

COST Action 1306
New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: Opportunities and Challenges

‘New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: A Transdisciplinary View from Cyprus’
31 January 2017

Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the activities, presentations and discussions taken place at the open event ‘*New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: A Transdisciplinary View from Cyprus*’ at the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus on the 31st of January 2017. There were 7 keynote presenters from Cyprus and abroad: Prof Bernadette O'Rourke, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, UK, and Prof Joan Pujolar Cos, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain, Prof Fofi Constantinidou, University of Cyprus, Center for Applied Neuroscience, Dr Yiasemina Karagiorgi and Dr Alexandra Petridou, Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation, Pedagogical Institute, Cyprus, Elena Ioannidou, University of Cyprus, Martha Neokleous, European Commission Representation in Cyprus, Directorate-General for Translation Field Office in Nicosia. This event was under the aegis of the Ministry of Education in Cyprus. The event was of great success. We had over 80 participants, educators, teachers and principals of primary and secondary schools, public and private sector, representatives of the Ministry of Education of Cyprus and EU, academics, students, stakeholders and policy makers. The most important, one of the advantages of the event was that it was interdisciplinary. As part of this open event there was also an award ceremony of the essay competition: “Being able to speak more than one language has invaluable potentials. How can children’s multilingualism be promoted?” his open event was organised during the 5th round of workshop meeting of the ‘New Speakers’ Network at the university of Central Lancashire, Cyprus, 30-31 of January 2017.

The report has been prepared by Sviatlana Karpava, convenor and coordinator of the event. The report includes: key questions addressed and answered at the event, the issues and concerns raised by the various contributors at the open event, theoretical framework(s), definition of ‘new speaker’ and ‘new speakerness’, the range of multilingual profiles and/or contexts explored and cross-cutting themes or differences across these, synthesis of the contributions of the participants at the event and policy recommendations taken from the discussion during the workshop.

New Speakers: A Transdisciplinary View from Cyprus, synthesis of the participants’ contributions

The event was opened by the first keynote speakers and chairs of the IS1306 Cost Acton ‘New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe: Opportunities and Challenges’ **Bernadette O’Rourke**, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, UK, and **Prof Joan Pujolar Cos**, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain. Their presentation with the title: ‘*(New) Speakers in a multilingual Europe-Crossing boundaries and negotiating new spaces*’ was about multilingualism and a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of this concept. A new fine-grained approach to the study of language has appeared with the focus on the socially and spatially situated nature of linguistic repertoires that has substituted a monolithic approach to the study of ‘languages’ that views languages as bounded objects.

They have provided the overview of the network activities related to the concept of ‘New Speakers’ and processes of new speakerness. The focus of the research is not on the language as an object but on the analysis of speakers’ use, adoption of a language and being a new speaker from a sociolinguistic perspective.

The second keynote speaker was **Prof. Fofi Constantinidou** and presented on ‘*The effect of language and culture on verbal and non-verbal cognitive performance.*’ In her presentation/talk Prof Constantinidou provided the background on globalization, the importance of language knowledge, being bilingual and multilingual and the status of English as lingua franca.

With respect to clinical assessment, most of clinically sensitive and valid assessment tools are in English and there is a great need to adapt and validate these neuropsychological tests in other languages. Cognitive abilities of patients, non-native speakers of English should be properly assessed with the help of linguistically and culturally appropriate measures (Gonzalez et al., 2001; Constantinidou and Ioannou, 2008). Memory abilities and processing speed depend on language (Ishikawa and Nobe, 1998; Hoosain, 1982; Haveh-Benjamin and Agros, 1986).

The purpose of research was focused on the comparison of English and Greek, the differences in common cognitive (verbal and non-verbal) performance between Greek and English speakers, native speakers of Greek and English. Assessment battery was focused on executive functions, verbal memory, visual memory and attention/organisation.

It was found that English speakers were able to recall a greater number of digits than Greek speakers on Digit Forward and Digits Backward and this can be explained by monosyllabic structure of the digits in English. It was found that English speakers were able to recall a greater number of digits than Greek speakers on Digit Forward and Digits Backward and this can be explained by monosyllabic structure of the digits in English. The research was also focused on the comparison between older English and older Greek speakers regarding fast processing of linguistic information.

