Research Study

Teacher Identities in Heritage Language Education: The Case of Greek Heritage Language Teachers in Montreal and Toronto

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ABSTRACT. In this article, I focus on Greeks in Canada, an ethnolinguistic minority greatly concerned with preserving their language, and I explore ways to improve Greek Heritage Language Education (HLE). Improving Greek HLE in Canada is important, as there are now many third-and-fourth-generation Greek Heritage Language (HL) learners who have minimal knowledge of their HL and whose only opportunity to use it is in Greek schools (Aravossitas, 2016; Damanakis, 2010). To this end, the present narrative study, framed within critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics, focuses on the identities and perceptions of pedagogy expressed by eight Greek HL teachers teaching in primary and secondary Greek schools in Montreal and Toronto. By adopting narrative inquiry and using semi-structured interviews and identity charts, I shed light on the participants' teacher identities. The field texts are analysed narratively and thematically (Butler-Kisber, 2010). The findings suggest that there is merit in using translanguaging strategies in the HL classroom. Most importantly, Greek HL teachers in Montreal and Toronto reveal similar understandings of their role and identify similar shortcomings of Greek HLE in their respective settings. These findings suggest that the various Greek communities in Canada would be most successful in the mission to preserve Greek if they worked together.

RÉSUMÉ. Dans cet article, je me concentre sur les Grecs au Canada, une minorité ethnolinguistique très concernée par la préservation de sa langue, et j'explore les moyens d'améliorer l'enseignement de la langue d'origine (LO) grecque. L'amélioration de l'enseignement de la LO grecque au Canada est importante, car il y a maintenant de nombreux apprenants de troisième et quatrième génération de LO grec qui ont une connaissance minimale de leur LO, et dont la seule possibilité de l'utiliser est dans les écoles grecques (Aravossitas, 2016; Damanakis, 2010). À cette fin, la présente étude narrative, encadrée dans la sociolinguistique poststructuraliste critique, se concentre sur les identités et perceptions de la pédagogie de huit enseignants de LO grecque enseignant dans des écoles grecques primaires et secondaires à Montréal et Toronto. En adoptant une enquête narrative, et en utilisant des entretiens semi-structurés et des graphiques d'identité, je vise à faire la lumière sur l'identité des participants. Les textes de terrain sont analysés de manière narrative et thématique (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Les résultats suggèrent qu'il est utile d'utiliser des stratégies de *translanguaging* dans la classe de LO. Plus important encore, les enseignants de grec comme LO à Montréal et à Toronto révèlent une compréhension similaire de leur rôle et identifient des défauts similaires de l'enseignement de la LO grecque. Ces résultats suggèrent que les diverses communautés grecques au Canada réussiraient le mieux dans la mission de préservation du grec si elles travaillaient ensemble.

INTRODUCTION

In the Canadian context, the term *heritage languages* (HLs) is used to refer to "any language other than English and French" (Cummins, 1991, pp. 601-602), that is, any language spoken by ethnolinguistic minorities. Linguistic minorities are understandably concerned about preserving their languages, as research has shown that within three generations HL speakers tend to fully replace their HL with the host society's dominant language(s) (Campbell & Christian, 2003; Valdés, 2001). The issue of HL maintenance does not only concern the minority communities though. Preserving one's HL and culture is beneficial for their sense of group membership, as well as their personal, social, psychological, and even cognitive development. Therefore, language maintenance can facilitate both the HL speakers' overall identity formation and their integration in the host society (Cummins et al., 2005; Fishman, 1996; Valdés, 2005). Maintaining HLs therefore is beneficial not only for the ethnolinguistic minorities, but also for the societies that host HL speakers and are concerned with their successful integration.

HLs are maintained either informally at home or formally through HL education (HLE) programs. HLs may be formally taught in public and private schools or through programs organised and supported by the various minority communities (Cummins, 1992). Indeed, the minority communities are the ones primarily responsible for funding their own HL maintenance programs. Although Canada is officially multicultural, its public funds are mainly allocated to its two official languages, English and French (Haque, 2012). While the maintenance of HLs is a challenging task to organise and support, many minority communities are willing to invest in it to ensure the intergenerational transmission of their language and culture (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2014).

Situating the Study

The findings reported in this article stem from a larger research study (Tisizi, 2020) that focused on the Greek ethnolinguistic minority group in Canada, which is particularly concerned with preserving its language and culture (Aravossitas, 2016; Constantinides 2001, 2004; Damanakis 2005, 2010). Through the present study, I seek to contribute to the improvement of Greek HLE in Canada by examining the identities of Greek HL teachers teaching in primary and secondary schools in the greater metropolitan areas of Montreal and Toronto. Indeed, the examination of language teacher perceptions and self-identification is important for understanding their decision-making processes and practices, as they can either help engage language learners or alienate them (Blommaert, 2010; Pavlenko, 2003). In addition, the present study is based on the assumption that providing Greek HL teachers with the opportunity to open up about their

perceptions and practices can help them critically reflect on their role as HL teachers in creating more inclusive environments that will improve the experiences of Greek HL learners.

