

Teaching Modern Greek in the US: The development of an undergraduate course curriculum within the CEFR context

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Στο άρθρο παρουσιάζεται η ανάπτυξη ενός προγράμματος σπουδών για τη διδασκαλία της ελληνικής γλώσσας στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση των ΗΠΑ. Αρχικά γίνεται αναφορά στο γενικότερο πεδίο της ξενόγλωσσης εκπαίδευσης πανεπιστημιακού επιπέδου των ΗΠΑ αλλά και στο συγκεκριμένο περιβάλλον του πανεπιστημίου εντός του οποίου εντάσσεται το συγκεκριμένο πρόγραμμα. Ακολουθεί μια περιγραφή του προφίλ των φοιτητών και διατυπώνονται οι γενικοί στόχοι του προγράμματος. Για τον καθορισμό των ειδικότερων στόχων επιλέχθηκε το Κοινό Ευρωπαϊκό Πλαίσιο Αναφοράς για τις Γλώσσες. Συζητούνται οι λόγοι της επιλογής του συγκεκριμένου πλαισίου και στη συνέχεια παρουσιάζονται οι επιλογές που έγιναν σε σχέση με το περιεχόμενο και τη διαβάθμισή του, το διδακτικό εγχειρίδιο, αλλά και το σχήμα αξιολόγησης, έτσι ώστε να εξυπηρετούνται οι στόχοι του προγράμματος με τον καλύτερο δυνατό τρόπο.

KEYWORDS: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, curriculum development

1. Introduction

In September 2014, I undertook the task of teaching the Modern Greek language classes offered by the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University. The program was established at the University in 1979 and “aims to strengthen scholarship, teaching and research in all aspects of Byzantine and Modern Greek civilization, while exploring their relations to the classical tradition and the Late Antique world” (<https://www.princeton.edu/hellenic/overview/>). In an effort to overhaul the course, a new curriculum for the undergraduate language course offered by the Center has been developed.¹

Over the last three decades, Modern Greek second language acquisition and education have been the focus of considerable research, mainly because of the influx of immigrants and refugees in Greece, who have struggled to integrate into Greek society. A substantial body of knowledge has thus been accumulated, educational materials have been created and applied and best practices have been disseminated. As I have been involved in the growth of this field over the last fifteen years, it was my aspiration to transfer the experiences and the knowledge into this new context. However, the field of tertiary education in the US calls for a reframing of this knowledge and educational practice within the new context.

In the next sections of this paper the process of curriculum development will be discussed, with an emphasis on the rationale behind it, and a rough outline of it will be provided. The process followed the guidelines proposed by Nation & Macalister (2010), who identify the following factors as fundamental in a curriculum development process: the environment, students’ needs, methods and principles of language teaching, goals, content and sequencing, format and presentation, monitoring and assessment and, finally, evaluation of the program. This paper is organized around these factors and the decisions made regarding each parameter of curriculum development. Additionally, the issues that arose while attempting to apply the accumulated knowledge about Modern Greek learning and teaching into this new context are discussed.

¹ Special thanks are due to Dimitri Gondicas, Director of the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, for his trust and constant encouragement during the development of this curriculum.

2. Phases of curriculum development

The development process of the curriculum proposal described in this article lasted two academic years. After an initial year of reviewing literature, collecting information about the environment and the students, gathering and creating material and applying it in classroom practice, a curriculum draft was prepared. This draft was piloted during the second year. Detailed notes on its daily implementation and on students' test performance were kept, with the aim to identify strengths and weaknesses and revise the curriculum accordingly. Moreover, the university's course evaluation surveys conducted at the end of each semester gave students the opportunity to provide anonymous comments about their motivation to take the course, the quality and appropriateness of course materials and assessment tools, as well as the overall quality of the course.² These comments provided valuable feedback in the process of developing the final version of the curriculum, which is presented in this article.

