A Greek perspective of EFL (English as a Foreign Language):
Tracing linguistic difficulties, concerns and issues that Greek native
speakers encounter, when they acquire English as a Foreign
Language in the Greek educational system

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ABSTRACT

A Greek perspective of EFL (English as a Foreign Language): Tracing linguistic difficulties, concerns and issues that Greek native speakers encounter, when they acquire English as a Foreign Language in the Greek educational system

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The main purpose of this research project was to explore linguistic elements that potentially hinder or assist Greek native speakers in their effort to acquire English as a Foreign Language in the Greek educational system. The research also aimed at touching on some characteristics of the Greek educational system and of the way EFL is taught in Greece that affects the acquisition of English as a foreign language. For that purpose, data were collected through a survey and interviews of adult Greek native speakers in the central coast of California. The findings indicated that the acquisition of foreign languages, and in particular of English, is highly valued in Greece. Therefore, and due to the weakness of the Greek public educational system concerning the efficient teaching of foreign languages, a network of “parallel education” was organized and it is indisputably an established part of the educational landscape. As far as distinct language skills are concerned, it seemed that correct pronunciation and proper accent and to a lesser degree the grammar rules and vocabulary acquisition were the most difficult to acquire skills. An additional factor, which hindered the holistic approach to EFL, was the Greek teachers’ prioritization of accurate student language and grammar teaching instead of the development of communication skills. As the body of literature related to this topic was extremely limited, it is hoped that the trends and tendencies, which were shown in the present project, will be further explored in future research.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................iii

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................iv

Chapter One .................................................................................................1

  Introduction .............................................................................................. 1
  The Purpose of the Research .................................................................... 2
  Research Questions ................................................................................... 2
  Design of the Study – Methodology ....................................................... 2
  Personal Background ............................................................................... 3
  Significance of the Study ......................................................................... 5
  Delimitations ..............................................................................................7
  Definition of Terms ...................................................................................8

Chapter Two – Literature Review ...............................................................12

  Introduction .............................................................................................12
  English Language Teaching in Greece ..................................................13
  Research and Projects Concerning EFL for Greek Native Speakers ....16
  Articles on the Comparison Between the English and the Greek Language 20
    Comparison between linguistic forms of the English and the Greek language ..... 23
    Phonology .............................................................................................23
    The Writing System ..............................................................................24
    Stress, Rhythm and Intonation ............................................................25
    Grammar – Morphology .....................................................................26
    Grammar – Syntax ...............................................................................27
    Vocabulary ............................................................................................27

Chapter Three – Methodology .....................................................................29

  General Research Design .......................................................................29
  Research Setting ......................................................................................29
  Research Participants .............................................................................30
  Data Collection .......................................................................................32
    Survey ...................................................................................................32
    Interviews ..............................................................................................34
  Data Analysis ..........................................................................................35
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Foreign language learning is highly valued in Greece, as the Greek language is spoken only in Greece and Cyprus and the need for international communication is intense. Of all foreign languages, English is considered dominant due to its international prestige, its use in new technologies, and its influence in international politics and media. In consequence, the value of English language learning by Greek native speakers is stressed by business, industry and the government, that determines English as the one of the two foreign languages that all Greek students are required to study starting from the elementary school.

Even though English language learning is highly valued by the Greek government (the Ministry of Education and other governmental organizations consider proficiency in English a vital requirement for appointing employees in the Public Services), by the Academics in various Universities, and by the Greek society in general, very limited research has been done and very few articles have been written concerning the acquisition of English by Greek native speakers in the Greek educational system. The fact that the body of literature on that issue appears to be extremely limited is by itself very significant and in combination with the facts that research is mostly done by graduate students within the scope of their dissertation and that related linguistic articles are old – mainly published in the 1970s and 1980s- demonstrate on the one hand the need for more research, projects and articles on this issue, and on the other hand the difficulties in conceptualizing the problems and acquiring theoretical background for the purposes of this thesis.
A Greek perspective of EFL 2

The Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this study is to explore some factors that hinder or assist Greek native speakers in their effort to acquire English as a Foreign Language in the Greek educational system. It focuses on the basic language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – and the linguistic elements of both English and Greek that cause difficulties or facilitate the acquisition of the above language skills. It also touches on some characteristics of the Greek educational system that affect the acquisition of English as a foreign language.

Research Questions

a.) Are there linguistic elements – elements that can be attribute to the characteristics of the Greek and English language - that hinder the Greek native speakers in their acquisition of English as a foreign language?

b.) Are there linguistic elements that facilitate the Greek native speakers in their acquisition of the English as a foreign language?

c.) What are some characteristics of the Greek educational system and of the way EFL is taught in Greece that may affect the English language learning?

Design of the Study – Methodology

Since the research is on EFL for Greek native speakers, the participants are selected according to their native language and their speaking English as a Foreign Language. The participants are Greek officers studying in the Military Postgraduate Academy (M.P.A.) in the central coast of California and their spouses. I chose Greek
people studying in the MPA, firstly because it is a fairly big community of Greek native
speakers that have acquired English in the Greek educational system, and secondly
because I am a part of the community to which my participants belong and this fact
facilitates my contact and trust with them during the research.

The instrument for collecting data is a questionnaire. As research on the specific
issue is limited, no appropriate questionnaire that could be addressed to Greek native
speakers was found. Thus, I developed a questionnaire, which consists of questions for
demographic information useful for the discussion of the results as well as of four-point
Likert-type questions that address to the problem directly. After I receive the completed
questionnaires, I will ask four volunteers to participate in a brief interview. The purpose
of the interview is to elaborate on issues and questions raised on the questionnaire and to
supplement the findings of the survey. The study has been covered by the Georgia
University and the IRB (Institutional Review Board), which assure that the participants' privacy is maintained and confidentiality is guaranteed

Personal Background

I was ten years old, when I first started to study English as a foreign language. I
couldn't have done otherwise, because English is one of the foreign languages that the
Ministry of Education determines that Greek students are required to study. Thus,
learning English became a major concern for me and for all my classmates, not only
because English is considered dominant of all foreign languages, but because we had
come to realize that speaking only our native language, which is spoken only in Greece
and Cyprus, was a restricting factor to our need for international communication and to our future academic and professional success.

My studies in the High school and in the University led me to another academic field, Ancient and Modern Greek language and literature, which, though, was not so irrelevant with the teaching of English as a Foreign language. The English language and mainly its linguistic characteristics continued to be one of my concerns and, thus, after I acquired the “Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English”, I taught the English language at a lower and intermediate level.

As an English language teacher, I often experienced that students encountered difficulties in acquiring particular language skills. My students, for example, were struggling to learn and remember the correct spelling of the words and encountered a major difficulty in reading English words correctly. Listening and comprehending English native speakers was another skill that my experience showed me that causes problems to the Greek students. The problem was more intense, when they had to listen to British English; it seemed easier to them to understand American English, to which I could assume that they had become more accustomed by watching mostly American films or TV programs. The source of the biggest problems, though, was the students’ distinct accent. It is a really common situation in Greek classrooms that students, who are trying to pronounce words with an English accent, either fail and feel frustrated or are teased by their classmates, because they sound “funny” or “ridiculous”. My background and linguistic studies led me to assume that difficulties in abandoning their distinct accent are due to some specific phonemes that the English language has, but the Greek language lacks and, thus, Greek students are not used to pronouncing.
When, later on, I came to the United States, my personal experience led me to believe that, although I speak reasonably good English, I am frequently in situations, where I encounter difficulties that make me reluctant to communicate in English, or where my words and my full intentions are not understood. My experiences in an English speaking country made me understand and justify my students' reluctance or frustration in similar situations. Gradually I became increasingly interested in exploring the linguistic elements of both English and Greek that possibly hinder or facilitate Greek native speakers in their effort to acquire English. I wanted to find out if my experiences from the foreign language learning and my impression of my students' difficulties were connected with the experiences of other Greek native speakers, and if the language skills that I had difficulty in acquiring, caused the same problems to other Greek people, as well.

As far as my own perspective in the research is concerned, my personal and professional background gave me the advantage of having an insider's perspective in the present research. Furthermore, the research is conducted among Greek speakers of a community to which I belong. This makes me a researcher and a participant at the same time, it renders me an "indigenous insider" of the research.

Significance of the Study

The study of second language acquisition and the further exploration of the connections between the English and Greek language has both personal and professional significance for me. As a language teacher, I hope that the study of research concerning EFL for Greek native speakers will enable me to help my students learn the foreign
language easier and more fluently. Additionally, I believe that through a contrastive study of the English and the Greek language I will become more aware of the components of the two languages and I will gain valuable insight into both my primary language and English. Furthermore, the review of the related literature may provide valuable information on the teachers’ teaching techniques and attitudes and confirm or not my hypothesis that the preferred teaching style of EFL in Greece affects the acquisition of English as a second language. Thus, I expect that my professional career as a language teacher in secondary schools will benefit from my studies in both theoretical and practical issues.

While these studies can provide me with personal and professional help, they might serve other purposes as well. By identifying the difficulties that students encounter, when acquiring EFL, one may be able to design proper curricula for schools. Teachers could also be provided with information and directions towards successful guidance for their students. By tracing the potential hindrances, the teachers could identify the pattern of the typical errors that are done by students and predict the areas in which the students are going to experience difficulties. Accordingly, teachers could decide on where to focus their teaching, where to put extra effort and time, when teaching EFL, and, generally, how to improve their practice and their teaching strategies. On the other hand, students, who know in which areas and why they find certain difficulties and know that other students encounter similar difficulties, feel more comfortable, reassured and determined to study. On the whole, by knowing potential hindrances one can be more effective either when teaching (teacher) or learning (student) a foreign language.
Delimitations

During the design of the research and the literature review some thoughts and some potential problems urged me to restrict my scope and focus of the study. Initially, this study confined itself to surveying and interviewing Greek native speakers and discussing their perspective in acquiring English as Foreign language. The participants are people that started studying or completed their studying English in the Greek educational system. Therefore, I exclude from my sample bilingual people that acquired both English and Greek simultaneously, or people that fully acquired English as a foreign language in a country other than Greece.

The study is also restricted to adults that have already acquired the foreign language and have at least acquired English at an elementary level, in order to be able to express their opinion on this learning process. I acknowledge that the questionnaire and interviews do not come immediately after the process of learning, and that the period that intervened between learning and the survey may have altered the subjects’ opinion on the degree of difficulty they have encountered, when acquiring EFL. Nevertheless, I want to make sure that the research participants have a clear and overall picture of their personal process of learning and that they can explicitly describe it. I also want to be certain that they can comprehend the linguistic aspects and terms, on which they are surveyed or interviewed, something that could not be accomplished if children were interviewed.

Furthermore, I have to narrow my study down to how the subjects think or feel about the difficulties they face. I do not intend to take written or spoken samples, in order to analyze them and assess the errors that the subject actually do make, when communicating in English.
Additionally, as I focused on aspects of my topic, which puzzled and challenged me the most, I decided to explore the linguistic aspects that cause the difficulties Greek speakers encounter. I am not concerned about the subjects' social and economic background or any other social factors that can possibly hinder or facilitate the acquisition of EFL.

Lastly, my sample includes the Greek military officers studying in the MPA and their wives. Since they are a relatively small community – no more than 65 people – most of them are asked to volunteer to participate. I realize that the number of the participants is not large and that the sample is not representative of the larger Greek population. I also realize that the results of the study will address to the specific group that is being studied and that if the research is duplicated with different populations, it may have different results. Although I acknowledge that this study cannot be generalized to all the Greek population, it is my hope that the study will show trends and tendencies and that it will provide feedback and information for the design of future studies.

Definition of Terms

In order to appreciate the literature, which refers to some linguistic aspects of the Greek and English language, a definition of related terms is considered necessary. The following terms or acronyms are frequently used, when discussing linguistic aspects of the English and the Greek language. The definitions were taken mostly from the “Cambridge International Dictionary” or from “The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics”.

ESL: English as a Second language
EFL: English as a Foreign language

MPA: Military Postgraduate Academy in Central California (Pseudonym).

Georgia University: Pseudonym of a university in the Central Coast of California.

First language: one's native language.

Second language: a language spoken in addition to one's native language; the first foreign language one learns.

Second-language acquisition: literally refers to learning a language after having acquired a first language, but the term is frequently used to refer to the acquisition of a second language after a person has reached puberty.

Frontistirio: private teaching institutes that supplement state education and provide tuition in foreign languages.

"Parallel education": includes private lessons and frontistiria

Linguistics: is the scientific study of language. Linguistics is the systematic study of the structure and development of language in general or of particular languages.

Linguistic: is something connected with language or the study of language

Grammar: is a branch of linguistics dealing with the form and structure of words (morphology), and their interrelation in sentences (syntax). The study of grammar reveals how language works.

Morphology: is the study of the grammatical structure and form of words and categories realized by them. While many people, influenced by writing, tend to think of words as the basic units of grammatical structure, linguists recognize that words are build out of pieces - the morphemes. The word “cats”, for instance, consists of two elements, or morphemes: “cat”, the meaning of which can be roughly characterized as
“feline animal,” and “-s”, the meaning of which can be roughly characterized as “more than one”. The study of these smallest grammatical units (morphemes), and the ways in which they combine into words, is called morphology.

Syntax: is the study of how words combine to make sentences. The order of words in sentences varies from language to language. English-language syntax, for instance, generally follows a subject-verb-object order, as in the sentence “The dog (subject) bit (verb) the man (object).”

Phonetics: is a branch of linguistics concerned with the production, physical nature, and perception of speech sounds.