Today, Greek language courses are offered on weekdays and on Saturdays in schools that are founded by Greek communities, Greek parishes, and other institutions across Canada (Aravossitas, 2016). Even though there are several Greek communities across the country (Aravossitas, 2016; Constantinides, 2004), it is estimated that over 80% of the 250,000 Greeks currently in Canada reside in or close to Montreal and Toronto (Library and Archives Canada, 2016). For this reason, the research reported in this article focused on Greek HLE in these two locations. More specifically, the study focused on the experiences of eight Greek HL teachers teaching in primary and secondary Greek schools in the greater areas of Montreal and Toronto, and its aim was to examine their understanding of their role as Greek HL teachers. Ultimately, it was hoped that the participants, as well as other Greek HL teachers who will learn about the study, would reflect on their teacher identities and instructional practices in order to create educational environments that are welcoming for all Greek HL learners.

An additional reason why I wanted to focus on Greek HL teachers in the greater areas of Montreal and Toronto was because I wanted to examine how, if at all, the tension between English and French affects Greek HLE in Montreal, as opposed to Toronto, where English is undeniably the dominant language (Statistics Canada, 2016). While English and French both have official status in all other Canadian provinces, French is Quebec's only official language since 1974 (Haque, 2012). This renders French Quebecers a "fragile majority" (McAndrew, 2012), greatly concerned about preserving their language and rights. This has had a great impact on the province's policies and practices regarding language teaching.

The present study is framed around the following questions: (1) How do Greek HL teachers in Montreal and Toronto understand and/or reflect upon their teacher identity and their perceptions about language teaching? (2) What similarities and differences can be identified between the responses of teachers based in Montreal and teachers based in Toronto?

LITERATURE REVIEW

My understanding of identities and languages as social constructions is largely shaped by critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics acknowledges that power is both exercised through and reflected by language, and therefore languages are seen as sites of struggle, that is, sites where power relations are either challenged or maintained (Hall, 1997; Norton, 2013; Weedon, 1997). Critical poststructuralist sociolinguistics also focuses on individuals' language practices, rather than the languages themselves. More specifically, it examines how people negotiate their sense of self through their language choices (Norton 2010, 2013). The power embedded in languages creates social inequalities that people either perpetuate or challenge, while negotiating their own identities (García, Flores, & Spotti, 2017; O'Rourke, Pujolar, & Ramallo, 2015; Weber & Horner, 2017). Identities are seen as discursive constructs that are dynamic and flexible (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Norton 2013; Pennycook, 2010). People perform (Butler, 1990) their identities in

their interactions with others, and through these interactions their identities are constantly evolving. Identities are thus constructed intersubjectively (Taylor, 1992), that is, they are constructed through a dialogic process (Bakhtin, 1981) with others. How identities and languages are constructed is an important consideration of this study.

Teacher identities are conceptualized as in-practice and in-discourse (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). In-practice teachers' identities include the teachers' concrete practices, whereas the in-discourse identities focus on the teachers' language practices and critical reflexivity. In sum, Varghese et al. (2005) have emphasised teacher practices, reflexivity, and meta-awareness. They have also highlighted the fact that teacher identities are created discursively through language practices. To fully understand teachers' identification practices, one must examine both their practices and their reflexivity. Indeed, the present study focused on the types of tasks and activities that Greek HL teachers prefer to use. This includes their assessment methods, their grouping strategies, as well as the learning goals they set and the expectations they hold for their students. The study also provided opportunities for the participants to reflect on their teacher role, their language practices in the HL class, and their attitudes towards their students.

The practices and identities of language teachers are closely connected (Norton & Toohey, 2011) and can play an important role in either engaging or alienating learners (Blommaert, 2010; Pavlenko, 2003; Tsui, 2007). Indeed, Kanno (2003) found that language teachers often assign imagined identities (Norton, 2013) to their students, that is, they envision where learners should belong based on their backgrounds and abilities and impose identities on them. Kanno (2003) argued that this tendency, which can limit the learners' agency, can be avoided when teachers reflect critically on their beliefs and ideologies. Ayers and Schubert (1994) argued that teachers' identities and perceptions about teaching should be at the core of research on language learning and teaching. They introduced the notion of teacher lore and invited teachers to share their stories and reflect on their practices to improve both their teaching and that of other teachers. Indeed, the teachers' identities and perceptions should be at the epicentre of research on teaching, as they shape the teachers' practices and the way they view teaching.

Feuerverger's narrative study (1997) demonstrated that HL teachers in Toronto struggled to establish a sense of professional identity, to the extent that they even had difficulty in claiming a physical space in the schools where they taught. Wu, Palmer, and Field (2011) focused on Chinese HL teachers in a Sunday school in South Texas. According to this study, HL teachers viewed their job as voluntary and held the opinion that parents are the ones primarily responsible for teaching HLs to their children. Lee (2002) and Lee and Bang (2011) focused on Korean HLE in the United States and highlighted the need for professional development programs for HL teachers. Studies, like the aforementioned, reveal that HL teachers can feel marginalised and insecure about their job and suggest that their professional identities—and subsequently their teaching—can be improved with professional development programs.

Contrary to these studies, Kim and Kim's (2016) study of three Korean HL teachers in the United States demonstrated that Korean HL teachers had strong teaching identities. The Korean HL

teachers' beliefs about the importance of their teaching role affected their instructional practices and their students' learning experiences. Kim and Kim (2016) highlighted the importance of encouraging HL teachers to reflect on their identities and positionality towards their students, as these are reflected in their teaching and can affect the learners' own attitudes towards their HL. HL teachers' instructional practices are affected by their beliefs about students and their understanding of their role as HL teachers. When teachers are given opportunities for critical reflection and professional development, both their teaching and the learners' experiences can be improved.

