 - 3.11)
	FrenchTL	2.77	0.08	(2.62 - 2.92)
Students' use of TL during TL lessons	EnglishTL	2.39	0.09	(2.22 - 2.56)
	FrenchTL	1.60	0.12	(1.37 - 1.83)

Table 3.10: Teachers' and students' use of TL

3.9.3 Student perceptions of the TL

Many studies have shown, and our experience confirms, that when we find something useful we are motivated to find out about it, learn it. Usefulness of a language and success in learning it are usually positively correlated. Therefore, European students were asked during the Survey how useful they thought that it was to learn the TL and how difficult they think it is to actually learn it. Finally, they were asked what they thought of the TL lesson, their teacher and the textbook.

The findings are presented in Table 3.11, where we see that English is considered a more useful language than French. The higher values of each index correspond to more positive perceptions and we note that students of English have higher mean values and CIs than the French students. This finding shows a European trend, where, in most countries, students find the first foreign language more useful than the second. As English is the first foreign language in most countries, the SurveyLang report (2012: 64) concludes that European students find learning English most useful.

	SQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Perception of usefulness of TL and TL learning	EnglishTL	1.60	0.02	(1.56 - 1.64)
	FrenchTL	1.35	0.04	(1.27 - 1.42)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	EnglishTL	1.37	0.04	(1.30 - 1.45)
	FrenchTL	1.62	0.04	(1.55 - 1.69)
Perception of TL lessons, teacher and textbook	EnglishTL	3.12	0.05	(3.02 - 3.23)
	FrenchTL	3.00	0.06	(2.89 - 3.12)

Table 3.11: Students' perceptions relating to TL

The more useful we think something is, the more we are motivated to learn it and the less difficult it seems to us to learn. This is what both experience and empirical studies show. This explains then why, according to Greek students of English, the TL is perceived as easier to learn than French. We see this information in Table 3.11 above showing students' perceptions about the difficulty of learning each target language. We note that French students have on average higher values, meaning that French students perceive the TL as more difficult to learn than English. This finding correlates

with the European trend. Most European students perceive the second foreign language as more difficult than the first.

The results of how students perceive their lessons, their teacher and their language textbooks are also presented in Table 3.11 above and we see that Greek students of both English and French are rather satisfied with the quality of their lessons, their teachers and their textbooks. The slightly greater satisfaction of students of English is more or less the same in all European countries.

3.9.4 Reasons why students study the TL

Students were also asked why they are taking the foreign languages they are studying at school. The results are shown in Figure 3.25, where we can see that they are taking them because they are compulsory subjects in school. Actually, as mentioned earlier, the Greek school curriculum includes English as a compulsory foreign language in primary school (from the third grade), on through the end of junior secondary school (ISCED 2). It also includes either French and/or German as a compulsory-optional subject, meaning that students are obliged to take a second foreign language, starting from primary school (grade 5) on through the end of junior secondary school (ISCED 2), but they can choose which one it is going to be. In senior secondary school, when the Survey was carried out the situation was the same as in junior secondary but it has since changed. All three languages are compulsory- optional subjects. This means that there is choice involved as to which of the three languages will be chosen. However, the choice is not necessarily the choice of the senior secondary school student, just like it is often not the choice of the junior secondary or the primary school student. It depends on which languages the school can offer.
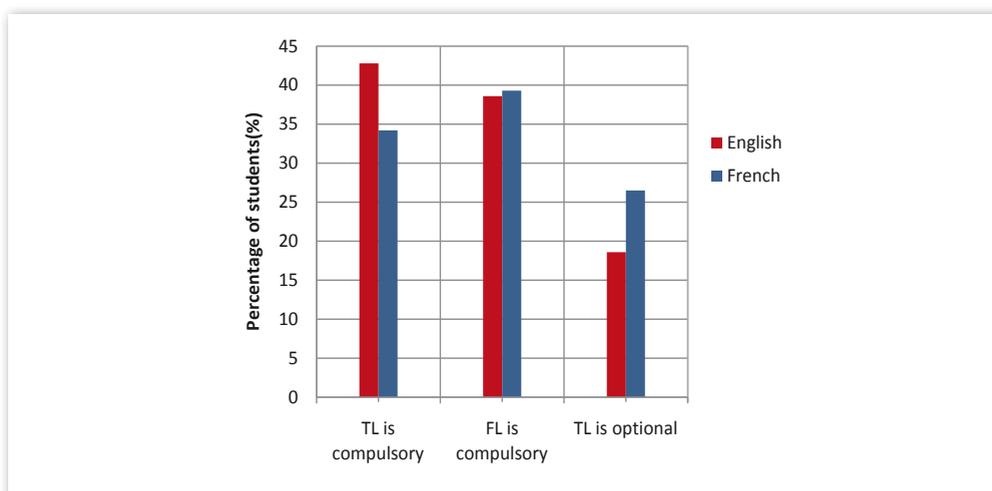

Figure 3.25: Why students take the TL as a course in school

3.10 Teachers' access to high quality initial and in-service training

Experience and empirical research shows that well trained teachers are a key factor for effective language education in school. Therefore, this was one more aspect that was investigated through the Survey. European teachers were asked about their initial teacher training and the opportunities they have for in-service training. The Greek teachers of English and French who responded to the questionnaire seem to be fairly well prepared for foreign language teaching during their undergraduate studies.

3.10.1 Foreign language teacher qualifications

All teachers of foreign languages in Greek state schools hold a 4-year university degree, and more than 30% reported having completed postgraduate studies, making Greece the country with the highest percentage of postgraduate degree holders for first and second target language teachers in the 16 participating European entities (Table 3.15).

	High School	University	Postgraduate studies
EnglishTL	1.83%	66.47%	31.71%
FrenchTL	0.00%	62.66%	37.34%

Table 3.12: Highest educational levels of TL teachers

Although a degree in English or French Language and Literature ensure graduates' proficiency in the language they have majored in, the vast majority of Greek teachers (all teachers of French and most teachers of English) reported that they have also obtained a certificate of language proficiency (Table 3.13). This finding is similar to the European average, since most foreign language teachers in all educational systems have full certification for the language(s) they are teaching.

	No certification	Temporary/ emergency certification	Provisional certification	Full certification	Other certification
EnglishTL	0.00%	0.00%	1.85%	89.99%	8.15%
FrenchTL	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	0.00%

Table 3.13: TL teachers' certification

During their undergraduate studies at university, Greek foreign language teachers-to-be are trained to teach the language they major in, as specialist teachers in primary, secondary or tertiary education (Table 3.14). As a matter of fact, according to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012:65-66), Greece, together with Spain and France, has the foreign language teachers who are specialized for their profession.

	Generalist	Semi-specialized in languages	Semi-specialized in TL	Specialized in language	Specialized in target language
EnglishTL	2.83%	1.05%	1.09%	10.90%	21.35%
FrenchTL	0.77%	1.09%	2.69%	15.84%	27.37%

	Completely specialized in languages	Completely specialized in TL
EnglishTL	12.87%	49.92%
FrenchTL	24.06%	28.17%

Table 3.14: TL teachers' specialization

3.10.2 Foreign language teacher accessibility and/or shortage

As regards foreign language teacher accessibility in Greece, the percentage is high, as shown in Figure 3.26. Most school principals report not having had any difficulty in filing teaching vacancies over the past five years (2006-2011). However, almost three years after the collection of the data, the situation concerning teacher accessibility has changed dramatically due to massive job cuts.
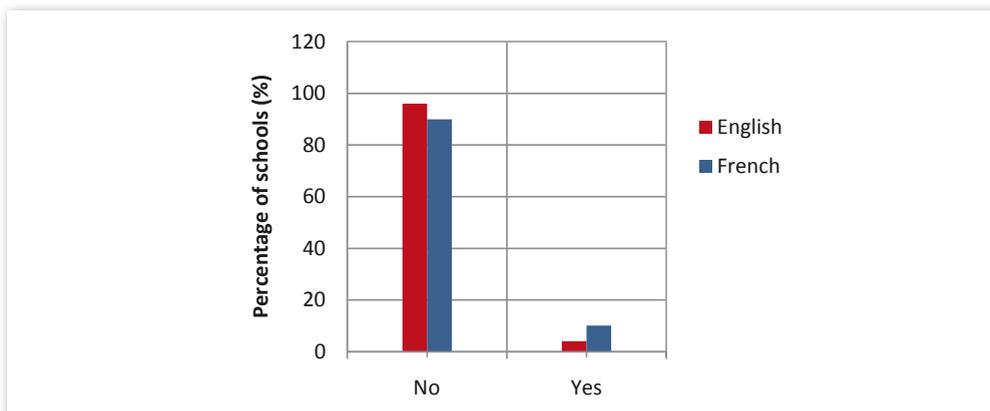
Figure 3.26: Foreign language teacher accessibility and/or shortage

In the last three years, due to the crisis Greece has faced, schools are shorter of 20,000 teachers of all subjects –primary and secondary school teachers. Many were merely made redundant overnight and others retired to save themselves from even more severe salary cuts, but their positions have been left vacant.

3.10.3 Teachers' professional development and in-service training

Both school principals and teachers were asked about whether foreign language teachers have financial incentives for professional development courses, seminars

and/or in-service training. The findings regarding Greek teachers of English and French are presented in Table 3.15 below.

	PQ &TQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Number of different financial incentives for in-service training from school (PQ)	EnglishTL	1.06	0.18	(0.71 - 1.40)
	FrenchTL	0.95	0.16	(0.63 - 1.27)
Number of different financial incentives for in-service training (TQ)	EnglishTL	0.84	0.13	(0.59 - 1.10)
	FrenchTL	1.20	0.15	(0.90 - 1.50)

Table 3.15: Incentives for in-service training

From the school principals' responses we see that English and French teachers have the same lack of incentives, financial or otherwise, for any type of continuous education. So, while the average number of foreign language teacher incentives varies from 1.5 to slightly higher than 2 for other European countries, SurveyLang (2012:66) reports that Greece (along with Malta and Portugal) have mean values lower than one.

Basically, the only incentive that Greek teachers have is that of acquiring 'credit' which may count towards their being selected for a higher-salary position; a position as a specialist school advisor or as a school headmaster. The only type of programme that secures such credit for them is postgraduate education leading to a Master's or to a PhD degree. Most foreign language teachers who are hoping for some kind of professional distinction or promotion try to complete their postgraduate studies before they are appointed. Once they are appointed, it is rather difficult to follow a postgraduate programme, since most of those run by state universities in Greece, which are tuition-free, are for full-time students. To follow such a programme, they need either to get a leave of absence from their school so as to become full-time MA or PhD students, or to follow a distance learning programme while carrying on with their regular workload at school. Actually, more and more teachers are turning to postgraduate studies, as a form of continuous education for their professional development, not only because it may help them get a higher salary position, but also because those who have a postgraduate degree get a small bonus added to their salary. Moreover, they are less likely to be made redundant –something very important during these recent years of the economic crisis in Greece. In the past, it was relatively easy to get an up to three year paid leave of absence to do postgraduate work. It is not easy to do that anymore. What still remains a possibility is to get a full year's paid maternity leave.

On the basis of the above, it is obvious that the problem is not lack of incentive, but lack of a continuous education strategic plan for in-service teachers. The programmes which are offered from time to time are organized as 'one-off' courses. In other words, professional development education in Greece is unsystematic, erratic and it lacks continuity. Things were a bit different (but not necessarily better) until 1992 when, special Teachers' Colleges offered to a very small number of teachers (who were

selected through a draw process and were relieved from school duty without losing their salary or having duties to repay afterwards) one or two year's continuous education.

Initial teacher training has also been problematic in Greece, especially for specialist teachers other than those dealing with foreign languages because the latter have been through pre-service education and training in the foreign language and literature university departments, where they have completed their undergraduate studies. For both the foreign language teachers but especially for the teachers of other subjects, who have had no pre-service education and training, special inductive education seminars are offered at the Regional Training Centres (known as PEK in Greek) which replaced the aforementioned Teachers' Colleges. These seminars are part of an intensive 100-hour education programme whose purpose is to facilitate novice teachers to be integrated in school, to improve their knowledge of current teaching approaches and methodologies, to raise their awareness about the management skills they need and to develop their ICT skills. Foreign language teachers must go through this programme too.