Phoneme: is the smallest distinct sound unit in a given language. For example [top] in English realizes three successive phonemes represented in spelling by the letters t, o and p.

Phonology: is the study of sounds in a particular language or in languages generally.

Phonetic language: A spelling system or a language can be described as phonetic if you can understand how words are pronounced simply by looking at their spelling.

Pronunciation: refers to saying a word or a letter in a particular way.

Accent: is the way in which people in a particular area, country, social class, etc. pronounce words.

Stress: refers to pronouncing (a word or syllable) with greater force than other words in the same sentence or other syllables in the same word.
Intonation: the sound changes produced by the rise and fall of the voice when speaking, esp. when this has an effect on the meaning of what is said. Intonation distinguishes kinds of sentences or speakers of different language cultures.

Inflection: is a change in -or addition to- the form of a word that shows a change in the way it is used in sentences.

Inflected language: is a language in which the form or ending of some words changes, when the way in which the words are used in sentences changes.

Semantics: is the study of the meaning of linguistic signs— that is, words, expressions, and sentences.

Lexical errors: errors relating to words

Spelling: is forming a word with the letters in the correct order.

Orthography: is the accepted way of spelling and writing words.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review includes three areas: a.) report of English language teaching in Greece. The institutions and the conditions under which the foreign language is being taught in Greece may affect the acquisition of the language; b.) research and projects that have been done concerning the acquisition of English by Greek native speakers in the Greek educational system. The research on this field is very limited and it is mostly done by graduate students within the scope of their dissertation; c.) brief comparison between certain basic linguistic forms of the English and the Greek language. The comparison facilitates the interpretation of the research’s results.

The first area intends to provide background data to the reader in terms of how EFL is taught in Greece; through statements by professional organizations the reader can trace the importance that the government and the Greek society give to the teaching of foreign languages, and thus trace the rationale for the research. The second area discusses findings of previous research on the topic; the report of the researches is made through a comparing and contrasting the researches procedure, regardless of whether these researches are framed through positivism, phenomenology or emancipatory research - in other words, regardless of whether they have the same epistemological framework with the present study. The third area provides assumptions of linguists on how the Greek and English languages are different and what difficulties this fact poses to the Greek native speakers, who acquire English as a foreign language;
it provides a theoretical framework, a set of perspectives that will guide the analysis of the data and will facilitate the understanding of the research’s findings.

The literature review is focused on the above three areas. As explained in the first chapter, the research has restricted its scope, and accordingly the literature review excludes areas that are outside of its parameters. In particular, it does not include research of Greek native speakers that have acquired English outside the Greek educational system. For example, a number of researches that have been conducted in Cyprus or in the U.S.A. on how children of Greek immigrants acquire English as a second language in the bilingual schools are excluded. Additionally, a number of psycholinguistic experiments that have Greek native speakers as participants, but aim at addressing psychological and not purely linguistic issues are not included. The literature review also restricts its scope to the teaching of EFL in Greece, as it was considered that general references to EFL are not directly relevant to the scope of the present thesis.

English Language Teaching in Greece.

The importance of EFL is easy to be demonstrated, taking into consideration the status of English nowadays. Indisputably English is considered a “global language”, since it has penetrated into the international domains of political life, business, communication, entertainment, media, press, advertising, access to knowledge, international travel and education (Papadopoulou, 1999, p. 30). Taking also into consideration that Greece is a country of eleven million people, whose native language is very little known abroad, it is of no surprise that acquiring EFL in Greece is considered highly necessary.
According to "A survey of English language teaching and learning in Greece", the value and need for English language teaching in Greece is very high (British Council, 1991). This is best demonstrated by S. Griffith, who stated that of all candidates worldwide, who participate in the Cambridge First Certificate and Cambridge Proficiency examinations, about one quarter are in Greece (Griffith, 1997, p. 145).

Education in Greece is the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. The educational system is highly centralized and the Ministry of Education controls all decisions and formulations of policy. The state education system is organized into primary education (nursery schools and primary schools); secondary education (lower secondary schools or gymnasias and upper secondary schools or lykeias); and higher education (universities or AEIs and institutions of technological education or TEIs). A nationwide uniform curriculum exists for all primary and secondary schools - private schools must follow the same curriculum as public schools. As far as English as a foreign language is concerned, the Ministry determines who is eligible to teach EFL in the public and private education system and sets a fairly detailed curriculum listing an outline of suitable content, e.g., topic areas, functions, skills to concentrate on (the British Council, 2002).

According to a law, which passed in 1985 (law1655/85), foreign language teaching was introduced in primary education in the 1987-1988 school year on an experimental basis in 124 schools throughout Greece (English language was introduced in 80 schools and the French language in 44 schools). The two languages were introduced in the 4th grade and continued to be taught in all grades of primary and secondary schools (Martin-Bletsas, 1988). Foreign languages were not taught at primary state schools until
the law of 1985. From December 1992 the teaching of English at these levels was
extended to all primary schools, but no other foreign language is taught in primary
schools. The laws of 1985 and 1992 are indications of the government’s commitment to
foreign language teaching and they were significant steps, both in terms of extending the
scope of language teaching and in establishing English officially as the most widely used
foreign language.

In all secondary schools it is compulsory for students to take two modern foreign
languages. At gymnasium level the two compulsory foreign languages are English and
either French or German. At gymasia, students study English for three hours per week in
all three grades. Almost the same curriculum is developed for lykeia as well.

A new secondary English curriculum was introduced in 1986, following the
publication by the Ministry of Education of “The syllabus for English language teaching
in state schools” in 1984. This new curriculum sets out a broadly communicative
approach. Moreover, the Ministry set up a project that resulted in the writing of a three-
year English course designed for gymnasium level (British Council, 1991, p. 7).
Reactions to the new curriculum and books varied.

Despite the constitutional guarantee of free education for all, the general lack of
public confidence in schools’ ability to teach languages properly stimulates “parallel
education”. “Parallel education” includes private lessons and frontistiria. Frontistiria are
private teaching institutes that supplement state education and provide tuition in foreign
languages. There is a large number of these private teaching establishments throughout
the country. British Council estimates that there are between 5,000 and 6,000 frontistiria
in Greece and the majority of the students - approximately 80% - attends these classes
(The British Council, 2002). Even though all political parties agree on the desirability of doing away with "parallel education", and even though there are signs that parents are now delaying sending their children to language schools as they are learning English at a young age at public schools, the reality is that the frontistiria are an established part of the educational landscape, and the system depends on them to a certain extent (British Council, 1991, p. 18 and the British Council, 2002). It is also widely accepted by the Greek society that, in order to do well at school, children must have extra private lessons in frontistiria or in one-to-one instruction, and it is indicative of the high value set on education by Greek parents that so many of them are prepared to pay for this. As Pavlidou argues "it is common knowledge in Greece that a foreign language is to be learned appropriately not at school, but at one of the hundreds of foreign language schools in Greece or with private lessons" (Pavlidou, 1991). Despite the shortcomings of individual frontistiria, they are basically successful and in good health. They usually have better trained teachers, smaller classes and more resources - more attractive books are used along with computers, videos, etc., which are not available in public schools (the British Council, 2002).

Research and Projects Concerning EFL for Greek Native Speakers.

The body of research that deals with the acquisition of the English language by Greek native speakers appears to be extremely limited. This is not surprising given the fact that research on this area is almost exclusively carried out by Greek native speakers and that academic linguistic research in Greece, which is not very developed, is mainly focused on the study of the ancient Greek language. The limited research on a
Greek perspective of EFL is mostly done by Greek graduate students within the scope of their dissertation, by university professors or by researchers who wanted to explore the preferred teaching styles of Greek EFL teachers. The articles that were traced are descriptions of research on the implementation and teaching of EFL in Greece (Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Karavas-Doukas, 1995; Mitakidou, 1997; Bolla-Mavrides, 1989; Papadopoulou, 1999).

All the related research was focused on the teaching and learning English by Greek speakers in the Greek educational system and the participants to the researches were mainly Greek native speakers. For example, Hughes & Lascaratou (1982) did a study in thirty people (ten native-speaker teachers of English, ten Greek teachers of English, and ten English native-speakers who were not teachers), who judged the seriousness of 32 errors made by Greek-speaking students of English in their last year of the Greek high school. Similarly, Karavas-Doukas (1995) interviewed 14 EFL Greek teachers, who taught in various schools within and around the Athens area. Mitakidou (1997) developed, observed and evaluated at the Child Development Center at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, an innovative teaching program in which young children can develop an awareness of the phonetic, grammatical and vocabulary functions of a foreign language, while developing favorable attitudes toward that language and the culture it expresses.

Even though the purpose of the research varied significantly, all studies made some common remarks and identified some factors that were common in the way English is taught in Greece. For example, Hughes & Lascaratou (1982) aimed at identifying the criteria by which teachers are judging the seriousness of errors made by
students, who were learning a foreign language, and if there was a difference between the groups of native and non-native English speakers in their assessment of the relative seriousness of errors; Karvas-Doukas (1995) attempted to explain the causes of the non-implementation of a Greek English language teaching innovation, which involved a more communicative learner-centered curriculum and a series of textbooks in Greek secondary schools; and Mitakidou (1997) aimed at developing an innovative approach to English language teaching emphasizing on a holistic approach to language learning, and the group learning activities.

Nevertheless, all the researchers agreed that the Greek educational context is highly teacher-centered and that the teachers' preferred style prioritizes accurate student language and grammar teaching instead of the creation of opportunities for genuine communication in the classroom, in spite of the fact that the Ministry of Education, the state-mandated curriculum and the textbooks advocate a communicative learner-centered approach. In particular, Hughes & Lascaratou (1982) argue that in judging the seriousness of errors made by Greek students, the Greek teachers made reference to the "basicness" of the rules infringed and tended to overrate accuracy at the expense of communication, while the English teachers depended on the criterion of intelligibility. Since the vast majority of teachers of EFL in Greece are Greek native speakers, their failure to take account of the degree to which an error impedes communication, should be questioned, especially, when the expressed intent of language teaching in Greece is to develop communication competence in the foreign language. Mitakidou (1997), moreover, argues that despite the attention given to foreign language learning and the ongoing discussions on the methods and techniques
for classroom teaching, the teaching of English in Greece has remained formal and conventional. Formal teaching approaches, with their emphasis on form rather than in meaning, are incompatible with the active learning of children, who learn the language best, when it is meaningful and relevant to their needs. Greek foreign language programs are based on textbooks and give priority to the development of grammatical and vocabulary skills. Mitakidou claims, though, that emphasis should be placed on a holistic approach to language learning and that Greek teachers should operate on the principle that language is learned best and easiest, when it is whole and in natural contexts. Additionally, Karavas-Doukas (1995) argues that the incompatibility of the teachers’ learning/teaching theories and of the wider Greek educational context with the principles of the learner-centered approach hinders the implementation of EFL innovations in Greece. The teachers having been trained and used to a teacher-centered approach both as learners and as teachers consider the application of communicative learner-centered approach in school as highly problematic and unfeasible. They thus revert to their familiar teacher-centered grammar-based pedagogy performing the well-experienced roles of authority and transmitter of knowledge. The researcher’s findings suggest that teachers tend to eliminate the intended communicative features of the textbooks, transform their objectives and implement them as controlled grammar practice exercises. They also complain of the textbooks’ lack of grammar, reading passages and structured practice.
Articles on the Comparison Between the English and the Greek language.

The articles referring to the linguistic forms of the English and Greek language (Papaeftymiou-Lytra, 1987; Varnas, 1978; Commonwealth Department of Education, 1982; Efstathiadis & King, 1972; Varnas, 1979; Economidis, 1975) are all more theoretical approaches of EFL. They all do a brief comparison between certain basic linguistic forms of the English and the Greek language and aim at serving the same purpose: explore and illuminate through examples fundamental linguistic differences between the two languages, that potentially cause errors or difficulties to the Greek native speakers, when they acquire English as a Foreign language. For example, Papaeftymiou-Lytra (1987) does a contrastive analysis between Greek and English phonology, grammar, syntax and vocabulary, in an effort to identify linguistic elements that cause serious difficulty to Greek speakers in acquiring English. Similarly, the Commonwealth Department of Education (1982) in Australia obviously after examining writing and oral samples and using previous experiences prepared and distributed “notes,” that aim at informing teachers of the difficulties that are likely to be encountered by Greek speaking students, who are newcomers to Australia, because of the differences between the English and the Greek sound systems and grammatical structure. Moreover, Efstathiadis & King (1972) took writing samples from Greek learners of English from the Department of English, University of Thessaloniki, and also from essays by candidates for the Cambridge Lower Certificate in English and made an analysis of the frequent errors. The analysis explains the frequency of errors with reference to the different linguistic forms of the two languages, gives illustrating examples and occasionally proposes teaching techniques by which mistakes could be
avoided. Additionally, Varnas (1978) is discussing the phenomenon of "language interference." He explains that speakers of a second language, especially if they are adults, always show some influence from their native language, when they learn a second language. The phenomenon of "language interference" is due to the linguistic difference of the two languages, explains the features of the Greek language found in the English, which are spoken by adult Greek native speakers, and the problems faced by these speakers in the learning of English. The same author, Varnas (1979) briefly describes the development of bilingualism and how the prior acquisition of the native Greek language affects and hinders the learning of certain linguistic elements of the second language. Finally Economidou (1975) in her dissertation attempts a contrastive analysis of the Greek and English languages, in order to help teachers be more efficient by knowing the mistakes that the students might make, because of interference from the Greek language.