Translanguaging in the Language Classroom

In educational contexts such as HL classes, where the students' backgrounds can be highly diverse (Cummins, 2014), one is likely to encounter instances of translanguaging (García 2007, 2009). Coined by Williams (1994), it first described the pedagogical practice of students receiving input in one language and producing output in another and since has been expanded to include people's flexible linguistic practices both inside and outside school (García, 2007). Translanguaging has been associated with bi/multilinguals' ability to communicate by making use of their full linguistic repertoires and has been defined as "the multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (García, 2009, p. 45). Rather than considering bi/multilinguals' languages as obstacles to the learning of a target language, supporters of translanguaging view them as resources that can be leveraged to make meaning (Canagarajah, 2018; Cummins, 2017; Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015).

Bi/multilinguals use translanguaging spontaneously, but translanguaging can also be used strategically by teachers to model and encourage the use of multiple languages in the classroom (García & Sylvan, 2011; Williams, 2012). Whether strategically planned or spontaneous, translanguaging refers to dynamic and flexible discursive practices that disrupt the power imbalances among languages in the class, increase student engagement and motivation, and can transform the students' relation with minority languages and their overall view of multilingualism (Cenoz, 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016). Indeed, recognising the students' multiple languages as resources and allowing them to make use of their full linguistic repertoires can be transformative and beneficial both for their language learning and for their overall personal development. The teachers' own identification, along with their perceptions of language and language teaching, largely shape their willingness to adopt translanguaging and create safe environments where students feel free to use all their linguistic resources to learn.

METHODS

For the purposes of this research, I focused on Greek HL teachers teaching in primary and secondary Greek schools in the greater metropolitan areas of Montreal and Toronto. In the greater Toronto area, there is one Greek day school, whereas, in the greater Montreal area, there are five trilingual (French, Greek, English) day schools. There are also afternoon and Saturday Greek schools in both locations. Once I obtained clearance from my university's

Research Ethics Board, I contacted gatekeepers in both areas by email and asked them to inform the teachers about the study. I purposefully selected eight participants (four from each location), making sure to include teachers working in different educational contexts and having different backgrounds. More specifically, I recruited both Greek-born and Canadian-born participants, as well as teachers working both full-time and part-time. I considered it important to examine the perceptions of teachers from different backgrounds, as I was seeking to understand the ways in which their experiences affect their understanding of their role as Greek HL teachers. Information on the participants' backgrounds is included in Appendix A.

After selecting the teacher participants, I contacted them individually to set up initial appointments. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, no sessions were held on school premises. I held three sessions with each teacher, during which they were asked to complete written tasks and to participate in semi-structured interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I also asked the teacher participants to create their own identity charts, a tool which allows individuals to visualise aspects of their identity by creating a chart that includes their character traits, the roles they assume, and any other information that they deem relevant (Gordon, 2013). By combining visual modes of representation (e.g., the identity charts) with interviews, the aim was to provide rich opportunities for critical reflection, which then served as the basis for discussion in the subsequent sessions. The duration of each interview session ranged from thirty minutes to one hour. The sessions were conducted over the span of eight months from August 2018 until February 2019. The sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis using narrative inquiry.

Narrative inquiry examines how people make sense of their lived experiences, how they construct personal accounts of these experiences, and how they position themselves in relation to the social world (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Chase, 2011; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Riessman, 2008). The participants were invited to reflect on their experiences in the HL classroom and on how these experiences have informed their teacher identities. I used Labov and Waletsky's (1997) narrative framework to restructure the participants' original narratives according to the framework's six parts (i.e., abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda). After analysing the field texts narratively, I also identified common themes across the teachers' perceptions (Butler-Kisber, 2010). The reason for using thematic analysis was not to undermine the differences in the teachers' perceptions. On the contrary, thematic analysis was used to bring the field texts together, while respecting the divergence in the teachers' opinions.

FINDINGS

Teacher Identities In-Practice

To understand the Greek HL teachers' practices, I asked the participants to describe the types of activities they use in the HL class. From their responses, there was a general agreement that individual activities are their preferred type of activities for HL instruction. Six participants reported their preference for individual activities and argued that group tasks and projects lead

to noisy classrooms that are hard to control, especially in supplementary education programs. In Niki's words:

> Each student works on their own. I rarely ask students to form groups; I don't really like this method. When I tried it out in the Saturday school, the children were very noisy. Like, panic! And when we play games, the same thing happens. It is easier in the other school. Because it is a day school and children tend to respect you more.

A second reason was presented by Maria, who believed that students are given ample opportunity to work on their teamwork skills in the Canadian educational system. She found that individual work is preferable, as it offers a clearer image of the students' language skills, since they do not get to "hide behind their team." Maria noted:

> Generally, I avoid group projects, because teamwork is already strongly supported in all educational levels here in Quebec. The students know how to do group projects – but they do not know how to speak Greek well. So, I try to reinforce their personal effort, rate their individual performance and assist them. I want them to make a real effort and not hide behind a team.

The two participants who held a different opinion were Anna and Stella, who reported using both individual and group activities, and found the latter more appropriate for evaluation and revision purposes. In sum, the majority of the participants reported being more comfortable using individual activities in the HL class. They linked group activities to classroom management challenges and an imprecise understanding of the students' language level.