The collective type of continuous education that English and French teachers (as well as teachers of other subjects) have is in the form of in-service seminars offered by 'expert' School Advisors. These seminars are carried out during the school day, but they must not disrupt the teacher's teaching schedule. However, when and how many seminars are offered to teachers of a particular area depends on how hard each School Advisor is willing to work to organise them, as there are no standards, no rules and regulations, and no one to assess the Advisor's work. So, it is up to him/her what type of seminars s/he will offer to the teachers in the areas s/he is responsible for, how often, etc. This is why only 35% of the teachers of both English and French say that they participate in 'organised in-service training' (Figure 3.27). It is also why more than 50% of the teachers say that participation in in-service training is obligatory (Figure 3.28). When their School Advisor organises seminars in their area, teachers are more or less required to go. It is also interesting that a significant number of teachers report, and we see this in Figure 3.27, that they participate in in-service training during non-working hours. As a matter of fact, conscientious School Advisors often organise events during weekends and conscientious teachers go to them, despite the fact that they are not rewarded for such activity.
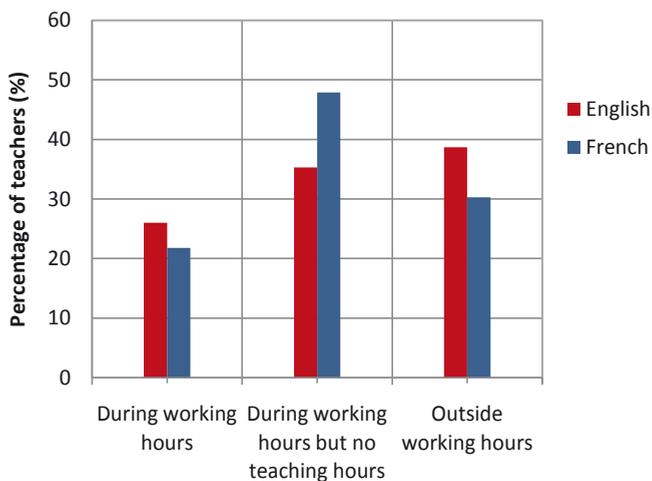
Figure 3.27: Organisation of in-service training
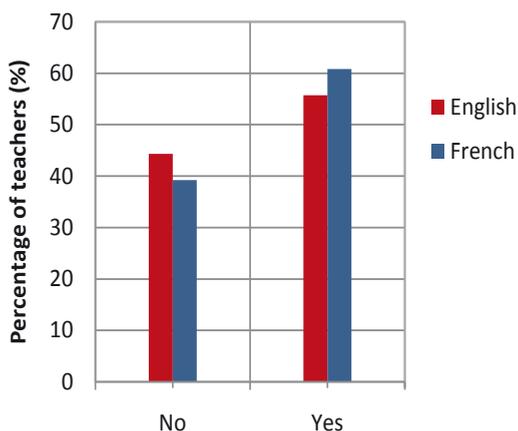
Figure 3.28: Participation in obligatory in-service training

On the basis of the discussion above, no wonder that only a small proportion of the Greek teachers of English and French linked participation in in-service training programmes with career advancement: 16.6% English language teachers and 7.2% French language teachers (Figure 3.29). According to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 67), in most participating European educational systems, the proportion typically lies between 30% and 50%.
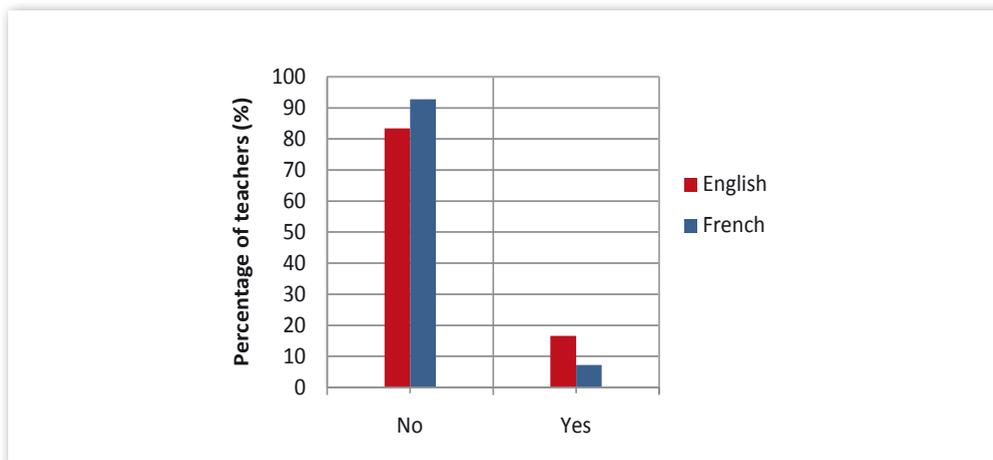
Figure 3.29: Participation in in-service training required for promotion

Finally, it should be pointed out, that promotions are not foreseen for school teachers in Greece and this may be the worst disincentive for their continuous education and their job-related performance. Greek teachers, though administrative type of regulations only get minor increases in salary on the basis of seniority (their salary is increased by a slight sum every so many years), regardless of performance and achievements. Also, it is stipulated that teachers with an MA or an M.Ed get a bonus added on to their salary. The bonus is a little higher if they have a PhD especially in the field of specialization.

3.10.4 Focus TL Teacher in-service training

To confirm what has been already been pointed out above, about the frequency of participation of English and French teachers in in-service seminars, we see the findings presented in Table 3.16 below. It is interesting to note here however that the mean values of in-service seminar participation by Greek teachers of English and French (1.5-2) are similar to those of other countries, as reported on the ELCS final report (2012: 67).

	TQ	Mean value	Std. Error	95% CI
Number of times participating in in-service training through different modes	EnglishTL	1.58	0.16	(1.27 - 1.90)
	FrenchTL	1.82	0.15	(1.52 - 2.11)
Focus of in-service training on languages or teaching related subjects	EnglishTL	0.01	0.06	(-0.11 - 0.13)
	FrenchTL	0.16	0.04	(0.09 - 0.24)

Table 3.16: Frequency and focus of teachers' participation in in-service training

But what is the focus of these seminars that teachers participate in? Are they language related or language-teaching related? The findings are in Table 3.16 above, whereby it

is interpreted as follows: As regards the focus of target language teachers' in-service training on, If there is a zero value on the index of language training or of teaching training, it means that the teacher has had the same amount of in-service language training in teaching-related training. A negative value indicates that the teacher had more training in teaching-related training, and a positive value means that the teacher had more training in language-training.

Taking the above into account, we look at Table 3.16 again and see that the mean value of the index for English language teachers is very close to zero and the 95% CIs are below zero. This shows that their training was equally divided between teaching and language training. The mean value and the 95% CIs of the index for French target language teachers are above zero, showing that most French teachers' seminars were for language training. This actually represents the general trend in Europe (SurveyLang 2012:67), where most language teachers claim to have been participating in language training seminars.

3.11 Use of existing European language assessment tools

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was introduced by the Council of Europe in 2008, as a means of motivating teachers and students to recognise and document the knowledge of languages and the intercultural awareness they have developed, in spite of formal teaching. It was also introduced so as to serve as a tool for the development of language competences and for self assessment on the part of the leaner. However, in order to use the ELP, foreign language teachers need first of all to be familiar with the CEFR descriptors and how these are used, because the ELP is based on the CEFR. However, as mentioned earlier in this volume, at the time that the Greek Survey was conducted, the French and English teachers were not familiar with the CEFR. Specifically, Figure 3.30, below, shows that about 66.2% of the English teachers and 43.1% of the French teachers state that they have not been informed or trained in how to use the CEFR, while Figure 3.31 shows that teachers generally do not systematically use it as a reference document. Only slightly more than one-third of the teachers of English and French stated that they use the CEFR occasionally, while a quarter of the French teachers stated that they used it quite often. Generally it seems that more teachers of French have been trained to use the CEFR and use it as a reference more often. In half of the participating countries, a greater number of second target language teachers reported having been trained in the use of the CEFR than their first target language counterparts. Accordingly, throughout Europe the use of the CEFR is limited (SurveyLang 2012:69).
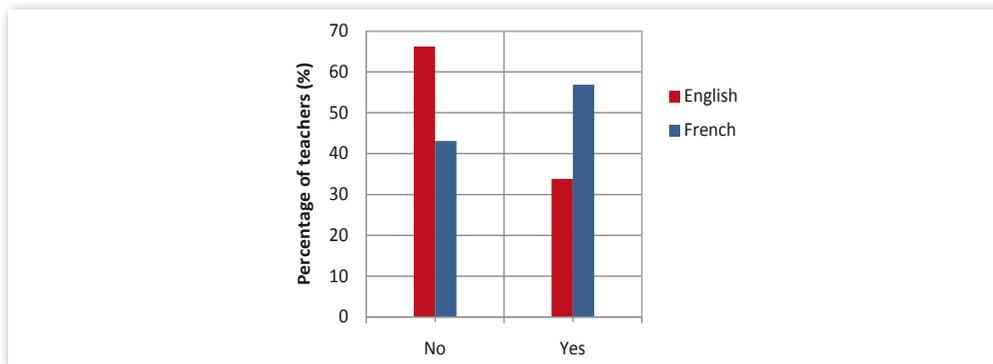
Figure 3.30: Teachers who received training about CEFR
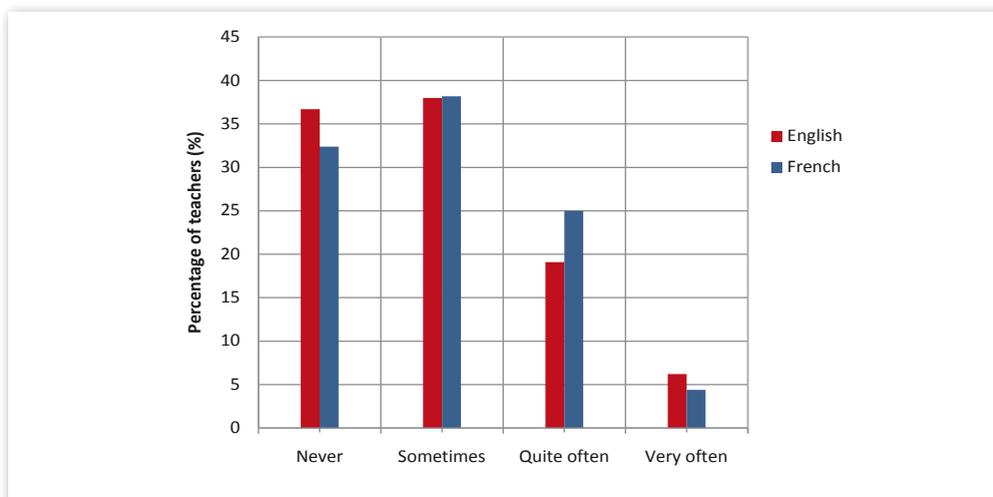
Figure 3.31: Teachers' use of the CEFR

Despite the fact that most Greek teachers in question are not familiar with the CEFR, they report having been trained to use the ELP. Figure 3.32 shows that 53.3% of the English teachers and 67.5% of the French teachers report having been informed about the use of the ELP. However, the impact of this training seems quite limited, since the percentage of teachers that actually use the ELP in their classrooms is quite low: approximately 22% for both languages (Figure 3.33). The majority of both English (77.9%) and French target language teachers (78.4%) report not using the ELP in their classrooms.
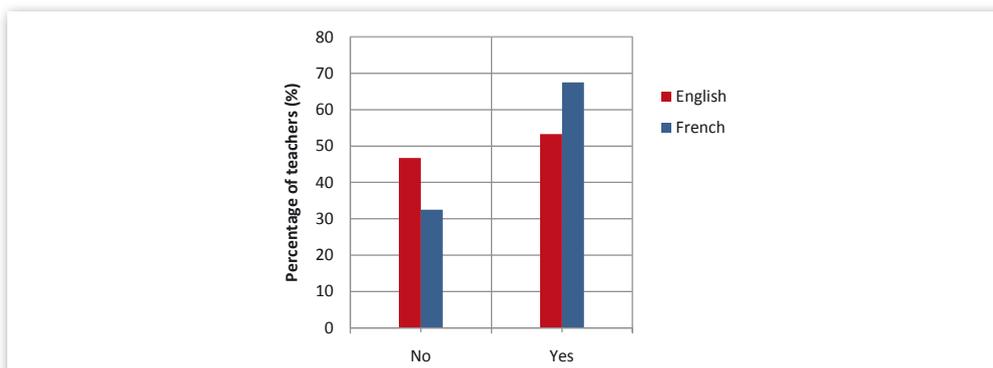
Figure 3.32: Teachers who received training in ELP use

Moreover, according to the SurveyLang Final Report (2012: 68-69), the proportions of teachers in all participating countries who indicated that they received training in the use of the ELP are lower than the proportions of teachers who indicated that they received training in the CEFR. The opposite is true in Greece where, on average, more teachers stated that they had received training in the use of the ELP (53.3% of the English teachers and 67.5% of the French teachers) than in the use of the CEFR (33.8% of the English teachers and 56.9% of the French teachers). It is also interesting to note that although French target language teachers seem to have received more training in the use of both the ELP and CEFR than their English counterparts, they use both European language assessment tools with the same low frequency as English target language teachers do.
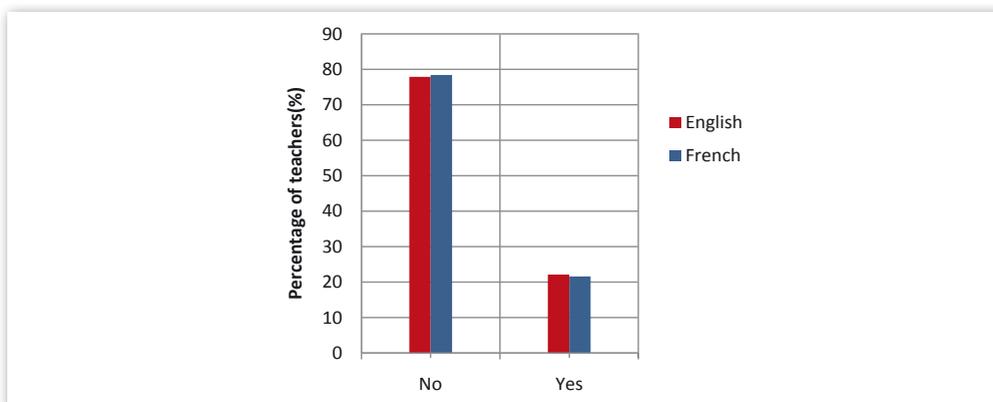
Figure 3.33: Use of the ELP

The findings regarding the use of the CEFR and the ELP by Greek foreign language teachers, derived from the analysis of the data provided by the Greek Survey, coincide with those of the ESLC final report, in which percentages of CEFR and ELP use are low across all entities.

3.12 Practical teaching experience

On the job experience, acquired through guided apprenticeship of some form, is invaluable for anyone starting a new job, no matter what that job it is, but for teachers-to-be guided practice teaching is especially valuable. It helps teachers to shape new attitudes and experiences, as they forget the ones they themselves had when they were students, because the educational conditions in each era require new ways of doing old and new things. It is in this respect that practice-teaching or teaching assistantship is considered to be an integral part of initial teacher training programmes. Therefore, the Survey investigated if teachers had acquired some kind of teaching experience by being placed in schools or have had to follow some kind of organised student-teaching practice programme.

At the time that the Survey was carried out in Greece, practice teaching had already been introduced in teacher training programmes organised by the foreign language and literature departments from where these teachers graduated. However, many of the English and French teachers who participated in the Survey had graduated years before practice teaching became a fundamental component of the teacher training programmes. Therefore, as shown in Figure 3.34, more than 50% of the Greek target language teachers said that they had had no practice teaching as part of their initial training and preparation to enter the teaching profession.[10] The other 50% had some practice teaching for periods of time that varied considerably. For the French teachers, the largest group seems to have had such experience for a period of one month, and there is a variety of lower frequencies for longer periods of such placement time, ranging from two to six months to, rarely, one year. The picture is similar as regards the other half of the English teachers: Frequencies of duration of in-school teaching placement are spread out mainly from one to twelve months.