Even though all of the above articles and dissertations aim at exploring fundamental linguistic differences between the English and Greek language, each of the article sets distinct limitations to its scope and focuses on different linguistic areas of the two languages. Although it is possible that some or all of the articles examine one linguistic area, there are other areas that each author chooses not to mention according to his/her own criteria. Papachrymiou-Lytra (1987) examines Greek and English phonology, grammar, syntax and vocabulary. In particular, as far as phonology is concerned, she examines vowels, influence of spelling in pronunciation, stress and intonation; as far as syntax and grammar are concerned, she examines spelling, punctuation, tenses of verbs, conditionals, passive voice, modal verbs, word order and
different parts of speech; as far as vocabulary is concerned, she mentions some factors that facilitate or hinder vocabulary acquisition and provides a sample of written Greek with a transliteration and a word to word translation in English, in order to demonstrate the difficulties and errors that word to word translation produces. In contrast, Varnas (1978), without considering extra-linguistic factors, briefly describes some of the phonological and syntactic features that are different in the Greek and English language. He argues that phonological problems are frequent and very often become a source of confusion and misunderstanding, while problems of syntax and grammar, although they are also fairly common, they are not so serious, because they are not as rule obstacles to effective communication. Varnas (1979) one year later examines only the phonological and grammatical differences of the two languages. As far as grammar is concerned, he focuses on the high inflectional character of the Greek language and the possible interference phenomena that may be observed in bilingual children due to these differences. The Commonwealth Department of Education (1982), on the other hand, primarily focuses on some fundamental differences between the English and the Greek sound systems and explicitly describes the pronunciation difficulties that can be produced by the differences, and secondly refers to the persistent errors that are caused by the differences in the grammatical structure of the two languages. In contrast, Economidis (1975) in her dissertation examines in a more comprehensive way and with strictly linguistic terms the phonological, morphological and syntactical difficulties that can be encountered by Greek learners of English as a second language. Finally, Efstathiadis & King (1972) examine selectively, rather than exhaustively, some of the most frequently recurring mistakes classifying them under two main headings: a.)
mistakes involving wrong selection of lexical items and b.) structural errors, further subdivided to errors in determiners, conjunctions and adverbs, nouns, verbs, and word order.

As it was mentioned above, "language interference" is the phenomenon according to which influence from the native language is unconsciously transferred to the acquisition of a second language, through the substitution of linguistic patterns of the native language for linguistic patterns of the foreign language (Varnas, 1978). Since language interference explains the errors and difficulties in second language learning and since language interference problems are better understood through a contrastive analysis of the languages involved, a brief report of the basic differences between English and Greek is considered necessary.

*Comparison between linguistic forms of the English and the Greek language.*

The Greek and English languages are both Indo-European languages. English, though, is one of the Germanic languages, while Greek is by itself a single branch of the Indo-European family - it does not belong to a sub-family, and as a consequence, it is not very close related to any other Indo-European language. Therefore, Greek and English phonology, grammar -morphology and syntax- and vocabulary are very different in nature.

*Phonology*

The Greek and English phonological systems are broadly dissimilar and this cause Greek native speakers serious difficulties in perceiving and/or pronouncing correctly many English phonemes (Papaeftymiou-Lytra, 1987). Greek has twenty-one consonants and five vowel phonemes in contrast with English that has a greater number
of phonemes. The Greek speaker will identify two or three English phonemes with one Greek phoneme. When speaking specifically about the vowels, a Greek native speaker has to learn eleven new vowels and furthermore to make the proper phonemic distinctions, in order to pronounce English correctly (Varnas, 1978).

The Writing System

The Greek Alphabet has 24 letters and it is different from the English alphabet, which may cause a few difficulties, especially to people that begin to learn English (See Appendix A for the Greek alphabet and the phoneme that corresponds to each letter). The more obvious increase in difficulties is in the field of reading the letters, since in the Greek alphabet there are letters which are unfamiliar to Greek speakers or, even worst, since some written letters exist in common in the two alphabets, but represent different sounds in the two languages, for example Π exists in both alphabets, but in Greek represents the sound R.

Punctuation conventions are roughly the same and only slight differences can be found between the two languages. The most important difference is that the semi-colon of English (;) represents the question mark in Greek, while the English question-mark (?) is unknown in Greek. Greek also uses a single dot above the line in place of the English semicolon (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1982).

The lack of conformity between English spelling and pronunciation seems to be a major disconcerting factor for Greek native speakers. The Greek language is phonetic in the sense that there is almost one-to-one correspondence between sound and graphic symbol (letter). The lack of consistent definite patterns in the English language may cause major difficulties to Greek speakers that tend to think that there is only one way of
pronouncing a letter and try hard to learn the English spelling and pronunciation. Also, since every letter in Greek is pronounced, Greek students of English tend to pronounce every letter they see in an English word, for example clapped, psychology, chalk, write (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1982 and Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987).

Stress, Rhythm and Intonation.

In general, patterns of word stress in Greek and English are similar, although we should note that Greek words have primary stress, while in English syllables may carry primary, secondary or weak stress. The major problem encountered by Greek native speakers is in remembering or predicting the stress in each English word, as in Greek stress is shown on all written words by an accent mark (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1982 and Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987). The Greek sentences have a syllable-timed rhythm, which means that each syllable has approximately the same duration, regardless of the number or position of stress in an utterance. English sentences, however, have a stress-timed rhythm, which means that the stressed syllables in an utterance are evenly spaced regardless of the number of unstressed syllables that intervene. Greek learners tend to transfer syllable-timed rhythm into English and that may cause problems in both the production and the recognition of an utterance (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987).

Intonation patterns in English and Greek differ significantly. That is why when some features of the Greek intonation are used in English, the utterance may seem impolite or abrupt. The Greek learners should have practice, in order to produce natural and consistent intonation patterns in English.
Grammar – Morphology

The Greek and English grammatical systems have many similarities, for example, they have the same “part of speech” categories, definite and indefinite articles, regular and irregular verbs, active and passive voice verbs etc (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987). The morphological system of Greek, though, is much more complex than that of the English language. Greek is a highly inflected language-articles, nouns, adjectives and pronouns have four cases in singular and four cases in plural form. Greek has grammatical gender, that means that nouns and pronouns are masculine, feminine or neuter, but there is no systematic relationship between gender and meaning, for example the Greek noun that means *wall* is masculine in the grammatical gender. The morphology is similarly complex in the construction of verbs. Greek speakers are able to distinct the gender, number, case, tense and person of the verb with the adding of the suitable ending (Varnas, 1979). Even though Greek grammar is more complicated and it would be definitely much more difficult for an English speaker to acquire the Greek grammar than it is for a Greek speaker to learn the English grammar, many grammatical differences between the two languages hinder the acquisition of the English grammar from Greeks. For instance, the Greek language, unlike English, makes little use of prepositions and when it does, there are many cases where the English expression does not require the equivalent Greek preposition. The Greek language also has no equivalent to English phrasal verbs and that is why Greek native speakers have difficulty in learning phrasal verbs and they avoid using them, preferring one-word verbs, which very often seem formal (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987). Different authors report similar differences in the formation of tenses, pronouns, determiners, the causative structure, the modal verbs etc.,
but their reference for the purpose of this literature review was considered excessive. All of the authors wanted to stress that major or slight differences in the grammatical structure of the two languages can cause difficulties to second language learners.

*Grammar – Syntax*

The Syntax of the Greek language is more flexible than the English one. The word order in both Greek and English is Subject-Verb-Object, but in English this order is very strict and important for the comprehension of the sentence, while in Greek this order can be changed without any ambiguities, due to the rich inflectional apparatus of the Greek language. Consequently, Greek speakers do not consider word order very important and the errors or misunderstandings, when they speak or write in English are very frequent. Quite often they place the object in the subject’s place and vice versa, or they omit the subject, because in Greek the endings of the verbs make the use of the subject optional (Varnas, 1978).

*Vocabulary*

Many English words are loans from the Greek language (e.g. telephone, crisis, phenomenon...). Many Arts and Sciences operate mainly with Greek vocabulary, since the Greek thought and language has profoundly shaped Western thought. As a consequence a Greek native speaker can easily identify English words that derive directly from Greek and this facilitates the learning of the English vocabulary. He especially can identify words that seem “difficult”, obsolete or strictly scientific along with many everyday words. It is also interesting to note that there are thousands other English words which on first hearing cannot be identified as Greek, because of the alteration in orthography or in pronunciation that has taken place or because they are descended from ancient Greek
words or names. Therefore, there are words that derive from the Greek language but the average modern Greek speaker cannot always identify them.

On the other hand, the Greek language has borrowed and is increasingly borrowing words from English (e.g. jeans, goal, picnic...). This also facilitates learning, but in certain cases can lead into confusion. Certain errors happen when the near-identical Greek word has a slightly different meaning in English. For example Greeks may misuse the word *air* to mean *wind* or the word *idiotic* to mean *private* or the word *sympathize* to mean *like*. Additional difficulties arise when the semantic range of the Greek word is greater than that of its English equivalent (e.g. *xeri* for both hand and arm; *xano* for lose and miss, so as a Greek speaker may say “I lose the train”), or when a pair of English words does not have an exact counterpart in Greek (e.g. say/tell: annoy/bother; excuse me/ sorry) (Papaeftymiou-Lytra, 1987; Efstathiadis & King, 1972).

In summary, in spite of all the different scopes or purposes for which each article examines EFL for Greek native speakers, they all provide valuable information for my study. The researches, in particular, illuminate the conditions under which English is taught in the Greek educational system, as well as the teachers’ perception and teaching techniques, which can significantly affect the way the English language is perceived and learned by the Greek students and, ultimately, can hinder or facilitate the acquisition of the foreign language. On the other hand, the more theoretical approaches to linguistic aspects of the languages offer valuable knowledge and useful insight in both Greek and English and constitute a theoretical and practical framework, which may facilitate the interpretation of the investigation’s results.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

General Research Design

The present study aimed at identifying the linguistic issues and difficulties that Greek native speakers encounter, when they acquire English as a second language, through a survey of Greek native speakers in a town in central coast of California. This was not an experimental study; it focused on describing opinions of the particular number of Greek people that were present in the central coast of California in February 2002 and were willing to participate in the study. The study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data through interviews and a survey with open-ended and closed questions.

Research Setting

The research was conducted among adult family members of Greek officers that study at the Military Postgraduate Academy in Central California. The Military Postgraduate Academy (MPA) is a university for postgraduate studies offering 48 academic curricula to military from every branch of the uniformed services and to civilian members of the Department of Defense and international students around the world. In the beginning of 2002 there was a significant international graduate enrollment. A total of 287 students from 44 countries were enrolled in over 30 curricula across campus.

The community of Greek officers and their families is one of the biggest communities of international students in the MPA. In fact, it is the third largest community of international students according to the students’ statistics from the official MPA web site. The bonds among the Greek community members are quite strong and
furthermore, it is a community in which the researcher belongs and accordingly can research with respect to its experiences.

Research Participants

The participants were the Greek military officers that were studying in the Military Postgraduate Academy (MPA) in February 2002 and their wives. The research participants were chosen according to their native language and their speaking English as a Foreign Language. All participants had to be adults that their native language was Greek and that had acquired English at least in an elementary level, in order to be able to express their opinion on this learning process. Furthermore, all participants should have started studying or completed their studying English in the Greek educational system, in order to be able to describe or express their opinions on how EFL is taught in Greece. Therefore, from the total of 65 officers and their spouses in the MPA, 62 people participated in the survey. People that were not present in February 2002, or people that were bilingual and had acquired both English and Greek simultaneously, or people that fully acquired English as a foreign language in a country other than Greece were excluded from the research.

A total of 62 people participated in the research survey, 37 of which were men and 25 were women. The age of the participants ranges from 18 to 42 years old. Specifically, only four people were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, the majority – 35 participants- were between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-two, and twenty-three participants were between the ages of thirty-three to forty-two.
All of the male participants were students in the MPA and consequently they were all University Graduates and students in a Postgraduate School. As far as the female participants were concerned, the level of their formal education varied. There were female participants who were High School graduates, Technical College Graduates, University Graduates, and Postgraduate students or graduates.

All of the male participants were military officers that were sent by the Greek government to complete their studies. Regardless of whether they came from high or low-income families, they were considered middle-class and middle-income people. Nevertheless, the participants are not representative of the whole Greek population, their number is not large and, and as a consequence, the findings of the survey can only show trends and tendencies for the whole Greek population.

Apart from the survey, four of the participants were chosen to participate in interviews that aimed at further elaborating some issues that were addressed in the questionnaire. Since the questionnaires were anonymous, the interviewees were not selected according to the patterns that their responses to the survey revealed. The participants to the interviews were selected, in order to be representative of the people that had been surveyed. Of the four people that were interviewed two were men and two women. The two women were selected according to the level of their formal education; one of them was a Technical College graduate and the other was a Postgraduate school student. As all the male participants had the same level of formal education, their selection was according to their age; one of them was a senior officer and accordingly one of the older participants and the other was one of the youngest officers. Naturally,
the names of the people who were interviewed are kept strictly confidential, in order to maintain their privacy.

Data Collection

Two instruments were used for the collection of data. Data were collected through a survey of the participants that were described above and through interviews of four of them.

