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# Cypriot Greek in UK Greek complementary schools: curriculum policies, classroom practices, and language ideologies

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Cypriot Greek is positioned at the interface of curriculum policy, classroom practice, and language ideologies in UK Greek complementary schools (GCSs). Drawing on ethnographic data collected over six months in 2018 in two North London GCSs, we analyse (a) curriculum documents produced for Greek complementary schools, (b) classroom interactions, and (c) pupil perspectives from one case-study school. The curricula formally acknowledge Cypriot Greek but frame it in limited and bounded ways. Standard Greek is constructed as the legitimate target for literacy, while Cypriot Greek is treated as permissible mainly in oral communication and often linked to cultural tradition. Classroom data show how these policy framings are recontextualised in teaching and learning, particularly in moments where exam-related expectations are made salient. The teacher's practices reproduce a literacy–oracy binary and discourage the use of Cypriot Greek in writing, while pupils display uncertainty about what is allowed and orient to assessment as a key rationale for avoiding Cypriot forms. We argue that, although flexible multilingual practices also occur in everyday interaction, exam-thematised episodes make visible how assessment regimes can intensify standardising pressures that are rooted in broader hellenocentric hierarchies and in limited institutional support for repertoire-based pedagogies. We conclude by calling for more systematic curricular guidance, materials, and teacher education that legitimise pupils' full repertoires and support metalinguistic work across varieties in home, heritage and community language education.

## 1. Introduction

Complementary schools (CSs; also referred to as supplementary schools, Saturday schools, or heritage language schools; see Creese & Martin, 2006; Lytra & Martin, 2010; Simon, 2018; Ganassin, 2020, for terminological discussion) are established and run by minoritised communities, most commonly communities with a history of migration, with the aim of supporting the education of their youngest members. Wei (2006) notes that they constitute a "response to the failure of the mainstream education system to meet the needs of ethnic minority children and their communities" (2006:78). Depending on the linguistic profile of the community at hand, CSs may provide teaching support in the majority language of society and in select subjects such as maths. In the case of communities in which languages other than the majority language are spoken as home, heritage, or community languages (HHCLs), CSs typically provide lessons in the HHCL and also teach elements of culture that are considered important for the community (or, indeed, communities), which may include religion, history, and forms of art such as music, song, and (folk) dance. They are therefore seen by communities as important institutions tasked with the preservation and transmission of community identity and its defence against the assimilation pressures exerted by the linguistic and cultural majority of the host society.

CSs can be highly heterogeneous in terms of the national or ethnic identifications of their pupils and their families. For example, pupils in Albanian CSs may originate in Albania, Kosovo, or North Macedonia (Tereshchenko & Archer, 2015). Language therefore functions as the element that forges and sustains links between the people involved in CS life. CSs operate in parallel to mainstream schools, with teaching taking place at weekends and/or weekday afternoons and evenings. While some schools are staffed by paid teachers who are either seconded from abroad or sourced locally, many schools rely on the voluntary service of parents and other community members.

Greek complementary schools (GCSs) have long been central sites for

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Greek language education and the intergenerational transmission of Greek cultural resources in the UK. They have traditionally served the UK's Greek Cypriot and Greek communities, namely, diaspora populations with family origins in Cyprus and in Greece, respectively. In this article, we show how Greek complementary schooling is shaped by persistent hierarchies between Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek. For many British-born pupils of Greek Cypriot background, Cypriot Greek (including UK-developed contact varieties known as Grenglish; Karatsareas & Charalambidou, 2020) is the principal HHCL, while exposure to Standard Greek may be limited and uneven (Ioannides, 1990; Roussou, 1990). Yet, Standard Greek is typically positioned as the legitimate target variety of complementary schooling, while Cypriot Greek is often constructed as inappropriate for 'proper' learning and assessment, and may be discouraged or sanctioned (Papapavlou & Pavlou, 2005; Yiakoumetti, 2007; Ioannidou, 2009; Sophocleous & Wilks, 2010; Karatsareas, 2018, 2021a, b, c; Ioannidou et al., 2020; Cushing, Georgiou & Karatsareas, 2024). These tensions raise a long-standing pedagogical and ideological question, namely, whether, and how, Cypriot Greek should be taken into account in the design and delivery of Standard Greek teaching in GCSs (Sergides & Tansley, 1991).

In what follows, we examine how linguistic hierarchies are produced and negotiated at the interface of policy, ideology, and classroom practice in UK GCSs. Specifically, we ask:

(1) How is Cypriot Greek represented and positioned in curriculum policy for UK GCSs?
(2) How do teachers and pupils orient to Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek during classroom interactions?
(3) What are the implications of these findings for HHCL education in UK GCSs?

To address these questions, we draw on ethnographic classroom data collected in 2018 in two North London GCSs, alongside curriculum documents. These include the 2018 curriculum produced by the Cyprus Educational Mission (Κυπριακή Εκπαιδευτική Αποστολή; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018), the London-based unit of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus (MESY) that supports the operation of UK GCSs, and by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus (2023) which we analyse as part of the empirical findings. While our dataset includes a range of classroom interactions, the analysis in this article foregrounds episodes where exam expectations are explicitly thematised, as these moments make visible how institutional assessment regimes interact with broader language ideologies to shape what counts as legitimate Greek in complementary schooling.

Our contribution is twofold. First, empirically, we offer a fine-grained, multi-source account of the place of Cypriot Greek across curriculum policy texts and classroom interaction in a London GCS, showing how curricular framings of legitimate language are taken up, reproduced, and at times reinterpreted in everyday teaching and learning. Second, analytically, we advance scholarship on CSs, including GCSs, (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Lytra & Martin, 2010; Simon, 2018; Panagiotopoulou, Kirsch & Chatzidaki, 2019; Voskou, 2021; Cruickshank et al., 2023; Lytra, 2024; Thorpe & Karamanidou, 2024; Aravossitas & Oikonomakou, 2026; Cruickshank & Tsung, 2026; Ganuza et al., 2025, 2026; Wei, 2026) by tracing the pathway from meso-level policy texts to micro-level classroom ideology and practice, specifically, what teachers can authoritatively present as "allowed", what pupils learn to treat as legitimate, and how these hierarchies are intensified in assessment-oriented routines. Here, meso-level refers to institutional documents (curricula, guidelines, assessment-related policy texts) produced by bodies that oversee complementary schooling, operating between macro-level state policy and micro-level classroom interaction. In doing so, we address a gap in the literature on UK GCSs, which has paid limited attention to the positioning of non-standardised resources such as Cypriot Greek at the policy–practice interface.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 briefly outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Section 3 situates GCSs within the broader UK educational landscape. Section 4 introduces the study design, research site, participants, and data. Section 5 presents the analysis of curriculum documents, focusing on how Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek are framed in two curricular texts and what this implies for legitimate language use. Section 6 analyses teacher practices through classroom interactional data, examining how Cypriot Greek is authorised, restricted, or rendered peripheral in everyday teaching. Section 7 turns to pupils' orientations and experiences, highlighting how they navigate language expectations. Section 8 discusses the implications of the findings for curriculum development, teacher education, and more inclusive, repertoire-based approaches to HHCL provision in the diaspora. Section 9 concludes.

## 2. Multilingual repertoires and pedagogies

We draw on Creese and Blackledge's (2011), Blommaert and Backus's (2013), and Busch's (2015) holistic understandings of learners' linguistic repertoires as comprising of resources, which learners use flexibly to embrace and reflect upon their multilingual identities. For Blommaert and Backus (2013, p.15), "repertoires are individual, biographically organised complexes of resources, and they follow the rhythms of actual lives". This approach moves beyond essentialist views of languages as discrete and bounded entities and allows for a view of multilingual speakers, such as CS pupils, as meaningfully integrating their linguistic and cultural resources in the multilingual settings where they participate. A second- or third-generation CS pupil in London may use Cypriot Greek at home with family members, Standard Greek in literacy activities at the complementary school, and English with peers, and draw flexibly on features from all three to complete a classroom task during complementary school lessons.