Greek language has polysyllabic structure, while English has monosyllabic structure on non-verbal cognitive tests. There were revealed some difference between the participants regarding their performance on auditory span tasks, Digits Forward and Backward, as well as the tasks that require cognitive and mental flexibility (Train Making Tests) and verbal fluency. Only complex non-verbal tasks such as Rey complex Figure Tests revealed the difference.

According to Haaland, Price and La Rue (2003), there is a decline in performance on paragraph recall with age, both for immediate and delayed recall conditions (Fastenau, Denburg and Abelles, 1996; Johnson, Storand and Balota, 2003). The translated and adopted battery of tests for neurocognitive performance assessment was used. English speakers performed better than Greek speaker on paragraph recall. Age was a statistically significant factor. There is an effect of age on the initial encoding of textual information rather than on strategy of this information (Fastenau et al., 1996; Constantinidou and Bakar, 2002; Constantinidou et al., 2014).

Differences in language and culture affect the performance on the recall task (Gasquoine, 1999; Kennepohl, 2004 and Nell, 1999). With respect to linguistic and cultural influences, there might be an effect of cultural bias of a story on recall production. English speakers were tested on standard tools while Greek speakers on a translated, adopted tool. Neuropsychological performance is affected by linguistic and cultural factors in line with context-process hypothesis and cultural schemata (Wagner and Hayes, 2005).

The context of the story might have influenced the process of encoding of the textual information. In Cyprus, there are two varieties, Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and Cypriot Greek (CG). SMG is used for formal oral and written communication, while CG dialect is used for informal social interactions. CG and SMG differ in phonology, pronunciation, syntax, morphology and semantics. It could be that CG has a role or affect encoding and processing of the information in SMG (in paragraph recall tasks).

Professor Constantinidou tried to discuss the concept of New Speakers in her presentation. It is important to delineate language and cognitive difference or disorder. Assessment should be done both in native and second language. The length of exposure to L2 should be measured and second language learning mechanisms, task familiarity and cultural expectations should be taken into consideration (schooling, declarative learning). It is important to be careful with translated versions of assessment tasks, even non-linguistic tasks and simple recall tasks. Such cross-language differences as syllable structure can affect the performance in simple recall tasks and cognitive shifting tasks (for young participants). The difference between Greek and English population were mainly with respect to complex working memory tasks, with visual and non-verbal tasks. Contextually based information (story recall) triggers different patterns of performance. Such factors as task complexity, linguistic complexity, story task familiarity, historical context and experiences can affect the development of cognitive skills. Linguistic, educational and socioeconomic background should be taken into consideration.

The next presentation was by **Dr Yiasemina Karagiorgi and Dr Alexandra Petridou**. In their talk '*Constructing a Validity Argument: The Case of the Greek Language Test 'Milas Ellinka I' in Cyprus schools.*' The problem/ issue raised in their presentation was related to the high number of students with Greek as an Additional Language (GAL) in Cyprus public schools. Cyprus public schools are monolingual and in order to progress with their studies, students need to master Greek, language of their host country. GAL students are immersed in mainstream school together with monolingual Greek Cypriot students, but they have some extra classes for intensive learning of Greek. The absence of Greek language diagnostic tests leads to the difficulty of assessing their GAL students' language proficiency and provision of relevant support.

The authors presented and described the test 'Milas Ellinika I' for children 7-11 years old that assess A1, A2 and B1 levels of common European Framework of Reference for language (CEFR) on listening, reading, writing and grammar skills. The duration of the test is 45-90 minutes and it has a variety of questions. The results of validation (McNamara, 2011; Hughes, Porter and Weir, 1988) of diagnostic test 'Milas Ellinika I' in Cyprus education context and its importance were presented and discussed.

The test was developed in Greece by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. They presented A-posteriori (after-the test) study. The validity of the test, its multifacetedness and relativity (Weir, 2005; Messick, 1989) were discussed. According to Weir (2005), four key elements of validation are scoring-validity, criterion-validity, context-validity and consequential validity (Messick, 1995).