The participants all reported a preference for conventional methods, such as assigning dictation, reading comprehension activities, essays, and student revision activities. Their main focus is grammar and vocabulary teaching, as well as the improvement of the students' oral expression in Greek. However, five participants admitted that there are times when students seem to lose interest and appear to be disengaged and unmotivated. In such instances, they explained that they turn to more unconventional methods such as board games, karaoke, music, arts and crafts, and dancing to win over their students. As Sofia explained:

> You need to find what works for each of them. For instance, I have found that some children enjoy music so I teach them songs in Greek. I explain the words so that they understand what the song is about and they like this. Others prefer crafts, so I ask them to make something using the alphabet letters. With other children we play games and they like it—things like snakes and ladders or Monopoly, but they must speak Greek during the game […] So, you should not focus on just teaching them Greek. You need to find what will win them over.

The Greek HL teachers' preference for individual activities and conventional teaching methods can give the impression that their overall approach to teaching is conservative and teacher-centered. However, a closer examination of the participants' teaching strategies reveals their

sincere caring for their students and their willingness to drastically adjust their teaching to win over the Greek HL learners when needed. When met with student disengagement, Greek HL teachers become inventive and resourceful to win over their students by linking their teaching to the students' interests and personal realities.

Language Practices in the HL Classroom

To understand teachers' language practices, I started by asking them to describe their linguistic repertoire, which "is understood as a whole, comprising those languages, dialects, styles, registers, codes, and routines that characterize interaction in everyday life" (Busch, 2017). All eight participants characterised themselves as being fluent in Greek and English, and five of them (all four participants from the greater Montreal area and one from Toronto) also reported being fluent in French. The four participants from the greater Montreal area found French to be an invaluable tool for their future in Quebec and expressed a general appreciation for the French language. In contrast, three of the teachers from the greater Toronto area stated that their knowledge of French was either minimal or non-existent, and expressed no interest in improving it. Kostas, a participant from the greater Toronto area, stressed that although he had received instruction in the language, he felt that he had no opportunities or reasons to use the language outside the French classroom. In sum, the participants' linguistic repertoires were affected by their region's linguistic landscape. The participants from the greater Montreal area considered trilingualism as indispensable for their life and future in Quebec, whereas participants from the greater Toronto area reported using English and Greek only, and saw no need in learning French.

Struck by the difference in their perceptions, I also asked the teachers to describe their students' relationship with French. Once again, the participants from the greater Montreal area highlighted that French is indispensable for their students and argued that their students realise this, despite often feeling that French is forced on them. On the contrary, the participants from the greater Toronto area noted that their students receive instruction in French—because the teaching of Canada's official languages is mandatory—but hardly ever use it. Indeed, the participants from Toronto stressed that, just like them, their students choose English for their interactions, and even go as far as to question the need to learn any other language. Sofia explained:

> It is not just that they love this language. They also have this perception that since they know English, they do not need to learn anything else. Unfortunately, everyone here shares this opinion [...] Because English is an international language, you don't really need to know anything else. If I were one of them, I probably wouldn't want to learn any other language either. Why bother? Everyone speaks English.

The participants' reports suggest that the dominance of English in the greater Toronto area has affected not only the students' relation to French but also their relation to any language other than English.

Many of the participants believed that the only language that should be used in the Greek HL class is Greek. They explained that many students do not use Greek at home with their families. They argued that using another language, such as English, in the HL class would reduce the

learners' much needed exposure to the target language and stall their HL learning. In fact, the participants seemed to be judgmental of some of their colleagues whom they found to overuse English. In Lena's words:

> I know teachers who were born here and they speak English to children. They sing songs in English, because it comes easier to them. If you ask a parent which teacher they would prefer, one who was born here and has been working for twenty-five years as a teacher or an inexperienced teacher who has just arrived from Greece, they will choose the second. Because they have a very good command of Greek.

This comment reveals the importance that is placed on students receiving adequate exposure to their HL, which in the teachers' minds is linked to the teachers' own ease with the language, and ultimately whether or not the teachers are Greek-born. Evidently, the assumption here is that, contrary to Canadian-born teachers, their Greek-born counterparts are native speakers and therefore better suited for teaching the language to Greek HL learners.

The teachers also referred to several Greek school policies that are in place that officially mandate them to keep the languages separated when teaching. Surprisingly, when asked whether they found that language separation works well in the HL class, all participants reported that they sometimes have to switch to more flexible language practices because students become disengaged. The teachers noted, for example, that despite the school policies—and their own beliefs about the need to only use Greek—they often feel compelled to use English or French in the HL class, as they find that this facilitates the students' understanding and engagement.

However, the participants argued that they do not use languages other than Greek freely. They reported having created their own rules about what is and what is not acceptable when it comes to using multiple languages in the HL class. They admitted using languages other than Greek for instruction-giving as well as for vocabulary and grammar teaching. The teachers highlighted that the HL class is in most cases a mixed-abilities class, and therefore using English—and in fewer cases French—for giving instructions is a way to ensure that all students, irrespective of their familiarity with Greek, can understand the teacher. The teachers also appeared to have realised that allowing students to make connections across all their languages actually helps them learn and retain new information in Greek. For example, Anna noted:

> What I found is that now children are confused. Because they cannot make the necessary connections in their heads with words. For instance, I once taught a third-grade class, and I talked to them about paradise. And they couldn't understand the word in Greek, *παράδεισος*, so I said "paradise" and it was like an epiphany for them. And I also mentioned the French word "paradis" and wrote all three of them on the board. I was very impressed by this.