According to the ESLC final report (2012:70), Greece and Slovenia have on average the shortest duration of in-school teaching placement compared to the other participating countries.

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10 Here it might be important to note that teachers of both target languages reported having teaching experience of about 16 years on average.
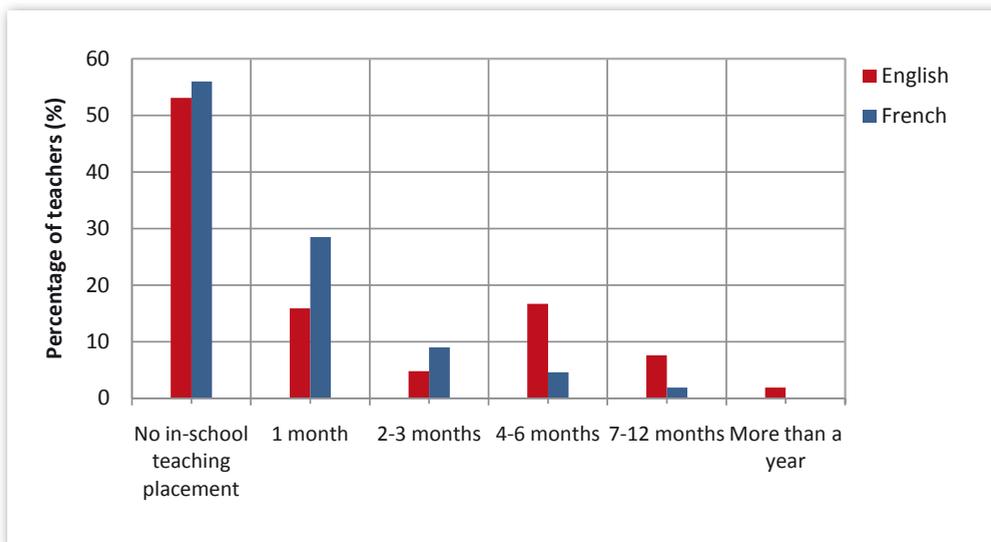
Figure 3.34: Duration of in-school practice teaching

However, many language teachers in Greece acquire extensive teaching experience before they enter the state school system by working in evening language schools. The know-how that they get ranges from very good to very bad, depending on the private organization that operates the language school.

Another way that Greek teachers get experience is by being appointed as substitute teachers with payment by the hour, rather than a salary. Again, here there is no guidance and some teachers describe those first encounters with a class as having been thrown into a cage with lions.

When they are finally appointed – in the past 'by row' – and in recent years after a rigorous public examination, they have single appointments and can only teach one language, even if they have proficiency in a second one. Therefore, the majority of language teachers in Greece state that they have taught only one language in the past five years (Figure 3.35). There is a small percentage (17.4%) of teachers (of French) teachers who claim to have taught another language as well, but this may not have been in the state school sector.

On the whole, it is common practice across Europe for teachers to be hired to teach only one language, according to the SurveyLang report (2012:70).
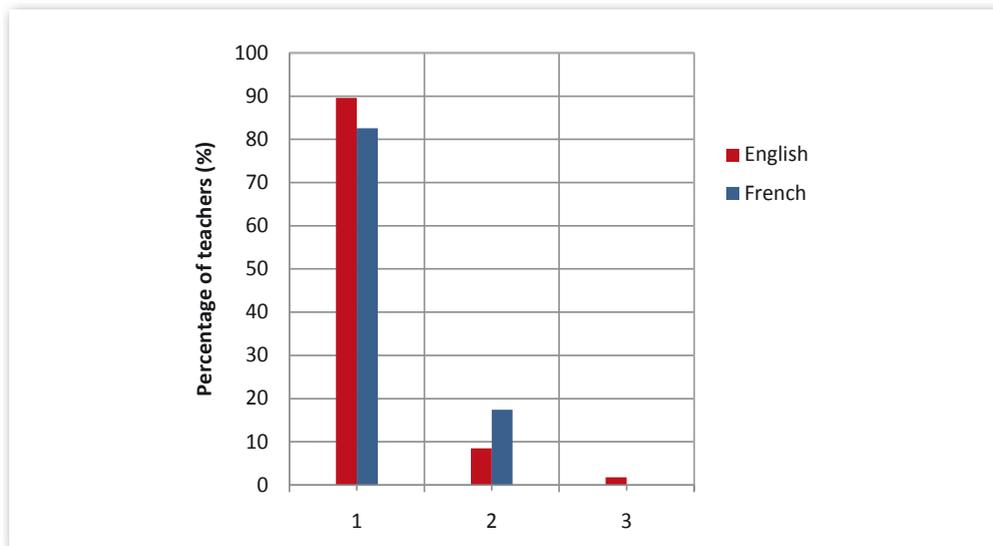
Figure 3.35: Number of languages taught in the past five years

The same source notes, however, that there are substantial differences between countries in the teachers' experience in teaching a language other than the target language.

Despite the above findings, in Greece, as shown in Figure 3.36, there is a small percentage of French teachers (about 10%) and English teachers (about 6%) who claim to have taught a subject other than the target language for more than one year. We have commented elsewhere in this report about the fact that there may be foreign language teachers who have also specialised in a second foreign language, and thus can undertake teaching this language in the public school context. This however is rare. It is more frequent for language teachers who have a second specialisation to be assigned to teach a subject of the school curriculum in Greek, e.g., History, under special circumstances.
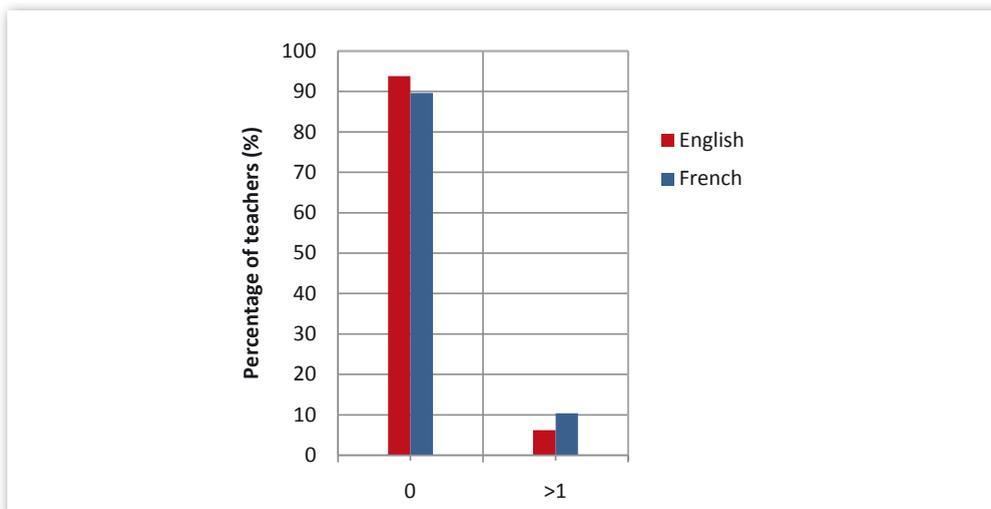
Figure 3.36: TL teachers' experience in teaching other languages

3.13 Summary of the findings of the context questionnaires

As reported in the previous sections, foreign language learning in Greece starts relatively early (i.e. at the third level of ISCED I) in the majority of schools, and very early (i.e. at the first level of ISCED I) in some schools participating in an experimental project which prescribes longer duration of teaching time for English and makes use of materials designed to meet the needs of the very young learners and their teachers.

The teaching two foreign languages is compulsory in primary and secondary education, as is the case in most of the other participating countries. More lesson time is devoted each week to the first target language than to the second target language, while it has been shown that Greek students spend more time on foreign languages outside of school in comparison to the students of all other participating countries.

The majority of the Greek students in the Survey sample were monolingual, with Greek as their mother tongue, but they are commonly exposed to other languages at home and through the media –most frequently to English. But Greek students seem to have few opportunities to use the languages they are learning through visits abroad –fewer than other European students. Greece is reported by the Survey to be among the countries with the lowest average frequencies in TL exposure through exchange visits and intercultural exchanges.

An important finding concerns the few opportunities offered to immigrant students by the school system both to master Greek and to learn their language of origin. Although students report receiving instruction in both languages to some extent, school principals' responses to the relevant questions raise doubt as to whether this is actually the case

in the state schools. The issue of the role and the efficiency of state schools in language learning are debatable in the Greek society, and teachers, well prepared qualified for the teaching profession, frequently bear the brunt of the public's negative criticism.

Greek teachers of English and French who participated in the Survey were well prepared but it seems that they have gained experience and expertise mainly on their own, over time in the classroom. Few of them had the opportunity to do practice teaching for a substantial length of time. Furthermore, Greek foreign language teachers have had few opportunities for intercultural exchange visits. Finally, Greek language teachers are highly qualified, holding university and often postgraduate degrees. Actually, they seem to be among the most well prepared professionals in Europe but they have almost no external motivation to do their job as well as possible. They get nothing for doing an excellent job.

Few Greek schools reported integrating ICT into their programmes, and the vast majority did not have a multimedia infrastructure. School principals also report that their schools are institutions in which few opportunities are created for the enhancement of language learning and limited measures are taken to encourage language learning.

Furthermore, although some efforts had been made to integrate EU tools –such as the CEFR and the ELP– into foreign language teaching, at the time that the Survey was carried out, they had not yet been integrated.

Chapter 4

THE EFFECT OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A basic hypothesis that the expert team made before conducting the Survey was that a series of contextual factors related to foreign language learning are likely to have an impact and on the development of students' language competences, as indicated by their achievement on the language test. These contextual factors have been called 'policy issues' because they may be a starting point for the formation of national and supranational language education policies.

The purpose of this part of this report is to investigate and highlight the effect of the contextual factors that have already been discussed in the preceding chapter on students' foreign language proficiency. For our investigation, we employed multilevel regression analysis,[1] which we thought would be useful for us to explore the relations between each contextual factor and tested students' achievement. Before presenting the findings, it should be pointed out that the dependent variable stands for the students' achievement in listening and reading comprehension, as well as in writing, and the predictor is any one of the contextual factors. The predictors are treated as fixed, and the multilevel models predict the variability in student ability in relation to two components: within-school variance and between-school variance.

Simple linear regression identifies correlations between indices derived from the Principals' Questionnaire, and the students' ability is aggregated at school levels (plausible school means). The Teachers' Questionnaire also contains information at the school level. However, the link between the teachers and the students does not exist, and thus the teachers' indices are aggregated to the school levels. The aggregated indices are used as explanatory variable for the simple linear regression models with dependent variable the plausible school means.

This part of the report, which deals exclusively with the effects of the contextual factors on students' proficiency, consists of three sections. The first section presents the effects of the economic, social and cultural status (henceforth ESCS) index separately for the students tested in English and for those tested in French. The second section presents the effects of the 13 contextual factors already discussed in chapter 3 and, finally, the third section presents the impact of other contextual factors (derived from the Student and Teacher Questionnaires) that were not included in the previous two analyses, but seem to have an effect on foreign language learning skills.

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1   Figures with the data refered to in this chapter are included in Appendix 1 of the volume. Appendix 2 contains tables with additional data which may be useful for a more specialised reader.

The preliminary analysis that was conducted prior to the analysis of the effect of contextual factors according to the 13 contextual factors or 'policy issues' has highlighted the effect of various predictors which are not included in the policy issues but are nevertheless significantly related to students' foreign language competences. The ESCS index has been found to be significant in relation to all issues, including: a) the class or lesson time spent per for foreign language learning, b) the frequency of exposure to the foreign language through the traditional and new media, c) the onset of foreign language education, d) the time spent for tests, d) the use of ICT for FL learning in class and outside school, opportunities for school language projects, e) teacher comparing/contrasting the students' L1 with the foreign language being learnt, f) the perception of students regarding the value of the target language and the difficulty of learning it, g) opportunities for exchange visits of teachers and students, and h) number of languages studied before starting to study the target language.

The index of the ESCS and gender is found to be significant *for every aspect of English language learning* (see Appendix, Figure 4.1)*.* Those that positively affect student achievement are (a) *time spent per week on foreign languages,* and (b) *frequency of exposure to English through the traditional and new media.* In other words, students who have been studying English as a foreign language for a long time and students who are exposed frequently to English through the media are more likely to do have higher competency levels in listening reading and writing. The same is true for students who believe that the English language is valuable and that the learning of English is useful. They are expected to have higher level of competence in at least one of the three.

On the other hand, when the frequency of ESCS predictors with a negative effect increases, student competence levels are expected to be lower. For example, in the Survey we see that students with earlier onset of English, who have the same levels on all the other ESCS predictors, turn out to be more competent in listening than in writing.

Our analysis produced some unexpected findings, which need further investigation. Among these findings, which might be an interesting start point for research, concern the negative indices between student achievement in English and (a) the time they spent for tests (e.g., for test preparation), (b) opportunities they have in school to do language projects (negative for listening comprehension), (c) the use of ICT for foreign language study, and (d) the practice of teachers' comparing/ contrasting the foreign language with the students' mother tongue.

While it was expected to find a negative relationship between student achievement in all competences in English and perceived difficulty of the language, the finding of a negative relationship between achievement in reading comprehension and the number of languages studied before starting English was not. It was also unexpected to find a negative relationship between the use of ICT by students outside school and their

competence in reading comprehension. Likewise, it is surprising to find a negative relationship between travel abroad and students' communication competence in writing.

The results are not dramatically different for French (see Appendix, Figure 4.2). The index of the ESCS is important and has positive effects on student achievement in French. Students with higher level ESCS backgrounds are expected to do better in French, which is not a surprising finding. On the other hand, though it is not surprising that sex/gender is found to be an important predictor for reading competence and writing in French (i.e., females are found to be more competent in these two competences than the male students), it is an interesting finding that could stimulate further investigation.