The participants were from 17 primary schools, from all Cyprus districts, who attended Greek language remedial classes. Scoring validity included marker reliability (double-marking, item difficulty, item quality, reliability for item and person measure). Main findings of the survey were that the test is appropriate for students' age and Greek proficiency level. Test item instructions were with clear links between pictures and wording of each item. The understanding of test item was facilitated by pictures.

Overall, this test is an important tool for evaluating the Greek proficiency of non-native speakers of Greek, GAL students, in order to help them to integrate into the learning and teaching process in Cyprus. The presenters also speculated on the concept of 'New Speakers', in their case new speakers are GAL students, new speakers of Greek with immigrant background.

Dr Elena Ioannidou in her presentation '*Performing 'linguaging': multilingual practices among youth and young children in Cyprus*' gave an overview about current trends in sociolinguistics and a social theory of language and language as performance (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Bauman, 2002). There were raised some issues and examples of how speaker act against standards and norms in their language choice (Jorgensen, 2008). There was also a discussion about individual linguistic repertoires that are composed by different linguistic varieties, registers and languages. Speakers can have various communicative aims for ideational function that represents their world or for interpersonal function that enacts their social roles. These communicative aims trigger linguistic choices and language use.

The presentation was focused on the idea of language as performance, 'linguaging' and was based on the previous research projects on the use of language in the Cypriot context: a) Preschool children using different varieties of the Greek language during play time at home (Ioannidou, forthcoming), b) Teenage girls describing their multilingual linguistic and literary practices in out of school contexts (Shaili and Ioannidou, 2016), c) A multilingual classroom in a private secondary school where the students and the teacher use different languages and different varieties as tools to act upon in classroom discourse (Christodoulou and Ioannidou, 2015).

The results of the study show that language is used by young children and teenagers as a resource for meaning-making, representation and enactment. A lot of mixing of codes, 'crossing' and mixing can be observed (Rampton, 2006). Dr Ioannidou tried to deal with the concept of 'New Speakers' in her presentation in the light of her own research paradigm.

Ms Martha Neokleous: in her presentation '*The Case of Cyprus: a multilingual contradiction*' gave an overview on multilingualism in the EU and in Cyprus and the activities of the European Commission on the local and international

level. The results of the ‘Special Euro Barometer 386: Europeans and their languages’ showed that Cypriot citizens believe that they should be able to speak at least one foreign language. They have learned languages through group language lessons with a teacher outside school.

Cyprus participants agree that languages should be a policy priority. Foreign languages are well represented in Cyprus and European schools. As for primary schools, English is introduced from the 1st grade at primary schools. There is an increase in the teaching hours of English. In gymnasiums they have English and French classes. In lyceum they have three foreign languages, English, French and other foreign languages.

The presenter was talking about language identity questions, especially among young people, the official language policy in Cyprus, Turkish as EU language, use of English for communication purpose and also communication between and communities in Cyprus. According to ‘Special Eurobarometer 386: Europeans and their languages’ translation has been perceived to have an important role in order to access public services and translators (around 4,300) and interpreters (around 1,000).

There are a lot of linguists working for EU Parliament, Court of Auditors, Court of Justice, Court of Europe, European Economic and Social Committee, European Central Bank and Translation Centre. The EU translators and interpreters translate from and into all the EU’s 24 official languages and they cover all subject areas. Recruitment competitions for EU officials are published via official journal of the European Union and European Personnel Selection office. Selection procedure takes place from 5 to 9 months. The recruitment criteria and eligibility are EU citizenship, full university degree in languages or another field, no previous professional experience is required. Language knowledge for translators is of great importance, mother tongue, English, German or French or other first source languages and a second source language among the EU’s official languages.

The services that EU translators provide are full-length translation, web translation, translation hotline, translation of confidential texts, machine translation, editing and web writing advice, written and oral summary, linguistic advice and stand-by services. They also deal with machine translation, terminology and tools, studies, visiting translator scheme, European Day of languages, links with schools and universities. The stakeholders involved are National authorities, universities, language industries, international organisations, public, machine translation users, schools and universities. European Day of languages is celebrated on the 26th of September.