In short, although the participants found it very important to ensure that their students receive ample exposure to Greek, they also intuitively realised the advantages of using languages other than Greek when teaching. Whether for teaching vocabulary and grammar, or for strengthening

the students' comprehension, all participants reported using multiple languages in the HL classroom while trying to maintain a balance between their use and student use of Greek.

When discussing the use of languages in the HL classroom, George focused not just on the receptive skills of the HL learners but also on their productive skills in Greek. He argued that when students are allowed to use all their languages to communicate, they become more motivated and end up producing more output in Greek, thus improving their oral skills. George also associated this with the HL teachers' attitude towards less advanced students and insisted that the teacher must hold high expectations for all students, giving them opportunities to practice the target language while drawing on all their languages. In his words:

> It is essential for students to feel that you do not exclude them from the rest. For them to know that you have expectations for them and that they need to make an effort. Even if their phrases are half in Greek and half in English, even if their grammar is wrong. If you show them that it is ok if they make errors or if they have to use some English words too, they will want to show you that they can make it; you can see that they find it easier to produce oral speech and that they progress.

This quote raises the issue of teachers' expectations for students and how the teachers' attitudes can affect the learners' motivation and ultimately help improve their language abilities. George realises that he can help students to develop their Greek linguistic capabilities by creating safe spaces where they can take risks using all the resources at their disposal.

Teacher Identities In-Discourse

To examine how the participants reflect on their role, they were asked to create a visual representation of their identity(-ies). They were asked to create two identity charts: one to represent their identities before becoming teachers and one to represent their current teacher identities. The participants were free to include as many categories as they needed and to work on the two charts in whichever order they preferred. When the participants decided that their identity charts were complete, they presented and reflected on them.

The majority of the participants found that their identities had been transformed since becoming HL teachers. Lena, a teacher with over twenty years of experience in Montreal's Greek schools, explained that before becoming a teacher, she was very self-involved. She found it very hard to receive criticism, even when it was constructive. Becoming a teacher had made her more patient, more understanding, and generally a happier person (See Figure 1). Similarly, Stella elucidated that becoming a HL teacher had increased her empathy and understanding and had amplified her willingness to learn and collaborate with others.
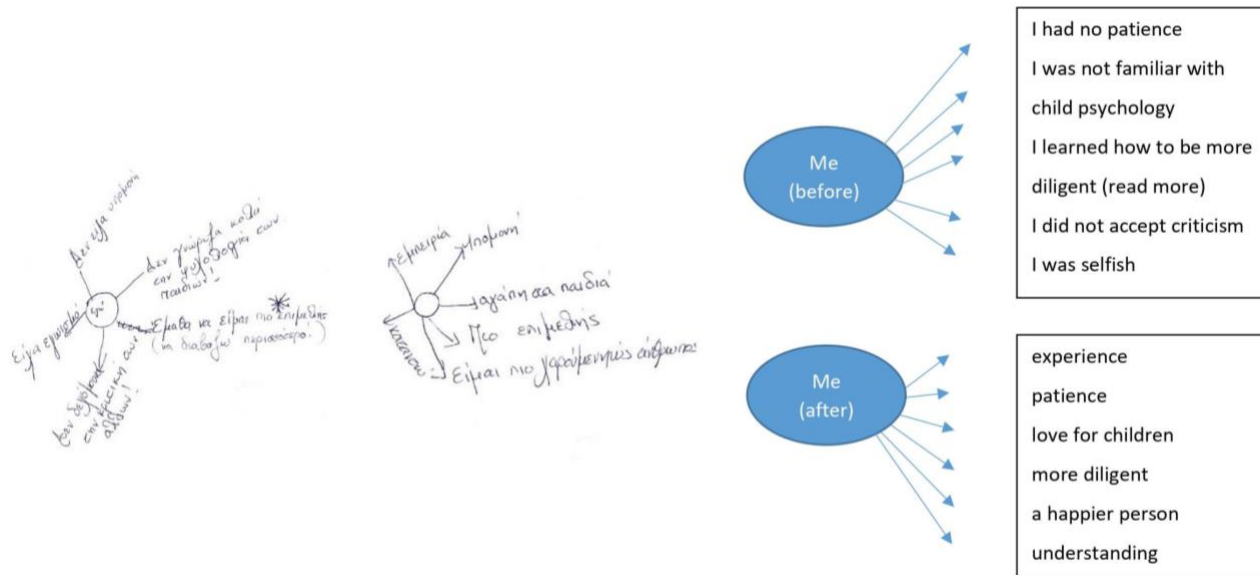
Figure 1: Lena's identity charts before and after becoming a teacher (with translation)

Many participants shared the belief that while their main personality traits have remained the same, becoming HL teachers had magnified these traits and enriched their overall identities. Sofia found that becoming a teacher had made her more patient and flexible. Novice teacher Niki explained that after becoming a HL teacher, she felt more independent and vigorous. Anna elucidated that character traits like patience, dependability, and the ability to listen as a mediator had all been augmented after becoming a HL teacher.

Other participants focused on a sense of responsibility. George explained that becoming a HL teacher had increased his awareness of the importance of his Greek heritage. He felt that it was his responsibility to inspire his students and communicate his passion for the Greek language and culture to them. Similarly, Kostas elucidated that since becoming a HL teacher, he considered it essential to be involved in the Greek community. He viewed himself as a role model for his students at all times and not just while in school (See Figure 2). Kostas noted:

> I am always a role model. For the students, but also for everybody else. For example, going out and getting drunk; I think I am not allowed to do that anymore, because now I am a teacher. I am a teacher for our children. There are many things that stress me out now that I am a teacher, and all I think about is how to inspire the youth.