It should be noted, however, that concrete results from the implementation of the curriculum's final version have not been obtained, and the research needed to assess its virtues and shortcomings will be hopefully realized in the near future. The purpose of this article is not to report research findings, but to put forward a literature-informed curriculum proposal, which has been based on teaching practice in this context. Therefore, the last factor in the guidelines proposed by Nation & Macalister (2010), i.e. the evaluation of the program, is not discussed in what follows.

3. The environment

The field of collegiate foreign language teaching in the US is currently undergoing a reform process. In 2007, a report issued by the Modern Language Association (MLA) ad hoc committee regarding foreign language education offered at the university level (Geisler et al. 2007) called for a wide reform in the field. More specifically, the report commented on the structure of foreign language departments, in which two- or three-year language courses organized by specialists in second language education feed literature courses developed by faculty members specializing mainly in literature. This bifurcation, as other scholars have also pointed out, leads "into largely content-indifferent language classes and largely language-indifferent content classes" (Byrnes 2012c: 8-9). The report suggests the replacement of "the two-tiered language-literature structure with a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole" (op.cit.: 237). Additionally, it stresses the fact that language learning in a higher education setting cannot be viewed solely as an instrumental endeavour, but needs to introduce students to culture as is "represented not only in events, texts, buildings, artworks, cuisines, and many other artifacts but also in language itself" (Geisler et al. 2007: 236). Along the same lines, it encourages departments to reconceptualize foreign language education, focusing on the differences between the target language and students' own language with respect to meaning, mentality and worldview. The aim is to produce educated speakers who can operate between languages and cultures and have developed "translingual and transcultural competence", an important aspect of which is their ability "to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture" (op.cit.: 237). In other words, it is not only a better understanding of the "other" that is pursued but also an awareness of the characteristics of one's own culture as a lens for viewing the world.

² Students' reactions to earlier versions of this curriculum have been particularly positive, rating the overall quality of the course between 4.65 and 5, on a 1 to 5 scale. However, ratings have not been obtained for all semesters, because courses with low enrolments are not evaluated by the students, in accordance with the university's policy.

Realizing the subjectivity and relativity of this “lens” has the potential for leading to the acceptance and understanding of the self as well as the “other.” The report has initiated a debate among scholars from various foreign language departments on the precise nature of the concepts of translingual and transcultural competence, as well as on the ways that the envisaged curriculum reorientation can be realized. The issue is far from settled and the relevant discussion is beyond the scope of this article. However, it needs to be noted that this ongoing discussion has brought the notion of culture into the foreground as a central parameter in foreign language education at tertiary level.

The courses offered by the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies do not present the two-tiered structure noted in the MLA report as characteristic of foreign language departments. The Modern Greek language course has a duration of two years. It extends to four semesters, each comprising 12 weeks of study. Each week four 50-minute classes are held, amounting to 192 lessons over the four semesters. However, a week-length reading period, which can be optionally added to the schedule, provides 4 to 6 additional teaching hours per semester (16-20 hours in total). A third year of study is not offered at this point, mainly due to limited enrolments. Students seeking to broaden their knowledge of Greek literature have the opportunity to attend courses in which English is the medium of instruction and Greek literary works are studied in translation. The ability to read the authentic Greek text is considered a plus, but not a prerequisite for enrolment in these courses. Despite the fact that the program does not present the configuration of foreign departments described in the MLA report, the MLA ad hoc committee’s recommendation for curricula fostering a unified approach to language and culture has been taken into full consideration. The integration of culture in foreign language classrooms has been given prominence over the last decades on both sides of the Atlantic and the discussion about its scope and objectives provides a solid base for classroom practice (see Chan et al. 2015, Kramersch 1993, 1995, 2013, Krasner 1999, among others).

Finally, one more parameter of the educational environment that was considered of utmost importance was the students’ interest in learning Modern Greek as manifested in course enrolments. According to data presented in the 2015 MLA report (Goldberg et al. 2015), enrolments in Modern Greek language courses at higher education institutions have shown a substantial decrease since 2009. After a period of consistent growth starting in 1974, they fell from 1,982 in 2009, to 1,157 in 2013, a drop of 41.6%. Enrolments in language courses offered by the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies seem to follow this general trend. Within this context, the struggle for adequate enrolments in the course is a constant preoccupation, making the development of an attractive, comprehensive Modern Greek language curriculum fundamental for the survival of the program.