Ms Neokleous also informed the audience about ‘Translating Europe Project, Building a Community of Translation Stakeholders’ with the focus on translation tools and technologies, local and EU level, organization of translating

Europe workshops in EU countries, informing public about technology, tools and training, status of the translation profession, employability of young translation graduates.

There is a visiting translator scheme, translators can spend around 2 weeks at university, public institution or country of language that they are learning. There is a mutual interest and mutual benefit as students can exchange knowledge, experience and good practices. Ms Neokleous also discussed the concept of 'New speakers'. Language learning and teaching, development of translation and interpreting skills and opportunities for training are of great importance.

Round table discussion

After the keynote presentations, there was a **round table discussion** so that the audience could ask various questions and get the answers and clarifications from the competent experts in the area of multilingualism from interdisciplinary perspectives.

These are some of the questions that Prof Constantinidou tried to address in her presentation and during the round table discussion:

- Our disciplines have often operated on the basis of assumptions that are proving less and less productive. Studies building upon language acquisition research commonly draw on data collected from native speakers, or subjects in the process of becoming native speakers. Acquisition amongst bilinguals or L2 learners is not so well known enough to develop protocols to detect and treat language impairments. How does this affect your work?
- Do you think that Cypriot professionals in this area are sensitized for these issues? Even when speech therapists may not have the same backup to deal with native speakers and non-native speakers, it probably helps if they are aware of the implications that these unbalances may have for the people they treat.
- Is your field generally open to consider linguistic and cultural background as independent variables?

Dr Yiasemina Karagiorgi, Dr Alexandra Petridou were asked the following questions:

- Should we understand that the same form of "demotic" or standard Greek used in Greek schooling is also valid in Cyprus, or did your pilot study already involve an adaptation to a Cypriot Greek variety?
- Do you think that the language curriculum in Cyprus is applied in a way that ensures social equality between native speakers of Greek and GAL students? Do GAL students generally present poorer academic results, particularly in Greek language?
- This question connects with a universal problem of education systems: we evaluate similarly students who have different points of departure. Language is a good example. Should and Could Cypriot schools set different goals to native and non-native speakers of Greek? Could this test be instrumental in articulating such goals?
- Do you have any knowledge if Cypriot students who move to Greece suffer any kind of educational or social disadvantage?

Dr Elena Ioannidou tried to answer the following questions:

- How is translanguaging addressed by institutions, particularly educational ones? Is it considered as a resource for learning or pushed outside of institutional space or accorded negative evaluations? Can translanguaging be seen as a form of cultural resistance in some contexts?
- Do native and non-native speakers of Greek presents different forms of translanguaging, and what are the implications?

Ms Martha Neokleous was asked to discuss the following questions:

- How do Greek Cypriot speakers feature in the whole EU architecture? The EU largely operates with the European traditions that treats languages as uniform things, so that variation is commonly ignored or

problematized. So are Cypriot speakers "invisible"? Less visible? Is their Greek accepted? Does it have to be negotiated?

- The question of translators may be a case in point. I am talking here out of full ignorance of the logics of Greece-Cyprus political and cultural relations. Did you ever need to negotiate your legitimacy as a "Greek" voice in the EU interpreting space?
- How does being a "native" feature in the EU interpreting profession? Are there hierarchies between "native" and "non-native" translators/interpreters? Do selection procedures privilege specific profiles of speakers?
- A related topic: in relation to English, for instance, preference for non-native speakers is growing in some contexts. Do you see this happening with other languages? Any experience about this issue in other contexts in which you have worked?

The impact of the event and its relevance to the main objectives of the Cost Action

The participants of the open event were given short questionnaires to fill before the event. The analysis of the data showed that the participants had certain expectations for the meeting. The majority of the audience were primary and secondary teachers as well as university students and academics. They were eager to learn more about the concept of 'New Speakers', to know more about multilingualism and advantages of multilingual society, to get new experience and some interesting ideas for future studies or work and find the ways in order to support multilingual students coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in monolingual classrooms in Cyprus.

Some of the teachers wanted to find out more about the diversity in Europe and how Europeans and Cypriots do perceive this reality, new ways of teaching in a multilingual class, how to use and speak different languages in the same school or class environment.