For these participants, being a Greek HL teacher was not limited to teaching a language. In their eyes, this profession came with additional responsibilities, such as setting the right example for students and finding ways to maintain their connection to the Greek language and culture.
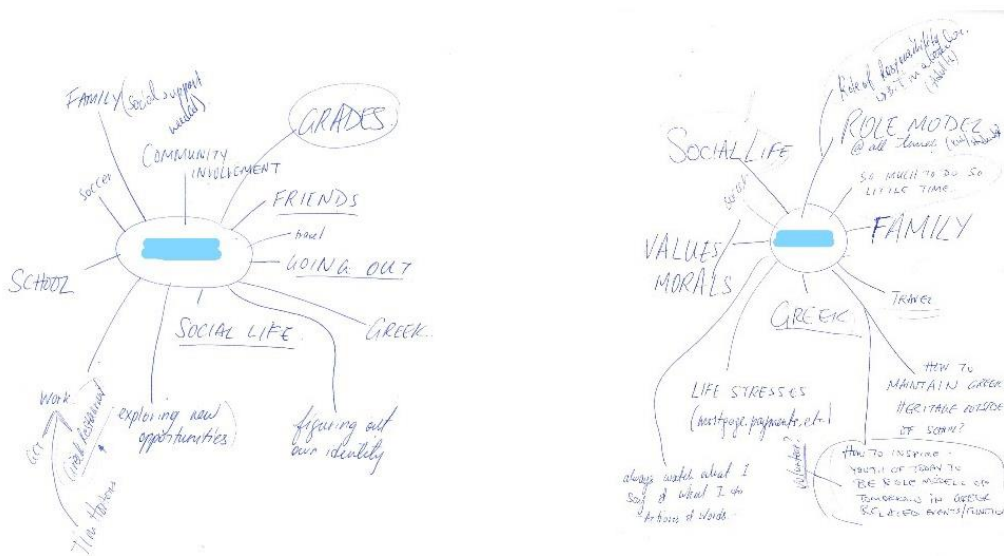
Figure 2: Kostas's identity charts before and after becoming a teacher (with translation)

Most participants had similar understandings of what it takes to be a good HL teacher. They felt that Greek HL teachers must have an excellent command of the Greek language and must stay on top of developments in the pedagogical field. They found that it was their responsibility to also affirm their students' identities and constantly find ways to inspire them by making them appreciate Greek. Additionally, all participants were adamant about the importance of teaching the Greek language and culture together, since they are interconnected. Thus, any attempt to teach them separately cannot portray the wholeness of the "Greek phenomenon." In Anna's words:

> We cannot teach the language without referring to customs for example. And I think when we teach those together, we provide a complete overview of the Greek phenomenon—because it is a phenomenon […] The way we teach Greek here, by connecting everything, [...] it makes more sense.

The participants explained that HL teachers must have strategies to inspire HL learners and communicate to them the importance of preserving a connection to their HL. The teachers reported using photos from Greece and personal stories to motivate their students. They also noted that younger students are often motivated to learn Greek when it is pointed out to them that this will help them communicate better with their Greek-speaking relatives. Older students are more determined to learn Greek when they are told that being fluent in multiple languages can improve their future employability. Maria reported having class discussions about the benefits of multilingualism in general, while Kostas, Lena, and Stella noted that they often refer to the specific advantages of speaking Greek to win over their students. Most importantly, teachers explained that they often feel that they must affirm their students' identities as HL speakers and provide them with reasons to appreciate their heritage. For instance, Lena noted:

I tell them about words in medicine, which are all Greek, I tell them about democracy and how proud they should be of the Greek language. All people should be speaking this language. This language that gave us medicine, physics, mathematics—is there another language that has done all that? […] I try to inspire them; I make them feel proud of being Greek.

The participants admitted that students losing interest in HL learning is a frequent occurrence, and each of them explained that they had developed their own strategies to keep the learners motivated. Whether by using visuals or by highlighting the advantages of knowing multiple languages (and Greek in particular), the teachers' common aim was to reignite the learners' interest in learning Greek.