We side with Cummins's (2005) view that drawing on learners dominant language in second-language learning contexts does not hinder acquisition of the target language. On the contrary, it allows them to transfer their already established linguistic skills to the newly introduced language. From this perspective, Cypriot Greek is not a problem external to learning Standard Greek but part of pupils' repertoires that can be pedagogically mobilised.

The work of García (2009) and García and Flores (2012) on planned and intended multilingual pedagogies highlights how teaching can build on pupils' dynamic and complex language trajectories. They advocate for curricular changes that prioritise the flexible use of pupils' repertoires, allowing them to "choose the language through which they make sense of the lesson, and to compare and contrast the ways in which the languages are written and concepts are expressed" (García & Flores, 2012, p. 240).

Our work is also informed by research and debate in Cyprus on the benefits of introducing contrastive analysis of Standard Greek and Cypriot Greek within a critical literacy framework (Hadjioannou, Tsiplakou & Kappler 2011). In this context, critical literacy refers to pedagogical approaches that treat language and texts as socially and

politically situated, and that invite learners to examine how linguistic forms and varieties are valued, legitimised, or stigmatised in particular contexts, including institutions and communities (Behrman, 2011; Luke & Dooley, 2011). Rather than presenting standardised varieties as the only 'correct' option, a critical literacy approach uses comparison between varieties to develop metalinguistic awareness while also making visible the ideological assumptions that underpin standardisation and language hierarchies. This perspective is relevant to our study because it suggests how differences between Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek can be addressed explicitly and non-deficitly, supporting pupils to draw on their full repertoires while reflecting on why some forms are treated as more legitimate than others, including in complementary education and examination contexts.

## 3. Greek complementary schools in the UK

GCSs were originally established in the UK to cater for the linguistic and educational needs of the Greek community, and expanded substantially with the growth of the Greek Cypriot community in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which subsequently played a leading role in sustaining Greek language education for younger generations of both Greek Cypriot- and Greek-origin families. Until recently, the majority of pupils attending Greek schools were born in the UK to parents and/or grandparents who migrated from Cyprus. However, the 2010 debt crisis in Greece resulted in a new wave of economic migrants relocating to the UK with their families, which has in turn brought about a significant change in the composition of the pupil population (Karatsareas, 2021b).

Success in the Modern Greek GCSE and A-Levels is one of the main reasons for which parents with a Greek Cypriot background insist that their children attend GCS. There is an expectation that a good result will be more easily achievable than in other subjects thanks to the exposure to Greek at home, thus improving children's prospects of admission to university. Beyond academic considerations, attending a GCS and obtaining at least the Modern Greek GCSE is widely regarded within the UK's Greek Cypriot diaspora as a key marker of communal belonging, a kind of rite of passage that signals and reinforces one's identity as a member of the community. Many parents, having attended GCS themselves and often recalling mixed feelings at the time, nonetheless recognise the long-term benefits of participation and are keen for their children not to miss out on the friendships, shared cultural reference points, and early connections to community life that GCS can offer, including ongoing involvement in church and other communal activities. This orientation can be understood in relation to what Voskou describes as the historical mission of GCSs in the UK: "a way of fulfilling immigrants' wish to forge ethnic identities and transmitting the Greek heritage and ethnic characteristics to the following generations" (2021:203), addressing anxieties about a "gradual de-hellenisation of the children", and protecting them from assimilation into the British linguistic, cultural, and broader societal milieu.

In 2025–2026, 65 GCSs operated in the UK (Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, 2026), with almost half of them concentrated in the Greater London area. The overall number of enrolments was 6651 pupils. Depending on pupil numbers, schools may offer teaching in up to ten different levels: pre-school, years 1 to 6, pre-GCSE class, GCSE class, and A-level class. The teaching of Greek and the participation of pupils in cultural activities such as Greek and Cypriot folk dancing, singing, religious worship, and visits to museums and other sites considered to be important to the Greek Cypriot and Greek communities take up 80% of the schools' available teaching time (Kountouris, 2015:147–148). A smaller amount of time is dedicated to the study of history, geography, and Greek Orthodox religion, which are taught in Greek. In 2025–2026, teaching was delivered by 19 Greek Cypriot teachers who held permanent positions in the educational system of the Republic of Cyprus and who were seconded in the UK for a set number of years, and 143 locally sourced teachers coming from either Cyprus or Greece, who are employed on an hourly-paid basis. The latter group includes a small number of teachers from Albanian, Bulgarian, and Romanian onward migrant backgrounds (Karatsareas, 2026).

## 4. Our study: methods and data

Our empirical evidence is based on ethnographic data collected over six months (January–July 2018) in two North London GCSs, pseudonymised as Gefyri 'Bridge' and Anemomylos 'Windmill'. Fieldwork took place at a time when UK GCSs were experiencing a period of transition linked to post-2010 migration from Greece and the enrolment of increasing numbers of pupils from Greece. Although our analysis is based on 2018 data, later research suggests that post-2010 migration from Greece has continued to reshape school ecologies and, if anything, to intensify standardising expectations of 'correct' Greek, further marginalising Cypriot Greek (Karatsareas, 2021a, b).

In this article, we present data from Gefyri, a school associated with a Greek Orthodox parish. We conducted weekly in-class observations in years 5 (age range 10–12 years), 6 (age range 12–14 years), and the pre-GCSE year (age range 14–15 years). We focused on these more advanced levels because pupils are generally expected to have developed linguistic skills in the Greek components of their repertoires. Gefyri offered classes on two weekday evenings (two hours each) and on Saturdays (four hours including breaks). Observations were conducted on Saturdays in order to capture longer stretches of uninterrupted teaching time.

By the end of the observation period, our dataset comprised recordings of classroom interactions (captured with mini recorders and broadly transcribed using standard orthographic conventions for Greek and English), fieldnotes, focus group sessions with pupils, one-to-one interviews with teachers, and artefacts including pupils' samples of work, classroom displays, and books. In addition, our dataset includes curriculum documents, including the curriculum as it was published in 2023 and an earlier draft produced in 2018, which we treat as institutional policy texts and analyse as part of the empirical findings.

Classroom recordings were the main dataset and transcribed and reviewed iteratively to capture pupils' and teachers' orientations towards Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek. Interview data were used to triangulate findings and provide insight into how teachers and pupils made sense of language norms and expectations. Fieldnotes and artefacts were analysed to contextualise spoken interaction within the broader linguistic and visual ecology of the classroom. For the classroom interactions, our analysis adopted a multi-layered qualitative approach (Georgiou, 2020, 2022) combining thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) with principles from interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Rampton, 2019). Thematic analysis enabled us to identify recurrent patterns in participants' talk and metalinguistic commentary across the dataset, while interactional sociolinguistics sensitised us to how speakers signalled and negotiated social meanings, roles, and ideologies through linguistic choices in context.

The second dataset analysed in this paper consists of two curriculum documents. The 2018 draft produced by KEA (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018) and the 2023 produced by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (2023) of the Republic of Cyprus. These documents enable us to examine how Cypriot Greek is represented and positioned in curriculum policy in UK GCSs. We drew on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework to analyse how Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek are discursively framed, approaching the documents at three interrelated levels: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. At the textual level, we analysed language use and lexical choices, including ideologically loaded terms such as "national consciousness" and "Greek identity" as well as metaphors such as "roots", through which particular understandings of language, belonging, and legitimacy are constructed. At the level of discourse practice, we considered the production and circulation of the curriculum (e.g., who authored it, under what institutional auspices, and how it is intended to guide teaching). At the level of sociocultural practice, we situated these textual and institutional choices within broader ideological contexts, including

the essentialised construction of ethnic identity and the positioning of CSs as key institutions for maintaining linguistic and cultural cohesion in the diaspora.