4. Students’ profile

To the best of my knowledge, there is no study that investigates the profile, goals, and needs of students interested in learning Modern Greek in the US. The remarks included in this section originate from personal observations, students’ comments during the course evaluation procedure conducted by the university, as well as my conversations with them over the two years of the curriculum preparation. It must be noted, though, that relevant studies need to be conducted so that the developed curricula can be more efficiently calibrated to the audience’s characteristics.³

³ One such study has been conducted in Canada by Oikonomakou et al. (2017). In this study the majority of students enrolled in the studied university courses are of Greek origin, unlike the student population composition at Princeton, at least during the academic years I have personal experience of.

The Modern Greek language course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduates have usually developed an interest in Modern Greek during a study abroad program in Greece or Cyprus or through the attendance of courses that made some reference to aspects of Hellenic culture (e.g. literature). Additionally, a small number of students of Greek origin, who usually have limited proficiency in Modern Greek but a strong cultural connection, are also enrolled in the course. In all cases, students are interested in participating in study abroad programs or internships in Greece and Cyprus and some explore the possibility of connecting their senior thesis to some aspect of Hellenic studies. Heritage learners are also interested in strengthening their connection with the culture of origin and in developing interactional skills that would allow them to reconnect with extended family members residing in Greece. For instance, one of the students commented on her motives to enrol in the course:⁴

“I took this course because my family is Greek and I travel there every summer to visit them, but have never been able to communicate with them. I think I engaged with this class more than some of my other classes”.

As far as the graduate students are concerned, almost all of them are conducting research related to Hellenic Studies. Their project usually involves study of literature written in Modern Greek, as well as a longitudinal stay in Greece at some point in the future for primary research. For instance, two students made the following comments regarding their reasons for taking the course:

“I took this course primarily to gain knowledge of Greek for research purposes”.

“Being a visiting graduate student in Classics, I have a strong interest in both ancient and modern Greek culture. Besides, Modern Greek is considered a necessary skill for archaeologists back in my home country (I will take part to an archaeological program in Greece this summer), which explains my strong level of engagement in the course”.

Consequently, the audience that attends the course is expected to be involved in a large variety of heterogeneous communicative situations, ranging from everyday interactions, formal and informal, to the exchanging of ideas in an academic context. The question that arises is how students are going to develop the competences required to perform in all these situations in the limited time allotted to language study. Moreover, not only the identified needs but also the aims of tertiary foreign language pedagogy, as stated in the MLA report, are ambitious in themselves and require high levels of language ability. Finally, the fact that the course is part of a humanities program calls for an emphasis on textual interpretive skills, which in themselves are very demanding in terms of the required language abilities. Given that learning Modern Greek is a challenging endeavour for English speakers –due to a new orthography being introduced, a limited number of English cognates in the lexicon and the relatively free word order– in my opinion, the program should aim at creating a strong general language base on which more specific language skills can be built later. It should also focus on developing strategies for autonomous learning during the program as well as after its completion.

⁴ The students' comments in this section come from the course evaluation conducted by the university at the end of every semester.

5. Methods and Principles

In this “post-methods” era (Brown 2002, Kumaravadivelu 1994), Nation & Macalister (2010) do not adhere to any particular teaching method in their guidelines; instead, they propose a list of 20 research-based principles, which curriculum developers need to take into consideration when designing a course. Some of these principles are language independent, while others need to be grounded on language-specific research results. An effort was made to design the curriculum in accordance with all of these. However, it should be noted that despite the progress made over the last decades regarding the learning of Modern Greek as a second language, the field lacks some of the knowledge that certain principles call for. In particular, word frequency lists have been obtained (Hatzigeorgiu et al. 2001, Mikros et al. 2005), but most available corpora for Modern Greek mainly comprise written texts, while oral language is underrepresented in them. Frequency of grammatical structures is another area in which relevant research lags behind pedagogical needs. Nevertheless, Greek scholars have made considerable efforts to identify vocabulary items useful for different proficiency levels and to rank elements of Modern Greek grammar into levels of difficulty (e.g. Moschonas 2008, Rousoulioti & Panagiotidou 2015). Their work has been taken into consideration when designing the curriculum.