The rest of the findings, most of which were anticipated, are the following: When students believe that learning French is a useful enterprise, they seem to be more competent in writing (as regards both their linguistic and their communicative competence). Competence in writing is also positively related to the frequent exposure and the use of French through the traditional and new media. An early start in languages is positively related both to students' listening comprehension and to their communication competence in writing. Finally, students who find French language learning difficult are found to have lower achievement in French listening and reading comprehension.

On the other hand, as with English, there are a number of unanticipated findings with French too. The factor of "opportunities for students' exchange visits" is related to lower competence in listening and writing. Likewise, there is a negative relationship between achievement in French and (a) the levels of parents' knowledge of French, (b) student opportunity to participate in school language projects (negatively related to reading comprehension), (c) students' frequent use of French at home (negatively related to their communication competence in writing), and (d) time spent on studying French and on studying ancient languages (negatively related to their linguistic competence in writing).

In conclusion, it is important to say once again that this preliminary analysis has highlighted the fact that the ESCS index is an important predictor for all competences in both languages. There are strong indications that the higher the value of the student ESCS index, the greater the student achievement. The grouped index of ESCS is significant for all competences in English and for writing in French (both for student linguistic and communication competence in writing). This means that the average value of the ESCS in each school significantly affects the mean of student achievement in these competences. The variable of gender is a significant predictor for reading and writing in French.

Now, in what follows we shall discuss more extensively the 13 contextual factors, or policy issues, in relation to the achievement in the target foreign language by Greek

students of English and French. The multilevel models (see Appendix) are contingent on the significant predictors found in the preliminary analysis. Hence, the effects described below have been adjusted for the ESCS status, the grouped ESCS, and student's gender, when necessary, and for their interpretation, students are assumed to have the same levels of ESCS and the same gender. The models presented at the school and teacher levels contain the marginal effects of each index. In the Appendix the reader can find the conditional effects of each of the indices of language learning that are significantly related to the students' ability for each skill in each of the two languages.

4.1 The effect of early language learning and time spent on lessons

The onset of foreign language learning represents the school grade in which students started studying a foreign language. The indices of the onset of foreign and target language learning are significant predictors for all the competences in English (Figure 4.3). For the French language, the onset of foreign language learning is related significantly to achievement in listening comprehension and writing (Figure 4.4). All the effects are negative, indicating that students who start learning foreign languages at an earlier age have better achievement. For the majority of educational systems that participated in the study, this was true: An earlier onset of foreign language learning means a higher achievement (SurveyLang 2012:78).

The indices for foreign and target language lesson time per week represent the weekly lesson time for the foreign and target language as reported by students. The target language lesson time was found to be a non-significant factor. However, foreign language lesson time was found to be positively related to performance in listening, reading and in communication competence in writing, in English. In other words, Greek students who have more foreign language lesson time per week are expected to be more competent in all three competences, as the rest of the European students are, according to the SurveyLang report.

Because the early language learning factor is positively related to achievement, it is encouraging that the first foreign language learning starts being taught relatively early in Europe (anywhere between first and fifth grade of primary school) and that Greece is one of the countries with very early start in teaching the first foreign language, and a relatively early start of the second foreign language. The onset for the second foreign language in Greece is similar to four other countries, which start teaching it in the fifth grade of primary school. In most countries the teaching of the second foreign language though starts in secondary school.

It is also encouraging that there is a fair amount of time allocated for teaching the first and the second foreign languages in the school programme of all European countries,

including Greece of course. That amount of time allocated ranges from two to three hours per week.

4.2 The effect of offering diverse languages

Having examined the number of target and (ancient) foreign languages taught and learnt in European schools, we analysed school principals' and students' indices which have significant effects on achievement. It appears that the number of languages taught does not seem to have an effect on the average student's achievement (Figure 4.3) . Only a weak relation was found between the number of foreign and ancient languages taught in schools and students' communicative competence in writing in the French language (Fig. 4.4).2

The number of (target and ancient foreign) languages taught in schools seem to have a positive effect in students' listening and reading comprehension in English, but a weak effect on their linguistic competence in writing, in French. Generally, the effects seem to be positive on all counts in English. That is, the more languages students study, in most European countries, the better their achievement in English is. Curiously though, the effects in French are not positive. As a matter of fact, it seems that the more languages students study the lower their achievement in reading comprehension and in communication in writing, in French.

As far as the effect of the number of foreign languages learned before the target language is concerned, this index is significantly related to performance in all competences in English. The effects, however, are negative, which means that students who have learned more foreign languages before English are expected to have lower scores on all skills tested in the English test.

4.3 The effect of informal language learning opportunities

The indices investigated with regard to this factor include the effect of a) informal language-learning opportunities through the home and living environment, b) informal language-learning opportunities through visits abroad, c) informal language-learning opportunities through traditional and new media, and d) parents' target language knowledge on French and English students' performance in the respective languages (see Appendix, Figure 4.3 and 4.4 for results).

One of the most important predictors is the index describing students' target language exposure through the traditional and new media. This index is significantly related to

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2   According to the SurveyLang report (2012: 79-80), more than two-thirds of the effects of this index on school averages in Europe are positive. However, less than one-third are significantly positive, the effects being strongest in writing.

all three competences students have in English and to their linguistic competence in writing in French. All the effects are positive, meaning that students who use the target language through the traditional and new media are expected to do better in reading, listening and writing in English and in writing in French. The considerable positive effect of this index on student achievement is seen in almost all the countries that participated in the ESLC (SurveyLang 2012: 80-81).

More analytically, one of the factors that which has a positive effect on students' performance in reading and writing in English is informal language learning opportunities at the home and living environment. There is a weaker relation between this index and the communication aspect of writing in English and reading competence in French. In general it seems that, students who frequently use English in their home/living environment are expected to perform better in reading and writing in English. As for French, most relations are negative or weak. Students who use French at home are frequently expected to have lower scores in tests of reading and the communication aspect of writing in French. The first effect (involving English language students) is statistically significant at the 0.10% level, whereas the second (involving students of French) is significant at the 0.01% level. Generally, in most European countries, no effects on student achievment were found for this index.

Greek parents' target language knowledge is found to be significantly related only with reading competence in French. In most European countries, however, the effect of this index is significant, meaning that parental knowledge of the target language is associated with better student achievement in that language.

4.4 The effect of the school's foreign language 'specialisation'

As already discussed in chapter 3, the percentage of Greek schools participating in the Survey through English that offer CLIL is only 2.42%, and none of the schools participating in offer CLIL. Thus, regression analysis was performed only for the schools where students were tested in English. iIt seems that the average students' competence in schools that offer CLIL is higher than in schools without CLIL (Figure 4.5). In other European countries, no clear effects were found for this index.

This index also includes the frequency with which school principals take measures to encourage language learning in their schools. The schools that have a higher specialist language profile have on average students with higher level competences in listening comprehension and writing in English and only in writing in French. As a matter of fact, a very strong relationship is found between communication competence in writing in French and the school's specialist language profile: the effect is significant at the level of 0.05%. The remaining effects provide evidence for an important relationship which is significant at the 0.10% level. According to the SurveyLang report (2012:82), the effects

of a school's specialist language profile on student performance are positive in more than two-thirds of the countries that participated in the survey.

Students' competence, on average, does not seem to be clearly affected by the provision of extra target lessons by schools. As a matter of fact, for two-thirds of the European countries participating in the Survey, the effect of this factor on student achievement was positive, though not significantly so.

Moreover, student opportunity to participate in extra target language lessons was found to be significantly related to the students' writing competence in French (Figure 4.4). The effect is positive, implying that the more extra French lessons the students have, the higher their achievement in writing. No significant effect was found between this index and students' performance in English, but this needs to be further investigated, since more than half of the students of both the first and the second target language have taken extra lessons of the target language. The fact that Greece is the only country showing a high percentage of students taking extra lessons in the second target language is emphasised in the SurveyLang report.

4.5 The effect of the use ICT in language teaching and learning

Investigation of this factor, associated with the existence of ICT facilities in schools and their use by teachers and students, presented results the reader finds in the Tables below, displaying the indices which have a significant effect students' performance.

ICT facilities in schools includes three indices: a) the availability of a multimedia lab, b) the presence of a virtual learning environment, and c) the availability of software for language assessment. The availability of a multimedia lab is significantly related to listening and writing in English. Thus, students whose schools offer multimedia labs are on average more competent in listening and reading comprehension than students whose schools do not offer such facilities. However, no apparent effects of this index were found in other European countries. In addition, the presence of a virtual learning environment and the availability of software for assessment had no effect on students' competences in either English or French. This lack of significance may be due to the small variability of the indices. However, the results for these two indices are more or less similar (Figure 4.5).

As far as the teachers' use of ICT devices either during or outside lessons and the use of web content for teaching are concerned, only the teachers' use of ICT during lessons seems to have an effect on students' performance, i.e. it affects writing (Figure 4.6). The other two indices do not have a clear effect on students' target language abilities. In other European countries, no clear effects were found for the indices relating to teachers' use of ICT.

Multilevel regression analysis was also performed in order to examine the relationship between students' use of ICT and their performance. Students' use of ICT for language learning is significantly related to their abilities in all the skills in English and to listening and reading in French (Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

However the relationship is negative, implying that the more frequently students use ICT for language learning purposes, the worse will be their ability in both languages. This rather unexpected effect is also evident in all other European countries (SurveyLang 2012: 83).

4.6 The effect of intercultural exchanges

This factor includes indices relating to a) funding opportunities for student exchanges, b) teachers organising exchange visits and language projects, and c) student participation in exchange visits and school language projects (Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

The first of these three indexes (funding opportunities for student exchanges) has very little effect on student achievement. There is only one positive relation, which pertains to students of French and their performance in listening comprehension. However, this relation is statistically significant only at the 0.10% level, as one can see in the Table that follows.

The second of the three indices, which has to do with the teachers' involvement in organising exchange visits and language projects, clearly seems to have a positive effect (in two-thirds of the classes) on a European level. In examining our findings, we see that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' involvement in organising exchange visits and students' performance in writing (in both English and French, though for the French students the significance level is only at 0.10%).

It might be interesting to note that in other European countries, these indices do not seem to be related in any significant way to student achievement (SurveyLang 2012: 84).

The third of the three indices (student participation in exchange visits and school language projects) is clearly related to student performance, but curiously enough it is negatively related. Though this finding is perplexing, it seems that students who have more opportunities for school trips abroad and exchange visits perform worse in listening comprehension and writing in both languages. One might think that was an error in the Greek data but we see similar results at a European level. The effect of this index on student achievement is generally negative.

Likewise, the relationship is negative between student opportunities to participate in school target language projects and achievement, but mainly as concerns the Greek

data, where we see a negative effect on listening comprehension in English, and on listening and reading comprehension in French. On a European level, this last index has mixed effects.

4.7 The effect of staff from other language communities

This factor refers basically to guest teachers placed in Greek schools, to foreign language teachers whose first language is different from the foreign language they teach, and to their training to teach the target language as a foreign language. Findings from Principals' Questionnaires show that in Greece only one of the participating schools had received guest teachers, that most of the French and English teachers have Greek as their mother tongue (a very small proportion reported English or French as their L1). Greek teachers of French and English use the language they teach as a foreign language, they have received substantial pre-service education and training in the target language and most of them report having received training in teaching the target language as a foreign language.

The indices related to this factor include a) receiving guest teachers from abroad, b) the language teachers' L1, and c) the kind of training the teachers received to teach the target language.

While simple regression analysis showed no apparent effect of these indices on Greek or other participating countries' student achievement in any of the each of the three competences in either language (SurveyLang 2012:85), this issue must be further investigated.

4.8 The effect of 'language learning for all'

This factor refers basically to language-friendly schools, schools that welcome multilingualism and support immigrant students' efforts to learn both the language of the host country, as well as their language of origin. As very few of the participating schools are 'language friendly' in the way perceived by the SurveyLang team, our analysis here showed no apparent relationship between these indices and student achievement in either English or French. However, the findings were similar in the other participating European countries (SurveyLang 2012:85-86). Again, these issues do require further study.

4.9 The effect of the foreign language teaching approach

This policy issue includes a range of indices relating to the teachers' focus on teaching the language. More specifically, the issue includes the emphasis teachers place on

(a) teaching the four competences (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking), (b) teaching grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and culture and literature, (c) using the target language during class, (d) highlighting similarities/differences between languages. There are also indices related to students' perceptions of their target language lessons, and students' reasons for choosing to study the target language. The results of the regression analysis carried out can be found in the Appendix in Figure 4.6.

The findings regarding certain aspects of the first two indices, i.e., (a) and (b) above, are different in Greece and other participating countries. On a whole, these two indices seem to have no significant effect on student achievement in either language taught in Greece whereas for the majority of other European participants the effect of teacher emphasis on the four competences is positive. More specifically, for approximately one-third of the participating countries it is significantly positive and for the remaining two-thirds the teachers' emphasis on grammar, culture and literature is related to higher achievement (Suveylang 2012: 86-87).

Surprisingly, the only index found to have a relatively significant effect on the performance of Greek students (specifically in listening comprehension in English) is English language teachers' emphasis on pronunciation. This is a Greek finding that does not agree with findings on a European level, because language teachers' emphasis on pronunciation and vocabulary in other European countries has no positive effect on student achievement either in either target foreign language.

Indices that relate to the Greek foreign language teachers' or students' use of the target language during class do not have an apparent effect on any of the students' competences in either target foreign language. The only positive relationship found in the Greek data is between teachers' use of the target language and students' performance in writing. On a European level, however, the effect of teachers' and students' use of the target language during lessons has a positive effect on student achievement.

Whereas on a European level teachers' attempts to compare/contrast elements of the target language with the students L1 has no apparent effect on student achievement (SurveyLang 2012:88), in Greece, the teacher's emphasis on similarities between languages seems to have a slightly negative effect, particularly in English.

Unlike several of the indices above, there is one that is quite significant and this is students' perceptions of the target language. Students' viewing the target language as valuable and the teaching-learning of this language as useful seems to be a significant predictor for Greek students' language competences. More specifically, this index is positively related to achievement in reading, listening and writing in English (only and writing in French). This finding agrees with findings in all other participating entities (SurveyLang 2012: 89).

