ON LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY AMONG GREEK CYPRIOT STUDENTS

Elena Ioannidou

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to explore the links between language and ethnic identity among a group of eleven-year-old Greek-Cypriot students. The paper approaches the two concepts from both a theoretical (trying to define the meanings of language and identity) and methodological perspective (trying to define what language and ethnic identity mean in the fieldwork) using an ethnographic approach. Specifically 'language' is examined through students' expressed language attitudes towards Standard Modern Greek and the Cypriot Dialect, and 'ethnic identity' is researched through their ethnic awareness, identification and values towards the concepts of being "Cypriot, Greek, Greek Cypriot, Turkish, Turkish Cypriot". The principal question addressed is whether the students connect Standard Modern Greek and the Greek Cypriot Dialect with their preferred ethnic identities. The data are interpreted in the wider sociolinguistic and educational context of Cyprus.

Introduction

> *"A: The Greek is the same with the Cypriot, because he was born to Greece he is Greek*
> *(...) both of them are Greeks, (.. .) they can understand when you talk to them, they have the same religion, the customs and the traditions are almost the same*
> *E: would you say that you are Greek?*
> *A:no*
> *E: what then?*
> *A: that I am Cypriot (...) but I do have a connection with them"*
>   - Extract from an individual interview with Achilleas[1]

In some contexts the words of Achilleas may astonish some people, an eleven year old boy talking with such naturalness about ethnic labels, religion, tradition and linguistic varieties. Nevertheless, in the highly politicised context of Cyprus,[2] the overwhelming majority of the children, even from much younger age, are aware of ethnic and political terms such as *Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, Turk, occupation, invasion* and so forth. The unresolved political problem in Cyprus, i.e., the partition and isolation of the two main ethnic groups (Greek and Turkish Cypriots), along with the

continuous uncertainty about the island's political future, has contributed in the hardening of the boundaries of certain identities and an ongoing opposition between the 'self' and the 'other' (Hall, 1992). In addition, the existence of a number of linguistic varieties (Figures 1.1 and 1.2) and their connection with ideological and national values in a linear way (on a policy and rhetorical level, Ioannidou, 2003), makes the sociolinguistic scenery of Cyprus even more complex and places issues of language and ethnic identity in the heart of political and social life (Moschonas, 2000).

Figure 1.1: The Official Languages of Cyprus
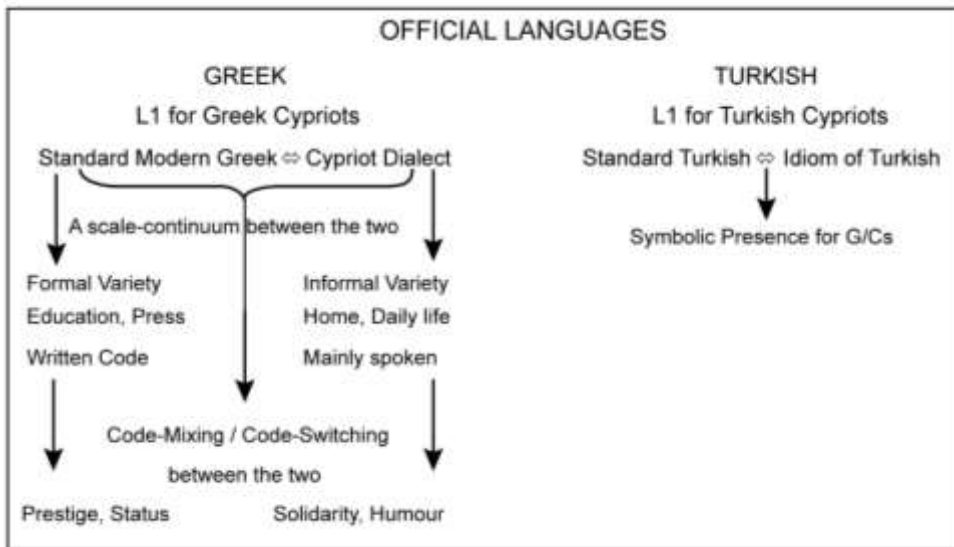
Figure 1.2: The "Other Languages Spoken on the Island
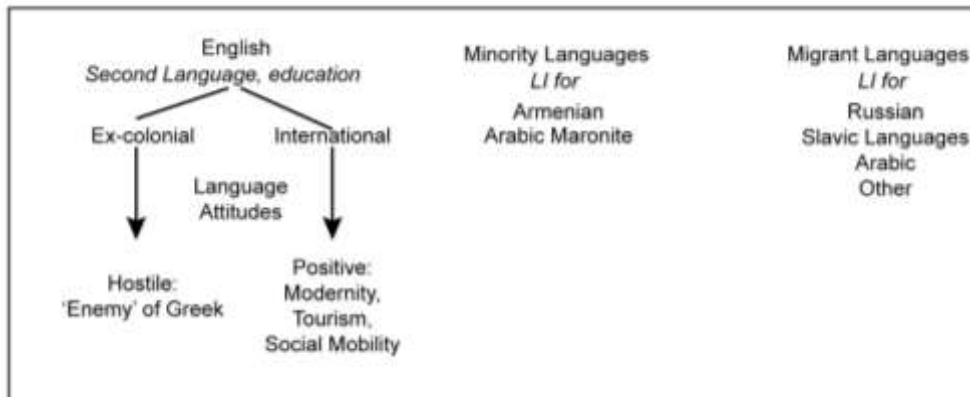
Despite this centrality of language and identity in the political life of Cyprus there are very few studies which empirically explore the possible connections that exist between the two concepts and document the way various social actors (and not political rhetoric) understand and experience issues of language and identity. The aim of the present paper is to bring together these two large and complex concepts by researching the possible links that exist between language and ethnic identity among a group of Greek-Cypriot students using an ethnographic approach.