Apart from the guidelines proposed by the framework on which we have based the curriculum development, the discussion regarding teaching methods in the context of higher education in the US is of special interest here. Several scholars seem to agree on the observation that communicative language teaching, at least in the way it has been interpreted in the US, while having contributed to the promotion of student-centred approaches and the improvement of students’ oral skills, has had limited success in promoting writing and extended discourse skills (Byrnes 2006, Kern 2000, 2002, Paesani et al. 2016, Swaffar & Arens 2005). Given the great significance of these skills for academic success, the overhauling of foreign language curricula has led scholars to adopt the construct of literacy as a basis for course creation (Byrnes et al. 2010, Kern 2000, López-Sánchez 2015, Paesani et al. 2016, Swaffar & Arens 2005). Text-based instruction, with its emphasis on the social and cultural contexts of the written and spoken texts (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 200), has been advocated as an appropriate basis for curriculum organization at the collegiate level. In this context, special effort was made in the developed curriculum to foster language learning at a text level, in both oral and written skills.

6. Goals

Given this context, the general goals of the course were set out. The course aims at developing students’ communicative and intercultural competence in Modern Greek, while acquainting them with the accomplishments and challenges of Modern Greek society. Finally, an important goal is to encourage and prepare students to pursue further studies and research related to Hellenic Studies.

From this point onwards, the curriculum development followed the process of backward design (Richards 2013). More specifically, the outcomes of the course were initially specified and subsequently the content and method to achieve these outcomes were defined. However, as Crabbe points out (as quoted in Richards 2013: 28), “[i]n fact, design goes backwards and forwards whatever the starting point,” and this curriculum development process has been no exception.

Regarding the specification of the course’s objectives, the alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001) was considered an appropriate choice. The CEFR, which has had a major impact

in Europe and beyond (Byram & Parmenter 2012), aims to provide a common base for the elaboration of language syllabi and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. It is built up in accordance with an action-oriented approach: the ability to use a language is related to the ability to interact effectively within the social environment. According to the CEFR, the language user's communicative competence is activated while performing language activities, which are divided into four types: reception (listening and reading), production (spoken and written), interaction (spoken and written), and mediation (translating and interpreting). The CEFR describes what a learner can do at six levels of gradually advancing proficiency: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. For each of the activities detailed descriptors are provided, illustrating what language users are expected to be able to do at each level.

There are several arguments in favour of aligning the curriculum to the CEFR, the first of which is related to the general orientation of the framework. The CEFR was developed with the aim of providing a basis for the elaboration of policies that would promote an individual's plurilingual and pluricultural competence, in order to deal with the communicative challenges posed by living in a multilingual and multicultural Europe. The language learning process in the CEFR is described as follows:

The learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner becomes *plurilingual* and develops *interculturality*. The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how. (Council of Europe 2001: 43, emphasis in original)

The notion of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram 1997, 2012) has been advocated within the European context as a significant parameter of foreign language pedagogy. According to Byram et al. (2002: 7), “the components of intercultural competence are knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one’s belonging to a number of social groups”. Language learners learn to move beyond stereotypes and to be aware of the multiple identities possessed by each person that are expressed by and through language. In this regard, as Byram (2015: 41-42) states, foreign language teaching is “educational”, in the sense that it can promote the ability of learners to be critical, to decentre and reflect upon themselves. Overall, it has been claimed that the CEFR does not extend the notion of cultural learning to the level of “transcultural competence” that the MLA report advocates (Schmenck 2013).⁵ However, the approach to foreign language teaching promoted within this framework fits well within the general orientation of US collegiate education towards the inclusion of cultural awareness into the language curriculum.