There is also a strong relationship between students' perception of how difficult it is to learn the target language and their achievement in both languages both in the Greek data and the data from other participating countires. That is, the more difficult students think that it is to learn the target language the worse their performance is in all three areas.

Finally, there is no clear relationship, in either the Greek or the European level data, between students' achievements and their perceptions of target language lessons, teachers and textbooks, or their claims of why they chose to study the target language (SurveyLang 2012:89).

4.10 The effect of teacher training

This factor relates to a range of indices regarding the type and intensity of target language teacher training. More specifically, it includes a) the educational level, certification and specialisation of teachers, b) teacher shortage/availability, c) financial incentives for teacher training, d) whether in-service training is compulsory and required for career advancement, e) organisation, mode and focus of in-service training, and f) financial incentives for visits and stays abroad. The results of the regression analysis of these indices are presented in the Tables below:

Starting with the index of teacher shortage/availability, it is interesting to note that both the Greek findings and findings at European level show no apparent effect on student achievement in both languages. This is a somewhat peculiar finding and should be investigated further. If schools are short of target language teachers, it means that students are having no lessons. So how are their competences developed – unless it is in cases like Greece where oftentimes students get extra foreign language lessons outside of school?

The number of financial incentives for in-service training provided by schools is significantly related to performance in reading and writing in French, and the relationship is positive (Figure 4.7). This means that the more incentives for in-service training there are the better students will perform in these skills in French. No effects were found for this index on performance in English (with the exception of a positive relationship between this index and performance in reading in English), probably because of the small variance of the sample. Similar findings are reported in other European countries. The effect of this index seems to be positive, but only in some areas of language performance (SurveyLang 2012:90).

The level of education, the teaching certification and the specialization of target language teachers do not seem to be significant predictors for student achievement. Note that the variance of these indices is limited. Moreover, no strong relationships were found between English and French students' achievement on the one hand, and

teachers' level of education and in-service training on the other. These findings agree with European findings as a whole, though there is one index which was found to have a positive effect on achievement in two-thirds of the participating countries. This index is certified teachers.

Whether in-service training serves the purpose of maintaining or improving teachers' language proficiency (i.e. is language-related), or it aims to provide updated knowledge and practice in pedagogy and foreign language teaching methodology (i.e. is teaching-related) is unclear both in the Greek data and on a European level. For example, in the Greek data, when teachers' in-service training has a language-related focus (instead of a teaching-related focus), students' performance in writing is lower. The relation is stronger for the French teachers (Figure 4.8). Clearly further investigation is required here as well.

4.11 The effect of teacher opportunity to work/study in another country

This factor relates to the number of exchange visits teachers have participated in and the funding for such ventures. No strong relationship between teacher opportunity to work or study abroad and student performance in the target language was found.

There is, however, a minor indication in the Greek data that the number of teacher visits to the target language-speaking country may have a positive effect on students' performance and more specifically in writing in French (Figure 4.8). On a European level, in two-thirds of the countries, the number of teacher stays in a target language culture does show positive effects on student achievement in some areas, not in all (SurveyLang 2012: 91).

4.12 The effect of the use of European language education 'tools'

This factor refers to the use of the 'European Language Portfolio' (ELP) and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). It is to be noted that, as mentioned in Chapter 3, teachers of both languages (a) claimed to have received training on the use of the ELP, but only a few of them reported using it, and (b) only half claimed to have received some training on the use of the CEFR, but only a few reported using it occasionally to guide their teaching. Therefore, no wonder that regression analysis has not shown any effects of these indices on students' performance in both languages.

On a European level, teacher training in the use of the CEFR shows positive effects on student achievement in two-thirds of the countries. Its actual use in the classroom shows positive effects in two-thirds of the countries, but only for listening comprehension and writing. No relationship however was found between the use of the ELP and student achievement in the first and second target foreign language (SurveyLang 2012: 92).

4.13 The effect of teachers' practical experience

This factor includes two indices: a) duration of in-school teaching placement, and b) teachers' target language/other language teaching experience. The first index, which relates to pre-service teaching practice, has no apparent bearing on students' performance in any of the areas, in either language, in Greece or on a European level. However, the second index does. It seems that the greater the experience that teachers have in teaching the target language, the better the performance of their students in English (Figure 4.6).

Teachers' experience in teaching other languages does not have an effect on students' performance, probably due to the small sample variability of this index. However, in Europe, this index does have a positive effect on student achievement in two-thirds of the participating entities (SurveyLang 2012: 92).

4.14 Other contextual factors and their effects

Apart from the indices included in the 13 factors which could prompt language education policies, regression analysis was also performed on other variables as well, in order to see their effect on student achievement. Variables which seem to have a significant positive effect on Greek students' target language performance are presented below.

Home location seems to have a relationship to student achievement in the Greek data. As mentioned in chapter 1, almost half of the students tested come from urban schools –located in towns (23.4%) or big cities (23.6%). The other half come from schools in rural areas and small towns or villages. Multilevel analysis has confirmed that the relation between where one lives and student achievement in listening, reading and both aspects of writing is statistically significant. We found that students who live in urban areas performed better in both languages.

We know that educational attainment is tied to social class and that educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations. Those in high social classes are likely to have greater educational attainment than those in low social classes. Since members of higher social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are more able to provide educational advantages to their children. We believe that this is particularly true where foreign languages are concerned, but reliable data are scarce to back up our claim. Therefore it is particularly important that we found through our analysis that foreign language achievement seems to be related to social class in several ways, one of them being the level of education that parents have.

The levels of education of the parents of Greek students who participated in the study have already been mentioned, in chapter 1, but it is useful to remind readers that

approximately one-third of the mothers (33.7%) and fathers (26.5%) have a school-leaving certificate. A similar picture emerges with parents who have completed tertiary education. A slightly higher percentage of mothers (33.7%) than fathers (32.2%) have a university degree. Regression analysis performed on these variable showed that the lower the educational level of the mothers, the lower the performance of students in listening and reading comprehension in both languages. Also regression analysis showed that students whose fathers have low educational levels tend to have low achievement in all three competences.

Another variable linked to social class is students' home possessions. The findings from our analysis are presented in the figure below. As the reader can see in Figure 4.9, most of the students have DVD players, dishwashers, works of art, cable TV, books of poetry and Greek literature classics. Fewer students reported having a home cinema or a security alarm at home.

When regression analysis was performed on these variables and their relation to students' target language performance, a positive effect was found between possession of books of poetry, Greek literature classics, and works of art on student achievement. In other words, students who have these possessions at home do better in all skills in both languages than students who do not. Moreover, students who have cable TV tend to achieve lower grades in listening and reading.

As mentioned in chapter 1 of this volume, the vast majority of students (89.2% for English and 88.2 for French students) also had access to a personal computer at home that they can use for schoolwork. Analysis of the effect of this variable showed that students who have access to a PC for schoolwork perform better in all skills in both languages. Moreover, of the students who have access to a PC at home for schoolwork, the vast majority (86.4% of the English students and 82% of the French students) also have access to the internet. Regression analysis showed that students who have access to the internet at home perform better in all skills than students who do not.

Chapter 5

MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

5.1 Outcomes, usefulness and impact

As already explained at the very beginning of this volume, the purpose of the ESLC was to develop a reliable system with which to measure the progress that the education systems in EU Member States are making towards achieving the 1+2 European objective. More specifically, the ESLC was an initiative by the DG EAC of the European Commission, as a follow up of the Barcelona European Council decision passed in March 2002, which called for the establishment of a language competence indicator. In its 2005 Communication,[1] the Commission stated that 'the ultimate aim of the European Indicator of Language Competence is to provide Member States with hard data and comparisons on which any necessary adjustments in their approach to foreign language teaching and learning can be based'.[2] It further explained that 'progress towards the objective of ensuring that all pupils learn at least two foreign languages from an early age can only be measured using reliable data on the results of foreign language teaching and learning.' This task was undertaken on a consensual basis with Member States' representatives, involving Expert Working Groups on Languages and on Indicators and Benchmarks, ultimately resulting in the execution of the SurveyLang project, whereby the ESLC was also regarded as a model, on the basis of which a more permanent scheme could be set up to monitor the success of European schools with foreign language education.

The project having been completed, the findings and the conclusions of the ESLC, published in 2012, were very informative and also valuable insofar as it was possible for the first time ever to design a foreign language education map of Europe, on the basis of some form of empirical data. They were also useful to the extent that each entity which participated in the Survey was willing to take advantage of the 'hard' data collected and analyse it further, as Greece did in order to take a close look at the results of the foreign language education that our educational system offers and to examine the conditions of foreign language teaching and learning in comparison with those in other educational systems in Europe.

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1   Commission Communication of 1 August 2005 – The European Indicator of Language Competence [COM(2005) 356 final - Not published in the Official Journal]

2   http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11083_en.htm (accessed 23/05/2014).

Looking back on this project one may say that it was exceedingly expensive and exceptionally time consuming. As the ESLC was methodologically quite complex, its implementation required a great deal of collaborative effort by the participating educational systems with the project team. The project, which took several years to complete, also required the immense effort and energy by different categories of people who worked laboriously to plan and execute it, as well as to hand in a substantial number of deliverables, to publish and circulate results. The in-country work of participants was also enormous, because 'implementing the ESLC depended not only on this collaboration but also on pooling the expertise of SurveyLang partners. The natural question that springs up then is 'Was it worth it?' and if it was 'Who was it worthwhile for?' or 'Who benefited most from this project?'[3]

Our opinion is that, despite its constraints, limitations and shortcomings, the project was definitely worthwhile. One could argue that it was not as cost effective as it could have been, that the research methodology could have facilitated the collection of data with a greater degree of validity,[4] and that the test design procedure could have prevented the rendering of unreliable test results in some instances,[5] and the questionnaires could have averted some of the unreliable responses which require further investigation. However, we believe that it would have been almost impossible to carry out a 'flawless' survey of this type, conducted for the first time ever on a European level, though a project of this magnitude. We must not forget that it involved 53.000 students across Europe, a sample of 16 participating entities involved in administering the language test (designed to measure the level of language proficiency in three competences, at 4 levels on the scale of the Council of Europe, in 2 different languages, in both paper and computer based forms) and also to facilitate the process of completion of the contextual questionnaire by students, their teachers and also the school principals at sampled schools.

ESLC was most certainly a worthwhile project, enhancing significantly the knowledge base that was previously available at both European and national levels, and providing a convincing answer to the question 'Are schools in Europe doing their job in teaching our

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3   First European Survey on Language Competences: Executive Summary. Accessed on 23/05/14, the text is available in pdf at http://www.surveylang.org/media/Executivesummaryof theESLC_210612.pdf

4   We suggest that some of the findings are not valid or reliable, because conclusions drawn from them are not corroborated with any research results in testing studies. One very loud example is the conclusion that test preparation is a negative index for student achievement in English (cf. Hill & McNamara, 2011).

5   For example, one unexpected finding discussed in chapters 3 and 4 is that Greek students appear more competent in production and especially writing production than in comprehension (i.e. reading or listening). As this finding is not corroborated by other research findings, as already mentioned, we concluded that the findings might be related to the types of writing tasks students were tested in and to the script raters' bias.

youngsters two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue?' With reference to the solid evidence provided, those of us concerned with foreign language education now have the necessary proof to support what we have been arguing for years: that policies in our countries are not ensuring that schools do their job with regard to foreign language teaching and learning. European students lack the desired language proficiency –in some countries more than others.

The outcomes of the ESLC go beyond profiling the language proficiency of students for it has offered:

❖ Indicators providing a broad range of information on the context of foreign language teaching and learning

❖ Information on the relationship between language proficiency and the contextual indicators

❖ A resource and knowledge base for policy analysis and research.

The impact that the ESLC has had is different for different stakeholders. If they are willing to draw upon the data accumulated, it may prove to be a valuable resource for researchers, policy makers, educators, parents and students. For the Commission the ESLC was the reliable evidence they were looking for as a basic 'European Indicator of Language Competence'. Though it is unlikely that the Survey itself will comprise the tool with which to systematically monitor progress in language learning of young people across the EU educational systems, there are still plans to carry out a second survey in 2016, with which to provide updated information on European students' language competences. The plan is 'to involve additional Member States, and also cover speaking skills in a foreign language'.[6] However, this decision may be reconsidered in view of the European Council's recent decision to reject the Commission's proposal to introduce a language benchmark.[7] Nevertheless, the European Indicator of Language Competence which has been a major step in establishing a sound evidence-base for policy-making, allowing European governments to develop language-learning policies and improve national standards, is still a major mission, as the European Commission continues to promote multilingualism at a European level, 'under the Erasmus+ programme, notably

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6   See: http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/evidence-base_en.htm

7   The basic proposal put forth by the Commission, having arrived to this proposal as a result of the work by the Thematic Working Group on languages in education and training, defined two goals to be achieved by 2020. The first one was that a benchmark of 'independent User' (B1/B2) be set for the first target foreign language upon European students' completion of compulsory education at the age of 15-16. The second was an increase in number of schools introducing the second target foreign as a compulsory subject, as early as possible (see: "Towards the adoption of two European benchmarks on language competences" (Brussels, 8 May 2013, A3.002/lt).

through language assessment and strategic partnerships, as well as the European Language Label awards'.[8]

For Greece (perhaps also other countries –those that participated in the Survey and those that failed to do so) the impact of the ESLC has not yet been estimated, mainly because the efforts to make the results known have been erratic, as they have been made without the official support of the National Research Coordinator or the Ministry of Education. The efforts for broad dissemination of the ESLC findings are the next step to publishing this volume both in print and digital forms. The two institutions which are supporting this publication will hopefully take on this task, proposing and encouraging language education policy that will upgrade foreign language education in state schools.

5.2 Overview of the Greek Survey findings

Greece is one of the sixteen entities which participated in the ESLC and was represented by a sample of 2,972 Greek students of the third form of the gymnasium (ISCE 2), coming from 112 schools. A little over half of the students (1,594) sat for the test in English, which is the first foreign language offered as a compulsory language in the Greek educational system, in 57 schools from different parts of the country. The rest of the students (1,378 to be exact) sat for the second foreign language exam in French, a language offered as an optional compulsory language. The students tested in French came from 55 gymnasia around Greece.