Survey

As research on the specific issue is limited, no appropriate questionnaires that could be addressed to Greek native speakers were found. Thus, after studying “A practical guide to behavioral research” by B. and R. Sommers, in order to have the theoretical framework and be familiar with survey techniques, the researcher developed a questionnaire and gave it to teachers in Georgia University and classmates for comments and feedback. Initially, the questionnaire was administered to four Greek native speakers – other than the research participants- to fill it out and make comments on it. After their feedback the first questionnaire was significantly revised. The questionnaire that was finally given to the participants (A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix B) consisted of 22 questions, some of which gave demographic information useful for the discussion of the results or background information on how the participants were taught English in the Greek educational system. Most of the main questions were focused on the core areas that were identified as key elements that potentially cause difficulties in Greek EFL students or as indicators of how EFL is taught in Greece. They were designed on a step scale-rating model, where the intervals were adjectives that could determine the degree
of difficulty that each participant encountered in acquiring different skills, when he/she was learning EFL. (e.g. When you started learning English, how difficult it was to get used to the use of the English alphabet? Use the following scale. A = Not difficult, B = Slightly difficult, C = Moderately difficult, D = Very difficult). Two of the survey questions were open-ended questions. Open-ended are questions in which the respondent writes his/her own answer and does not choose from among alternatives provided by the researcher. Even though the number of the participants was large enough and the open-ended questions were more difficult to code, the open-ended questions were considered very useful and important, because they avoided suggesting answers to the respondents and they revealed the salience of the participants’ opinions - the importance of specific issues in their minds. Thus, in open-ended questions each participant referred to the linguistic phenomena that caused him/her particular difficulties or made suggestions for teachers that teach English in Greece without having a range of possible answers by the researcher.

The above questionnaire was translated to the participants’ native language (Greek), as it was considered that they would perceive easier linguistic terminology in their native language (see Appendix C). The survey was distributed to a meeting of all the officers, in which the purposes of the research project were explained and the right of the participants not to consent or to withdraw from participation were discussed. Furthermore, the directions that the respondents received on how they should fill the questionnaire out were the same for all participants. The questionnaire along with a copy of the respective consent letter, which the participants read and signed (see Appendix D), was handed individually to the participants by the researcher. It was estimated that each
questionnaire took less than 10 minutes to complete, but the participants were given as much time as needed to complete it. Thus, questionnaires were collected individually after a few days. The surveys were anonymous and for that reason the consent letters, which indicated the names of the participants, were not attached to the questionnaire and, additionally, they were collected and kept separately.

*Interviews*

After the collection of the completed questionnaires and a preliminary analysis of the responses, which aimed at roughly identifying the issues raised by the responses to open-ended questions and the possible hindrances in the acquisition of EFL, brief interviews were conducted. The purpose of the interviews was to extend, clarify and elaborate on issues and concerns raised on the survey. The interviews followed a questionnaire format and were consisted of five questions (see Appendix E). The questions drew on the participants' recollections of their individual learning experience, on their personal opinions on how EFL are taught in Greece, and on the degree of difficulty that they encountered, while they were acquiring English language skills. Four of the participants in the research were asked to participate in interviews, each of which lasted for approximately 20-25 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the interviewee's native language (Greek) at a time of their convenience and in the setting of their choice. Prior to conducting the interviews, the interviewees were informed about the research project and its possible benefits, were assured on its confidentiality and were reminded of their right not to answer any question or to withdraw at any time. After that, they read and signed the respective consent form (see Appendix F). The interviews were audio taped for the facilitation of the transcription and the data analysis, and the tapes
were kept at the disposition of some faculty of Georgia University and of the researcher. The names of the participants are kept confidential and for the written form of the research (thesis), pseudonyms are used for the interviewees.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were statistically analyzed, and along with the data collected from the interviews were the basis for the discussion on the linguistic concerns and difficulties that Greek native speakers encounter, when acquiring English as a foreign language.

Specifically, as far as the survey findings were concerned, the questionnaires were collected and the responses to each question were compiled and ranked by the degree of difficulty that the acquisition of each linguistic skill presented to the participants. The data were tabulated and where the majority of responses were was traced. Descriptive statistics was used for the purpose of summarizing the data and comparing responses of the participants in some questions. The responses to open-ended questions were read repeatedly, in order to identify themes and similarities or to cite some unique or interesting opinions among the responses.

The interviews were transcribed, translated into English and the responses were compared and analyzed for similarities and differences among the different aspects of EFL that were stressed by the interviewees. The comparisons among their experiences or opinions were noted and they will be discussed at large in Chapter four.

The analysis of the data was supplemented and influenced by my own insight and experience as a Greek native speaker, who had acquired English in the Greek educational
system. My experiences on EFL, along with my background on linguistic studies and the input from the study of related literature helped in the identification of themes during the data analysis and in the interpretation of the data.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The data which derived from the survey of 62 Greek native speakers, along with the themes that were contained in the four interviews, which were conducted, are discussed in this chapter. The answers to the survey questions are analyzed first. The responses to the survey were tallied and the results are shown by graphs, in order for the findings to be better illustrated. For each individual question the results are shown by a graph, whenever possible, and a short description and analysis. As explained in the third chapter, some of the survey questions are demographic, the majority are closed questions and the last two questions are open-ended questions. The responses to the open-ended questions are presented only descriptively.

After the survey results, the data that were collected through interviews are discussed. The responses to each question are given through the participants’ own statements and through a narrative, which presents the patterns and themes in their responses.
Survey Results

Question One

1.) What is your age?  
A.) 18-25  
B.) 26-32  
C.) 33-  

Only four out of the sixty-two respondents were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, - all of them were women. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-two. The age of the participants ranged from twenty-two to forty-two years old. Their age is an important factor in the analysis of the results, because it indicates that all of the participants had graduated from the elementary school before the passing of the law of 1985 (law1655/85), according to which foreign language teaching was introduced in primary education. Consequently, all of the participants started learning English as a foreign language on their own, at a different age and in different educational institutions, which in this scope becomes important in terms of revealing the respondents’ attitudes and opinions for EFL in Greece.
Question Two

2.) What is your sex?  A.) Male  B.) Female

The majority of the respondents were male. Specifically, thirty-seven out of the sixty-two respondents were male and twenty-five respondents were female. The participants were all the officers and their wives, who were present in the MPA in February, 2002. Since not all of the officers were married, the percentage of male participants was larger than that of the female.
The majority of the participants were students or graduates in postgraduate schools. This was expected as all of the male participants, which were the majority of the respondents, were students in postgraduate schools. The level of formal education of the female participants varied significantly. Five of the women were high school graduates, six were TEI (an equivalent of a Technical College) graduates, eight women were AEI (equivalent to a Bachelor degree) graduates, four were students or graduates of a Master’s or Doctoral program and two of the women did not state the level of their formal education.
Question Four

4.) At what age did you start learning English? ________ and where (school or frontistirio)?

The responses to the first part of the question ranged from the age of five to the age of twenty-two. Some participants started learning English by the time they were in the kindergarten and others started as adults, after they had found out how useful English as a second language was. The average age to start learning English was the age of ten. It should be noted that people who started learning English as adults had already acquired another foreign language at a public school or a private institution, as foreign language acquisition was always highly valued in Greece and it was obligatory, when the respondents were at a school age. The difference between the years that the participants were at a school age and nowadays is that a foreign language was not taught until high school age and that English were not taught in all the student population – students were taught either English or French, which were also equally valued a couple of decades ago.
As the graph reveals, the majority of the participants answered the second part of the question saying that they started learning English in a frontistirio (private teaching institute), very few participants said that they started English at school (only five), while five participants said that they started English by having private lessons or when they were adults in the Naval Academy. It is interesting to note that most of the participants started English at a relatively young age -in the primary school- and in a frontistirio and that, when the participants were at school age, English was officially started to be taught in the High school. These findings reveal that most of the participants’ parents did not seem to have much trust to the Greek public educational system, as far as foreign language learning is concerned. Most of them chose to start English at a much younger age than determined by the Ministry of Education, or chose to start with private teaching institutes or classes, even though they knew that eventually most of them were going to be taught English at school (see question five), which could indicate that they did not have much confidence in public schools’ ability to teach them English adequately. The fact that only the older participants stated that they started English at school reveals that from a point on parents thought it was “incumbent” upon them to send their children to private institutions and that frontistiria became an established part of the educational landscape.
Question Five

5.) Where were you taught English?
   A. at school _____       C. in both school and “frontistirio” _____
   B. in a private school (frontistirio) _____   D. somewhere else. Please specify _____

More than half of the respondents (thirty-three out of the sixty-two) stated that they acquired English in both school and frontistirio. The participants who stated that they acquired English “somewhere else” specified that they learned English in both school and through private lessons or in a College. Since private lessons and frontistiria (private teaching institutes) are pretty similar concepts and they both belong to “parallel education”, we can assume that in fact the percentage of respondents who stated that they acquired English in both school and frontistiria is larger than the one that appears in column C. In general, this question was misconceived by some respondents, who thought that the question was referring to where they had acquired English more efficiently and not in which institutions – despite of their organization and effectiveness- they acquired English overall.
6.) How useful do you think that frontistirio or private classes are, in order to learn English in Greece?
A. Essential ___ B. Very useful ___ C. Somewhat useful ___ D. Not useful ___

The responses to this question were very important, because all of the respondents – most of them were or will be parents of school age children – had no doubt that private teaching was not only useful, but in fact essential, in order to acquire a foreign language in the Greek educational system. Fifty-six out of the sixty-two respondents considered that “parallel education” is from very useful to essential. It should be noted that the only participant who stated that frontistirio or private classes are not useful at all, had private lessons with an English native speaker for five years.
Question Seven

7.) When you were in Greece, for how many academic years were you studying English?

The responses to this question ranged from one to thirteen years. On the average, though, the participants were studying English for 7.5 academic years, while they were in Greece, which shows that most participants were respectively fluent in English, that they had been studying English for a long period and were able to express their opinion on how Greek and English are different. Furthermore, their responses showed that foreign language learning is a long lasting procedure in Greece, and since it is greatly appreciated, most students spend much time on the acquisition of foreign languages.
**Question Eight**

8.) How would you assess your proficiency in English today?
A. Excellent  ___  B. Very good  ___  C. Fair  ___  D. Poor  ___  F. Very poor  ___

Most students (thirty-eight) assessed they had a very good knowledge of English, while nine of them believed that their fluency in English was excellent, which was directly connected to their learning English for several years (see the responses and the analysis of the previous question), as well as to their practice in English, as a result of their living in an English-speaking country. It is quite interesting that most of the participants who assessed that they did not speak English very well or that they had not studied English for many years were more fluent in another foreign language and said that they decided to learn English after they had learned another language or at an older age.
9.) Do you speak any foreign languages, besides English?  Yes ______  No ______

9a) If Yes    A. Which language (languages) ______

B. At what level?  a.) elementary ______  b.) intermediate ______  c.) very good ______

C. Did you learn it/them a.) before you started learning English? ______

b.) after you had learned English? ______

c.) simultaneously with English? ______

The majority of the respondents (thirty-five participants) could speak another foreign language besides English, which was evidence of the importance of foreign language learning in Greece. Some of the participants could speak more than two foreign languages and one female participant could speak four foreign languages fluently.

The foreign languages that the participants said that they could speak were French, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese. Specifically, nine people said that they could speak French at an elementary level, four at an intermediate level and five at a very good level. Three participants speak elementary German and five intermediate. Three people speak Spanish at an elementary level and one at a very good level, while only one
participant claimed that he could speak Japanese at an intermediate level. Lastly, four respondents claimed they speak Italian at an elementary level, four at an intermediate level and two at a very good level. It is of no surprise that the largest percentage of people that speak a foreign language other that English can speak French, since French was along with English the language that was most valued and taught in high schools, when many of the participants were at a high school age. As seen in the following graph, though, other foreign languages are increasingly becoming attractive and are learned by Greek native speakers.

Twenty-five respondents – the majority of the participants who could speak a foreign language other that English- said that they learned the foreign language after they had learned English, five respondents said that they were learning the two foreign languages simultaneously, and seven participants that they had acquired another foreign language, before they started learning English.
10.) When you started learning English, how difficult it was to get used to the use of the English alphabet? 

Use the following scale.  
A = Not difficult,  
B = Somewhat difficult,  
C = Quite difficult,  
D = Very difficult

More than half (thirty-seven out of the sixty-two) participants considered that the difference in the alphabet between the Greek and English languages did not cause any difficulty during the acquisition of the English language. A large number of participants found that the different alphabet caused some minor difficulties. It seems, though, that the use of different alphabets (the Greek language uses the Greek alphabet, while the English language uses the Latin one), while in the acquisition of other languages may cause more serious problems in Greek native speakers, e.g. in the acquisition of Slavic languages, Arabic or Chinese, in the case of the Romance languages does not cause serious problems. The Greek native speakers are getting used to the English alphabet relatively quickly probably due to the similarities between the two systems (the Latin alphabet derives from one form of the Greek alphabet), or because they frequently see texts in English in their everyday life (in signs, films, internet, magazines).
11.) How difficult is it to read/pronounce correctly an English word that you see for the first time?
Use the following scale.  
A = Not difficult,  
B = Somewhat difficult,  
C = Quite difficult,  
D = Very difficult

Pronunciation seemed to cause more difficulties to Greek native speakers than the use of the different alphabet. Thirty-four respondents said that it was somewhat difficult to pronounce correctly an English word that they saw for the first time, and thus they did not know how it was pronounced. Nineteen respondents claimed that they did not have any difficulty in reading correctly an unknown English word, while eight of them admitted that it was quite difficult. It should be mentioned that it was not in the scope of this thesis to find out whether the participants actually read correctly unknown English words, but the aim was to explore how confident they feel and how they assess the possible difficulties that they encounter in different tasks.
Question Twelve

12.) How difficult is to spell correctly an English word that you hear for the first time?
Use the following scale.  A = Not difficult,  B = Somewhat difficult,
C = Quite difficult,  D = Very difficult

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Spelling was somewhat difficult for the most of the respondents who seemed to recall that they spent much time in trying to remember the correct spelling of each English word, when they were learning English. Specifically, nine participants assessed that they did not have difficulties in spelling correctly an English word that was unknown to them, thirty-nine assessed that they had some difficulties, twelve said that it was quite difficult and two said it was very difficult. The difficulties that Greek native speakers encounter in both pronunciation (question eleven) and in spelling are due to the fact that the English language is not phonetic, as the Greek language is. The lack of one-to-one correspondence between English sounds and letters is quite confusing for the Greek speakers and that is the reason that correct English spelling and reading demands a lot of practice and much effort on behalf of them.
13.) How difficult was it to learn the grammar of the English language (e.g. tenses, irregular verbs)?