Another reason for using the CEFR as a basis for the curriculum's aims is its dissemination in the US. While in secondary education, the *Standards*, introduced by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), are the prevailing framework nowadays, the picture changes in higher education. The tertiary education landscape in the US is fragmented and the language education policy followed by each institution is determined at the local level, resulting in a plethora of approaches and frameworks adopted. In this context, the CEFR, although a European endeavour, is not alien to the people involved in the field. Institutions and organizations such as the Goethe Institute and the ACTFL have disseminated the CEFR and the

⁵ Schmenck (2013) makes the same remark with regard to the prevalent in the US *Standards* framework.

rationale that pervades it through a series of initiatives (Bott van Houten 2012).⁶ Admittedly, tertiary educational entities that have actually adopted aspects of the CEFR are relatively few (e.g., the German Department at Cornell University), despite the fact the CEFR's focus on the learner, mainly expressed by the European Language Portfolio (ELP), is congruent with the prevalent ideology in the US of learner-centeredness in language learning and teaching (Byrnes 2012a). From the perspective of the Modern Greek language program itself, the alignment to the CEFR is an opportunity to avoid marginalization among language programs offered on and off campus, even though it involves a less commonly taught language. The program is thus contextualized within a wider framework, recognizable beyond the humanities. This increases its visibility and the transparency of its aims.

Moreover, the alignment to the CEFR would also introduce students to this widely used framework, which has created a context for educational practice across Europe and beyond. This by itself contributes to learners' familiarization with an aspect of European culture that is also implemented through Modern Greek language education.

Finally, Modern Greek second language education has been developed in recent years mainly in the context of the CEFR, especially with regard to adults. Almost all programs, materials and certifications available are aligned to this framework. Adopting the CEFR provides the opportunity to utilize all this material and would encourage students to pursue a certificate of attainment.

Returning to the alignment process, levels A1 and A2 were set as the course's objectives for the first two semesters. During the second year, students are expected to develop their skills of independent language use at the B1 level. Given the identified students' needs, the course aims at the equal development of the language activities of reception, production and interaction. Mediation was not included in the program mainly because at the time of the curriculum development there were no illustrative descriptors for this competence on which graded tasks could be created. However, in 2017 the CEFR companion (Council of Europe 2017) was published, which elaborates on the concept of mediation and contains levelled descriptors of the activity. Given the activities in which the course's students are expected to be involved, a future revision of the curriculum needs to include in its aims the development of selected mediation skills. In other words, students that will pursue further studies in the humanities are expected to act as mediators between academic and literary texts written on Modern Greek and the intellectual community of the university and well beyond. The course should carefully prepare them for the task.

7. Content and sequencing

As David Little (2016) points out, level A1 involves social and physical survival, while levels A2 and B1 describe increasingly complex interactions and transactions. Level A2 involves the "highly predictable transactional and interactional routines that account for a high percentage of everyday communication" (Ćatibušić & Little 2014: 19). For the purposes of our course, the first-year curriculum, which covers levels A1 and A2, involves routines that our students are expected to be involved in, from basic personal identification to booking tickets and travelling, as well as visiting a doctor or recounting personal events.

From B1 level onwards, the descriptors included in the CEFR are more general. For instance, the descriptor for Informal Discussion at the lower B1 level reads "Can

⁶ For instance, a whole section of issue 91 of the *Modern Language Journal* has been devoted to the design and implementation of educational policies in Europe in the context of the CEFR, along with the perspectives of such a supranational endeavor (Byrnes 2012b).

give or seek personal views and opinions in discussing topics of interest.” (Council of Europe 2001: 77). Expressions like “topics, which are [...] of personal interest” (Council of Europe 2001: 24) and “familiar topic within his/her field” (Council of Europe 2001: 60) come up repeatedly in the B1 descriptors and need to be specified with reference to the target audience. Taking the profile of the courses’ audience into consideration, the themes for the second year of the course were specified as shown in Table 1. Some of the themes have been touched upon during the first year, and are revisited and elaborated during the second year, thus creating a spiral curriculum.