Results show Greece comparing very well with the European average for English, but it seems that students' 'Autonomous User' performance is due to extra lessons in private tuition classes rather than curricular activity in school. This is a very serious issue that certainly needs to be investigated further and addressed at the level of policy – to create appropriate policy and also monitor implementation.

On the other hand, as in many other European countries that participated, Greek students' achievement in the second target foreign language was poor. Even more worrying was the fact that the small percentage of students who performed above 'Basic User' level in French also had extra lessons, outside their regular morning school classes.

Indeed, there were significant differences between first and second foreign language performance in all three competences, as in many other European countries. However, the proportion of Greek students who are A1 level or below in, the second foreign language, i.e. French, is higher in Greece. As a matter of fact, Greece has the highest frequency of students who fail to reach Basic User level in the second foreign language – an issue which also needs to be addressed.

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8   Ibid (http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/evidence-base_en.htm)

The ESLC enriched its research methods and complemented test results with data from questionnaires focusing on the context of foreign language teaching and learning. The questionnaires were completed by the participating students, their teachers and the principals of the sampled schools. The aim was to provide comparable information on factors which determine the educational context and its impact on language learning. The implicit aim was to highlight areas which impede language learning, and in this way stress the need for consideration of ways to modify weaknesses through policies which create or support contexts favourable to developing foreign language proficiency. In this sense, the contextual factors that the Survey focused on were considered policy issues, and thirteen of them were selected in order to facilitate discussion about progress in each country.

The findings from the Greek Survey have been discussed in chapter 1 of this volume. Test results were discussed in chapter 2 and contextual factors were discussed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 discussed the findings resulting from regression analysis, which explored the relation between questionnaire indices and student achievement, based on their performance on the language tests. The findings on the basis of the sampled school population can supposedly be generalised, but one could question whether indeed these findings are representative, since schools that took part were allowed to decide whether they would participate or not. Actually, it was the foreign language teacher who came forth with the proposal to have his/her class take part and the school principal had to agree. We wonder if the findings would be different if a larger sample of schools in Greece took part in a survey like this one – a sample with schools or classes that were obliged to participate. As a matter of fact, we might question the representativeness of the sample in the Survey. After all, it was composed of classes taught by foreign language teachers who agreed to participate –perhaps feeling certain somehow that their students would not fail– and of schools whose school principals gave their consent, knowing perhaps that their school was not underprivileged as far as foreign language education was concerned.

5.3 Problems needing to be addressed

Following the detailed discussion of the findings resulting from further study and analysis of the ESLC data in the previous chapters and the brief discussion above, the section that follows focuses on 10 issues which, in our opinion, constitute major setbacks in foreign language education in Greece. They are posed in the form of questions, which need to be addressed by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, since this is the only decision-making body in Greece, given that the country still has one of the most centralised educational systems in Europe. Even minor issues to be resolved, designated, regulated, announced require a Ministerial decree. Therefore, decisions for whatever big or small matter must be taken by the Minister of Education of each government in power. The most important ones are recorded for reference and for

reasons of transparency in the Government Gazette. These decisions hold equal weight as a law. So, Ministers may listen to bodies or units in or attached to the Ministry which are administratively responsible for proposals, but they ultimately must decide on their own, unless the proposals are in the form of a coherent plan of action submitted to be discussed and approved by Parliament.

The problems which emerge as the ten points below are discussed could be viewed as the basic challenges that a coherent foreign language education plan of action or coherent policy could face up to.

1. The first problem is that, while every school in the country covers exactly the same course content, specified by detailed national syllabuses, expected to use the same teaching approaches and exactly the same coursebooks (centrally produced and government controlled), there is great inconsistency in language achievement where English (and French) is concerned. More specifically, while nearly half the students in Greece studying English in school achieve Independent User level, the other half not only fails to achieve it but a high proportion of that other half does not even manage Basic User level. While there is discrepancy of achievement in other European countries, the discrepancy in Greece seems to be due mainly to extra support classes after school which, as has been mentioned throughout this report, have become standard practice for the average Greek student. Why do families feel the need to send their children to support classes in order for them to learn, seeming to distrust school for this job?

2. In the final ESLC report, it is made clear that performance in the second target language is low in many of the participating entities. In most cases it is only natural that performance in the second target language is much lower because of the curricular time spent on it. In several countries the second language does not begin to be offered until secondary school and fewer hours of the curriculum are devoted to it. However, in Greece, the second target language is introduced in primary school and the hours allocated to lessons are not far fewer than the first target language. So why is there such low achievement in Greece?

3. The onset of foreign language teaching in Greek schools is above the European average. At the time of the Greek Survey, English (as the first target foreign language) was taught from the third grade of the Greek primary school –the same as only in Estonia, France and Sweden9– and French (as one of the two second target language –the other one being German) was introduced in the fifth grade of primary school, the same as in Spain, Estonia, Sweden, Croatia and Malta.

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9   Along with other countries, such as France, in the last three years Greece progressively has been lowering the onset of English language teaching to the first grade of primary school, and as mentioned earlier there are more than 1300 12-seat schools throughout the country offering first and second year pupils a social literacy in English programme. For detailed information about this programme visit http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/peap.

Since, it has been established in this study that early onset of foreign language learning is a significant predictor and ultimately positively related to language achievement, the question posed is: Why is the performance of Greek students lower than students in other European countries where foreign language learning begins at the same time as in Greece or later?

4. Given that the time allocated for teaching the first and the second target languages in Greece –ranging from two to three hours per week– is more or less the same as in other participating countries, why is it that Greek students are obliged to receive a lot of extra support language teaching (more than the students in any other European country) with parents having to pay private tuition for these classes?

5. Regressive analysis of Survey data showed that the effect of 'informal language learning opportunities through the home and living environment' is a significant predictor for language learning and positively affects students' performance. Given that Greek students especially of English have opportunities for exposure to the language because it is a language that many parents know, because English is the main language in the Greek landscape, and because it dominates the traditional media in Greece, why is it that this experience is not capitalised in school and ultimately in curriculum language learning?

6. Even though Greek state education addresses the problem caused by mixed language level classes, by grouping students according to level of language proficiency, the problem is exasperated by the irregularity and variability of language support that students get, depending on parents' social, educational and economic background. It is to be noted that in the ESLC final report, Greece is mentioned as the only country showing a high percentage of students who take 'extra lessons' in the foreign language. One of the reasons for taking evening language classes, as students and their parents claim, is because in these classes students are prepared for language proficiency testing that will secure them a much desired language proficiency certificate.[10] Language certificates are highly sought after in Greece because they count as an important work qualification in both the private and public sector. In view of this, why has preparation for the national foreign language exams, administered by the Ministry of Education and leading to the state certificate of language proficiency, issued by the Ministry itself, not yet been introduced within the educational system?

7. Comparative Survey findings show that in Greece there are few opportunities to integrate ICT into foreign language teaching, due mainly to lack of equipment and software, but also due to lack of teacher preparation for this task. In general, Greece has low frequencies of use relating to every aspect of ICT in the language

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10 Never mind that one of the findings of the Survey, resulting from the regression analysis in chapter 4, was that the more students prepare for a test the less well they do on it. There is no piece of research in the field of language testing which attests to such a finding.

classroom, and schools fail to take advantage of students' existing digital literacy and extend it into the development of strategies for learning. As a matter of fact, Greece is reported as one of the countries where ICT is the least used both during lessons and outside of school. Students of English and French are reported to be using ICT outside school often, but not for the purpose of foreign language learning. The first question that is raised, therefore, is 'What does the school do to exploit the students' skills and talents and create bridges between what they are learning in school and their everyday realities?' The second question we should raise is 'Why do language teachers continue to be excluded from a 2010-2014 EU and state funded programme whose purpose is to train teachers to integrate ICT into foreign language teaching?'

8. While student and teacher exchange, as well as language project cooperation between schools in different countries are encouraged across the EU, in Greece a comparatively low percentage of English and French students have the opportunity to participate in school exchanges or take part in exchange visits. The ESLC final report mentions Greece as one of the countries that offers the least funding for student exchanges, similar to Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Sweden, and one where students have limited exchange opportunities, similar to those of French-speaking Belgium, Croatia, Portugal and Sweden. Greek teachers also get few opportunities for exchange visits, and very rarely have an opportunity to organize exchange visits. Furthermore, participation in school language projects is infrequent for both students and teachers of both languages. Greece appears, again, among the countries where teachers are given the least opportunities to participate in school language projects, unlike Estonia, Poland and Slovenia, where a high proportion of schools get involved in school language projects. All this despite the results of regression analysis which revealed that teacher participation in exchange visits and school language projects are indices for enhanced student performance (particularly in writing) in both languages. So why is it so in Greece? And why is it that there are no guest teachers in Greek foreign language classes – teachers from other countries whose first language is the same or different from the foreign language they teach?

9. Regression analysis revealed that what students think about the usefulness of the target language and the learning of this language are significant predictors of achievement. More specifically, this index is positively related to student performance in both English and French. Students who believe that learning the target language is useful are expected to have better ability in all skills in both languages. However, the index relating to students' perception of the difficulty of learning the target language is significantly related to performance in all skills in both languages. The effect, however, is negative implying that the more difficult the students find target language learning, the worse ability they have.

10. ESLC findings reveal that Greece is among the participating countries which have the best prepared foreign language teachers, who are highly accessible, though not made available to schools upon demand –due to financial reasons. All Greek English and French teachers hold a specialist university degree, from a department of the target Language and Literature, and more than 30% have had specialized postgraduate studies in Greece or in the country where the target language is the official language. As part of their undergraduate studies, where language teachers-to-be access knowledge in the target language (the curriculum courses are in English or French), they receive specialized initial training in teaching the target language. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities for practical classroom experience through in-school placement and student-teaching programmes. At their initial teacher training stage, a small percentage of teachers-to-be have experienced in-school placement, but only for a month or so, with actual teaching practice lasting for about a week. According to the final ESLC report, Greece and Slovenia have on average the shortest duration of in-school teaching placement. As regards the experience acquired through actual classroom teaching, teachers of both languages reported teaching experience in their subject on average about 16 years, which is good because regression analysis revealed that the greater experience a teacher has in teaching the target language, the higher the achievement of his/her students (providing of course that there are some incentives for a job well done). Where things are not so good is when we move to in-service teacher training and participation in professional development programmes, which the state is supposed to offer. Such programmes are rarely offered and, if they are, participation is voluntary and with a total lack of incentives, financial or otherwise. Neither are there incentives for participation in seminars offered by foreign language School Advisors. So the first question is 'Why are there no programmes and no incentives for teachers' continuing education and development?' since it has been shown, through analysis of ESLC data, that this index is related significantly to student performance and that the relation between this and high achievement is positive?' Even more important is another related question and that is: 'Why do foreign language (and other subject) teachers in Greece have no incentives whatsoever for a job well done?' Could this, we should ask finally, be related to the fact that while there are good teachers at work (though obviously demotivated, due to lack of incentives) foreign language education in school is not what it is expected to be?

In conclusion, the analysis of the ESLC data reveals that policy is urgently needed In Greece. A series of contextual factors, for which we now have empirical data, should change. They should be turned into conditions that favour foreign language education in Greek schools, where language teaching and learning seems to be undervalued, as the development of language proficiency seems to happen outside of school. This has serious economic consequences in a country which is still going through a dramatic

economic crisis. The reform needed does not necessarily mean increased resources. It requires that the Ministry of Education should decide to take foreign language education in school seriously, and adopt a carefully worked out long term plan and strategy with a view to bringing language education into school rather than it to happen on the outside. If this continues the state allows those who are privileged to receive foreign language education with private tuition, while the state also pays for teachers to teach in school. This means that the country pays a double amount – through both private and public funds. Despite the spending however underprivileged students are not receiving the language education they ought to be getting, given that 'better competences in foreign languages encourage a more open approach to others, their cultures and outlooks and allow taking full advantage of living in the multicultural and multilingual European society and... [they] help citizens to be more employable and adaptable in the modern EU labour market.'[11]

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APPENDIX 1

Figures related to the effect of the grouped ESCS index and the contextual factors on students' language proficiency
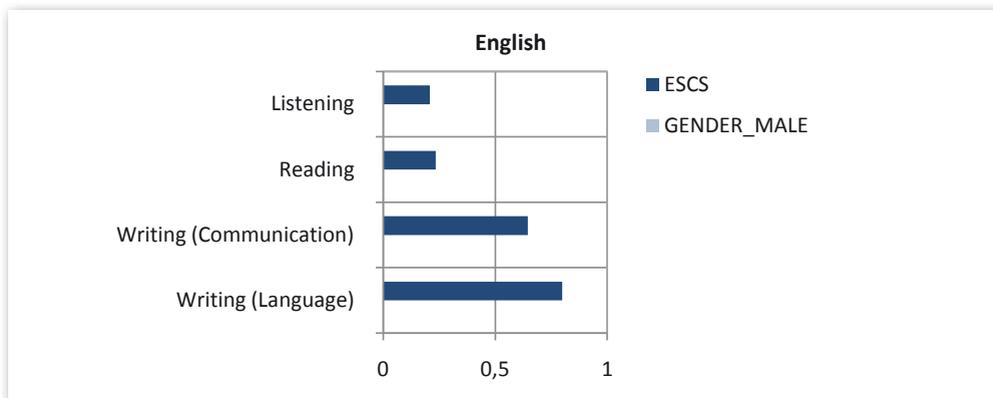
Figure 4.1: Effect of the ESCS index and gender on language proficiency in English
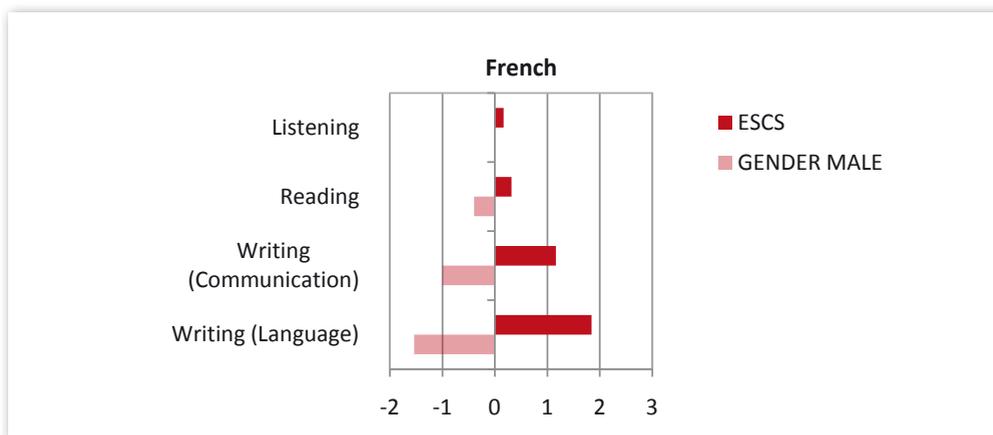
Figure 4.2: Effect of the ESCS index and gender on language proficiency in French