Language is defined as a communicative and symbolic system (Edwards, 1985) and as a carrier of different social and ethnic values (Calvet, 1998; Schiffman, 1996). In the present paper the term *language* is used to indicate those varieties found in the wider context of Cyprus and in the repertoire of the students (mainly Standard Modern Greek and the Greek-Cypriot Dialect). At the same time, ethnic identity is defined as primarily a matter of self-awareness of belonging to a certain group (Barth, 1969) and an elusive category with multiplicity, contextuality, hybridity and dialogic interaction with the other as its major features.[3] In this paper, ethnic identity includes terms such as *Greek, Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, English, Turkish, Turkish Cypriot,* that are used in the wider context of Cyprus to describe different ethnic groups but also to express different ideological and political positions (Mavratsas, 1997). Evidently both concepts are broad and multiple, something that makes their interrelation more complicated and dubious (Edwards, 1985, 1994).

The 'Link' Between Language and Ethnic Identity in Policy and Political Rhetoric: The Public/Macro Manifestation of the Link

Although language is admittedly connected to ethnic identity, in other words the way people choose to speak reveals their positioning regarding their ethnic identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Giles and Johnson, 1981), most scholars agree that the interrelation between the two is complex, multi-levelled and not always easy to see (Fishman, 1972; Edwards, 1985). Despite this complexity, a great number of studies attempt to explore this link from different theoretical disciplines (e.g. sociolinguistics, social psychology) and from different perspectives, focusing either on the public or the individual manifestation of the link (in Edwards, 1985). One of the commonest examples of public manifestation of the link is the association of 'one's language to one's nation' (or ethnic group), originating from the phenomena of 'linguistic nationalism' (Williams, 1994) or 'linguistic nationism' (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985) in which language is viewed as the primary symbol of the nation, its people and its history.

In the case of Cyprus the associations made between language and ethnic identity on a public-policy level are striking. Despite the acknowledged bidialectialism[4] and the fact that the Greek-Cypriot Dialect is the first variety of all

the Greek Cypriots, on a political rhetoric the Standard Modern Greek is considered the 'Greek' language, while the Dialect is viewed as 'not that Greek' (Mavratsas, 1997). This is also reflected on the current educational and language policy making, where the Cypriot Dialect, is banned from formal education. Instead the Standard Modern Greek is promoted on every level of the educational system, both as a medium for teaching as well as the variety under study.[5] Evidence from both the educational policy and the public discourse indicates that the particular linguistic policies are directly linked to political and national values, aiming to reflect specific ethnic positioning. In particular, data from policy making (Ioannidou, 2003) demonstrate that the exclusive promotion of Standard Modern Greek is routed in the perception that Greek Cypriots belong to the Greek world and therefore need to use the common linguistic variety which, as one policy maker from the ministry characteristically noted, *'connects the Greeks as a nation'* (in Ioannidou, 2003). This ideology (one linguistic variety associated with one identity) is widespread in the past and current educational and linguistic policies in which the prevalent ethnic identity promoted (in the textbooks, the curricula and the wider context of the schools) has been the "Greek-Christian" one with a direct association of this identity with the Greek language, meaning the Standard Modern Greek.

Furthermore, apart from the educational policies, in public discourse (especially in the media) there has been a strong debate regarding the connection of the various linguistic varieties with specific ethnic identities. From a newspaper review I conducted for a period of two years (Ioannidou, 2002, 2004) the most striking commonality between the various articles was the fact that the various linguistic varieties were often positioned against each other, placing usually 'Greek' (i.e., Standard) in conflict with the Dialect, English and Turkish. First, one commonly referred to position by various scholars (as Ioannou, 1991; Karoula-Vrikkis, 1991; Minas, 1998; Makrides,1998), is that the existence of different varieties threatens the purity of 'Greek language' in Cyprus. For this reason very often English and Turkish loanwords found in the Dialect are attacked as markers of the Greek Cypriots being less Greek[6] (Minas, 1998). Second, and related to the above, English is considered as the main opponent of the Greek language in Cyprus (Minas, 1998; Makrides, 1998), and often the use of English is equated with the Greek Cypriots not showing love towards Greece (Karoula-Vrikkis, 1991) and adopting British-English values of life (Ioannou, 1991). Arguments such as these confirm the thesis that in countries where there is political instability, clashes between different ethnic groups and opposing ethnic ideologies, language issues become very sensitive and tend to be connected to ethnic and political values (Thomas, 1991; Rahman, 1996).