Reflexivity is central to this research, particularly given its ethnographic orientation. We recognise that researchers are embedded in the field and that knowledge is produced through relationships and interaction, such that researchers may both shape and be shaped by the research context. In line with Consoli and Ganassin (2023), we therefore treat the human element as integral to the research process and foreground critical reflection on positionality and its implications. Accordingly, we offer brief positionality statements below, as our linguistic and biographical backgrounds had shaped access, interactional dynamics, and the interpretation of language ideologies.

The first author is a female academic of Cypriot Greek origin. At the time of the research project, she was a PhD student at UCL and worked as a Research Assistant for the project. Her research interests include the language education of refugee children, multilingualism and classroom-based research. She had previously worked as a complementary teacher at another North London school during 2014–2015, where she had established strong relationships with the community. Her responsibilities for the project included collecting classroom data, conducting group interviews with pupils, and transcribing and analysing datasets. Although this may appear to be a linear process, the experience was far from straightforward. She became deeply embedded in the research context, engaging closely with the needs and experiences of diaspora pupils to understand the complexities of their educational and cultural environments. Aligned with her insider position, she was aware of her role as a researcher and of how the community perceived her as an expert. This dual positionality, occupying both insider and outsider roles, was creative, allowing her to notice insights that someone fully inside might take for granted and someone fully outside might miss (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In addition, participation in the project shaped her intellectual and personal development, increasing her awareness of the cultural, ideological, and political dimensions of Cypriot Greek diaspora education. This was a two-way dimensional research, in which she both influenced the community and was, in turn, shaped by it.

The second author is a male academic born and raised in Athens, Greece. He moved to the UK for postgraduate study and, at the time the study was undertaken, he was a lecturer at the University of Westminster in Central London. Prior to this project, he had conducted research on Cypriot Greek as spoken in London, through which he established longstanding contacts within the city's GCS network. These relationships facilitated recruitment and access. In addition, his previous teaching experience at the Open University of Cyprus was viewed positively by participants and further supported engagement and trust. The second author is a speaker of an Athenian variety of Greek, which many interlocutors may perceive as closely aligned with 'proper'Greek. We therefore treated researcher language background as a salient element of the research encounter and organised fieldwork roles accordingly. Classroom observations and pupil focus groups were undertaken by the first author, while the second author led interviews with GCS teachers. However, teacher interview data are not analysed in the present article.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the (then) School of Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Westminster (reference number: ETH1718–0433) and by MESY via the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (application ref.: 173,874). Access to the participating schools was negotiated through the head teachers as institutional gatekeepers. As the research involved pupils under 18, written informed consent was obtained from participating teachers and from pupils and their parents or guardians, supported by participant information sheets (including age-appropriate versions for pupils). Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time. All data were anonymised (pseudonyms used throughout) and stored securely (locked storage for hard copies and password-protected, encrypted digital files on secure university systems).

In the analysis that follows, we begin by examining how Cypriot Greek is positioned in the curriculum documents, and then turn to the classroom data, focusing first on the teacher's practices and subsequently on pupils' orientations.

## 5. The policy of teaching Greek in UK Greek complementary schools

The teaching of Greek in the GCSs is guided by curricula that have over the years been produced by KEA either as grassroots initiatives or under the auspices, and with the support of, the MESY to guide the teaching of the Greek language offered by CS (discourse practice). Curricula produced by the government of Greece through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Religious Affairs as well as by the Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies (Ε.ΔΙΑ.Μ.ΜΕ.) of the University of Crete have also reached the community. Kountouris (2015:149–150) lists ten curricula that were either used or circulated in the UK in the period 1986–2001 produced both by the government of the Republic of Cyprus and that of Greece. Only five of these curricula were written with British pupils with a Greek Cypriot background specifically in mind (as opposed to more general curricula written for all Greek education outside Cyprus and Greece or specific ones written for Greek heritage pupils in Germany). It falls beyond the scope of this article to review these historical curricula. Our focus here is on the most recent curricula. The 2023 which was published by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the 2018 draft curriculum produced by a group of KEA teachers in their efforts to reform the 1997 MESY-authored curriculum. The 2023 text is available on KEA's website (https://kea.schools.ac.cy/index.php?id=analytiko-programma). The 2018 draft curriculum is not currently available online. However, because our study began in 2018, we were able to download the document at the time. We subsequently analysed it as part of our research and have retained a copy in our records.

According to the 2023 curriculum (71 pages, approximately 17,000 words), the aim of the education offered by GCSs is

> τη διατηρηση και διαμόρφωση της εθνικης συνειδησης, της ελληνικης ταυτότητας καθως και τη διαχυση του ελληνικού πολιτισμού στα παιδιά και τους/τις νεους/ες της παροικίας του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου. Η προσφορά αυτης της εκπαιδευσης είναι υψιστης σημασιας καθως συνιστα τον μόνο διαυλο επαφής με την ελληνικη γλωσσα και τον ελληνικό πολιτισμό. Η ελλειψη της οδηγεί στην αποσύνδεση των παιδιών και των νεων της παροικίας από τις ριζες και τον πολιτισμό που τους κληροδοτεί η ελληνικη τους ταυτότητα. (Ministry of Education Sport and Youth, 2023:6).
>
> [the preservation and shaping of national consciousness, Greek identity, and the transmission of Greek culture to the children and young people of the Greek community in the United Kingdom. The provision of this education is of paramount importance, as it constitutes the only channel of contact with the Greek language and culture. Its absence leads to the disconnection of the community's children and young people from the roots and culture bequeathed to them through their Greek identity.][1]

This formulation frames complementary schooling as a high-stakes project of identity maintenance. Greek language and culture are constructed as the primary channel through which "national consciousness" and "Greek identity" (text level) are preserved and shaped, and the absence of such schooling is portrayed as leading to "disconnection" from one's roots. In this way, the curriculum positions GCSs not simply as sites of language instruction but as diasporic institutions charged with safeguarding belonging through a particular national-cultural narrative.

This hellenocentric orientation is also reflected in the widespread labelling of these institutions as *Greek* rather than *Cypriot* schools (cf. the

[1] This and all other translations in this chapter are ours.

labelling of the complementary schools established by the Turkish Cypriot community as Turkish schools; İssa, 2005). In Philippou and Klerides's terms (2010:221), such naming practices "promote the membership of the Greeks of Cyprus or the Cypriot Hellenism to the wider imagined community of Hellenism or the Greek nation … and exclude the 'Turks of Cyprus' (and other Cypriot ethnic communities)". Here, imagined community refers to a national community understood as socially produced and sustained through shared representations and narratives of belonging, rather than through face-to-face interaction among all its members (Anderson, 1983). In the present context, the label Greek school foregrounds affiliation to a broader national frame of Hellenism and can naturalise Greekness as the unmarked lens through which Cyprus is represented, rendering other Cypriot positionalities (including Turkish Cypriot and other minority communities) less visible. The issue, then, is not who attends in demographic terms, but the ideological work performed by naming and the kinds of belonging it privileges in the public representation of the schools (sociocultural practice).

According to the 2023 curriculum, the primary aim of GCSs is to foster an emotional connection between children and young people of the diaspora and their homelands, Cyprus and Greece, with the aim of making pupils feel proud of their origins within the multicultural contexts in which they grow up. More specifically, the curriculum aspires to enable pupils to communicate effectively in Greek, to value and love Cyprus and Greece, and to cultivate national consciousness through knowledge of the Greek Orthodox faith, cultural heritage, history, and the natural environment of their homelands (Ministry of Education Sport and Youth, 2023:6). In addition to efficiency, the 2018 draft mentions correctness, as well ("correctly" «ορθά», p. 7). Although the term is not clarified, it is safe to assume that it refers to Standard Greek and especially the way in which the standardised variety is used in Athens, Greece.