Use the following scale.  
A = Not difficult,  
B = Somewhat difficult,  
C = Quite difficult,  
D = Very difficult

A  B  C  D
0  10  20  30  40  50  60

11  34

Learning the rules of the English grammar was one of the most difficult tasks for Greek native speakers as the responses in question thirteen revealed. Even though none of the respondents said it was very difficult, seventeen of them said it was quite difficult to learn the English grammar and thirty-four of them found it somewhat difficult. The question obviously refers to the morphology of the English grammar, but the term used is "grammar", because it is the term which is the most easily perceived by Greek speakers and the least possible to be confused. The question also regards English grammar as a whole and does not examine different aspects of the English grammar, whose degree of difficulty may vary significantly.
14.) How difficult was it to learn the syntax of the English language (e.g. right word order in a sentence)?

Use the following scale.  
A = Not difficult,  
B = Somewhat difficult,  
C = Quite difficult,  
D = Very difficult

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Sixteen participants responded that the learning of the English syntax was not difficult for them, thirty participants said it was somewhat difficult, fifteen found it quite difficult and one respondent said it was very difficult to get accustomed to the right word order in an English sentence. The respondents seemed to understand that on the one hand the same word order that the two languages have facilitates the learning of syntax, but on the other hand the less strict character of the word order in the Greek language generates the language interference phenomenon and produces errors and misunderstandings.
15.) How would you characterize the English grammar compared with the Greek grammar?

A. Greek grammar is more complicated and difficult to learn than the English one
B. English grammar is more complicated and difficult to learn than the Greek one
C. They have the same degree of difficulty
D. I do not know/I cannot say.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents – fifty-eight out of the sixty people that responded to this question – believed that the Greek grammar was more complicated and difficult to learn than the English grammar. Even though many of them admitted that they encountered some difficulties in learning the rules of the English grammar (question thirteen), when it came to comparing the morphology of the two languages, a statistically significant number of them found the Greek grammar more complicated. The fact that the participants had already acquired the more complex inflectional system of their native language did not seem to affect their assessing the learning of the rules of the English grammar as quite difficult.
As we have seen in previous chapters it is indisputable that the English language has borrowed many words from the Greek vocabulary, a fact that facilitates the acquisition of the English vocabulary to a certain extent. The only objection, though, is to what extent Greek speakers realize that some of the English words are Greek rooted, since many of these words seem or sound significantly changed through the different spelling or pronunciation. That is the reason question sixteen asked whether the respondents believed that they could identify Greek-rooted words in an English text and not whether it was helpful that the English language has many Greek words, an answer that was obvious. As seen in the above graph, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (fifty-five out of the sixty-two) believed that it was not difficult to identify Greek rooted words in English and only five of them were uncertain of it.
17.) How helpful was the use of English words in the Greek colloquial language or in Greek everyday life, e.g. in TV, cinema, computer language in acquiring the English vocabulary? 

Use the following scale. A = Very helpful, B = Quite helpful, C = Somewhat helpful, D = Not helpful

The opinions on whether the use of English words in the Greek everyday life helped the acquisition of the English vocabulary were divergent. Eighteen respondents said that the use of English words in the Greek colloquial language was very helpful; twenty-one said that it was quite helpful; thirteen felt that it was somewhat helpful and seven that it was not helpful. While somebody would expect that the respondents would find the growing number of English words that are used in signs, magazines, computer terminology, etc. quite helpful, many respondents did not seem to share this opinion or seemed to believe that it was of minor importance.
Question Eighteen

18.) How difficult is to abandon your thick accent and speak with a proper accent, when you speak in English? _____
Use the following scale. A = Not difficult, B = Somewhat difficult, C = Quite difficult, D = Very difficult

Even though, judging from my experience, I would say that abandoning the Greek accent is the most difficult task for the Greek native speakers and at the same time the task in which they are least trained, many of the participants did not seem to share this opinion. It is not clear whether they felt this way because they were satisfied with their accent or because they thought that the proper accent was not really important as long as they were able to communicate in a foreign language satisfactorily. Nevertheless, nine participants said that abandoning their distinct accent was not difficult, nineteen people said it was somewhat difficult, twenty-two of them claimed it was quite difficult and ten respondents said it was very difficult.
19.) Before you come to the USA, was it easier for you to comprehend?
A. something said with the American-English accent.
B. something said with the British-English accent.
C. it made no difference.
C. I had difficulty in understanding everything said with an accent.

Almost half of the respondents said that, before they came to the United States it was easier for them to comprehend something said with British accent. This is of no surprise, since in Greece most of the public and private schools are teaching “British English” and accordingly they try to get their students accustomed to British accent through listening activities. Eighteen participants, though, said that they comprehended something said with American accent, probably because they were more affected by the exposure to American English through American television programs and films, which in Greece are rarely dubbed. It is interesting to note that six of the participants said that they had difficulty in understanding everything said with an accent and understood English spoken by Greek speakers, which is probably another consequence of the fact that most teachers of EFL in Greece are Greek native speakers.
Sixty out of the sixty-two participants responded to this question. Two of the sixty said that they always “first think in Greek, and then translate into English”; one of them commented that Greek was his native language and it was impossible for somebody to think in another language. Twenty-one participants said that they “first think in Greek and then translate in English” very often, while twenty-seven said they sometimes do that, seven participants stated they occasionally act this way and only three participants claimed that they almost never first think in Greek and then translate in English. The fact that many of the respondents very often or sometimes “first think in Greek, and then translate it into English”, may produce some errors which are due to the Greek language interference to the speaking of English.
21.) When you were learning English, what were the things that caused you difficulties? (e.g. grammar rules and exercises, vocabulary, dialogue and communication activities…)

Question number twenty-one was the first of the two open-ended questions of the survey and it was trying to trace what the elements of foreign language learning were, which the respondents felt that were the most difficult to acquire. The responses to the open questions were really interesting, because each participant mentioned only the language skills that personally considered as the most difficult, and expressed his/her opinion with his/her own words.

The language element that was most often mentioned by the participants, and accordingly that caused difficulties to most of them was the learning of the English grammar rules. Twenty-four of the respondents referred to grammar as a difficult aspect of learning English and many of the respondents went further to explain the particular grammatical phenomena which were confusing or more difficult to acquire: they mentioned the phrasal verbs, which have no equivalent in the Greek language and they are pretty confusing for Greek speakers, the irregular verbs, indirect speech, and idioms.

Eighteen participants mentioned that they had difficulty in speaking in English and stressed that communicative skills were very difficult to acquire. The acquisition of the English vocabulary was mentioned by thirteen participants; one of them specified that he encountered much difficulty in learning specific terminology, and several respondents stressed that vocabulary learning was difficult, because it required frequent revision. The respondents did not make a detailed reference to the aspects of vocabulary learning that
they considered the most difficult e.g. memorizing, learning the spelling of new words, learning the pronunciation of new words etc.

Five participants mentioned that the learning of the English syntax was difficult, five mentioned the listening comprehension, four respondents said they had difficulty in pronouncing the words correctly, and three said they found the writing of essays quite difficult. One participant said that spelling was difficult and time-consuming, and one mentioned that the translation from Greek into English was tough. Two participants referred to an aspect of EFL that had nothing to do with linguistic issues: they mentioned that it was quite troublesome that they had to spend much time on attending English classes and doing their homework.

*Question Twenty-two*

22.) Based on your experience, what suggestions would you have for teachers that teach English in Greece, so as to improve their teaching strategy?

The suggestion that almost half of the participants had for the teachers of EFL in Greece had to do with the practice of speaking in English. Twenty-nine respondents stressed the importance of the dialogue in English and some of them made some very interesting specific comments. One said that grammar exercises should not be done at the expense of oral practicing and that teachers should spend equal time on practicing both skills. Another participant said that communicative skills should be cultivated from the first years of learning EFL, and some participants stressed the importance of practicing oral English on interesting and updated topics.
A second suggestion which was made by thirteen participants and it was pretty
similar with the first one was that teachers should tutor in English almost exclusively.
Some respondents mentioned that teachers should not explain new words in Greek, but
they should try to explain by giving synonyms in English.

Ten respondents would ask for more listening activities, which would help in
acquiring new vocabulary, grammar and particularly the pronunciation of words. They all
claimed that the listening activities should contain dialogues from English native
speakers, one person stressed that it is important that practice should be done in both
British English and American English, and another said that listening should entail slang
and everyday dialogues.

Since many participants felt that the teaching was done through the teacher’s
tutoring, through textbooks and audiotapes, they suggested a variety of alternative
sources that would be challenging for the children. They suggested that teachers could
use computers for their teaching – and a participant even suggested suitable software and
its characteristics–, English films, songs and literature.

There were many other suggestions, which were mentioned by less than four
people each, but they were worth mentioning them. Respondents suggested that
vocabulary and grammar rules should be often revised, in order to be consolidated, that
the grammatical exercises should be more interesting and less repetitive, that many of the
existing textbooks are not suitable and should be changed, and that teaching should entail
more group work. They also suggested that students should write more essays, that
grammar exercises should be more, that students should participate more in defining the
teaching strategies and that learning English should not necessarily be connected to the
exams for Cambridge certificates. Some respondents were particularly descriptive and they even proposed some strategies or activities that teachers could use, like specific games for vocabulary learning, list with Greek rooted words that should be written by the whole class as a project, video recording or tape recording of the class for feedback, etc.

**Interviews’ Analysis**

The participants to the interviews were four of the survey respondents, – two male and two female Greek native speakers. The female participants were selected according to the level of their formal education: Sophia, thirty-eight years old, was a Technical College graduate and Mary, thirty-one years old, was a Postgraduate student. The male participants had the same level of formal education; they were both Postgraduate students. Their selection was done according to their age. Aris, one of the senior male survey participants, is thirty-nine years old and Spyros, one of the youngest male participants, is twenty-nine years old. The participants’ privacy was maintained through pseudonyms for each of them. Since the interviews followed a questionnaire format, the data that were collected through each interview question will be discussed separately.

**Question One**

Initially, all the interviewees were asked to discuss their personal experiences from the acquisition of English as a Foreign language in Greece. Based on the commonalities or differences in their responses, I could discern that there were similarities in the recollections and the opinions of the youngest interviewees and that these were distinct from the respective recollections of the older interviewees.
The youngest participants, Mary and Spyros, both stated that their parents decided that they should have had private lessons in English at a very young age: Mary started with private lessons, when she was nine and she continued learning English until she was twenty-nine years old, and Spyros cited that he was “grateful to his dad” that he decided to hire an English teacher for private tuition to him and his six year old twin brother. They both assessed themselves as fluent in English, and Spyros in particular attributed his fluency to the fact that he started learning English at a very young age, when his “aptitude for assimilating knowledge and information was greater”.

The older participants, Aris and Sophia, started learning English in the Naval Academy and in the College respectively. Thus, they both started learning English as adults and owing to the fact that it was an obligatory class in their schools’ curriculum. They both, though, decided to improve their English later, when they realized that it was useful for their career and everyday life, and they attended classes at a frontistirio. They both felt that they were not very fluent in English and Aris attributed his inefficiency to the fact that he started EFL as an adult and that he did not have “the luxury” to take English classes, when he was younger and he had more time and capacity to assimilate the new knowledge. It should be noted, though, that for the older participants English was the second foreign language that they acquired. They had both acquired French as a foreign language in the high school, since, as Aris mentioned, they were in the high school during “a transitional period”, when the English language was “just starting to supersede the French as the main foreign language”, but “French was still taught in most public high schools”.

Two of the participants – Mary and Spyros - had personal experiences from both aspects of “parallel education: private lessons and private teaching institutes (frontistiria). According to their opinion, their main difference was that during private lessons and one-to-one instruction the teacher individualized his/her teaching strategy and program according to the student’s particular needs, while in a frontistirio the program was necessarily structured, in order to meet the requirements and needs of the majority of the students. On the other hand, a class at a frontistirio allowed the teacher to assign group work and engage the students in role-play activities, which Mary found “very challenging”.

Since all the interviewees had the common experience of “parallel education” and all had the opportunity of having both Greek and English native speakers as teachers, they were asked to comment on their different teaching style. They all agreed that Greek teachers put more emphasis in the teaching of grammar, syntax and vocabulary, while English native speakers as teachers focused more on listening and speaking activities and were invaluable for getting them accustomed to the correct English pronunciation. Specifically, Mary responded firmly that she had the best experiences from EFL, when she was taught by English native speakers, because she felt that she was in a class “where English was spoken more proficiently at all levels”. Sophia, on the other hand, found no discrepancy in the ability of Greek and English teachers, even though she admitted that Greek teachers usually did not encourage dialogue in their classrooms and they focused on grammar exercises. The responses of the male participants were presenting different perspectives. Aris said that English teachers are efficient, when they teach to students of an advanced level, because then their incapability to communicate in any other language
than in English is an additional "means of pressure", which obliges advanced students to practice their communicative skills. At a lower level, however, he believed that Greek teachers are indispensable, because they can understand their Greek students' background and teach English grammar or vocabulary more efficiently. Spyros commented that the English native speakers were very helpful as teachers, because it is extremely important that "you learn a language, through communication and not through rules". He added, though, that Greek teachers were better in teaching and explaining the grammar rules.