Arguments such as the above are mostly expressed by the carriers of national ideology, while more left oriented arguments[7] promote a less nationalistic framework for language. Related to this Moschonas (1996) and Mavratsas (1998)

point out that the reasons behind the rhetoric of conflict between Standard and Dialect, and Standard and English are nationalistic, exploited by the Right in order to promote the idea of one united language and one united nation. However arguments about the protection and the purity of language do not come only from the national-right rhetoric but enjoy wider support from other political ideologies expressed by more centred-political parties. These arguments enjoy wider support since they are embedded in a tradition of centuries in Cyprus where the "Greek language and the Christian Orthodox religion" were projected as the main components of Greek-Cypriots' identity and as markers of resistance of the various conquerors that came to the island (in Karageorgis, 1986). There is therefore no simple dichotomy between national/right and moderate/left. The position is more complex, at least on language issues.

Despite the multiplicity in language and identity in Cyprus and the strong political rhetoric around these issues there are no empirical studies documenting which ethnic identities Greek Cypriots adopt and on what grounds. Although there are a number of studies on national and ethnic identity in Cyprus, these are mostly from a theoretical (Calotychos, 1998; Mavratsas, 1997; Pollis, 1996) and conflict-resolution perspective (Loizos, 1998; Pollis, 1998). Only Papadakis (1993) has provided an account on how Greek and Turkish Cypriots regard their contemporary identities. In addition although there is a growing number of studies in sociolinguistic research, these focus mostly on language attitudes for SMG and CD (Papapavlou, 1998, 2001a; Roussou, 2000a; Pavlou, 1999; Sciriha, 1995), on the role of English (McEntee-Atalianis and Pouloukas, 2001; Papapavlou, 1998, 2001b) and on various issues about education (Pavlou and Christodoulou, 2001; Roussou, 2000; Papapavlou, 1999). There are fewer on language use (Goutsos, 2001) and no studies attempting to explore the connection of language and ethnic identity in the specific socio-political context, to verify (or reject) some of the claims made on a rhetorical level. In fact it can be argued that the issue of language and ethnic identity in Cyprus, as experienced and documented through a study of the people of Cyprus remains largely under-researched and therefore undefined.

For this reason a micro-individual exploration of the link is also needed in order to understand whether the attitudes people attach to different linguistic varieties reveals anything about their preferred ethnic or social identities (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Giles and Johnson, 1981). In other words, is the policy of the state successful? Do Greek Cypriots feel more Greek than Cypriot? Do they adopt Standard Modern Greek as their own variety? And what is happening with the Dialect? In the following section an attempt is made to present data on language and ethnic identity from a group of eleven to twelve year old Greek-Cypriot students, trying to offer an account on the way these issues are voiced from people in Cyprus.

The 'Link' of Language and Ethnic Identity Among a Group of Greek-Cypriot Students: The Micro/Individual Manifestation of the Link

Methods and Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected for a period of four months from a group of eleven to twelve year old students from a state, primary, urban classroom.[8] Since I had to deal with complex and multi-levelled concepts, I used an ethnographic approach[9] that would enable a deep understanding and analysis of the way students understood and experienced language and ethnic identity. The data collection techniques included a combination of mainly qualitative methods, such as participant observation, individual and group interviews, recordings of classroom talk, and some quantitative such as questionnaires, identity tests and semi match-guise language tests.[10]

The main challenge for this study was not so much to investigate language attitudes or ethnic values and identification per se, but to explore the interactions and possible relation that existed between the two concepts among the students. For this reason, two main methodological steps were made.

Firstly, an effort was made to explicitly define what exactly the terms "language" and "ethnic identity" meant in the fieldwork. Particularly, both terms were understood as a combination of behaviour and values, with the term "language" indicating students' "language use" and "language attitudes" (see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985), and "ethnic identity" covering issues such as "ethnic identification" (i.e., the degree to which they identify with certain groups), "ethnic behaviour" (i.e., the way the ethnic element is present in their daily life and interaction), "ethnic awareness" (i.e., the knowledge they hold regarding various grouping in the society) and "ethnic values" (i.e., their attitudes and norms towards these groups) (Ocampo et al., 1997; Phinney and Rotheram, 1987).

In the present paper I present data mostly from the perspective of values,[11] exploring students' language attitudes towards Standard Modern Greek and the Cypriot Dialect,[12] and their values, identification and awareness towards notions such as *Greek, Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, English, Turkish, Turkish Cypriot* and *European.* Researching language attitudes is considered very important when we explore the connection between language and identity, since they reflect values that go beyond linguistic issues, uncovering social meanings attached to linguistic categories (Coupland and Jaworski, 1997) and various studies have documented a connection between people's language attitudes and their beliefs about ethnolinguistic vitality (McGroarty, 1996). Similarly, exploring evaluative data of allegiance and other social groupings such as ethnic identity are very useful since they can access local processes of interpersonal attraction or distancing and can help predict the character of social relationships within a speech community (Garrett et al., 1999).