Both the published curriculum and the 2018 draft acknowledge that pupils live in and have everyday experiences of a multicultural and diverse society. The curricula, however, do not recognise pupils as multicultural individuals but rather as monocultural ones. The 2023 text mentions pupils' "national and cultural identity" «την εθνική και πολιτιστική τους ταυτότητα» (Ministry of Education Sport and Youth, 2023:6) as a something that needs to be taken into account, whereas the 2018 draft refer to pupils collectively as Ελληνόπουλα 'Greek children' (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018:15). GCSs are portrayed as pivotal institutions that, on the one hand, contribute towards inter- and intra-diasporic cohesion in that they help to forge, sustain, and bolster links amongst migrants themselves and between migrants and Cyprus and Greece as their countries of origin. This is achieved through the medium of language with the aim of instilling into younger generations a set of distinctive cultural features that they share with people in Cyprus and Greece (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018:7; Ministry of Education Sport and Youth, 2023:6–7).

The curriculum identifies a number of learner needs (discourse level), based on which the following pupil profile can be sketched: a second-, third-, or even fourth-generation British-born young person with some kind of Greek Cypriot or Greek background; a pupil who has been minimally exposed to Greek in their environment, if at all, and is therefore either monolingual in English or, if they are bilingual in English and Greek, is dominant in English; a pupil who has emotional and cultural ties with their grandparents' or great-grandparents' country of origin; and, a pupil who needs to display strong motivation and positive attitudes towards the study of language altogether. These traits underpin the curriculum's decision to teach Greek adopting principles, approaches, and methodologies drawn from the teaching of "second and foreign languages" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018:9; Ministry of Education Sport and Youth, 2023:7). While this orientation may be intended to respond to the reality that many pupils are English-dominant, it treats Greek as an externally acquired code, downplaying the sociolinguistic complexity of pupils' repertoires, particularly the possibility that many pupils engage with Greek primarily through Cypriot Greek and other multilingual resources in family and community life.

The curricula acknowledge the pupils' competences in English. The 2018 draft refers to it as "the language the children speak" («η ομιλούμενη γλώσσα των παιδιών», p. 10), whereas the 2023 version considers it "the children's main language" («η κύρια γλώσσα των παιδιών», p. 9). In contrast, recognition of the fact that pupils with a Greek Cypriot background may be bidialectal in Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek or even monodialectal in Cypriot Greek is tacit and is only found when the curriculum authors feel compelled to clarify that the use of Cypriot Greek by the pupils is "accepted" and "allowed" – not embraced, integrated, included, or celebrated. There is an underpinning policy guideline that reinforces the complementary distribution of Standard Greek and Cypriot Greek in different domains in terms of the literacy versus oracy binary distinction: Standard Greek is the language that must be used for reading and writing (and ideally also for speaking), Cypriot Greek is the language that cannot be used for reading and writing but whose use in speaking is permissible. There are three relevant mentions in the 2018 draft and a single mention in the 2023 curriculum:

2018 draft p. 10

Η χρήση της κυπριακής διαλέκτου είναι αποδεκτή και αξιοποιείται στο γλωσσικό μάθημα με τρόπο φυσικό, απενεχοποιημένο και λειτουργικό, και όπου κρίνεται απαραίτητο, για σκοπούς σύνδεσής της με την κυπριακή πολιτιστική παράδοση.

[The use of the Cypriot dialect is accepted and harnessed in language teaching in a natural, non-judgemental, and functional way, and, wherever deemed necessary, for the purposes of connecting it with Cypriot cultural tradition.] p. 16

Στο ΕΠΣ γίνεται δεκτή η χρήση της κυπριακής διαλέκτου στην προφορική επικοινωνία, αποδεχόμενοι το ήδη γνωστό λεξιλόγιο των παιδιών και αξιοποιώντας το, για αντιπαραβολή και προσθήκη αντίστιχων λέξεων και εκφράσεων στη Νέα Ελληνική.

[In GCSs, the use of the Cypriot dialect is accepted in oral communication, with the children's existing vocabulary being acknowledged and utilised for comparison and for introducing corresponding words and expressions in Standard Modern Greek.] p. 72

Λέξεις ή εκφράσεις των παιδιών στην κυπριακή διάλεκτο είναι αποδεχτές. Ταυτόχρονα δίνεται και η λέξη στην κοινή ελληνική, εξηγώντας ότι είναι λέξη με την ίδια έννοια.

[Words or expressions used by children in the Cypriot dialect are accepted. At the same time, the equivalent word in Standard Modern Greek is provided, with the explanation that it carries the same meaning.]

2023 curriculum p. 9

Η Κυπριακή διάλεκτος

Η χρήση της κυπριακής διαλέκτου είναι αποδεκτή και αξιοποιείται στο γλωσσικό μάθημα με τρόπο φυσικό, απενοχοποιημένο και λειτουργικό. Χρησιμοποιείται επίσης για σκοπούς σύνδεσης με την κυπριακή πολιτιστική παράδοση μέσω τραγουδιών και ποιημάτων.

[The Cypriot dialect

The use of the Cypriot dialect is accepted and harnessed in language teaching in a natural, non-judgemental, and functional way. It is also employed to connect with Cypriot cultural tradition through songs and poems.]

These are the only mentions of Cypriot Greek in the two documents. The second and third extracts from the 2018 draft are the only two points in the text in which Standard Greek is specifically identified as the language of instruction with the terms Νέα Ελληνική 'Modern Greek' and κοινή ελληνική 'Common Greek'. Throughout the rest of the 2018 document as well as in all of the 2023 curriculum, the terms ελληνική γλώσσα 'Greek language' or ελληνικά 'Greek' are used. In Greek-speaking contexts more generally, the term Νέα Ελληνική 'Modern Greek' is used to refer to Standard Greek as the universally accepted standardised variety. In the UK context specifically, it additionally

marks the form of language that is accepted in the GCSE and A-Level examinations, as it is used in the official designation of the two qualifications. By foregrounding commonality and a sense of sharedness, κοινή ελληνική 'Common Greek' excludes Cypriot Greek from the set of cultural traits that all Greeks around the world are meant to display and which diaspora education strives to instil in its pupils. The curricula therefore promote a homogenising and Greece-centric view (sociocultural practice), echoing Damanakis's (2001:59) view that it is imperative that "the linguistic norm of Greece" «η ελλαδική γλωσσική νόρμα», which is the standardised variety of Greek as spoken in Athens and educated speakers in other major urban centres in Greece, be the medium of education in Greek-language education around the world.

Both the 2023 curriculum and the 2018 draft especially include attempts to accept the use of Cypriot Greek to a certain extent and to capitalise on the knowledge pupils have of Cypriot Greek in order for them to achieve literacy in Standard Modern Greek. This is, however, done in a piecemeal and ad hoc fashion based on a construal of Cypriot Greek as a collection of lexical items, single words and expressions, that have Standard Greek 'equivalents'. The differences in phonology, morphology, and syntax are entirely disregarded, without a single reference to them in the entire text of the policies. The possible lack of overlaps between Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek in the lexico-semantic field (i.e., that there may be words in Cypriot Greek for which an exact equivalent in Standard Greek cannot be readily found and vice versa) is also entirely left out of focus. In both policy documents, connections are made with the cultural tradition of Cyprus, which suggests a view of Cypriot Greek as a trait that is temporally and spatially removed from the pupils' here and now rather than it being an active part of their multilingual and multidialectal lived experiences.