Table 1: Themes and subthemes at the B1 level

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
Personal identification	Physical appearance, Character, Feelings
House and home	Housing. The urban environment
Food and drink	Cooking, Diet, Eating Habits
Health and body care	Accidents, Medical services, Road safety
Free time, entertainment	Leisure activities
Media and News	TV channels, Newspapers, Press of Greek Diaspora in the US
Natural Environment	Weather, Environmental issues
Travel	Public transportation, Traffic, Accidents, Holidays
Education	Schooling, Higher education
Art and Literature	Fine arts, Museums
Work and Employment	Job search (with a focus on academia)

The specification of the CEFR for Modern Greek as it was implemented by the Center for the Greek Language for the needs of its certification procedure (Antonopoulou et al. 2013) along with the work mentioned in section 5 were used as guidelines for the selection and grading of language elements that realize the descriptors at different proficiency.

The course book selection and adaptation is a central parameter of curriculum development, having a tremendous effect on the learning process. Course books follow their own underlying syllabus and to a large extent determine the vocabulary and grammar elements presented in each unit and take a particular perspective toward the learning process and the representation of the culture associated with the language.

For our purposes, two course books have been chosen, namely Simopoulos et al. (2010), which covers levels A1 and A2, used for the first two semesters, and Pathiaki et al. (2012), which leads up to level B1, used over the second year of the program. This series of textbooks is designed to address the needs of adult learners who live in Greek-speaking countries. More specifically, the students follow the lives of a culturally diverse group of people living in Greece and through their activity the multifaceted social and linguistic reality of Modern Greece emerges. The books contain no descriptions or explanations on cultural topics, as is usually the case in course books used in the US, but learners are implicitly introduced to and left to discover, with the instructor’s guidance, how the differentiated identities and goals of the participants in a conversation or of the texts’ authors impact their language choices. Consequently, this textbook series fits well into the intercultural language learning orientation of the curriculum, as it provides learners with the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable them to understand the perspectives of the people involved. Additionally, the textbooks offer a balance among meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, and meaning-focused output. There is no support language, since they address a multilingual audience, usually with no common language among

them. As with culture, there are no grammar explanations, only examples of characteristic uses.

On the other hand, no textbook can ever be a perfect fit for a language course; certain adaptations are required so that the course's aims can be met. The two textbooks are mainly addressed to learners in the process of integrating into Greek society; therefore, the selection of themes and subthemes reflects their needs and interests. While this perspective has proved very useful as a prompt for discussion in class, adaptations were necessary to accommodate the needs and interests of our particular audience.⁷ For instance, in the unit on education special emphasis was given to higher education, while the book focuses on primary and secondary education taking the perspective of parents with school-aged children. To this end, materials from a variety of other textbooks and online courses have been used in the teaching process. Authentic materials, such as films, songs, as well as TV and radios shows, ads, flyers, comics, newspaper articles, webpages and the like, have also been exploited.

Regarding the development of students' intercultural competence, in parallel with the development of interpretation skills, concrete knowledge on cultural issues is occasionally needed so the meaning expressed can be successfully understood. For instance, interactions involved in renting a house usually make little sense if one is not familiar with the urban housing typology in Greece and the notion of "polikatikía," the characteristic apartment building of Greek urban areas. Expanding on the topic, the instructor can introduce the notion of "antiparohí," which has been the dominant model for urban construction in Athens and beyond (Serraos et al. 2016). Given this context, the learner can interpret the social relations between inhabitants of these apartment buildings, which define their language choices. Relevant information needs to be provided by the instructor explicitly or is collected by the students through carefully designed activities.