Some of the teachers attended this seminar in order to continue their professional development, to increase their knowledge, to have a possibility for a discussion during the round table. They wanted to broaden their knowledge on multilingualism and to get an understanding of other people's views on the English language teaching in the diverse society. There were certain questions raised: Who are the 'New speakers'? Second language learners? Minority language speakers? How the new speaker term is related to multilingual practices in a superdiverse society?

The majority of the teachers wanted to broaden knowledge and abilities about new subject, teaching techniques and methods in order to approach and be able to communicate with children of various cultural societies and groups. Some of the participants were expecting to gain insight on multilingualism in Modern Europe. What opportunities are there for those multilinguals and how we are steadily progressing to speaking more than two languages and why?

They decided to participate in the meeting because they found the topic very interesting and appealing, and also different from other seminars that they usually attend. It was a great opportunity and experience for them to listen and get in touch with people who are experts on multilingualism and in this way to expand their knowledge on the topic of multilingualism and globalization. Some of the teachers work in a multicultural school with many students having other native languages. So teaching and speaking in English with them is a challenge every day. Professional development, training on new teaching methods, being a future European citizen, further education are some of the reasons why people accepted the invitation to the event. Most of the participants were not aware about the New Speaker concept prior the event.

The main challenges with regard to New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe are the following: difficulty in learning new languages, adaptation to new multilingual and cultural environments, learning more than one language and difficulty to maintain this language in Cyprus, coexistence with students/people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, openness to diversity, ability to survive in a multilingual Europe, acceptance of linguistic diversity, the ability to use a language for communication and job opportunities.

The major opportunities with respect to 'New Speakers' in a Multilingual Europe are new job opportunities, job prospects, meeting new people, learn a new language, learn more about other countries and culture, common grounds through language for communication, ability to adjust to new environments, mobility, knowledge about different

cultures and languages, opportunity to show the beauty of each language and culture, ability to use the same/common language, a multilingual Europe, exposure to various languages through internet and communication.

They have defined certain challenges such as language learning in multilingual contexts, respect of minority languages, revitalization of minority languages, differences in pronunciation and grammar, language understanding, fitting in, turning diversity into a reason to be united, inability to think in one language, difficulty of retaining and separating between languages. Multilingual children raised in multicultural societies can suffer from an identity crisis. Racism could be an issue of foreign ethnicity and it can lead to various misunderstandings.

They have also defined certain opportunities such as cultural and linguistic exchange, recognition of all languages, free communication beyond borders, business opportunities, appreciation of difference of people's culture and traditions, getting introduced to new language and cultures, through a common channel of communication everybody could share same opportunities in life while at school and after school, finding a job, making friends, seeking meaning and communication, common grounds through language for communication and the ability to learn new languages easier. New generations can get to know minority languages. Knowledge of new languages is a national investment in various ways.

The results of the post-event survey showed that not all of the participants had similar expectations about the event and some of the audience were not prepared to such specialized presentations, though all of them found the open event useful and interesting. They suggested that any kind of research event that is related to multilingual Europe would be helpful in terms of promoting of New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe?

The audience also had some suggestions for the future event: How to approach a multilingual speaker, how to teach, how to correct, about bilingualism, about new methodology for teaching 'New speakers' in a Cyprus school, teenage speakers, policy frameworks, language and identity. The majority of the teachers were expecting to hear about the ways of improving their career and their professional work, about solving daily classroom routines/ problems in classes with students coming from different language and culture backgrounds.

The participants found all the presentations interesting and enlightening. The results of the survey showed that they found the concept of 'New Speakers' very interesting and would like to have further events and information on it, especially on specific terminology that was difficult to understand and follow. Some other issues, such as performing

'linguaging', mixing languages, effects of language and culture, language learning for young learners, multilingualism of Europeans, a general overview of the matter, the notion of new speaker, the absence of adequate language policy on the level of policy and ministry and policy making in the school system. With respect to the actions to be taken, all the participants would like to deepen their knowledge and skills in the area of multilingualism, whether it is related to their studies or current job and occupation, teaching and educational policies.

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