The mention of Cypriot Greek on p. 16 of the 2018 draft, which is included in a section entitled «Προφορικός Λόγος» "Spoken Language (Production)" (pp. 15–16), sets the policy foundations for the literacy versus oracy distinction that permeates teaching practice in the UK's GCSs: Cypriot Greek is a language whose use is allowed only when speaking and only to facilitate the learning of the standardised variety. There is no mention of Cypriot Greek in the «Γραπτός Λόγος» "Written Language (Production)" section (pp. 24–25), which suggests that the only language that can and must be written is Standard Modern Greek. The textbooks, activity books, and other materials used in Greek CSs (Μαργαρίτα 'Daisy', Μαθαίνω Ελληνικά 'I learn Greek', Κλικ στα Ελληνικά 'Click on Greek') are entirely produced according to the features of the standardised variety and were designed to accommodate the needs of pupils whose family background is mainland Greece and not Cyprus. Μαργαρίτα is designed for primary school age pupils of Greek heritage with limited or no linguistic and cultural competences in Greek, as well as for 'other' (i.e., non-Greek) primary school age pupils who learn Greek (E.DIA.M.ME, 2025).

In the next section, we examine how these curriculum framings, especially the literacy–oracy distinction and the limited, conditional positioning of Cypriot Greek, are recontextualised in classroom interaction through one teacher's pedagogical practices.

## 6. Teaching Greek in Gefyri: Ms Eleni's practices

The analysis of our classroom data revealed a number of recurring patterns in the ways teachers navigated the presence of Cypriot Greek in GCS classrooms. These included a tendency to discourage pupils' use of Cypriot Greek in favour of Standard Modern Greek, efforts to reframe Cypriot Greek expressions as inappropriate or contextually marked, and the reproduction of the literacy–oracy divide embedded in curriculum policy. In this section, we analyse interactions between one teacher, Ms Eleni, whose year 6 classroom provided particularly rich examples of how these patterns unfolded in everyday pedagogical interaction, and nine pupils aged between 12 and 14 years.

Of the nine pupils, eight were born in the UK to families with a Greek Cypriot background. Pupils in this group had English as their dominant language and, at the time of our observations, had been attending Gefyri for six years. The linguistic repertoire of these pupils additionally included Cypriot Greek, which was occasionally used within their families. One pupil was born in Greece and had arrived to London two years prior our study, at which time she started attending Gefyri. This pupil's repertoire included Standard Greek as a dominant language and English. Ms Eleni was a Cyprus-born Greek Cypriot who had recently obtained a Bachelor's degree in Education from a university in Cyprus and at the time was studying towards a Master's degree in the same field at a UK institution. She worked in Gefyri on an hourly-paid basis. Our classroom observations and the interview we conducted with her, both indicated that she was a very well-informed educator in terms of both pedagogical theory and practice.

While we do not present Ms Eleni as representative of all GCSs teachers, her case allows us to explore in detail how curriculum discourses are internalised, interpreted, and enacted by teachers, often with unintended consequences for pupils' experiences of language learning and identity. Through our analysis of her teaching practices, we shed light on the challenges teachers face in addressing sociolinguistic variation in the classroom and the tensions that arise between institutional expectations, linguistic repertoires, and pedagogical intent. At this point, we must note that classroom interaction was not uniformly corrective. Across the observation period, pupils frequently engaged in flexible multilingual talk, and Cypriot Greek features could pass as unmarked in peer interaction and in some teacher–pupil exchanges. However, when pupils' Cypriot Greek became salient, especially when linked to writing or assessment, Ms Eleni recurrently oriented to Standard Greek as the normative target and treated Cypriot Greek as contextually constrained. Here, we focus on these moments of tension because they make visible the ideological work through which language ideologies are reproduced in practice, and because it is analytically striking that such practices occured even in the presence of an observing researcher.

Ms Eleni showed signs of discomfort when faced with the use of Cypriot Greek by her pupils during teaching and learning time, and mainly employed two strategies in addressing those instances of Cypriot Greek usage. The first practice was to direct pupils to imagine that their spoken interactions were taking place in Greece, a context in which Cypriot Greek was constructed to be not only inappropriate but also unintelligible for the local Greek-speaking communities in Greece (Extract 1). Pupils were therefore instructed to avoid using Cypriot Greek lexical material in order to be understood and to use Standard Greek material instead, which would facilitate communication. The second practice was to reproduce the literacy versus oracy binary distinction that is enshrined in the 2018′s curriculum whereby Standard Greek is the language of literacy and ideally also oracy and Cypriot Greek can only be the language of oracy (Extracts 2 and 3). This was justified in terms of what was purported to be allowed in the spoken and written components of the GCSE examination in Modern Greek. Ms Eleni drew on the curriculum's guidance to justify her explanation to children in terms of being allowed to use Cypriot Greek in the oral communication part only.

The interaction in Extract 1 is part of a larger extract in which pupils read out their essays on the advantages and disadvantages of watching television. Here, we analyse Ms Eleni's reaction when Alexis used an expression ("να σας γελάσει" "to trick you") which she (incorrectly) believed to be used only in Cyprus. In Extract 1, and all subsequent extracts, we provide both the original and translated version of the spoken interactions. For the translated version, we use boldface to indicate Cypriot Greek linguistic material and italics to indicate English

linguistic material. A plain font indicates Standard Greek material.

**Extract 1. "How could we say the same thing in another way? If we added a slash? Alternatively?"**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Alexis | τελειώνοντας η τηλιόραση μπορεί | to conclude **television** can trick you |
| 2 | | να σας γελάσει ή να σας βοηθήσει | or help you |
| 3 | Ms Eleni | μπορεί να σας; | it can what you? |
| 4 | Alexis | γελάσει ή να σας βοηθήσει | trick you or help you |
| 5 | Ms Eleni | (γέλια) ωραία (γέλια) πάρα πολλά | (laughs) good (laughs) **very very** |
| 6 | | ωραία λοιπόν τι σημαίνει η | good so what does television can |
| 7 | | τηλεόραση μπορεί να σας γελάσει; | trick you mean? |
| 8 | Pupils | trick you | *trick you* |
| 9 | Ms Eleni | μπράβο because it tricks you οπότε | bravo *because it tricks you* so it is |
| 10 | | δεν είναι το literal meaning | not the *literal meaning* be careful |
| 11 | | πρόσεχε γιατί να σου χαμογελάσει | because to smile at you *he smiles* |
| 12 | | he smiles μπορεί να είναι unreliable | [it means] someone might be |
| 13 | | μπορεί να μην είναι άξιος | *unreliable* not be trustworthy okay? |
| 14 | | εμπιστοσύνης ντάξει; και κάτι που | and this is something we say in |
| 15 | | λέμε στην Κύπρο μπορεί να σου | Cyprus they may trick you okay? |
| 16 | | γελάσει εντάξει; ενώ στην Ελλάδα | but in Greece how could we say |
| 17 | | πώς μπορούσαμε να το πούμε στην | this in Greece? if we were in |
| 18 | | Ελλάδα; αν ήμασταν στην Ελλάδα | Greece how **could** we say this? |
| 19 | | πώς εμπορούσαμε να το πούμε; | how **could** we **say** the **same** thing |
| 20 | | πώς εμπορούσαμεν να πούμεν το | somewhere in Greece? be careful, |
| 21 | | ίδδιον πράγμαν κάπου στην | they may trick you how **could** we |
| 22 | | Ελλάδα; πρόσεχε μπορεί να σου | say this in **another way**? but |
| 23 | | γελάσει πώς εμπορούσαμεν να το | meaning the **same thing**? watch |
| 24 | | πούμε με άλλον τρόπον; αλλά το | out for him because he might? fool |
| 25 | | ίδδιον πράγμαν να λέγαμε; πρόσεχέ | you (writes on the whiteboard) he |
| 26 | | τον αυτόν γιατί μπορεί; να σε | might trick you he might deceive |
| 27 | | κοροϊδέψει (το γράφει στον | you they may fool you okay? he |
| 28 | | πίνακα) μπορεί να σε κοροϊδέψει | might do something he didn't tell |
| 29 | | μπορεί να σε εξαπατήσει μπορεί να | you beforehand let's **say** so you |
| 30 | | σε κοροϊδέψει εντάξει; μπορεί να | need to be careful okay? very good, |
| 31 | | κάνει κάτι που δεν σου είπε από | so the television might trick you |
| 32 | | πριν ας πούμεν άρα να τον | how else **could** we say it? if we |
| 33 | | προσέχεις ντάξει; πάρα πολύ | added a *slash*? in **another way** let's |
| 34 | | ωραία, άρα η τηλεόραση μπορεί να | **say**? how **could** we say it |
| 35 | | σου γελάσει πώς αλλιώς | differently? that the television can |
| 36 | | εμπορούσαμεν να το πούμε; αν | trick you? *slash*? *alternatively* |
| 37 | | εβάζαμεν έναν slash; με άλλον | how? that the television can |
| 38 | | τρόπον ας πούμεν; πώς | sometimes? trick you. it can |
| 39 | | εμπορούσαμεν να το πούμε αλλιώς; | sometimes trick you okay? |
| 40 | | ότι η τηλεόραση μπορεί να σου | |
| 41 | | γελάσει; slash; alternatively πώς; | |
| 42 | | ότι η τηλεόραση μπορεί κάποιες | |
| 43 | | φορές; να σας κοροϊδέψει. μπορεί | |
| 44 | | κάποιες φορές να σας κοροϊδέψει | |
| 45 | | εντάξει; | |