Additionally, the textbook series does not place emphasis on the instruction of the specifics of different text types or on the development of a reflective stance towards language and culture in the sense promoted in the MLA report. Therefore, additional material and activities were created to supplement the books' content in this respect. For instance, the use of singular and plural markings on the verb to indicate, among others, differences in social status and position in work hierarchy are repeatedly used in the course book's dialogues. Students, after identifying the function of the forms in discourse and the identities of the speakers using them, are encouraged to think if such social relations are linguistically marked in any other language they know, and especially English, and by what means. Cross-linguistic comparisons, discussion, and role-playing activities are used to enhance the students' reflection skills.

8. Format and presentation

The curriculum is organized around thematic units, each of which includes several performance objectives, the content and activities, as well as the suggested time that should be allotted to it. Moreover, the language elements in terms of vocabulary and grammar that are necessary for comprehension and production in each unit have been specified. However, the format and presentation at the lesson level is not determined, thus allowing for a certain degree of flexibility for the tutor and the students.

⁷ It has to be noted that especially Pathiaki et al. (2012) is mainly utilized as a portfolio of material to be selectively used in class, rather than a book whose linear arrangement is to be closely followed. Consequently, students have the opportunity to explore on their own the rest of the material, which is level appropriate, relevant to the unit's topic and touches upon different skills.

9. A unit example: Goals and content

A unit from the second semester of the program has been chosen as an example. Table 2 presents the unit's goals in terms of communicative competence along with the vocabulary and grammar necessary for performing these communicative activities. Moreover, the cultural elements that the unit focuses on are also included in the Table. The unit is estimated to be taught in eight lessons. The oral communicative objectives include the narration of short life stories, both students' own and those of other people. Regarding written language, short biographical notes are the focus of the unit. The relevant material in the course book (Simopoulos et al. 2010) focuses on the stories of the book's main characters, with a special emphasis on migrants and refugees. Given the course's context, adapted stories of Greek migrants to the US, as reported by students from Yale (Kaliambou 2012), are added to the unit's reading materials. Students are asked to compare the situations that the texts describe and to comment on the motives for migration. The status of Greece as a migration sending and migration receiving country is highlighted through these texts. The unit includes the screening of the film *Plato's Academy* (Tsitos 2009), which comments on the xenophobic beliefs and behaviours that have surfaced after the influx of migrants to Greece. Students are asked to write their thoughts after reading the texts and watching the movie. In this last assignment students are encouraged to use both Modern Greek and English to present their thoughts.

Table 2: Example of a unit from the second semester

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Communicative Objectives</i>	<i>Grammar</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Culture</i>
Personal domain: Personal Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are expected to be able: - to understand and produce short oral life stories (of others and their own) consisting of high frequency vocabulary - to ask questions to elicit information regarding someone's life story - to understand and produce short written biographical notes - to use appropriate wishes on different occasions (birthdays, name days, weddings), express sympathy, and congratulate - to propose a simple toast on an informal occasion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simple past tense - active voice - simple past tense - selected passive verbs - temporal adverbials for past reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - description of prominent life events (birth, death, birth of children, etc.) - wishes, condolences (sympathy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - migration from and to Greece: life stories of migrants (immigrants and refugees to Greece & Greeks that have migrated to the US) - xenophobic tendencies in Greek society (film screening) - Greek poets: Solomos, Cavafy, Elytis, Seferis (poetry set to music) - the custom of name day celebrations

With regard to biographical notes, the book presents the text type while introducing distinguished Greek poets. Given the strong intellectual tradition at Princeton University and the work done by Edmund Keeley and his associates on Greek poetry (see e.g. Constantine et al. 2010, Keeley & Sherrard 1966, 1981, Keeley et al. 1992), introduction of Modern Greek poems in the original and in English translation was considered an appropriate choice. Finally, students are introduced to the textual characteristics of short biographical notes and are asked to produce such texts themselves.

10. Monitoring and assessment

The university's academic schedule includes two major assessments per semester, a midterm and a final exam. In addition to these, weekly or biweekly tests have been added to the evaluation scheme of the course. These tests, especially in the second year, have taken the form of take-home exams that include readings relevant to the unit's topic, along with writing exercises, often reflective in nature. These tests were exploited as an opportunity for more extensive listening, reading and writing to be introduced into the curriculum.