While all other participants found that becoming a Greek HL teacher had substantially affected their identity, Maria did not share the same opinion. She decided to create only one identity chart and none of the categories that she chose to include were directly related to her role as a Greek HL teacher (see Figure 3). She was convinced that becoming a teacher had not altered her identity in any significant way and therefore found no reason to create two separate identity charts. She stressed that being a Greek HL teacher was not her first job, as she had held administrative positions in the past where she had to develop her organisational and communicative skills. While she admitted benefiting from these skills as a HL teacher, she argued that such skills are essential for all professions and are not exclusive to language teaching.
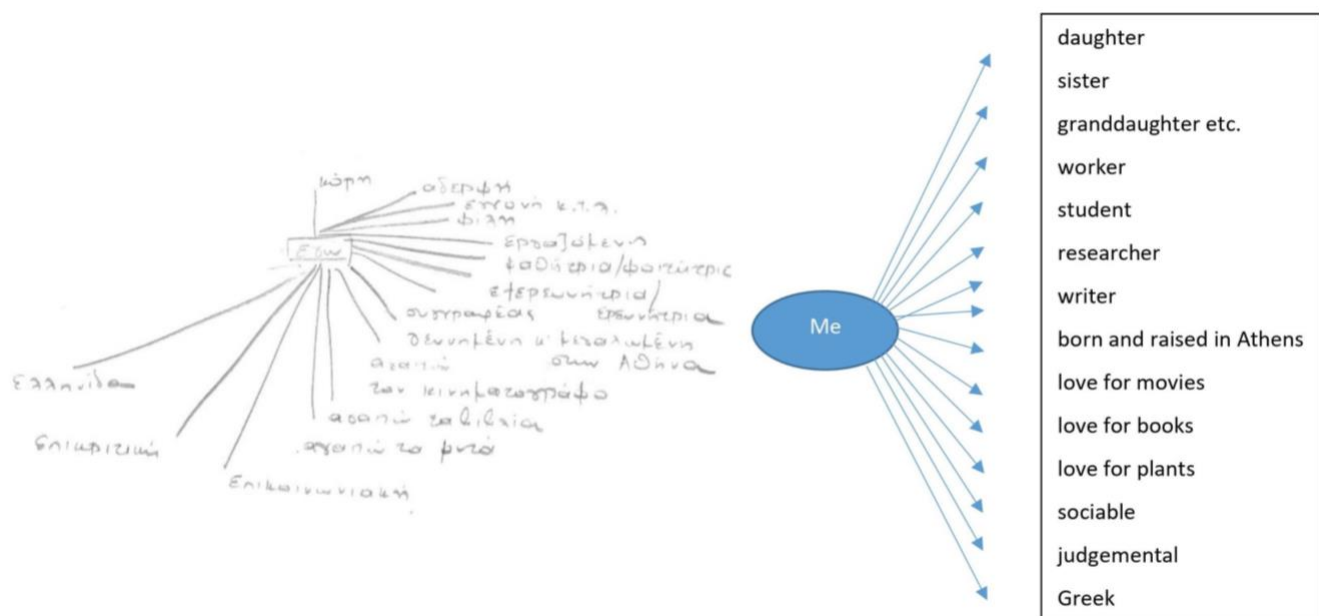

Figure 3: Maria's identity chart (with translation)

The teachers from both locations explained that Greek HLE faces certain challenges that cannot be counteracted by their efforts alone. Lack of funding, lack of specialised teacher training, lack of appropriate resources and materials, and large class sizes were just a few of the difficulties they named. While most participants had strong teacher identities and a sense of responsibility towards HL learners, they admitted that they do not always feel equipped to accommodate all their students' needs. The aforementioned challenges, coupled with the fact that many of them had no background in education, made them feel that professional development opportunities are greatly needed to improve their work.

DISCUSSION

How do Greek HL teachers in Montreal and Toronto understand and/or reflect upon their teacher identity and their perceptions about language teaching?

Most Greek HL teachers who participated in the study strongly identified with the role of the language teacher. They fully assumed the responsibility to teach Greek to their students and held the opinion that HL instruction is more effective when linguistic and cultural aspects are taught together. They considered it their duty not only to teach the Greek language to their students, but also to affirm the students' identities as HL learners and to act as their role models both inside and outside school. In fact, they each had their own unique way of winning over their students and inspiring them to maintain a connection to the Greek language and culture.
In general, the participants reported that they preferred more traditional ways of teaching and were convinced that offering ample exposure to Greek is the best way to ensure the students' success in HL learning. Even so, all participants realised that conventional teaching and monolingual strategies often prove inadequate to keep the Greek HL learners engaged. The teachers were genuinely interested in engaging their students in Greek learning. They reported that they use unconventional teaching strategies and multilingual use to win them over when students become disengaged. Despite their preference for conventional and monolingual teaching strategies, all participants were willing to alter their approach to HL teaching in the interest of improving student engagement.

Indeed, despite their monolingual beliefs (fueled by the Greek schools' mandate to keep the languages separated while teaching) all eight participants acknowledged that using various languages in the HL class could be helpful for students. The Greek HL teachers highlighted that using the students' shared languages in a mixed-abilities class helps ensure that all learners understand the teacher. The participants also understood that using multiple languages serves as a scaffold. This allows students to make connections between prior knowledge previously acquired in English and French and new knowledge in Greek. Thus, they used two or three languages when teaching grammar and vocabulary and highlighted similarities across the languages. The participants' intuitive adoption of the aforementioned practices reveals that they understand some of the benefits of translanguaging and that they are willing to try new approaches in order to reignite their students' interest in Greek learning.

Aside from some notable exceptions (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; C. Lee, 2019; Prada, 2019), there are not many studies on the use of translanguaging in the HL class. This lack of attention to translanguaging appears to stem from the belief that HL learners require ample HL exposure in order to successfully learn the language. This is a view also expressed by this study's participants: the more a learner is exposed to a target language the more likely they are to successfully learn it. Indeed, this hypothesis has been corroborated by research (Collins & White, 2011; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). While providing ample exposure to Greek is indeed essential for Greek HL learners' success in learning their HL, it is equally important to create safe environments where students are not marginalised along linguistic lines (Tse, 2001). Indeed, despite their monolingual beliefs, the participants of this study recognised that allowing the use of multiple languages in the HL class was a way to motivate HL learners and to strengthen student connections to Greek. They recognised that using multiple languages in the HL class can have a positive impact on the learners' receptive and productive skills in Greek. They additionally argued that drawing student attention to similarities across their shared languages helped students make connections and to consolidate new knowledge.