In line 1–2, Alexis begins by reading the last sentence he wrote in his essay. In this utterance, he uses the phrase μπορεί να σας γελάσει [na sas ɟeˈlasi] 'it may trick you.' In line 3, Ms Eleni repeats part of Alexis's utterance in an attempt to implicitly signal that there is something wrong with it. However, Alexis seems to be sure of his choice and repeats his original utterance (line 4). Ms Eleni laughs and asks for the meaning of the phrase (lines 5–7), to which the pupils respond in unison with the English equivalent (line 8). This is an example of a spontaneous interaction in this multilingual classroom where pupils drew on their multiple linguistic resources to engage in the communication with their teacher. However, Ms Eleni feels the need to comment that the verb form γελάσει [ɟeˈlasi] 'tricks' is something "we" say in Cyprus and is not used in Greece (lines 14–19). She goes on to ask pupils to produce alternatives they would use if they found themselves in Greece and does so rather insistently. In doing that, she draws on the full range of her pupils' linguistic repertoire, using Cypriot Greek, Standard Modern Greek, and English expressions of equivalence and alternative: Cypriot Greek το ίδιον πράγμαν [toiˈðːioᵐbraɣman] 'the same thing', με άλλον τρόπον [meˈalːoⁿdropon]; Standard Modern Greek πώς αλλιώς [pos aˈʎos]; English *slash, alternatively*. In the end, she offers what she believes to be the appropriate Standard Modern Greek alternatives herself: κοροϊδέψει [korojðeˈpsi] 'fools' and εξαπατήσει [eksapaˈtisi] 'deceives'. Ms Eleni's discourse reveals that her own knowledge of what is used in Cyprus and what is used in Greece is not always well-founded as the word γελάσει is also used in Greece. Ms Eleni believes that the phrase μπορεί να σας γελάσει [na sas ɟeˈlasi] 'it may trick you', is not used by Standard Greek speakers in the same way as it is used by Cypriot Greek speakers, and this shows the perceptions that people have towards standards versus regional varieties of Greek.

In Extract 2, Ms Eleni utilises the GCSE examination as a way to justify the literacy versus oracy binary distinction that she adopts with respect to the use of Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek forms and structures. In what follows, we see her attempt to compartmentalise the two varieties on the basis of different components of the examination: the standard language is to be used in the written component whereas in the oral component Cypriot forms are allowed albeit in moderation.

**Extract 2. "You can also speak the dialect a little bit."**

The conversation begins with a question raised by one of the pupils about whether they need to use (Standard Modern) Greek in the speaking component of the GCSE exam. Ms Eleni attempts to answer (line 3), but Aris interrupts her with an example of a word that is allowed in the exam, the Cypriot form for 'and' τζιαι [tʃe] (line 4). Ms Eleni returns to her answer seeking confirmation from the researcher who is observing the class, and whom the teacher constructs as an authoritative figure in front of the pupils (lines 5–8). This positioning is linked to the researcher's perceived insider expertise within this educational field. At the time of fieldwork, the researcher was undertaking doctoral research in Education at the same university where the teacher was completing a Master's programme, had previously worked as a teacher of Greek in London GCSs, and was known within local complementary-school networks. The researcher also had first-hand familiarity with the relevant curricula and with GCSE-related policies and expectations. In this interaction, these forms of professional and academic capital appear to be mobilised by the teacher to legitimise the interpretation of what is (and is not) permissible in the assessment context. In line 9, the researcher reassures the teacher, and Ms Eleni confirms that pupils can use Cypriot features in the speaking component but only to a limited degree (λλίγον [ˈlːiɣon] 'a little'; line 14). She continues to say that this is not possible in the writing component but is interrupted by Aris who completes her utterance (line 16). Aris's immediate response indicates that children have already internalised the ideological position that associates the writing element with the standardised variety and the oral element with the dialect.

In Extract 3, Ms Eleni talks to children regarding an observation she made while reading their essays. She focuses on their use of a Cypriot Greek feature, word-final -ν [-n], which occurs at the end of a number of nominal and verbal forms as well as quantifiers that derive from adjectives such as λλίγον [ˈlːiɣon] 'a little', which we saw in Extract 2.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aris | in speaking test you have to speak | *in speaking test you have to* |
| 2 | | ελληνικά; | *speak* Greek? |
| 3 | Ms Eleni | στο speaking test μπορείτε να | in *the speaking test* you can |
| 4 | Aris | τζιαι | **and** |
| 5 | Ms Eleni | μπορείτε να μιλάτε Αλεξάντρα | you can speak Alexandra I |
| 6 | | νομίζω στο speaking μπορούν να | think in the *speaking* they can |
| 7 | | μιλούν Κυπριακά **εν** στο γραπτό που | speak Cypriot **it's** in the |
| 8 | | **εν** μπορούν; | writting where they **can't**? |
| 9 | Alexandra | ακριβώς ακριβώς | exactly exactly |
| 10 | Ms Eleni | στο speaking παιδιά μπορείτε να | in the *speaking* children you |
| 11 | | μιλάτε όπως **εννά** μιλούσατε σε | can speak as you **would** to a |
| 12 | | παππού γιαγιά φίλους μπορείτε να | grandfather a grandmother |
| 13 | | μιλήσετε και **λλίγον** το dialect το | friends you can also speak the |
| 14 | | Cypriot dialect αλλά writing | *dialect* **a little bit** the *Cypriot* |
| 15 | | | *dialect* but in *writing* |
| 16 | Aris | you can't | *you can't* |

Corresponding Standard Greek forms have no such ending.

**Extract 3. "When you write, don't put the -n. When you speak, you can say it."**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ms | άρα όποτε πάτε να γράψετε κάτι να | so whenever you are about to |
| 2 | Eleni | μη βάζετε το ν εντάξει; άρα όταν | write something don't put the n |
| 3 | | γράφουμεν δεν είναι ανάγκη να | okay? so when we **write** it's not |
| 4 | | βάζουμεν το ν όταν μιλούμεν όμως | necessary to **put** the ν but when |
| 5 | | είναι πάρα πολύ natural μπορούμεν | we **speak** it's very *natural* we |
| 6 | | να το πούμεν εντάξει; όταν μιλάς | **can say** it okay? when you |
| 7 | | Αλέξη μου βάζεις το ν όταν μιλάς να | speak Alexis dear you put the n |
| 8 | | το βάζεις εντάξει; | when you're speaking you |
| 9 | | | should put it okay? |

Ms Eleni explicitly instructs pupils not to write forms that end in -ν [-n], a highly indexical feature that differentiates Cypriot Greek from Standard Modern Greek; for example, Cypriot Greek έπαιζεν [ˈepezːen] 'played (3SG)' versus Standard Modern Greek έπαιζε [ˈepeze]. She does, however, reassure pupils that is 'very natural' to incorporate -ν in their speech (line 5), going as far as encouraging Alexis to use the Cypriot feature in his idiolect (lines 6–9) in what might be construed as an indication of her own personal struggle to achieve two conflicting aims: on the one hand, she is obliged as a teacher to 'correct' her pupils' writing to satisfy the expectations of the examination board and the curriculum of the GCSs; on the other, she wants to make sure that her pupils do not feel that their 'naturally' acquired home language is 'unnatural'.