Besides the university's established assessment procedures, the integration of a language portfolio has been a key choice in view of our aims. The conception of the idea for a European Language Portfolio (ELP) that would complement the CEFR goes back to 1992 and was designed as an "instrument allowing individuals who so desire to maintain a record of different elements of their language learning achievement and experience, formal and informal" (Council of Europe 1992: 39). Portfolios enhance learners' autonomy by encouraging reflection upon the learning process and personal goal-setting (Little 2009, 2012). As was mentioned earlier, the development of learner autonomy is of utmost importance in this program, since it would enable students to continue expanding their language skills long after the completion of the two-year course. Furthermore, portfolios document the process of language comparison that naturally takes place when a new language is learned. They allow students to reflect on their multilingual competences and intercultural experiences and enhance their ability to move between languages and cultures. For the purposes of this particular course, the Spanish-English version of the ELP, designed by the *European Confederation of University Language* for use in universities across Europe, was selected.⁸ Although this is a version that meets the needs of this course, a valuable addition to the curriculum would be an online portfolio that could host all digital material produced by the students. This remains a goal for the future.

11. Future directions

During the curriculum development process, certain issues emerged that need to be addressed so as to improve the language education provided in this particular context. In this concluding section, I would like to devote some attention to the educational material, the study abroad programs, and the creation of a third year of study. As previously stated, it has been my aspiration to utilize the knowledge, materials, and the best practices developed in Greece over the last decades in the development of a curriculum for a university in the US. Reflecting upon the process, it has been a successful endeavour that provided new impetus for the course, although this remains to be verified in the course evaluation procedure. However, a few remarks are in order regarding the challenges that were faced.

⁸ In order to motivate students to update their portfolios, the ELP has been integrated into the course's evaluation scheme and accounts for 15% of the final grade.

More specifically, the material and curricula that were at my disposal mainly address the needs and interests of audiences with urgent integration needs. In these circumstances, curriculum developers, teachers and textbook authors frequently rely on the learners' interaction with the host society to complement the course's content. While this integration perspective can result in meaningful language teaching in the new context, it needs to be supplemented with content presenting issues that are currently of importance to Modern Greek society and identity, as well as the multiple –and often adversarial– views on these issues. Views on heated current subjects such as current politics (e.g. the rise of Golden Dawn, a far-right party) or cultural debates (e.g. the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece from the British Museum) need to be added to the course content. Admittedly, the proficiency level addressed in the course does not include comprehension and production of texts on unfamiliar and abstract topics. However, level-appropriate texts can be identified and, with appropriate scaffolding from peers and the instructor, learners can be introduced to these issues and the language used to talk about them.

Besides the classroom practice, intercultural language learning needs to be experiential learning and in that sense study abroad programs are essential for the program's success. Current research shows that even short stays can have a significant impact on the development of *intercultural communicative competence*, if effectively organized (Boye 2016). To the best of my knowledge, stay abroad programs in Greece or Cyprus that aim at language development place emphasis on language instruction in classrooms, guided tours and lectures. While the usefulness of such programs cannot be denied, it is of utmost importance to create programs that would provide students with opportunities for a holistic language and culture experience through authentic interaction settings and fieldwork related to Hellenic Studies. Active participation in projects, interaction with the host community and an opportunity to experience the use of Modern Greek in different contexts would enhance the students' language skills and strengthen their motives to continue studying the language.

Finally, the program has a limited duration of two years, due to low enrolment in the third year. However, the language goals of several students who wish to accomplish high academic skills are not fully obtainable within the two years currently allotted to language study. This lack of perspective for language learners may also act as a deterrent for prospective students who wish to reach an advanced level of proficiency. A third year of study would offer the necessary perspective to the program and, in order to make it feasible, the collaboration of tertiary education institutions is required. A jointly designed, literacy-based, one-year shared course, offered by institutions that already offer a two-year program, would hopefully be a viable solution to the problem of low enrolments at the local level.

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