Secondly, I used a two-fold methodological approach in which the two concepts were investigated in a balanced and equal way. Many studies on language and ethnic identity are criticised as being biased either towards language or ethnic identity, and therefore not providing a balanced and in-depth exploration of both concepts[1]s (Gal and Irvine, 1995; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985), and failing to capture all the multiplicities of their interrelation (Cameron, 1997). In the approach I adopted, language was initially placed in the centre, exploring students' language attitudes and observing whether there were any ethnic connotations in their linguistic values. Thereafter, ethnic identity was placed in the centre (and language was moved to the periphery), exploring students' ethnic awareness, identification and attitudes (Tajfel, 1981; Ocampo et al., 1997) and investigating whether language had any significant role in that. The rationale therefore of this two-way approach was to offer an in-depth exploration and understanding of both concepts and try to capture all the dynamics between students' language and their ethnic values.

Specifically, the following methods were used for investigating students' language attitudes:

- Detailed classroom observations which lasted four months with unstructured fieldnotes (trying to seek out any "critical incidents" in the classroom that would reveal anything regarding students' or teachers' language attitudes).
- One-to-one multi-task hourly interviews where all the students were asked to comment on different texts written in the two varieties, plus take a semi match guise test where they were asked to evaluate oral guises (speech) in both the Standard and the Dialect.
- Focus group discussions with the students (which lasted an hour each and were recorded) in order to investigate their language perceptions within a team or a group.

Additionally, for exploring students' ethnic identities the following methods were adopted:

- Detailed classroom observations using unstructured field notes.
- "Ten Statement Test" (Hutnik, 1991) in which the students were asked to complete two sheets, one with the affirmative statements 'I am' and the other with the negative statements 'I am not'.
- An "imaginary scenario" where the students had to describe themselves on the phone to a stranger, asking them "how would you describe yourself". These two approaches (2, 3) have been widely used both with children and with adults (Modood et al., 1997; Hutnik, 1991) in order to unravel and

understand the way people choose to define themselves in situations where the ethnic element is not necessarily pre-imposed, in other words to explore the saliency of students' ethnic identity.

- Students' ethnic identification, awareness and values were explored using a variety of tasks (commenting on photographs of places, asking them to provide information about various "historic events"). Additionally, students were provided with six 'identity cards' (Greek, Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, Turkish, Turkish Cypriot, English), asking them to choose those 'identity-cards' they felt close to, explain their rationale and provide definitions for each card. Furthermore in the focus group discussions, topics such as life in Cyprus in the past, present and future, family life, neighbouring countries and characteristics of the people in Cyprus (e.g., "who do you consider as a Cypriot") were brought up so that students might unravel possible values as they were expressed by the students when they tried to describe the wider context in which they were situated.

Placing Language in the Centre: Exploring Students' Language Attitudes

As a consequence of the formal policy and language ideologies found in the wider context, the students held very positive values towards Standard Modern Greek in matters of prestige, appropriateness, aesthetics and correctness.[14] Furthermore the Standard was the variety of the school and the majority of the students argued that they needed to learn it in order to do well at school or please their teachers. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of them underestimated the Dialect and considered it 'rude', 'inappropriate', 'peasant' and so forth.[15] Extract 1 from a focus group discussion and the 'Adjective-Map' (Figure 2) formed by students' characterisations encapsulate the dichotomy between the two varieties.

Extract 1 - Focus Group D
> "V: Greek is a better language because in Cyprus we use many taf (t) and zita (z).
> A: tze[16]
> Y: while in Greece it is different, the language is softer
> E: our language is harsher
> E.: what does that mean... ?(. ..) E: ours compared to the Greeks
> E.: but what does harsher mean?
> E: it is harsher.. "

Figure 2: Adjective-Map

Tidy	Aristocratic	Shows respect	Peasant	Uncivilized	Harsh
Polite	Civilized	Softer	Cypriot	Not good	Rude
STANDARD MODERN GREEK				**CYPRIOT DIALECT**	
Nice	Proper	Clear	Not nice	Not polite	Improper
The best Greek	With better phrases				
BUT ALSO:				BUT ALSO:	
Difficult	*Confusing*	*Distant*	*Irritating*	*Normal*	*Easier*	*Our own language*

Nevertheless, the Dialect was given positive attributes in matters of solidarity, identity and expressing themselves in a natural way.[17] All the students admitted that they found it easier to use, contrasting it to the 'inconvenience' and 'confusion' they often felt when they used the Standard. As Menelaos pointed out, "*I feel more comfortable using Cypriot because I know it better than Greek, and sometimes when I speak Greek I get confused so I can speak Cypriot more easily. I speak Cypriot much better, definitely".* The Dialect also proved to be connected to their sense of being Cypriots and to the solidarity they shared with the other Greek Cypriots. As Lydia added, *"Cypriot is my own language, it is the language of my country, it is the language I speak and the one I feel comfortable speaking".*

However, there was a striking differentiation on the degree the students were willing to identify with the Dialect. While all the boys adopted immediately the Dialect as their own code, the majority of the girls seemed reluctant to identify with it, claiming that they did not use it at all, and showing more preference towards the Standard. For instance Erato argued, "*I speak mostly that one (SMG), I never speak like that (CD), not at home, not with my granny, I never say 'tzai', those who live in the villages speak like that".* As it has been documented in the literature there is often a mismatch between what people claim to speak and what they actually speak (Milroy and Milroy, 1991). Similarly there was a mismatch between girls' claimed use and their actual language use. As the classroom observations documented (Ioannidou, 2002) the Dialect was very popular among all the students, using it in all their classroom interactions, except when they participated in the lesson and the majority of them followed the 'school rules', trying to converge to more standard types of talk.