Having shown how Ms Eleni frames and manages Cypriot Greek in relation to correctness, writing, and assessment, we now turn to pupils' perspectives to explore how they interpret, internalise, and negotiate these norms in their talk and reflections.

## 7. Pupils' practices and experiences: mixed understandings and internalisation of standard language norms

The extracts analysed in the previous section suggest that Ms Eleni's pupils are being socialised into an assessment-oriented hierarchy between Standard Greek and Cypriot Greek, and into a modality-based distinction in which Standard Greek is constructed as the expected norm for written production, while Cypriot Greek may be permissible in spoken interaction under certain conditions but is not positioned as an equally legitimate resource. Our data revealed that pupils had absorbed these distinctions, often reproducing dominant language ideologies that positioned Standard Modern Greek as more appropriate and legitimate. At the same time, they exhibited uncertainty and insecurity about whether given linguistic forms belonged to one variety or the other, which in turn shaped their perceptions of what was acceptable in the classroom and, crucially, in formal assessments. Their interactions also reflected moments of discomfort when selecting contextually appropriate Greek forms and feelings of inferiority associated with using Cypriot Greek. These findings underscore the importance of recognising CS pupils as agentive but vulnerable participants in the negotiation of classroom language practices, whose multilingual and multidialectal repertoires are shaped by a complex interplay of curriculum expectations, teacher attitudes, and broader community ideologies. While pupils also participated in everyday interaction where linguistic mixing was routine, the extracts discussed here capture the contexts in which pupils explicitly oriented to legitimacy and assessment, and therefore provide insight into how standardising ideologies are learned, rationalised, and reproduced.

In Extract 4, Ms Eleni asks for the meaning of δίχως [ˈðixos], a lexical item meaning 'without' that is not very frequently used in Greece.

**Extract 4. "Can you say without if you are writing in the GCSEs?"**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ms Eleni | λέει παιδιά έφυγε δίχως την ομπρέλα | it says children he left without |
| 2 | | του τι σημαίνει δίχως | his umbrella what does without |
| 3 | | | mean |
| 4 | Melina | without | *without* |
| 5 | Ms Eleni | without σημαίνει χωρίς | *without* means without |
| 6 | Alexis | without can you say χωρίς if you are | *without can you say* without *if* |
| 7 | | writing in the GCSEs? | *you are writing in the GCSEs?* |
| 8 | Ms Eleni | ναι χωρίς πάλι σωστό είναι ή χωρίς ή | yes without it is also correct |
| 9 | | δίχως | either without or without |
| 10 | Alexis | I thought it might be Greek Cypriot | I thought it might be Greek |
| 11 | | dialect | Cypriot dialect |
| 12 | Ms Eleni | λοιπόν μετά το μεσημέρι τι σημαίνει | right, after noon what does after |
| 13 | | μετά; | mean? |

Melina provides the correct answer in English (line 4), and Ms Eleni confirms this in both English and Greek. The Greek part of her utterance in line 5 includes a reference to the more commonly used item for 'without' χωρίς [ˈxoris]. Both variants are part of both the Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek repertoires. While Ms Eleni's intention is to present the two as synonyms, Alexis interprets the juxtaposition of δίχως and χωρίς as the teacher's strategy to facilitate the learning of δίχως. He seeks to confirm whether χωρίς, which he subsequently assumes to be part of the Cypriot Greek repertoire, is allowed in the written component of the GCSE (lines 6–7). Ms Eleni responds positively and formulates her synonymity learning objective, seemingly unaware of the intended meaning of Alexis's call for clarification (lines 8–9). Alexis restates his insecurity in lines 10–11, which is, however, left unanswered as Ms Eleni carries on to her next point in the discussion, whose aim is to clarify the meaning of another preposition (lines 12–13). Alexis's insecurity again shows how children may have mixed understandings on the lexical items between the two varieties and that they are emergent learners in both.

Extract 5 is part of an interview between the first author and two of Ms Eleni's pupils. The interview was entirely conducted in English.

**Extract 5. "The teacher usually laughs in a jokey way."**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Alexandra | when you speak Cypriot in the classroom what happens? |
| 2 | Valentina | the teacher starts laughing |
| 3 | Alexandra | really? |
| 4 | Alexis | yup |
| 5 | Alexandra | and? tell me the situation guys |
| 6 | Valentina | she usually says [INAUDIBLE] she usually laughs in a |
| 7 | | jokey way and says that |
| 8 | Alexis | she says the Greek way cause in your GCSE in your |
| 9 | | speaking test you have to speak Greek not Cypriot that's |
| 10 | | why she starts [INAUDIBLE] doing it more in Greek |
| 11 | | rather than Cypriot cause you will get more marks when |
| 12 | | speaking in Greek and also in your writing tests she told |
| 13 | | us |

The children's responses in this extract indicate that they have fully internalised their teacher's rule when it comes to the use of spoken and written discourse in the GCSE exam. Valentina's addition of the jokey adjective (line 7) suggests that she has developed an understanding that her teacher views the use of Cypriot Greek negatively. Even though pupils interpret the teacher's laughter as negative, it may also index Ms Eleni's interactional discomfort in having to enact and justify institutional expectations around "appropriate" language use, especially the curriculum- and exam-linked framing of Cypriot Greek as conditionally permissible in speech but not legitimate in writing, rather than straightforwardly reflecting negative attitudes towards Cypriot Greek. Alexis's desire to add to Valentina's statement by providing an example of teaching practice (lines 8–13), and to emphasise that using Cypriot Greek would lead to losing marks in the GCSE, suggests that in this assessment-oriented moment Cypriot Greek is not treated as a pedagogical resource for supporting Standard Greek learning. Rather, it is framed as a potential risk to written examination performance and therefore something to be avoided in this context. This does not imply that Cypriot Greek is never used in classroom talk. Instead, it highlights how, when GCSE writing is foregrounded, Cypriot Greek is positioned as incompatible with 'correct' written production.

## 8. Discussion

Our analysis of the curriculum documents indicates an explicit move towards acknowledging pupils Cypriot Greek backgrounds and accepting Cypriot Greek in spoken interaction. At the same time, this recognition remains partial and bounded. Cypriot Greek is referenced only briefly and is largely treated as an optional accommodation for oral work, while writing is constructed as a space where only Standard Greek is legitimate. This policy-level spoken/written compartmentalisation matters because it reproduces, rather than resolves, the hierarchisation of linguistic varieties. It implicitly frames Cypriot Greek as tolerable only under constrained conditions and as incompatible with literacy and formal learning. In this respect, the curriculum stops short of a genuinely repertoire-based approach in which pupils' resources, including non-standardised varieties, are mobilised systematically as pedagogical assets (Creece & Blackledge, 2011; Garcia, 2009; Garcia & Flores, 2012).