Regardless of their opinion on whether Greek students should be taught by Greek or English teachers, all the interviewees stressed the importance of communicating with English native speakers and preferably in an English speaking country. Thus, Aris considered his coming to the USA a "key point" in his effort to learn English, and Sophia said that she could never "expect that she would learn so much English at so little time and only by socializing with English speakers".

Question Two

Secondly, the interviewees were asked of their opinion of "parallel education" (private lessons and frontistiria), since they all had personal experience of it. Undoubtedly, the common theme that consistently ran throughout their responses was that "parallel education is necessary", regardless of whether they approved of the concept of an educational institute parallel, and to a degree independent, to the public educational system. Aris and Sophia, for example, were strongly opposed to the existence of the "parallel education" at a theoretical level. Nevertheless, they added that they were "impelled" to attend a frontistirio. Sophia characteristically said, "on the whole, I am
against frontistiria, because they are expensive and time-consuming", and she added “…both my children, though, are learning English and German at a frontistirio…You cannot do otherwise. Your children have to compete with the other students and they must have the best education possible”. On the other hand, Maria strongly approved of the existence of a “parallel education” system, due to the inefficiency of the public education system. She explained that “parallel education” in Greece “was, is, and will be an established part of the education system”, because in public education the budget is very limited and inadequate to the needs of modern schools, the teachers are not efficient and conscientious, and the textbooks are not well-written. Similarly, Spyros not only strongly agreed to the necessity of “parallel education”, but he went further to add that “in fact, parallel education is extremely useful in all countries, not only in Greece”, for the reason that anybody, who wants to acquire a foreign language at a proficient level, should put a lot of time into this learning try and “the already tight public school curricula cannot afford to spend the adequate time on the acquisition of the foreign language”. Therefore, the existence of an educational system “parallel” to the public educational system is needful.

Question Three

For the third question, the interviewees were asked to rate the following language skills: alphabet, spelling, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation, in terms of the difficulty that they posed to the respondents during the acquisition of the English language.
All the interviewees tended to connect grammar with syntax, which is linguistically correct since grammar and syntax are the two component parts of the morphological apparatus of a language, and some of the respondents connected spelling with pronunciation, which they found inseparable, and rated them accordingly.

All the interviewees agreed that the learning of the English alphabet was the easiest task in foreign language learning, which is a fact supported by the findings of the survey.

As far as the most difficult to acquire language skill were concerned, the opinions were divergent. Mary and Spyros considered that vocabulary acquisition was the most difficult task, because of its magnitude, which becomes vast, when it comes to special or scientific terminology. As Mary illustrated, “it is frustrating to know that, however advanced your level in English is, you will still have unknown words, when you first read a text in English”. Spyros added, “when you only want to communicate adequately, there is not a problem, but if you want to be excellent in English, vocabulary becomes a problem”. On the other hand, Aris and Sophia assessed the pronunciation as the most difficult to acquire language skill. Specifically, Aris cited that pronunciation in English was very confusing, compared with the respective Greek pronunciation, in which each letter corresponds to a sound. Interestingly, Mary, even though she rated vocabulary as the most difficult task, found pronunciation very difficult as well. She attributed that to the lack of English teachers, who might serve as models for correct pronunciation, and to the persistent influence of the pronunciation of her native language. Surprisingly enough, Spyros claimed that the correct pronunciation “was never a problem”, probably because his English teacher taught him correct pronunciation from his early years. He also
claimed, “if you have the right background in pronunciation, you can easily learn the proper spelling of the words”.

Grammar and syntax were put in the middle of the difficulty range, by all the interviewees, who seemed to compare the English to the Greek grammar and syntax and found Greek morphology more complicated and difficult to acquire. For example, Mary admitted that she encountered some difficulties with the English grammar, when she was at a young age, but as soon as she acquired the Greek grammar rules, the respective English rules seemed simple and comprehensible. Aris cited that the learning of the English syntax was easy, but the fact that the strict English syntax lacks the flexibility of the Greek syntax made its consolidation somewhat difficult.

Question Four

Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to quote and discuss some of the factors, such as institutions, situations, linguistic issues, etc., which facilitate the learning of EFL in Greece. The facilitating factors that emerged from the responses were three: the tutoring by or the communication with English native speakers, the institution of “parallel education”, and the Internet, films, songs in English.

Specifically, Mary and Aris considered the contact with English native speakers very helpful. “Therefore”, Aris said “it would be a good idea if young students were sent abroad to live in an English speaking country for a short period”, and Mary added that if this is not feasible, hiring English native speakers to work as teachers in Greece is invaluable for teaching all aspects of the EFL (vocabulary, pronunciation etc.). Additionally, Spyros and Sophia stated that “parallel education”, regardless of its
drawbacks, is a valuable institution, which facilitates EFL in Greece. Aris and Spyros, moreover, agreed that watching English or American films, listening to songs with English lyrics, and using the Internet facilitated the English language acquisition. As Aris illustrated “the fact that English films on TV and on the cinema are not dubbed is pretty assisting”, because the Greek speakers are getting accustomed to listening to English with correct pronunciation, grammar and structure.

Question Five

Lastly, the interview participants were asked to propose potential changes for the improvement of the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Greece. Even though all respondents offered various indirect suggestions for the duration of the interviews, they specified their suggestions, when they responded to the fifth question.

Mary, who throughout all her responses insisted that the performance of teachers of EFL in public schools is problematic, suggested a series of measures for the enhancement of the teachers’ efficiency. In particular, she proposed the stricter supervision of public school teachers, who usually “rely on” the lack of inspection by the central educational administration and “they do not exert themselves to the utmost” for the improvement of the academic performance of their students. On the same course of action, Mary proposed that all teachers should attend a series of seminars to ensure they are well grounded in tutoring EFL. Lastly, since Mary repeatedly stated that the tutoring by English native speakers is extremely helpful, she proposed the appointment of English native speakers as teachers in the Greek public schools, which is not permissible for the
time being, but can be allowed in the future, as another of the major changes that the unified Europe (EU) may bring about to the legislation of the EU countries.

Spyros agreed with Mary, regarding the appointment of English native speakers as teachers of EFL in Greek schools. On the whole, however, he was more optimistic or satisfied with the teaching of EFL in Greece. Specifically, he claimed "there is nothing more that can be done in public schools... because if, for example, the hours of EFL instruction are increased, this will be at the expense of other classes, like Greek language or History, which are more vital". In his opinion, the "nature and the mission" of the public school is to offer multilateral education, and that is the reason it should not focus more on the teaching of English.

Spyros and Aris both suggested that English language teaching should be starting at a younger age than the age determined by the Ministry of Education. They agreed that the teaching of EFL in the primary school was a measure taken in the right direction, but Aris proposed that EFL could be starting from the first grade of the primary school.

Finally, Aris and Sophia offered suggestions concerning the teaching strategies and preferences of EFL teachers. They suggested that teachers should focus on communicative English. Sophia explained "students should practice more on listening to and speaking in English, since this is the language skill in which they fail in the exams", and she added "in fact, all language skills should be taught, and they should be taught equally", implying that EFL teachers tend to prioritize the acquisition of some language skills (grammar, vocabulary) at the expense of others (communicative skills).
A Greek perspective of EFL  72

Summary

The interviewees' responses supported and elaborated the main survey findings. Specifically, they confirmed that foreign language learning is highly valued in Greece and that the English language particularly is considered the main and most useful foreign language. Greek speakers spend a lot of care, time and money in acquiring EFL and the number of children who start learning English at a young age is continually increased. Besides, as the interviewees admitted, the young age is extremely important for the fluency in foreign language learning, since at a younger age the capability for assimilation of new knowledge is great.

Under those circumstances, EFL in Greece has become an industry, and a system of “parallel education” was formed and operates independently of the public educational system. During the last two or three decades the Greek parents were feeling all the more that the frontistiria are the only means of learning proficiently a foreign language, a task which was the public school's responsibility until then. Nowadays, “parallel education”, which includes private lessons and private teaching institutes (frontistiria), is considered a “necessary evil” for the Greek educational system. All survey and interviews participants agreed that it is “an institution” in Greece, regardless of its drawbacks and of whether the respondents agreed with its existence. When asked, the participants illustrated that parallel education is necessary, because it substitutes and compensates for the public schools' inefficiency. Some of the reasons that the public schools fail at teaching EFL efficiently are: the public school teachers' lack of effectiveness, the lack of inspection of the teachers' performance, the students' reluctance to be attentive to their learning English at school, the limited hours of instruction of EFL, and the competitive character
of the Greek educational system that prompts students towards attending private lessons or classes.

Since the majority of Greek students attend private lessons or frontistiria, they have the opportunity to be taught English by both Greek and English native speakers. The interviewees’ responses overwhelmingly illustrated a distinction in their teaching style. The Greek teachers emphasize the importance of grammar, syntax and vocabulary and tend to eliminate the importance of listening comprehension, speaking in English and pronouncing correctly, which, conversely, are the English teachers’ instructive objectives.

As far as the language skills were concerned, the theme that was consistent in the survey and the interviews was that the English alphabet acquisition was the easiest task. The most difficult to acquire skills were the vocabulary learning and the proper pronunciation. Grammar and syntax as units of study posed some difficulties, but if compared with the Greek grammar and syntax respectively they were considered simpler. It should be noted that interviewees who commented on the difficulty of the language skills, responded with reference to the different nature and structure of the Greek and English language, and that revealed that they had the knowledge or they had pondered over the differences of the two languages, their native and the acquired one.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present study was to investigate mainly linguistic and educational issues that potentially affect the acquisition of English as a Foreign language by Greek native speakers in the Greek educational system. In particular, the study attempted to explore some linguistic factors that hinder or assist Greek speakers in their effort to acquire EFL, with reference to the acquisition of basic language skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking in English. It also focused on identifying some characteristics of the Greek educational system and of the way EFL is taught in Greece that may affect the English language learning.

In order for the above purposes to be addressed, answers were initially searched for in the review of the related literature and afterwards in the data of the present study, which were gathered through a survey and interviews of adult Greek native speakers. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss how and to what extent the research findings address to the original research purposes and I will compare and contrast them with the literature and the previousresearches. Subsequently, I will discuss my recommendations on how this project could be refined or how the topic might be further researched.

Discussion

The value of foreign language learning in Greece is particularly high and this fact is stressed by the survey results and is supported by the literature. The high value of foreign language learning is connected to the Greek people’s eagerness to learn foreign languages, as the Greek prevailing culture supports the acquisition of bilingual and lately
of multilingual skills. In addition, it connects to and supports the Greek speakers’ necessity to communicate with other people, since their native language is very little known abroad, and lastly it relates to Greece’s accession to the EU, which is a large community of countries that speak different languages. Hence, it is a matter of course that the majority of the survey participants could speak two foreign languages, which is evidence of the emphasis that the Greek educational system and, generally, the Greek society places on the learning of foreign languages. The largest percentage of the participants, who speak a foreign language other than English, could speak French. French along with English were the languages that were taught in high schools, when many of the participants were at a high school age, or it was the language that was highly valued a few decades ago and many individuals had chosen to acquire it on their own initiative. As seen in the survey results, though, other foreign languages are increasingly becoming attractive and are learned by Greek native speakers. To this direction, the Ministry of Education, which controls all decisions and formulations of the centralized educational policy, determines that all Greek students are required to study two foreign languages in public high schools.

Of all foreign languages, however, English is considered dominant and essential to the young people’s future education and employment. Admitting that, the government passed a law (law 1655/85), by which foreign language teaching was introduced in primary education. From December 1992, the teaching of English at the elementary level was extended to all primary schools, but no other foreign language is taught in primary schools. The laws of 1985 and 1992 are indications of the government’s commitment to foreign language teaching and they were significant steps, both in terms of extending the
A Greek perspective of EFL 76

scope of language teaching and in establishing English officially as the most widely used foreign language. Thus, it is of no surprise that all of the officers and their spouses who were asked to participate in the study were speaking English and most of them at a very satisfactory level, because it was obligatory to acquire English at school or because they decided to learn English as adults, when they realized that it was useful for their career and everyday life.