Evidently, the social image appeared to be more important to girls than boys (Milroy and Milroy, 1991), so girls had more conflicts in their attitudes regarding the

two varieties. This was obvious in Anastasia's words, when she pointed out, *"people might create a negative picture about you, so it is better not to speak Cypriot for example eve,y time, as people might have a negative idea of you".* Nevertheless, a more in-depth analysis of girls' words indicated that they also considered the Dialect as their own variety, even if their initial reaction was to reject it. In particular, they used the term 'normal' or 'ours' to refer to the Dialect, as opposed to the 'kalamaristika' or 'kalamaras'[18] to describe the people from Greece and their linguistic variety. The following extracts indicate this:

- *"I do try to explain to her but it is a bit difficult because it is easier to speak my own language"* - Anastasia.
- *"We speak normally with my classmates during the break time"* - Katerina.

From the overall data it can be argued that the overwhelming majority of the students associated the Dialect with the sense of being Cypriots, connecting it to their "country": *"I like Cypriot because it is the language of my country'* (Menelaos). Additionally, the Dialect functioned as a within group solidarity marker, as the means of communication with other Cypriots: *"this is how all the Cypriots speak and this is what I speak"* (Agis). Also, Achilleas asserted, *"I would prefer to use Cypriot ... because I know it better and I want to feel the others as my friends".* Finally, Menelaos pointed out that the Dialect was a boundary marker for excluding those who did not belong to the group in understanding the conversation, arguing *"with the Dialect you can make fun of them, and they cannot understand it".* Furthermore almost all the students, as Aggelos, reacted negatively to the question *"Would you prefer it if you could not speak Cypriot": "I would not like to stop talking Cypriot because I like Cypriot speech because I am Cypriot and I was born in Cyprus".*

On the contrary, as far as the Standard was concerned, most students viewed it as an opponent of the Cypriot Dialect in relation to their identity. Most of them referred to the Standard as 'kalamaristika' and 'their language', as opposed to 'Cypriot' and 'our language'. The following extract reveals that:

Extract 2 - *Focus Group B*
<u>"Demos</u>: I *like Cypriot more because when I heard some people from Greece speaking, **they were talking a bit stranger than Cypriot** and I could not understand very well what they were saying*
<u>Froso</u>: *they speak like **kalamaristika***
<u>Ifigenia</u>: *but they are **kalamaras***
E: do you like it?
<u>Ifigenia</u>: *we do not like it*
<u>Nefeli</u>: *sometimes no, if it gets annoying"*

Furthermore most of the students clearly stated that they would not like to speak exclusively the Standard, adding that they were often embarrassed and felt uncomfortable when they did so because it was not their own variety. The words of Odysseas encapsulate this: *"I do not feel good when I speak Greek because let us say, it is not of my country".*

Overall, among all the students there was a clear conflict between the two varieties since they represented different sets of values. The Dialect was the variety associated with their Cypriot identity, but it was also the variety connected with low status and prestige. On the contrary, the Standard did not form a part of students' identities but was imposed on them as the correct, the appropriate and the beautiful variety.

Placing Ethnic Identity in the Centre: Exploring Students' Ethnic Frames of Reference

When it came to exploring their ethnic identification all the students showed clear preference towards the Cypriot identity. Lydia for example argued, *"I chose Cypriot because it is my country"* and Aggelos pointed out, *"because I come from Cyprus, it is my country".* The Cypriot preference was overwhelming and there were no gender or other kind of differentiation; students clearly stated that they felt, above all, Cypriot. This was evident in the questionnaires (Figure 3) where all the students chose the Cypriot identity first,[19] as well as in the identity cards and the interviews.