The classroom data show how these curricular framings circulate in practice. Ms Eleni's management of Cypriot Greek is marked by uncertainty and constraint: pupils' contributions are sometimes corrected on the basis of assumptions about what counts as 'proper' Greek, assessment requirements are invoked to legitimise restrictive norms, and Cypriot features are discouraged in writing. These practices align with a view of languages and varieties as discrete, bounded codes that pupils must keep separate rather than as a repertoire of resources that can be strategically mobilised for learning. As a result, pupils are given limited opportunities to use Cypriot Greek to develop metalinguistic awareness, contrastive understanding, or other linguistic abilities that multilingual education research identifies as pedagogically productive (Cummins, 2005; Creece & Blackledge, 2011; Garcia, 2009; Garcia & Flores, 2012). This is notable because examples of such meaningful incorporation of children's linguistic resources have been documented in both complementary and mainstream school settings. For example, Kenner, Gregory and Al-Azami's (2008) study showed that when learners are able to draw on their available linguistic resources, they develop their metalinguistic skills that allow them to learn the target language. Of particular importance is Little and Kirwan's (2018) example demonstrating how one school's inclusive ethos allowed for an integrated language policy to be implemented across the curriculum. This approach allowed children with migration trajectories to freely use their HHCLs and be able to participate in a new learning environment. Regarding pupils' linguistic development, the authors draw on examples to illustrate the development of literacy skills as children with migration trajectories were encouraged to write in their HHCLs and translate their work in English and vice versa. Such an approach is in line with Cummins (1991) cross-lingual tranfer model that supports that the skills that children acquire in their HHCLs can be transferred to the new language. The authors also stress that this approach benefits all pupils, whatever their cultural or linguistic background.

Pupils' talk reflects the same ideological environment. They actively seek clarification about what is allowed, express confusion when their linguistic resources are not taken up as learning opportunities, and orient strongly to GCSE as a high-stakes horizon that legitimises a narrow definition of correctness (cf. Karatzia-Stavlioti & Louca-Crann's, 1999 findings). In this way, assessment regimes are not merely a backdrop but a key mechanism through which standard language ideologies are intensified and made actionable in complementary schooling. They offer an apparently objective rationale for treating Cypriot Greek as peripheral and encourage pupils to interpret the value of linguistic resources in terms of credentialing rather than learning. The consequence is a reproduction of linguistic insecurity and a diminished space for reflective engagement with pupils' full repertoires. In this sense, examinations operate as a powerful institutional mechanism that renders standard language ideologies actionable and difficult to contest in everyday pedagogy. However, the exam does not act alone. It gains force because it resonates with wider hellenocentric hierarchies that construct Standard Greek as the sole legitimate target for literacy and with the absence of robust institutional infrastructures such as teacher preparation, materials, and explicit curricular support needed to implement multilingual education approaches that develop pupils' metalinguistic

awareness and enable productive cross-varietal transfer.

These findings suggest that moving beyond symbolic recognition of Cypriot Greek requires a policy discourse that explicitly addresses how non-standardised resources can be used pedagogically across modalities, including literacy. One promising direction is a critical, contrastive approach that treats Cypriot Greek and Standard Greek as related systems and makes their differences visible across linguistic levels, not only lexical, while avoiding deficit framing of the Cypriot variety (Hadjioannou et al., 2011). Such an approach can create structured opportunities for pupils to develop metalinguistic awareness, engage critically with linguistic differences (Behrman, 2011; Luke & Dooley, 2011), and transfer existing competencies into Standard Greek learning. Implementing this shift also requires investment beyond curriculum wording, including the development of authentic materials that incorporate variation, and sustained preparation for CS teachers (pre- and in-service) in sociolinguistic variation, multilingual pedagogy, and assessment literacy. Without these supports, teachers may continue to rely on restrictive norms or examination requirements as the default safe pedagogical position, even when policy gestures towards inclusion.

Although several extracts discussed in this article arise from assessment-oriented moments, particularly where GCSE expectations are explicitly thematised, our observational corpus also includes more routine and less regulated classroom interaction in which pupils and teacher draw flexibly on English, Cypriot Greek, and Standard Greek without explicit metalinguistic commentary. Importantly, however, these moments should not be read as ideologically neutral. Even when interaction was more relaxed and linguistic mixing occurred, Standard Greek remained the normative instructional target and the overall orientation towards 'correct' Standard Greek was maintained. We nevertheless foreground episodes where Cypriot Greek becomes salient, corrected, or regulated because such moments render language ideologies particularly visible and provide a clear window onto how curriculum and assessment discourses are recontextualised in interaction. At the same time, the tensions documented here should be understood as intensified in examination-related contexts, even if they are grounded in broader and more persistent hierarchies that privilege Standard Greek.

## 9. Conclusion

In this study, we examined how Cypriot Greek is positioned at the interface of meso-level curriculum policy, teacher practice, and pupils' orientations in UK GCSs. Bringing together analysis of KEA curriculum documents and ethnographic classroom data, we showed how policy framings of legitimate language shape, are reproduced through, everyday teaching and learning, particularly in assessment-oriented routines. Our work speaks to wider dynamics that have been identified across HHCL education in the UK. Matras and Karatsareas (2020) highlight the structural tension CSs face when families want both formal, 'correct' literacy in the standard variety and support for everyday communicative competence, especially when the HHC variety differs from the standard. The authors also stress that when non-standardised varieties are not taken into account, pupils may disengage from complementary schooling, with knock-on effects for language maintenance, and argue that pupils' motivation can be supported by valuing non-standardised varieties and equipping teachers to address variation and multilingual repertoires. Importantly for our case, Matras and Karatsareas (2020) also note that formal qualifications can constrain and formalise teaching and discourage the use of non-standardised varieties especially in the written component of examinations. More broadly, our analysis illustrates how language ideologies travel with migration and are reconstituted in diaspora institutions. Hellenocentric standard language ideologies that privilege Standard Greek are not simply 'imported' intact from Cyprus. They are recontextualised through local governance structures, curriculum texts, community histories, and assessment regimes, taking on new local forms and consequences. In the UK context, this ideological transplantation is visible in how legitimacy is repeatedly tied to literacy and credentialing, and in how a bidialectal and multilingual ecology is managed through modality-based compartmentalisation rather than through pedagogically planned repertoire-based support.

Our analysis also connects to broader work on language policing and standard language ideologies across educational settings. Cushing et al. (2024) show that both mainstream and CSs can hierarchise standardised and non-standardised varieties through institutional policies, positioning teachers as vehicles for language ideologies and drawing on discourses of academic success and the primacy of writing over speech, including for varieties like Cypriot Greek. They further argue that examinations can function as mechanisms that shape de facto language policy in CSs by rewarding standardised forms, reinforcing standard language ideologies in local practice. Our findings provide a close-grained illustration of how these pressures operate in a GCS classroom and how they become entangled with pupils' understandings of legitimacy and success. At the same time, the implications of our work extend beyond GCSs, as tensions between standardised and non-standardised varieties are not unique to Greek-speaking communities. Research on other diasporas shows that mixed and contested attitudes towards linguistic variation can have consequences for participation and maintenance. In the Ukrainian community in the UK, for example, Harrison (2024) shows that choosing to teach one variety over another may discourage some parents from sending children to complementary school, potentially affecting maintenance efforts. Similarly, in Turkish CSs in London, Çavuşoğlu (2024) reports that young Turkish Cypriots often understand the role of the school as teaching the 'proper' variety and associate this with becoming more educated, even as some participants resist straightforward narratives that position the standard as desirable. Read alongside our findings, this suggests that more equitable HHCL provision in contexts of migration requires moving beyond symbolic recognition of non-standardised varieties towards curricula and pedagogies that explicitly legitimise pupils' whole repertoires, address variation across modalities (including writing), and support teachers with sociolinguistically informed training and materials so that non-standardised resources can be used as assets for learning rather than treated as problems to be contained.

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## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Alexandra Georgiou:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Petros Karatsareas:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

## Declaration of competing interest

I have nothing to declare.

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## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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