One of the characteristics of the Greek educational system and simultaneously a theme that ran consistently through the responses of all participants was the necessity of the institution of “parallel education”. “Parallel education”, which includes private lessons and private teaching institutes (frontistiria), refers to a very extensive network of private teaching institutes and tutors and it is a distinctive and vivid part of the Greek educational reality. According to the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the survey participants, the usefulness of the parallel education ranges from “essential” to “very useful”. In addition, all of the interview participants, regardless of whether they agreed with the existence of a system which is formed and operates independently of the public educational system, admitted that it is necessary or at least that it is the “necessary evil”. Even though the participants recognized that individual frontistiria may have significant deficiencies and that, in general, the institution of “parallel education” may have drawbacks, they stressed its usefulness as a means of substituting and compensating for the weaknesses of the public educational system. Some of the factors that were identified as responsible for the public schools’ failure to teach EFL efficiently, and accordingly as responsible for the existence of a “parallel educational system” are: the public school
teachers' ineffectiveness, the lack of evaluation of the teachers' performance, the students' reluctance to be attentive to their learning English at school, the limited hours of instruction of EFL, and the competitive character of the Greek educational system that prompts students towards attending private lessons or classes. These are only some of the reasons that the Greek parents do not have much confidence in public schools' ability to teach English adequately and feel that their children should attend classes at a frontistirio. In fact, as the research showed most of the participants' parents were feeling that the frontistiria were the only means of proficiently learning a foreign language and urged their children to start English at a much younger age than the age determined by the Ministry of Education, even though they knew that eventually most of them were going to be taught English at high school. In my opinion, the public schools' inefficiency and the parents' eagerness to enroll their children in a private teaching institute at an early age formed a vicious circle: the vast majority of the Greek elementary students started attending English classes at a frontistirio at an early age. When they were reaching at the age in which English was officially taught in the public high school, they had already acquired English to a certain level and they had become more advanced than other children. As a consequence, the English classes at the high school seemed boring and meaningless to them. The teachers in the public sector, on the other hand, felt incapable of exciting their students' interest and attentiveness for a topic, which they had already learned in a private institute and after a while they would give up the attempt to be as efficient and conscientious as they could. The fact that the public school teachers were not trying to be efficient and were suffering from low morale would oblige all of the students – even those who did not intended to – to attend private classes. This vicious
circle is the reason that “the majority of the students - approximately 80% - attends frontistiria” as the British Council reports, without taking into account the considerable number of students that have one-to-one tuition.

The results of the research and the opinions of the participants concerning the necessity of “parallel education” were fully supported and confirmed by the literature. Specifically, literature confirms that despite the constitutional guarantee of free education for all and the desire of all Greek political parties to abolish parallel education, the general mistrust in schools’ ability to teach languages properly stimulates “parallel education”. It also confirms that “the frontistiria are an established part of the educational landscape, and the system depends on them to a certain extend (British Council, 1991:18 and the British Council, 2002)”, as “it is common knowledge in Greece that a foreign language is to be learned appropriately not at school, but at one of the hundreds of foreign language schools in Greece or with private lessons” (Pavlidou, 1991). Therefore, “despite the shortcomings of individual frontistiria”, - to which these research participants referred to specifically- they are basically successful, because they “have better trained teachers, smaller classes and more resources - more attractive books are used along with computers, videos, etc., which are not available in public schools” (the British Council, 2002).

Regarding the difficulties that the acquisition of various language skills pose to Greek native speakers, the survey did not clearly show which was the most difficult task to acquire, since the participants were not asked to rate comparatively the difficulty in the acquisition of the language skills. Their survey responses, though, supported by the
responses to the interviews could reveal some tendencies. In particular, all the research participants agreed that the learning of the English alphabet was the easiest task in foreign language learning. All of them stated that they got used to the English alphabet relatively quickly probably due to the similarities between the two writing systems, or to their frequent exposure to texts written in the Latin alphabet in their everyday life. As far as the most difficult to acquire language skill is concerned, the research revealed some trends. The correct pronunciation and the abandonment of the distinctive accent were considered very difficult, because as the literature illustrated “the Greek and English phonological systems are broadly dissimilar and this cause Greek native speakers serious difficulties in perceiving and/or pronouncing correctly many English phonemes (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1987)”. The vocabulary acquisition was not the most difficult task, according to the survey participants, who seemed to acknowledge that the large number of Greek words that the English language has loaned, along with the increasing flow of English words to the modern Greek vocabulary, facilitate the English vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary acquisition, however, posed some difficulties to some interview participants, who illustrated that when excellency in speaking English is pursued, the magnitude of the vocabulary and particularly of the special terminology is problematic. As far as grammar rules learning is concerned, most of the participants seemed to have encountered difficulties, even though they did not rate grammar as the most difficult to acquire task. They all agreed that the English language grammar, when compared to the Greek one, is much less complicated and difficult to acquire. In absolute terms, though, they thought it was a difficult task and by no means did they agree to the opinion, which was found in the literature and according to which “the lack of any systematic
inflectional system in English leads Greek learners to feel that English has 'no grammar'” (Papaeftymiou-Lytra, 1987).

Regarding the relative literature, all the articles which were traced on this issue were useful, because they explored and illuminated through examples fundamental linguistic differences between the two languages that potentially cause errors or difficulties to the Greek native speakers, when they acquire English as a foreign language. These articles provided a theoretical framework, a set of perspectives that guided the analysis of the data and facilitated the understanding of the research’s findings. Nevertheless, all of the articles had a theoretical approach and none of them went further to research the topic or to elaborate it by the rating of the areas of difficulty. For example, none of the articles researched to what extend vocabulary acquisition is difficult and if it is more difficult than the acquisition of the alphabet.

Lastly, a theme that was very indicative of the way EFL is taught in Greece and which ran consistently throughout the majority of the responses and to the relative literature was the theme of teacher-centered, grammar-based pedagogy that is being followed in Greece. As the research showed, and the literature fully supported, the Greek educational context is highly teacher-centered and the teachers’ preferred style prioritizes accurate student language and grammar teaching instead of the creation of opportunities for genuine communication in the classroom, in spite of the fact that the Ministry of Education, the state-mandated curriculum and the textbooks advocate a communicative learner-centered approach. According to the research findings, which were not confirmed by the literature that was traced on this issue, but seemed pretty
logical, the preference for grammatical accuracy at the expense of communication is
typical of the teaching strategies of the Greek teachers. On the other hand, English
native speakers as teachers of EFL focus on the teaching of communicative skills rather
that grammar rules, which brings a balance, whenever the coexistence of both Greek
and English teachers is attainable.

Implications and Recommendations
This study was initially intended to explore on strictly linguistic issues that
hinder or facilitate the acquisition of EFL by Greek native speakers. In the process it
was discovered that learning English in Greece is closely related with its context, the
Greek educational system. Therefore, the scope of the thesis was broadened to include
some of the characteristics of the Greek educational system and of the way EFL is
taught in Greece, which are ultimately connected with the acquisition of distinct
linguistic elements of a foreign language. Despite the expansion to the scope of the
thesis, there were issues that were not fully addressed and important aspects of the topic
that were not explored and could become the topics of further research.

Initially, given the opportunity to repeat the research, I would refine some of the
survey questions, which were rather vague (as I realized for question five).
Additionally, I would ask the survey participants to comparatively rate the difficulty in
the acquisition of different language skills, in order to have a complete and lucid
picture of the difficulties they encountered. Furthermore, I would definitely include
more open-ended questions in my survey, or more interviews as means of collecting
data, since I realized that they were invaluable sources of information and they revealed
the importance of specific issues in the participants' minds and their actual perceptions without the intervention of the researcher's biases.

During the research and the review of the literature many issues emerged, which were outside of the parameters of this thesis to investigate, but they were significant and their further exploration could improve the teaching of EFL in Greece. Hence, the acquisition of each language skill that was entailed in the survey could by itself comprise a research topic. For example, it would be interesting to identify to what extent English grammar rules learning are problematic to Greek speakers, which grammatical phenomena are more difficult to perceive, for what reasons, and what teachers could do about that. Furthermore, since the thesis confined itself to investigating how the participants think or feel about the difficulties they faced, it would be interesting to conduct further research by taking written and oral samples, in order to analyze them and assess the errors that the participants actually make, and the areas that cause major difficulties. Broader topics that could be addressed refer to the reasons of mistrust towards the public schools' ability to teach foreign languages properly and to the ways in which confidence to the public school's abilities can be regained. It would also be interesting to explore at length why "parallel education" is viable and, in fact, successful, despite the constitutional guarantee of free education.

I hope that Greek educators and academic institutions will further explore the topic of teaching EFL in Greece, since the lack of literature and research was noticeable and significant, and since by investigating this issue educators can design proper curricula for schools, write proper textbooks, identify suitable learning sources, and improve their practice and teaching strategies.
At a personal level, I hope I will have the opportunity to further develop and elaborate on this project, even though I should admit that the real benefit from the research was the broadening of my horizons, the reshaping of my thinking on different educational topics, the insight that I gained on language issues, and the equipment and good grounding useful to a language teacher. As a language teacher I once more confirmed that whenever I delve into linguistic issues, I always feel amazed at the richness of the experience and at the depth of the language “tool”, which we take for granted, but it is indeed a “miracle”.


A Greek perspective of EFL  87

APPENDIX A

A presentation of the Greek alphabet with notes on pronunciation, phonology and orthography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Name &amp; Sound</th>
<th>Modern Greek pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A α</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>[a], as in &quot;father&quot;. Same like [a] in Spanish and Italian. Phonetically, this sound is: open, central, and unrounded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B β</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>[v], as in &quot;vet&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Γ γ</td>
<td>Gamma</td>
<td>[gh], a sound which does not exist in English. If followed by the sound [u] then it sounds almost like the initial sound in &quot;woman&quot;, but with the back of the tongue touching more to the back (soft) palate. To pronounce [gha], try to isolate &quot;w&quot; from &quot;what&quot; without rounding your lips, and then say [a]. In Castillian Spanish this sound exists in &quot;amiga&quot;. Same is true for [gho]: try eliminating the [u] sound from &quot;water&quot;. (C. Spanish: &quot;amigo&quot;). On the other hand, [ght] sounds like &quot;ye&quot; in &quot;yes&quot;, and [ghi] sounds like &quot;yi&quot; in &quot;yield&quot;. Phonetically, gamma is a voiced velar fricative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ δ</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>[th], as in &quot;this&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ε ε</td>
<td>Epsilon</td>
<td>[e] as in &quot;pet&quot;, except that the [e] in &quot;pet&quot; (and in most other English words) is lax, while in Greek it is tense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ζ ζ</td>
<td>Zeta</td>
<td>[z], as in &quot;zone&quot;. Actually, the remark for sigma (see below) applies to zeta as well (it is shifted a bit towards [Z], as in &quot;pleasure&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Η η</td>
<td>Eta</td>
<td>[i], as in &quot;meat&quot;, but shorter, not so long. This is one of the three [i] in the Greek alphabet; they all have identical pronunciation. The reason for this redundancy has to do with Classic Greek, where they were not redundant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θ θ</td>
<td>Theta</td>
<td>[th], as in &quot;think&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ι ι</td>
<td>Iota</td>
<td>[i], exactly like eta (see above). The name of the letter is pronounced &quot;yota&quot; in Modern Greek. (the reason for the y-sound in front of the letter's name is purely phonetical).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Κ κ</td>
<td>Kappa</td>
<td>[k], as in &quot;pack&quot;. Notice that in English [k] is aspirated if it is at the beginning of a word; Greek makes no such distinction. [ke] is pronounced as in Spanish &quot;que&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Λ λ</td>
<td>Lambda</td>
<td>[l] as in &quot;lap&quot;. The name of the letter is pronounced &quot;lamtha&quot; ([b] is eliminated because it is difficult to pronounce it between [m] and [th]).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Μ μ</td>
<td>Mu</td>
<td>[m], as in &quot;map&quot;. Notice that the letter is pronounced &quot;mi&quot; (mee), not &quot;mew&quot; as in American English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Letter</td>
<td>English Pronunciation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Νυ (Nu)</td>
<td>[n], as in &quot;noble&quot;. Notice that the letter is pronounced &quot;ni&quot; (nee), not &quot;new&quot; as in American English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ξ (Ksi)</td>
<td>[ks] as in &quot;fox&quot;. Contrary to the English &quot;x&quot;, the letter ksi does not change pronunciation in the beginning of a word (it does not become a [z]; Greeks have no trouble starting a word with [k]+[s]).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ο (Omicron)</td>
<td>[o] as in &quot;hop&quot;, except that the [o] in &quot;hop&quot; (and in most other English words) is lax, while in Greek it is tense. Same like [o] in &quot;got&quot; the way it is pronounced in British English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Πi (Pi)</td>
<td>[p], as in &quot;top&quot;. Notice that in English [p] is aspirated if it is at the beginning of a word; Greek makes no such distinction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ρ (Rho)</td>
<td>[r], a sound which does not exist in English (but exists in Scottish). Sounds very much like the Italian, or Russian [r], or the Spanish trill [r]. Phonetically, it is an alveolar, voiced trill.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Σσζ (Sigma)</td>
<td>[s], as is &quot;sit&quot;. Actually, if you listen carefully to native Greek speakers, it sounds a bit between [s] and [sh] (probably because there is no [sh] in Greek, so the sound is somewhat shifted in the phonological space). However, it is much closer to [s], rather than [sh], and every Greek speaker would swear they pronounce it exactly like the English [s], unless forced to admit the difference by looking at spectrograms. Notice that the second way of writing the lower case sigma is used exclusively when the letter appears at the end of a word (there is only one capital form); this rule has no exceptions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ττ (Tau)</td>
<td>[t], as in &quot;pot&quot;. Notice that in English [t] is aspirated if it is at the beginning of a word; Greek makes no such distinction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>υ (Upsilon)</td>
<td>[y], exactly like eta and iota (see above). The name of the letter is pronounced [ipsilon] (ee-psee-lon), not &quot;ypsilon&quot; as it is called in American English.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Φφ (Phi)</td>
<td>[f] as in &quot;fat&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ (Chi)</td>
<td>[ch], a sound which does not exist in English (but exists in Scottish, as in &quot;loch&quot;). [che] is pronounced as in Spanish &quot;general&quot;. Phonetically, it is an unvoiced velar fricative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ψ (Psi)</td>
<td>[ps] as in &quot;lopsided&quot;. Contrary to English, the sound of the letter does not change in the beginning of a word (it doesn't become a [s]; Greeks have no trouble starting a word with [p]+[s]). For example, in the word <em>psychologia</em> (psychology) the initial [p] sound is not omitted. However, do not put any aspiration between [p] and [s] when pronouncing this letter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ωω (Omega)</td>
<td>[o], exactly like omicron. (Once again, the reason for the redundancy lies in Classic Greek.)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE


2. What is your sex?  A.) Male ______  B.) Female ______

3. What is your highest level of formal education?  
A.) High school graduate ______  
B.) TEI (Technical College) graduate ______  
C.) AEI (university) graduate ______  
D.) Postgraduate student or graduate ______

4. At what age did you start learning English? ______ and where (school or frontistirio)? ______

5. Where were you taught English?  
A.) at school ______  
B.) in a private school (frontistirio) ______  
C.) in both school and "frontistirio" ______  
D.) somewhere else. Please specify ______

6. How useful do you think that frontistirio or private classes are, in order to learn English in Greece?  
A.) Essential ______  
B.) Very useful ______  
C.) Somewhat useful ______  
D.) Not useful ______

7. When you were in Greece, for how many academic years were you studying English? ______

8. How would you assess your proficiency in English today?  
A.) Excellent ______  
B.) Very good ______  
C.) Fair ______  
D.) Poor ______  
E.) Very poor ______

9. Do you speak any foreign languages, besides English?  
Yes ______  No ______  
9a) If Yes A.) Which language (languages) ______  
B.) At what level?  a.) elementary ______  
   b.) intermediate ______  
   c.) very good ______  
C.) Did you learn it/them ______  
   a.) before you start learning English? ______  
   b.) after you had learned English? ______  
   c.) simultaneously with English? ______

10. When you started learning English, how difficult it was to get used to the use of the English alphabet? ______  
A.) Not difficult, B.) Somewhat difficult, C.) Quite difficult, D.) Very difficult

11. How difficult is to read/pronounce correctly an English word that you see for the first time? ______  
A.) Not difficult, B.) Somewhat difficult, C.) Quite difficult, D.) Very difficult

12. How difficult is to spell correctly an English word that you hear for the first time? ______  
A.) Not difficult, B.) Somewhat difficult, C.) Quite difficult, D.) Very difficult

13. How difficult was it to learn the grammar of the English language (e.g. tenses, irregular verbs)? ______  
A.) Not difficult, B.) Somewhat difficult, C.) Quite difficult, D.) Very difficult

14. How difficult was it to learn the syntax of the English language (e.g. right word order in a sentence)? ______  
A.) Not difficult, B.) Somewhat difficult, C.) Quite difficult, D.) Very difficult
15.) How would you characterize the English grammar compared with the Greek grammar? 
   D. Greek grammar is more complicated and difficult to learn than the English one  
   E. English grammar is more complicated and difficult to learn that the Greek one 
   F. They have the same degree of difficulty 
   G. I do not know! I cannot say. 

16.) How difficult is to identify Greek-rooted words in an English text? 
   A = Not difficult, B = Somewhat difficult, C = Quite difficult, D = Very difficult 

17.) How helpful was the use of English words in the Greek colloquial language or in Greek everyday life, e.g. in 
   TV, cinema, computer language in acquiring the English vocabulary? 
   A= Very helpful, B= Quite helpful, C = Somewhat helpful, D = Not helpful 

18.) How difficult is to abandon your thick accent and speak with a proper accent, when you speak in English? 
   A = Not difficult, B = Somewhat difficult, C= Quite difficult, D= Very difficult 

19.) Before you come to the USA, was it easier for you to comprehend? 
   A. something said with the American-English accent. 
   B. something said with the British-English accent. 
   C. it made no difference. 
   D. I had difficulty in understanding everything said with an accent. 

20.) How often do you “first think in Greek, and then translate it into English”? 
   A. always  B. very often  C. sometimes  D. occasionally  E. almost never 

21.) When you were learning English, what were the things that caused you difficulties? 
   (e.g. grammar rules and exercises, vocabulary, dialogue and communication activities…) 

22.) Based on your experience, what suggestions would you have for teachers that teach English in Greece, so as to 
   improve their teaching strategy?
Α Ε Ρ Ω Τ Η Μ Α Τ Ο Λ Ο Γ Ι Ο

1.) Ηλικία
   A) 18-25__   B) 26-32__   Γ) 33-__

2.) Φύλο
   Α) Άρσενικό  B) Θηλυκό

3.) Υπόσταδο τυπικών γνώσεων
   A) απόφοιτος Διαδράσεως _
   B) απόφοιτος ΕΙ _
   Ε) απόφοιτος ΕΙ
   Δ) απόφοιτος ΦΕΙ _
   Γ) απόφοιτος σπουδαστής _

4.) Σε ποιά ηλικία αρχίζετε να μαθαίνετε Αγγλικά _ και πού (σε σχολείο ή φροντιστήριο): _

5.) Ποιο διδαχτήκατε να μαθαίνετε Αγγλικά _
   A) σε σχολείο__   Γ) και σε σχολείο και σε φροντιστήριο __
   B) σε φροντιστήριο__   Δ) αλλότερο (παρακάτω εξηγείτε) __

6.) Πόσο χρήσιμο ή απαραίτητο πιστεύετε ότι είναι το φροντιστήριο ή τα ιδιαίτερα μαθήματα, για να μάθει κανείς Αγγλικά στην Ελλάδα __
   A) απαραίτητο__   B) πολύ χρήσιμο__   Γ) αρκετά χρήσιμο__   Δ) καθόλου χρήσιμο

7.) Για πόσο χρώνα (σχολικά έτη) μάθανες Αγγλικά, όσο ήσουν στην Ελλάδα __

8.) Πόσο εκτιμάς τη γνώση των Αγγλικών σου σήμερα;
   A) άριστη__   B) πολύ καλή__   Γ) καλή__    Δ) μέτρια__  Ε) φτωχή__

9.) Μιλάτε άλλες ξένες γλώσσες, εκτός από Αγγλικά; Ναι__  Όχι __
   9α.) An vate:
   A) Ποιά γλώσσα (γλώσσες);__
   B) Σε τι επίπεδο; α) στοιχείως__  β) μέτρια__  γ) πολύ καλό __
   Γ) Διδαχτήκατε την άλλη ξένη γλώσσα(ες); α) πριν αρχίσατε να μαθαίνετε Αγγλικά__  β) αφού έχασε μάθετε Αγγλικά__  γ) ταυτόχρονα με τα Αγγλικά__

10.) Όταν αρχίσατε να μαθαίνετε Αγγλικά, πόσο δύσκολο ήταν να συντηρήσετε στη χρήση του ελληνικού αλφαβήτου;
    A) καθόλου δύσκολο__   B) λίγο δύσκολο__   Γ) αρκετά δύσκολο__   Δ) πολύ δύσκολο__

11.) Πόσο δύσκολο είναι να διαβάζετε οι εφηβικές μιας ιταλικής λέξης, πού σας είναι άγνωστη; __
    A) καθόλου δύσκολο__   B) λίγο δύσκολο__   Γ) αρκετά δύσκολο__   Δ) πολύ δύσκολο__

12.) Πόσο δύσκολο είναι να γράψετε ορθογραφικά μια άγνωστη αγγλική λέξη, πού ακούσετε για πρώτη φορά;
    A) καθόλου δύσκολο__   B) λίγο δύσκολο__   Γ) αρκετά δύσκολο__   Δ) πολύ δύσκολο__

13.) Πόσο δύσκολο ήταν να μάθετε τη γραμματική της αγγλικής γλώσσας (π.χ. χρόνους, ανώμαλα ρήματα);
    A) καθόλου δύσκολο__   B) λίγο δύσκολο__   Γ) αρκετά δύσκολο__   Δ) πολύ δύσκολο__
14. Πόσο δύσκολο ήταν να μάθετε το συντακτικό της αγγλικής γλώσσας (π.χ. τη σωστή σειρά των λέξεων μέσα σε μία πρόταση;)
   A) καθόλου δύσκολο   B) λίγο δύσκολο   C) αρκετά δύσκολο   D) πολύ δύσκολο

15. Πόσο θα χαρακτηρίζατε την αγγλική γραμματική σε σχέση με την ελληνική;_______
   A) η ελληνική γραμματική είναι πιο περίπλοκη και δύσκολη στην εκμάθησή της από την αγγλική
   B) η αγγλική γραμματική είναι πιο περίπλοκη και δύσκολη στην εκμάθησή της από την ελληνική
   C) έχουν τον ίδιο βαθμό δύσκολότητας
   D) δεν εχω γνώμη/ δεν μπορώ να κρίνω

16. Πόσο δύσκολο είναι να αναγνωρίσετε λέξεις με ελληνική ρίζα ή προέλευση σε ένα αγγλικό κείμενο;_______
   A) καθόλου δύσκολο   B) λίγο δύσκολο   C) αρκετά δύσκολο   D) πολύ δύσκολο

17. Πόσο επιβοηθητική ήταν η χρήση Αγγλικών λέξεων στην καθομιλουμένη ελληνική (π.χ. στην τηλεόραση,
   τον κινηματογράφο, στους ηλεκτρονικούς υπολογιστές ...) στο να μάθετε το αγγλικό λεξιλόγιο;_______
   A) πολύ επιβοηθητική   B) αρκετά επιβοηθητική   C) ελαφρώς επιβοηθητική   D) καθόλου επιβοηθητική

18. Πόσο δύσκολο είναι να αλλάξετε την προφορά σας και να μιλήσετε με αγγλική προφορά;_______
   A) καθόλου δύσκολο   B) λίγο δύσκολο   C) αρκετά δύσκολο   D) πολύ δύσκολο

19. Πριν ρθεί αγγλικά, ήταν ευκολότερο να καταλάβετε......_______
   A) κάτι που λεγόταν με αμερικανική προφορά
   B) κάτι που λεγόταν με βρετανική προφορά
   C) δεν είχε καμιά διαφορά
   D) μην ήταν δύσκολο να καταλάβω, το διάλεγα λεγόταν με προφορά

20. Πόσο συχνά έκρυφτα εκφράζεστε κάτι στα αγγλικά και μετά το μεταφράζεστε στα αγγλικά;_______
   A) πάντα   B) πολύ συχνά   C) μερικές φορές   D) σπάνια   E) ποτέ

21. Όταν μαθαίνετε Αγγλικά, τι σας δυσκόλευε; (π.χ. οι γραμματικοί κανόνες και οι ασκήσεις, η εκμάθηση του
   λεξιλόγιου, ο διάλογος)

22. Βασίζομαι στην εμπειρία σας, τι υποδείξεις θα κάνατε σε καθηγητές Αγγλικών στην Ελλάδα, ώστε να
    βελτιώσουν τον τρόπο διδασκαλίας των Αγγλικών;
APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (SURVEY)

Date: 26 February 2002

I am a graduate student in the California State University of Monterey Bay. I am conducting a research dealing with the Greek perspective of ESL (English as a Second Language). The purpose of this research is to identify mainly linguistic factors that assist or hinder Greek learners in acquiring ESL.

You are being asked to complete this survey to help researcher gather data for the above purpose. Your participation in this project will involve completing a questionnaire. I estimate it will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Some demographic information is collected in the beginning.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or answer any question. Your responses to this questionnaire will be completely confidential, and it is preferred that you do not identify yourself in any way on the survey. The information you provide will help complete my research and you should expect no possible benefit of your participation.

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to call me at 649-2595, or contact my professor, Dr. Christine Sleeter at (831) 582-3641.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Anastasia Anagnostopoulou
Student in Master of Arts in Education in CSUMB

I agree to participate in the research by completing the questionnaire.

Please, print your name: ___________________________ Date: ____________
INTerview Questions

1.) Which were your personal experiences from EFL? How were you taught English?

2.) What is your opinion of "parallel education" (private lessons and frontisiria)? How does it work in Greece?

3.) Rate the difficulty you encountered in acquiring the following language skills in English: alphabet, spelling, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Discuss your rating.

4.) Can you discuss some of the factors, such as institutions, situations, linguistic issues, etc., that facilitate the learning of EFL in Greece?

5.) Suppose you had the influence to propose changes for the way EFL is taught in Greece. What changes would you propose, in order to improve the teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Greece?
APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (INTERVIEW)

I am a graduate student in the California State University of Monterey Bay. I am conducting a research dealing with the Greek perspective of ESL (English as a Second Language). The purpose of this research is to identify mainly linguistic factors that assist or hinder Greek learners in acquiring ESL.

You are being asked to participate in an interview to help researcher gather data for the above purpose. The interview will ask you to elaborate on items that are relevant to this study and to provide your insights concerning a questionnaire that has already been distributed. No personal or sensitive question will be asked. The interview will be conducted during winter at a time of your convenience and it will approximately last for 20 minutes. It will be recorded on audiotape to allow a more accurate transcription and it will be done in person by the researcher.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this interview, or to withdraw at any time during the study, or not to answer any question. All the data gathered during this study, which was described above, will be kept strictly confidential. The interviews will be recorded, and the tapes will be safe and only in my disposition and in the disposition of some faculty of CSUMB. After the end of the research they will be destroyed. The information you provide will help complete my research and you should expect no possible benefit of your participation.

You may ask any questions concerning the research either before agreeing to participate or during the research study. If you have any questions that have not been answered by the researcher you may contact professor Christine Sleeter at (831) 582-3641.

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign the form below.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

Sincerely,

Anastasia Anagnostopoulou
Student in Master of Arts in Education in CSUMB

I agree to participate in the interview.

Please, print your name: ___________________  Date: ___________