Figure 3: Students' Preferred Ethnic Identities

Choosing One Identity - Questionnaire

Greek Cypriot 13%
English 4%
Cypriot 66%
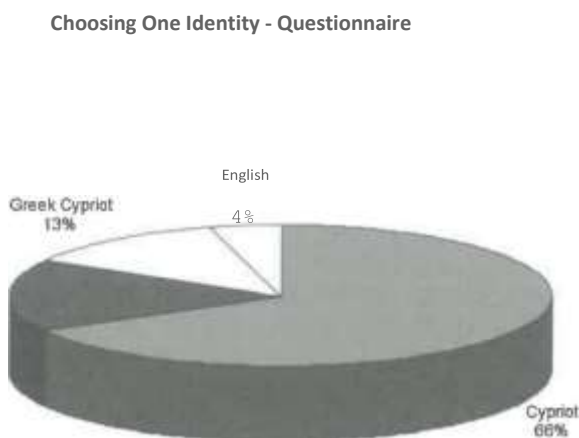
In addition, in the more indirect methods such as the Ten Statement Test (TST) and the Imaginary Scenario all the students referred to the Cypriot element as a central part of their ethnic identity. These two methods confirmed the saliency of students' ethnic identity, since they all referred to the ethnic element as part of their 'self' in situations where this element was not pre-imposed. Particularly, they attributed a wide range of characteristics to themselves in the TST (see Table 1) that had to do with different roles and memberships they adopted, their interests and activities, and personal and ascribed characteristics (Table 2). In all these characteristics the ethnic element, i.e., their expressed identity as 'Cypriots' was present. This saliency of ethnic identity was further revealed by the way they ordered their answers, where ethnic identity was mentioned, on average, among the three top answers. Finally, as mentioned before the saliency of ethnic identity was also confirmed in the *imaginary scenario* where in the descriptions they offered for themselves their identity as 'Cypriots' was central, as Extract 3 from focus group A reveals.

Table 1: Examples of Students' Ten Statement Tests

Anastasia	Aggelos
I AM from Cyprus **I AM** eleven and half years old **I AM** well behaved I **AM** a good student **I AM** clever and kind-hearted I **like** to dance **I like** very much to play with my dolls **I like** cycling **I like** all animals and trees I **do not** support any football or basketball team	**I AM** Omonia's[2]o fan I **AM** a student of Polis' primary school **I AM** Cypriot **I AM** an athlete I **AM** eleven years old **I like** playing electronic games **I like** reading mystery books **I like** playing football and basketball **I like** cycling **I like** watching TV

Table 2: Students' Replies in "I am" Ten Statement Test

Characteristics	Replies (N=24)	Examples: I AM ...
Roles and Memberships		
Ethnic identity	***22***	*Cypriot, from Cyprus, Greek Cypriot*
Football team fan	***19***	*Omonia fan, with AEK*
Student	12	*Student of X' school*
Athlete	10	*Athlete*
Ascribed Characteristics		
Age	8	*Eleven, Twelve*
Religion	0	
Interests and Activities		I like:
Sports	***24***	*Cycling, basketball, scooters, running*
Judgement and tastes	***21***	*MNM music, dolls, dancing, food*
Intellectual concerns	14	*Reading, painting, languages, literature*
Electronic activities	14	*TV, electronic games, my computer*
Other activities	8	*Sleeping, resting*
Nature	6	*Animals, trees, gardening, planting flowers*
Personal Characteristics		
Judgements imputed to others	17	*Well behaved, a bit naughty, obedient*
Major senses of self	15	*Good hearted, perfectionist, lazy, clever, fairly good at school*
Interpersonal style	12	*Smiling, not shy, pay attention to the way I look, polite, do not get angry, funny*
Physical Appearance	5	*Tall, slim, a bit fat, 39Kg*

Key: ***Italics and bold fonts*** = most commonly referred characteristics

Extract 3 - *Focus Group A*

"Anastasia: *we would say that we are from Cyprus, from the town of Larnaka*
Giannos: *I would say to him that Cyprus is an island*
E: *where?*
Menelaos: *in the Mediterranean*
Giannos: *in the Mediterranean Sea*
E: *what else?*
Giannos: *we would say that we have,* **we have villages that are occupied**
Dafni: *and for our beautiful beaches*
Anastasia: **that the Turks occupied us**
Giannos: *in 1974*

<u>Anastasia;</u> *that they occupied half part of Cyprus and that we still try to get it back, but without war"*

Evidently, the strongest components of this Cypriot identity, were the linguistic and the territorial factors (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985, p. 213). The majority of the students referred to the Cypriot dialect as a distinguishing marker of their Cypriot identity. Patroklos for instance pointed out, *"we are from Cyprus, we speak differently from the Greeks",* and Anna noted, *"I chose Cypriot because I speak like the rest of the people in Cyprus speak".* Although other features of the Cypriot identity were stressed, such as character, life style, tradition and descendant (Figure 4) the linguistic criterion was the most commonly referred characteristic. The following extract reveals students' preference:

Extract 4 - *Focus Group D*

"E: what is that that makes us Cypriots?
<u>Agis:</u> *we speak Cypriot, it is our language, our behaviour, we say re*
<u>Tefkros</u>: *compared to the Greeks it is a bit different E: what is different?*
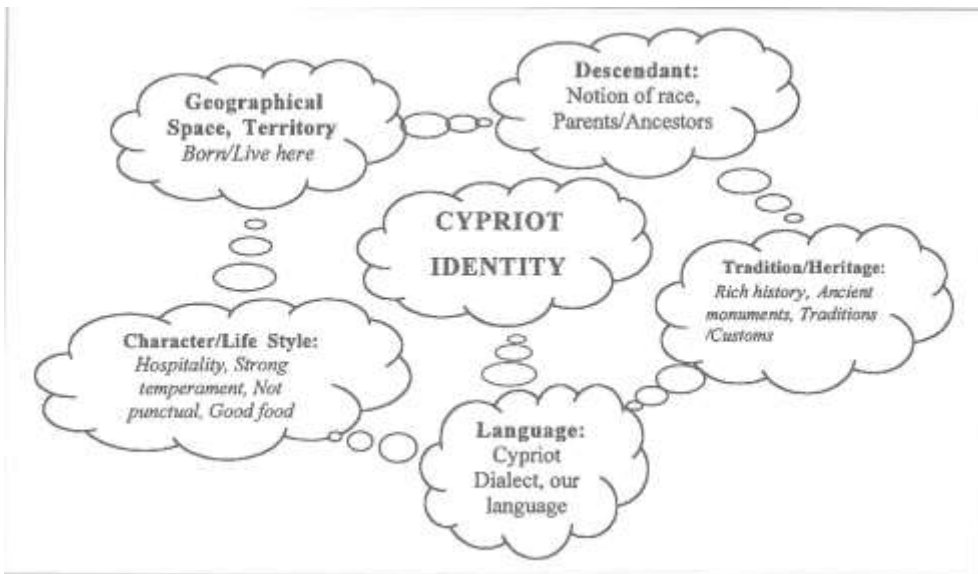<u>Ahilleas:</u> *the language is purer, pure*
E: *whose is purer?*
<u>Ahilleas:</u> *the Greek's*
<u>Tefkros</u>: *the Greek's, but we **are used to ours, it is nicer"***

Figure 4: The Components of Students' Cypriot Identity

In addition, students' identity appeared to have different levels and multiple layers. The central layer, the Cypriot identity, constituted the 'self' (Woolard, 1997) while the 'Greek' element also emerged to be very strong, with the students showing preference towards 'Greek' identity as an alternative or complementary form of the self. On the contrary the 'Turkish', 'Turkish Cypriot' and to some extent the 'English' identity appeared to compose parts of the 'other'. Very revealing was the way the students clearly made a dichotomy between "us" and "them". Some used the term 'our Cyprus' to indicate the feeling of belongingness Greek Cypriots withhold for the other part of the island. As Ifigenia for instance pointed out in her description of Turkish people, *"they now hold half of **our*** (my bold) *Cyprus and they do not accept to give back **our half Cyprus".*** The 'Turkish' identity[21] was the one that invoked the most negative connotations, with some students characterising it as 'not good', 'the enemy' and with a 'barbarian' language. *"It is almost an enemy",* Ifigenia pointed out. Similarly Menelaos completely rejected Turkish and their language arguing, *"I really hate Turkey because it is the country that occupied half of Cyprus and does not let us visit our places/land and for so many years it does not tell us what happened to our missing people".* And then he added, *"I do not want to learn the language of the enemy".* Evidently, because of the political problem and the way it is promoted in schools the students connected the Turkish people with negative stereotypes and they also transferred these negative connotations to the Turkish language. This is also reflected in the wider social context of Cyprus where there is a tendency to underestimate the Turkish language as not that cultivated (compared to Greek). Often the way people choose NOT to define themselves and the negative connotations they hold about certain identities provides a great insight on their notions of 'self' (Hall, 1992; Woolard, 1997). Similarly, in the case of these Greek-Cypriot students the negative stand they took towards Turkish identity defined to a large extent their sense of 'Cypriot' identity.

The notion of the other appeared to be an important reason for students' preference towards the Greek identity. As it emerged from students' rationale the Greek element in their identity was adopted more often when it was compared to an "external", "other" identity such as English or Turkish. Dionisis' words are revealing, *"I do not like to be Turkish or Turkish Cypriot, I really like being Greek".* In the same way Anastasia pointed out, *"because I am also Greek, I am not only Cypriot. I chose the Greek because I am neither English nor Turkish and I am not Turkish Cypriot either".*

Although the connection between 'Cypriot' and 'Greek' identity was mostly stressed on the grounds of the concept of motherland or a family relation (Extract 5), stressing as shared features the common customs and traditions and shared struggles, the fact that the linguistic criterion was not over-stressed was revealing.

these policies will have on students' self perception if the school underestimates their home variety and stigmatises it as "improper", "ugly" and "rude" and deprives them the right to use their home variety in the classroom (see Hymes, 1985). The words of the eleven year old Dafni constitute a good point for indicating that maybe this discrepancy between policies and practice does not come without consequences after all:

> *"I feel more comfortable using Cypriot because in Cypriot you cannot, you do not have to speak with a good manner, you will say it as you feel it, ... in Cypriot you just say things (sic) as you want. In Cypriot it is like you can say anything you like, you do not have anyone to stop you"* - Dafni.