English

Figure 4.3: Students' indices and students' competence in English
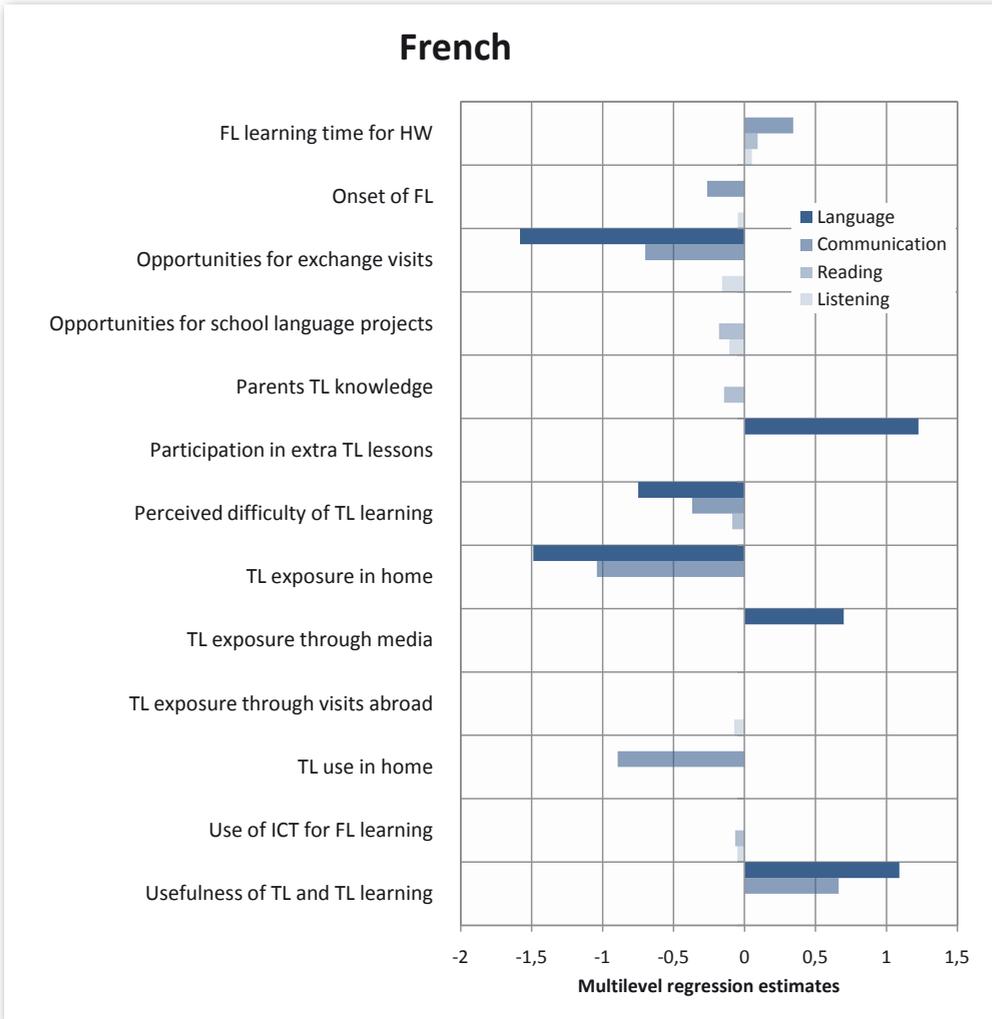
Figure 4.4: Students' indices and students' competence in French
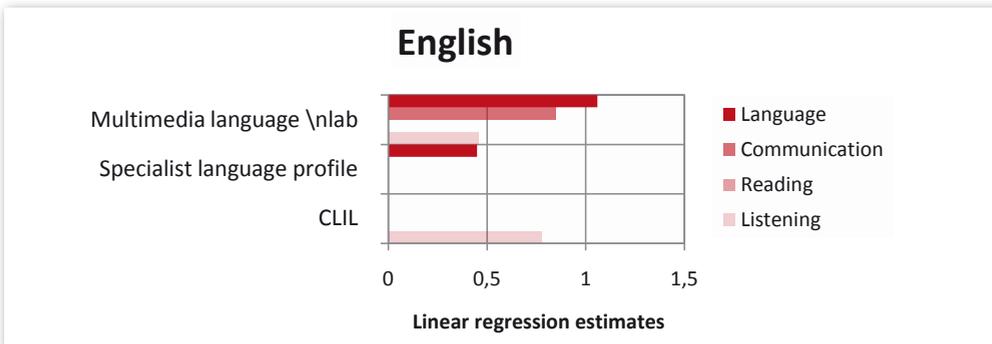
Figure 4.5: The school principals' index and students' competence in English
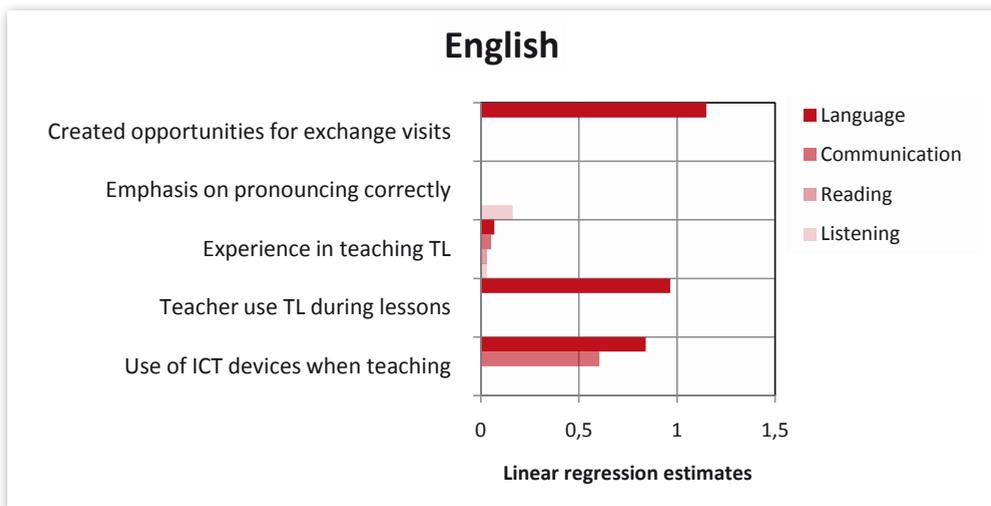
English

Figure 4.6: The teachers' index and students' ability in English
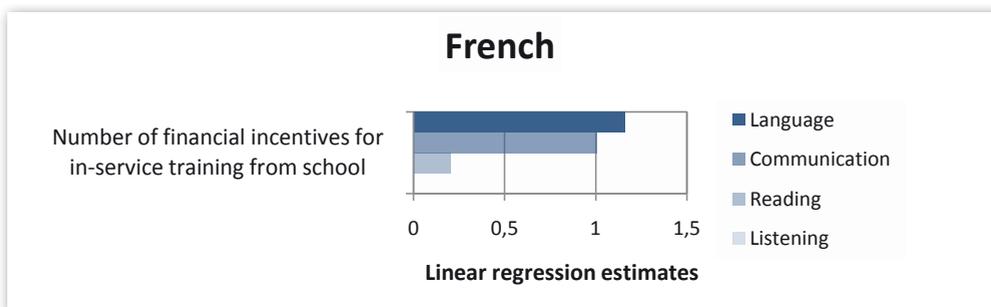
French

Figure 4.7: The school principals' index and students' competence in French
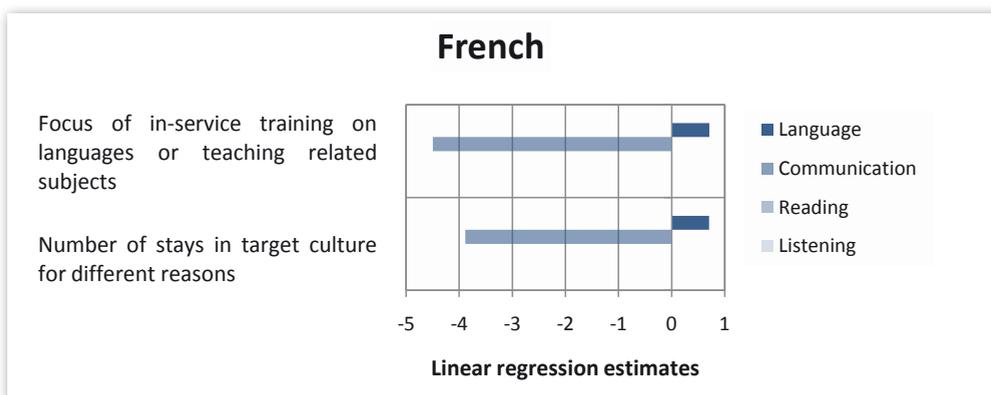
French

Figure 4.8: The teachers' index and students' ability in French
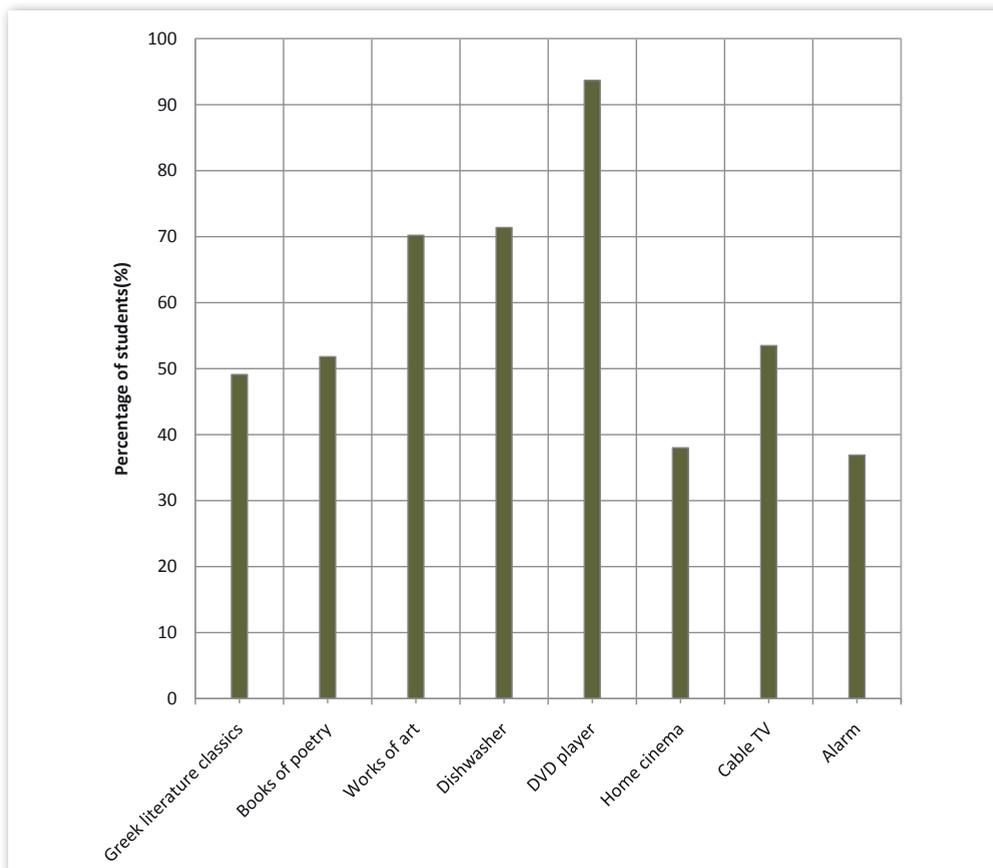
Figure 4.9: Greek students' home possessions

APPENDIX 2

The information presented below is summarized in Figures 4.1-4.8 in Appenidx 1. Below are the final multilevel regression models relating to the effect of contextual factors on students' language learning proficiency.