However, the benefits of translanguaging are not limited to helping students understand instructions and using their dominant languages as scaffolds. Proponents of translanguaging suggest that using multiple linguistic resources in the classroom, and allowing students to do the same, facilitates the learning of a target language and can boost the learners' confidence in using it (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Little & Kirwan, 2018; Seltzer & Collins, 2016). Researchers have also suggested that translanguaging pedagogy focuses on learners' agency and affirms their identities (García, 2009), transforms the students' understanding of multilingualism (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2016), and leads to a more equitable education (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Kleyn, 2016). It is therefore evident that while Greek HL teachers understand some of the advantages of translanguaging, they are currently not aware of its full potential. The fact that the participants are not familiar with translanguaging pedagogy and mainly rely on their intuition to win over their students is not surprising, as many of them have no background in education or pedagogic studies. Their intuition and experience in the HL class clearly lead them to the adoption of unconventional strategies and the use of multiple languages. It is likely their understanding of the principles and benefits of translanguaging pedagogy would be further developed if they had access to specialised training.

What similarities and differences can be identified between the responses of teachers based in Montreal and teachers based in Toronto?

The study also revealed differences in perceptions between participants from the two locations. A noticeable difference was revealed when the participants reflected on their linguistic repertoires. All teachers working in the greater Montreal area described themselves as trilinguals and noted that they use all three languages in their everyday interactions. They also considered French a valuable tool for their students' and their own life in Quebec. On the other hand, the participants working in the greater Toronto area reported using only English and Greek for their daily interactions. Most of them showed no interest in learning French noting that, although their students are familiar with French, they too hardly ever use it. They further argued that

their students saw no use in learning any language other than English, given the language's status as an international language. These differences in participant perceptions reflect the differences in the linguistic landscapes of the two locations. Clearly, the dominance of English in Toronto was mirrored in the participants' almost exclusive use of the language for their daily interactions. Similarly, the tension between French and English in Quebec was reflected in the teachers' acknowledgement of the necessity to know both official languages. Interestingly, despite the differences in their linguistic repertoires, all teachers had come to the realisation that using the students' multiple languages can help improve student learning and engagement. This paradox indicates that Greek HL teachers intuitively acknowledge the effectiveness of some translanguaging strategies in the HL class.

Despite the differences in how Greek HL teachers in the two locations viewed their linguistic resources, their teacher identities and pedagogical strategies were largely similar. The participants considered it their responsibility not only to teach the Greek language to HL learners but also to introduce them to the Greek culture, to instil pride for their Greek origins, and to generally inspire them to maintain a connection to their Greek national identity. The participants from the two locations also identified similar obstacles that Greek HLE in Canada needs to overcome. These common obstacles are linked to financial hurdles, the lack of teacher training, and specialised teaching materials for HL instruction. These findings echo the call of Aravossitas and Oikonomakou (2017, 2020) for more funding, teacher training, and teaching resources for Greek HLE.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research suggest that Greek HL teachers would benefit from specialised training in translanguaging pedagogy. After receiving training in translanguaging, they may recognise that leveraging all of students' linguistic resources can be transformative and empowering for students, not just on a cognitive level but on social and psychological levels. If they were to abandon the idea that using multiple languages is appropriate solely for the purposes of grammar and vocabulary teaching, the teachers could truly embrace the power of translanguaging pedagogy to engage learners and improve their overall learning experience. Indeed, there are various strategies and materials that Greek HL teachers could use to encourage students to use their full linguistic repertoires. They could model translanguaging themselves by using their various languages strategically to communicate to students that this practice is acceptable, thus validating all their languages. They could allow students to use all their languages for tasks such as brainstorming, interacting with their peers, or keeping notes, and Greek only for other tasks, such as writing essays and completing grammar activities. The teachers could also use activities that validate linguistic pluralism, such as language biographies, language portraits and dual books, among others (Celic & Seltzer, 2013). Introducing translanguaging in Greek HLE would allow students to understand their teachers and peers better. It would also increase student engagement, inspire them to take risks in the HL class, help them to make connections between their languages, and ultimately improve their ability to use Greek.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that Greek HL teachers in Montreal and Toronto have similar understandings of their teacher roles and identify similar aspects of Greek HLE that require improvement. The similarities in the participants' perceptions indicate there is promise in working together in order to advance the educational mission of preserving the Greek language and culture in Canada. Keeping the students engaged and stimulated, by using their full linguistic repertoires, can help Greek HL learners feel more comfortable in their learning, stay in Greek schools, and find significant improvement in their Greek language competencies.

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APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

Pseudonym	Place of birth	Age	Teaching experience in Greek schools	Type of School	Employee status	Teaching certification (for Quebec or Ontario)	Background in education/ pedagogical studies
Participants from the greater Montreal area							
Maria	Greece	30	4 years	Day & Saturday	Part-time	No	Yes
George	Greece	36	5 years	Saturday	Part-time	No	No
Anna	Canada	30	6 years	Day & Saturday	Full time	Yes	No
Lena	Greece	58	25 years	Day, Afternoon & Saturday	Full time	Yes	Yes
Participants from the greater Toronto area							
Stella	Canada	50	2 years	Day, Afternoon & Saturday	Full time	Yes	Yes
Kostas	Canada	26	8 years	Saturday	Part-time	Yes	Yes
Sofia	Greece	47	6 years	Afternoon & Saturday	Part-time	No	No
Niki	Greece	25	2 years	Day & Saturday	Full time	Yes	Yes