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Notes

1. Pseudonym for an 11 year old primary school student.
2. The data presented in this paper refer to the Greek-Cypriot community only.
3. This is an anti-essentialist positioning regarding ethnic identity and the one adopted in this paper. More about the anti-essentialist versus essentialist approaches for identity in Woolard (1997).
4. Although the situation in Cyprus has been characterised as diglossic (Sciriha, 1995; Karoula-Vrikkis, 1991), this term has been rejected on the grounds that there is not a strict dichotomy between SMG and CD, rather an extensive variation that constitutes a linguistic continuum (Moschonas, 1996; Newton, 1983) with a lot of code-switching and code-mixing (Moschonas, 1996).
5. As a consequence the use of the Standard is connected with the positive values of appropriateness, correctness and aesthetics (Papapavlou, 1998; Sciriha, 1995), while the Dialect is often stigmatised as 'ugly', 'rude' and 'less educated'. Nevertheless, SMG is often seen as distant, fake and formal (Moschonas, 2000), while the Dialect is associated with genuineness, sincerity and with the Cypriot identity (Moschonas, 1996; Sciriha, 1995).
6. Although it has been documented that first, these loanwords are confined to specific domains such as technology, tourism, pop culture (Papapavlou, 1998) and second, that the Standard also includes a considerable amount of loanwords, the stigma that the Dialect is not 'pure' is widespread.
7. This has also been confirmed in the newspaper review I conducted (Ioannidou, 2002), in which there were striking differences in the articles regarding language between *Simerini* (more right wing oriented) and *Haravgi* (more left wing oriented) newspapers. In a thematic analysis of the articles on language in *Haravgi* the following main themes emerged:
   1) All linguistic varieties are equal, the Greek language is not superior to the other languages
   2) Criticisms about the way the right wing considers language
   3) Loanwords can be a source of richness and it is healthy for a language to attain them
   4) The Greek language is not threatened in Cyprus

For a more complete analysis of the newspaper articles regarding issues of language and

ethnic identity see Ioannidou (2002) and Ioannidou (2004, forthcoming).

8. Particularly, I spent a total of six months researching class E which had 29 students (14 girls and 15 boys). The school was an urban school which had the characteristics of a standard school, i.e. neither posh nor working class , as it was confirmed by the local district education office and the principal of the school.

9. Although ethnography is not a clear-cut term (Hammersley, 1983), most of the scholars in the field (see for example, Denzin, 1997; Woods, 1996; Josselson, 1996) emphasise that ethnography involves an in-depth study of people and phenomena in context in their natural setting. This includes accurate portrayals of specific phenomena based on observational or interview data (Hammersley, 1992), an emphasis on cultural understanding and on locating and interpreting the study in its context. As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) point out, ethnographic research remains "firmly rooted in the first-hand exploration of research settings".

10. The match-guise test is one of the most common ways to elicit language attitudes developed by Lambert (1967) where people are asked to rate different 'guises' (linguistic varieties) performed by the same speaker. In my research students were asked to rate three guises in Standard Modern Greek, Greek-Cypriot Dialect and English in variables such as prestige, aesthetics, authenticity and solidarity.

11. A complete investigation of the term 'language' is presented in my PhD thesis (Ioannidou, 2002), where students' language use and their language attitudes are examined and documented by linguistic and sociolinguistic data.

12. In my PhD thesis I also examined students' language attitudes towards English and Turkish.

13. For example variational sociolinguistic studies i.e. which attempt to link linguistic variables with ethnic markers (e.g., Labov, Cheshire) have been criticised for offering detailed account on language while taking a more superficial stand towards exploring identity, often assuming and not documenting the link between the two (Cameron, 1997; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

14. From the whole data collected it was also documented that some of the teachers of class E tended to stigmatise the use of the dialect by the students even if they themselves consistently used the dialect in and out of the classroom (more discussion on this evidence in Ioannidou, 2002).

15. This was documented in studies among adults in the Greek-Cypriot context where the use of SMG was connected with the positive values of appropriateness, correctness and aesthetics, while the dialect is often stigmatised as "ugly", "rude" and "less educated" (Papapavlou, 1998; Sciriha, 1995).

16. Tze / τζαι (CD) = ke / και (SMG) = and.

17. Moschonas (1996, 2000) and Papapavlou (1998) also argue that the Dialect has these attributes in the wider context of Cyprus.

18. 'Kalamaristika' indicates the way people from Greece speak, and 'kalamaras' is the way Cypriot people describe the people from Greece, indicating the "pen-pushers" and sometimes being used in a negative way (Papadakis, 1993).

19. The 'Greek Cypriot', 'Greek' and 'English' had much lower ratings. The Greek and English identities were referred to by the students who were from Greece (i.e. Evagoras, Periklis) and England (e.g., Demos).

20. 'Omonia', 'Anorthosi', 'AEK' are football teams.

21. There were a few students who made a distinction between Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot identity pointing out that they were feeling closer to the Turkish-Cypriot identity since it included the Cypriot element although the Turkish was completely strange and hostile to them. This was documented in the task with the identity cards where none of the students chose the "Turkish identity card" but 6 out of the 29 students chose the "Turkish-Cypriot identity card" where they could choose more than one card. Despite that, from the qualitative analysis of students' comments it emerged that the Turkish-Cypriot identity was connected with the notion of the other since the majority of the students connected it with the political problem of the island (for a more detailed analysis see Ioannidou, 2003).

22. See for example the thorough analysis of Milroy and Milroy (1991) on social networks where people manage to retain their excluded from the power domains linguistic varieties through social networks and the force of solidarity.

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