		English		French	
		Estimate	*(Std.Error)*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	ESCS	0.208***	(0.036)	0.164***	(0.032)
	Grouped ESCS	0.565***	(0.111)		
Reading	ESCS	0.234***	(0.061)	0.316***	(0.041)
	Grouped ESCS	0.405***	(0.132)		
	Gender_Male			-0.398***	(0.081)
Writing (Communication)	ESCS	0.646***	(0.112)	1.162***	(0.175)
	Grouped ESCS	0.582***	(0.199)	1.347***	(0.386)
	Gender_Male			-0.996***	(0.320)
Writing (Language)	ESCS	0.799***	(0.130)	1.842***	(0.251)
	Grouped ESCS	1.104***	(0.284)	1.122*	(0.583)
	Gender_Male			-1.536***	(0.462)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.1: The multilevel model, including the significant predictors for each skill and target language

English Listening	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	1.112***	(0.236)
ESCS	0.101**	(0.479)
Grouped ESCS	0.442***	(0.127)
FL lesson time a week	0.068***	(0.025)
TL exposure through media	0.340***	(0.069)
Onset of TL education	-0.064**	(0.031)
TL learning time for tests	-0.103**	(0.047)
Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.116***	(0.036)

Opportunities for school language projects	-0.179**	(0.077)
Emphasis on similarities	-0.137***	(0.044)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.277***	(0.051)
Between-school variance: 59.40%	**Within-school variance: 22.10%**	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4.2: Final multilevel regression model for students' English language listening comprehension competence

English Reading	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	1.004***	(0.277)
ESCS	0.141**	(0.055)
Grouped ESCS	0.312***	(0.111)
FL lesson time a week	0.063**	(0.026)
TL exposure through media	0.489***	(0.082)
Usefulness of TL and TL learning	0.145**	(0.073)
Number of languages studied before TL	-0.402***	(0.095)
Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.122***	(0.042)
Using ICT outside school	-0.186***	(0.072)
Emphasis on similarities	-0.184***	(0.050)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.323***	(0.062)
Between-school variance: 76.08%	**Within-school variance: 23.30%**	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4.3: Final multilevel regression model for students' English language reading comprehension competence

English Writing (Communication)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	1.529***	(0.433)
ESCS	0.373***	(0.100)
Grouped ESCS	0.262	(0.199)
TL exposure through media	0.636***	(0.130)
Onset of TL education	-0.195***	(0.061)
Number of languages studied before TL	-0.566***	(0.170)
TL use through visits abroad	-0.205**	(0.089)

Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.159**	(0.071)
Opportunities for exchange visits	-0.388**	(0.166)
Emphasis on similarities	-0.253***	(0.088)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.804***	(0.098)
Between-school variance: 65.85%	**Within-school variance: 32.55%**	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4.4: Final multilevel regression model for the students' English language writing competence (communication aspect)

English Writing (Language)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	2.090***	(0.512)
ESCS	0.498***	(0.117)
Grouped ESCS	0.484	(0.258)
FL lesson time a week	0.163***	(0.057)
TL exposure through media	0.610***	(0.155)
Onset of TL education	-0.335***	(0.073)
Number of languages studied before TL	-0.589***	(0.201)
TL use through visits abroad	-0.278***	(0.098)
Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.212**	(0.084)
Emphasis on similarities	-0.261**	(0.104)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.953***	(0.117)
Between-school variance: 73.64%	**Within-school variance: 31.42%**	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4.5: Final multilevel regression model for the students' English language writing production (language aspect)

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French Listening	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	0.573***	(0.105)
ESCS	0.153***	(0.032)
Onset of FL education	-0.042**	(0.020)
Opportunities for exchange visits	-0.168***	(0.055)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.063**	(0032)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4.6: Final multilevel regression model for students' French language listening comprehension competence

French Reading	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	0.0788***	(0.121)
ESCS	0.361***	(0.046)
Gender	0.391***	(0.079)
Parents TL knowledge	-0.150***	(0.053)
Opportunities for school language projects	-0.172**	(0.074)
Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.114***	(0.042)
Between-school variance: 23.33%	**Within-school variance:** 18.23%	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4.7: Final multilevel regression model for students' French language reading comprehension competence

French Writing (Communication)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	-2.000***	(0.517)
ESCS	1.211***	(0.169)
Grouped ESCS	1.205***	(0.384)
Gender	-0.987***	(0.308)
Usefulness of TL and TL learning	0.781***	(0.190)
Onset of FL education	-0.276***	(0.104)
TL use in home	-1.088***	(0.322)

Opportunities for exchange visits	-0.723**	(0.305)
Between-school variance: 65.35%	**Within-school variance: 23.63%**	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 leveL

Table 4.8: Final multilevel regression model for students' French language writing competence (communication aspect)

French Writing (Language)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Intercept	-3.240***	(0.788)
ESCS	1.878***	(0.232)
Grouped ESCS	1.420**	(0.600)
Gender	-1.809***	(0.436)
Usefulness of TL and TL learning	1.112***	(0.297)
TL exposure through media	0.500**	(0.240)
TL learning time for tests	-0.626**	(0.243)
Opportunities for exchange visits	-2.019***	(0.432)
Number of learned ancient FL	-1.049**	(0.522)
Between-school variance: 32.71%	**Within-school variance: 29.91%**	

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 leveL

Table 4.9: Final multilevel regression model for students' French language writing competence

Skill	Policy issue indices	English		French	
		Estimate	*(Std.Error)*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	Onset of FL	-0.009***	(0.031)	-0.046***	(0.021)
	Onset of TL	-0.113***	(0.034)		
	FL lesson time a week	0.069**	(0.027)		
	TL learning time for tests	-0.170***	(0.049)		
Reading	Onset of FL	-0.125***	(0.035)		
	Onset of TL	-0.138***	(0.037)		
	FL lesson time a week	0.082***	(0.029)		
	TL learning time for tests	-0.115*	(0.059)		
Writing *(Communication)*	Onset of FL	-0.169***	(0.064)	-0.264**	(0.107)
	Onset of TL	-0.291***	(0.067)	-0.170*	(0.094)
	TL learning time for tests	-0.234**	(0.106)		
Writing *(Language)*	Onset of FL	-0.279***	(0.078)		
	Onset of TL	-0.488***	(0.079)	-0.263*	(0.138)
	FL lesson time a week	0.198***	(0.065)		
	TL learning time for tests	-0.285**	(0.125)	-0.447*	(0.255)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.10: Multiple regression analysis of students' indices and students' competence

French			
Skill	*Policy issue index*	*Estimate*	(Std.Error)
Writing (Communication)	Number of foreign and ancient languages on offer	1.035*	(0.524)

*Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.11: Diversity and foreign languages offered: Simple linear regression analysis of the school principals' index and students' competence

		English		French	
Skill	**Policy issue indices**	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	Number of learned ancient FL	0.215**	(0.099)		
	Number of learned modern FL	0.118*	(0.063)		
	Number of languages studied before TL	-0.194**	(0.094)		
Reading	Number of learned ancient FL	0.280**	(0.120)		
	Number of learned modern FL			-0.120*	(0.067)
	Number of languages studied before TL	-0.484***	(0.104)		
Writing (Communication)	Number of learned modern FL	0.274**	(0.127)		
	Number of languages studied before TL	-0.772***	(0.191)		
(Writing) Language	Number of learned modern FL	0.287*	(0.150)		
	Number of learned ancient FL			-0.963*	(0.558)
	Number of languages studied before TL	-0.886***	(0.225)		

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.12: Diversity and foreign languages offered: Multiple regression analysis of the students' indices and students' competence

Skill	Policy issue indices	English		French	
		Estimate	*(Std.Error)*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	TL exposure through media	0.356***	(0.064)		
	TL exposure through visits abroad	-0.108**	(0.047)	-0.073**	(0.031)
Reading	TL exposure through living environment	0.062**	(0.029)	-0.037*	(0.021)
	TL exposure through media	0.497***	(0.075)		
	TL use in home			-0.158*	(0.086)
	Parents TL knowledge			-0.145***	(0.053)
Communication	TL exposure through living environment	0.088*	(0.052)		
	TL exposure through media	0.811***	(0.130)		
	TL exposure through visits abroad	-0.264***	(0.095)		
	TL use in home			-0.894***	(0.325)
Language	TL exposure through living environment	0.153**	(0.061)		
	TL exposure through media	0.864***	(0.155)	0.699***	(0.225)
	TL exposure through visits abroad	-0.247**	(0.113)		

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.13: Informal language-learning opportunities: Multiple regression analysis of the students' indices and students' competence

Skill	Policy issue indices	English		French	
		Estimate	(Std.Error)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Listening	CLIL	0.779**	(0.329)		
	Specialist language profile	0.164*	(0.093)		
Writing (Communication)	Specialist language profile	0.250*	(0.142)		
Writing (Language)	Specialist language profile	0.449**	(0.203)	0.484*	(0.268)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.14: Foreign language specialization of schools: Simple regression analysis of the students' indices and students' competence

French			
Skill	Policy issue index	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Writing (Language)	Participation in extra TL lessons	1.225***	(0.438)

***Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4.15: Foreign language specialization of schools: Multilevel regression analysis of the students' index and students' competence

English				
Skill	Policy issue index		Estimate	(Std.Error)
Listening	Multimedia language lab	Not lang. specific	0.458**	(0.201)
		Yes	0.113	(0.567)
Writing (Communication)	Multimedia language lab	Not lang. specific	0.850**	(0.421)
		Yes	0.788	(0.627)
Writing (Language)	Multimedia language lab	Not lang. specific	1.059**	(0.473)
		Yes	1.158	(0.998)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.16: ICT use to enhance foreign language learning and teaching: Simple regression analysis of the schools' index and students' competence

English Writing			
Skill	*Policy issue index*	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Writing (Communication)	Use of ICT devices during lessons	0.604**	(0.280)
Writing (Language)	Use of ICT devices during lessons	0.841**	(0.345)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level.

Table 4.17: ICT use to enhance foreign language learning and teaching: Simple regression analysis of the teachers' index and students' ability

		English		French	
Skill	*Policy issue indices*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.120***	(0.035)	-0.051**	(0.024)
Reading	Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.143***	(0.041)	-0.066**	(0.033)
	Use of ICT outside school	-0.136*	(0.072)		
Writing (Communication)	Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.160**	(0.074)		
Writing (Language)	Use of ICT for FL learning	-0.211**	(0.087)		

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level.

Table 4.18: Foreign language specialization of schools: Multilevel regression analysis of the students' indices and students' ability

French			
Skill	*Policy issue index*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	Funding of students exchange	0.332*	(0.191)

*Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.19: Intercultural exchanges: Simple regression analysis of the schools' indices and students' ability

Skill	Policy issue indices	English		French	
		Estimate	(Std.Error)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Writing (Language)	Created opportunities for exchange visits	1.150**	(0.441)		
	Created opportunities for school language projects			1.281*	(0.652)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.20: Intercultural exchanges: Simple regression analysis of the teachers' indices and students' competence

Skill	Policy issue indices	English		French	
		Estimate	(Std.Error)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Listening	Opportunities for exchange visits	-0.227***	(0.086)	-0.158***	(0.055)
	Opportunities for school language projects	-0.226***	(0.081)	-0.106**	(0.051)
Reading	Opportunities for school language projects			-0.180**	(0.074)
Writing (Communication)	Opportunities for exchange visits	-0.603***	(0.172)	-0.700**	(0.312)
Writing (Language)	Opportunities for exchange visits	-0.525**	(0.210)	-1.583***	(0.447)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.21: Intercultural exchanges: Multilevel regression analysis of the students' indices and students' competence

English			
Skill	Policy issue indices	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Listening	Emphasis on pronouncing correctly	0.163**	(0.066)
Writing (Language)	Emphasis on pronouncing correctly	0.339*	(0.198)
	Teacher's use TL during lessons	0.965**	(0.476)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.22: Foreign language teaching approach: Simple regression analysis of the teachers' indices and students' competence

Skill	Policy issue indices	English		French	
		Estimate	(Std.Error)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Listening	Emphasis on similarities	-0.208***	(0.044)		
	Usefulness of TL and TL learning	0.186***	(0.070)		
	Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.390***	(0.049)	-0.057*	(0.032)
	Students use TL during FL lessons			-0.040*	(0.028)
Reading	Emphasis on similarities	-0.222***	(0.052)		
	Usefulness of TL and TL learning	0.379***	(0.074)		
	Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-0.468***	(0.060)	-0.086**	(0.042)
Writing (Communication)	Emphasis on similarities	-0.348***	(0.095)		
	Usefulness of TL and TL learning	0.644***	(0.136)	0.664***	(0.192)
	Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-1.016***	(0.098)	-0.369**	(0.176)
Writing (Language)	Emphasis on similarities	-0.402***	(0.113)		
	Usefulness of TL and TL learning	0.686***	(0.160)	1.091***	(0.276)
	Perceived difficulty of TL learning	-1.166***	(0.116)	-0.749***	(0.253)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.23: Foreign language teaching approach: Multilevel regression analysis of the students' indices and students' ability

Skill	Policy issue index	English		French	
		Estimate	(Std.Error)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Reading	Number of financial incentives for in-service training from school	0.162*	(0.094)	0.206**	(0.086)
Writing (Communication)	Number of financial incentives for in-service training from school			1.008***	(0.317)
Writing (Language)	Number of financial incentives for in-service training from school			1.163***	(0.356)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.24: Teachers' access to high quality initial and continuous training: Simple regression analysis of the schools' indices and students' ability

Skill	Policy issue index	English		French	
		Estimate	(Std.Error)	Estimate	(Std.Error)
Writing (Communication)	Focus of in-service training on language- or teaching-related subjects	-1.793*	(0.982)	-3.883**	(1.496)
Writing (Language)	Focus of in-service training on language- or teaching-related subjects			-4.497***	(1.602)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.25: Teachers' access to high quality initial and continuous training: Simple regression analysis of the teachers' indices and students' competence

French			
Skill	*Policy issue index*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Writing (Communication)	Number of stays in target culture country for different reasons	0.704**	(0.295)
Writing (Language)	Number of stays in target culture country for different reasons	0.711**	(0.322)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.26: A period of work or study abroad for teachers: Simple regression analysis of the teachers' index and students' competence

English			
Skill	*Policy issue index*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	Experience in teaching TL	0.031**	(0.014)
Reading	Experience in teaching TL	0.030**	(0.012)
Writing (Communication)	Experience in teaching TL	0.053**	(0.023)
Writing (Language)	Experience in teaching TL	0.069**	(0.032)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.27: Teachers' practical experience: Simple regression analysis of the teachers' index and students' competence

		English		French	
Skill	*Policy issue indices*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*	*Estimate*	*(Std.Error)*
Listening	FL learning time for HW			0.052**	(0.023)
	TL as most spoken language at home	0.536***	(0.193)		
	TL use through home environment	0.088*	(0.049)		

Reading	FL learning time for HW			0.092***	(0.032)
	TL as most spoken language at home	0.802***	(0.256)		
	TL use through home environment	0.167***	(0.059)		
Writing (Communication)	FL learning time for HW	0.160**	(0.074)	0.343***	(0.126)
	TL as most spoken language at home	0.810*	(0.430)		
	TL use through home environment	0.324***	(0.106)		
	TL exposure in home			-1.039***	(0.396)
Writing (Language)	FL learning time for HW	0.288***	(0.086)	0.321*	(0.183)
	TL as most spoken language at home	1.267**	(0.505)		
	TL use through home environment	0.405***	(0.126)		
	TL exposure in home			-1.489***	(0.573)

***Significant at 0.01 level, **Significant at 0.05 level, *Significant at 0.10 level

Table 4.28: Other policy issues: Multilevel regression analysis of students' indices and students' competence