

# The Iraq war as curricular knowledge

## From the political to the pedagogic divide

Bessie Mitsikopoulou and Dimitris Koutsogiannis

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens /

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The paper deals with educational discourse concerning the recent Iraq war in an attempt to explore how broader political issues, such as the Iraq war, are materialised in everyday classroom practices. It analyses lesson plans, aimed to be used by US educators of primary and secondary schools, from two Internet sites: one supporting the official position of US to go to war and the other taking a position against the war. The paper suggests that the lesson plans in the two sites constitute materialisations of two general approaches to education, the dominant and the critical, which do not simply adopt opposing views concerning the war but which, most importantly, contribute to the construction of different pedagogic subjects: in one case, there is an attempt towards 'compulsory patriotism', whereas in the other an attempt towards a 'compulsory' challenging of the war. The ideals which are in fact recontextualised here are that of nation and justice, the pedagogisation of which seems to raise much more questions than to provide answers.

**Keywords:** dominant and critical pedagogy, pedagogic subjects, on-line educational materials, lesson plans, pedagogisation of war, genre realisations, national standards, grand narratives

### 1. Analysing on-line materials

In the wake of the Iraq war, educational material was made available on Internet sites of associations such as the *National Geographic*, *Scholastic*, and *National Council of Teachers of English* that informed students about Iraq and the circumstances leading to war. Collections of resources such as reports, news reports and other media texts, maps, video clips accompanied by detailed lesson plans were offered with the purpose of integrating 'Breaking news' into

lessons, preparing 'lessons on war', and exploring the impact the war had on students. Differing views were voiced by American educators as to whether to discuss their country's involvement in the war with students. The events of 11 September had already prompted discussion in the classrooms (Apple 2002). Among the on-line sites which offer educational materials on the recent Iraq war are *NewsHour Extra* and *Rethinking Schools*.

*NewsHour Extra* is an electronic magazine hosted by PBS portal, a private, non-profit making, media enterprise owned and operated by the US public television stations. Its mission statement includes the following aim: "PBS uses the power of non-commercial television, the Internet and other media to enrich the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services that inform, inspire and delight". Through combining online and television media, pbs.org creates and distributes interactive programming for educational purposes. It hosts supersites for children, parents and teachers offering information on subjects such as history, arts, science and technology, and it also includes several online sites with classroom resources, lesson plans and activities. *NewsHour Extra* draws its materials from the 60-minute evening television news programme by award-winning journalist Jim Lehrer.

*Rethinking Schools* is a proactive, non-profit making organisation which publishes educational materials. It is directed by volunteer editors and editorial associates and has subscribers in the United States, Canada and other countries. It is a strong supporter of public education and it deals with issues such as critical classroom practice, educational reform, and race and equity in education. Its on-line portal includes information about its publications, an on-line newsletter, an on-line journal and educational materials for teachers. *Rethinking Schools* openly adopts an anti-war position, and its site on the Iraq war contains links for lesson plans, suggested reading, background documents, maps and geography activities and various resources for teachers.

This study reports on an analysis of on-line lesson plans based on the Iraq war material from *NewsHour Extra* ([www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/iraq/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/iraq/)) and *Rethinking Schools* (<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/war/ideas/index.shtml>). The corpus was retrieved on 21 May 2003 and is comprised of 24 lesson plans from *NewsHour Extra* that appeared between 21 March and 21 April 2003, and 10 lesson plans from *Rethinking Schools* most of which appeared in the Spring of 2003. The two sites were originally selected on the basis of the following three criteria:

- a. both sites adopt the view that the issue of the war should be explicitly dealt with in the classroom,

- b. both sites provide a wealth of resources for teachers including lesson plans and supporting material such as further sites for exploration which are defined by topic, printed articles, maps, suggestions for further activities,
- c. they adopt different perspectives: while *NewsHour Extra* is pro-war and is supportive of the US government's decision to go to war, *Rethinking Schools* openly adopts an anti-war position.

Taking into account their different views concerning the Iraq war, we wanted to investigate how these opposite positions are handled pedagogically by the two sites. However, our interest in these two sites is not limited to the different positions they hold concerning the war, since these two sites are characteristic examples of two important educational discourses: the dominant and the alternative. Thus, we primarily wanted to explore the extent to which the different positions concerning the war are related to the construction of different 'imagination'/pedagogic subjects (Bernstein 1996: 47) and ultimately look into the ways in which broad political issues, such as the Iraq war, are materialised in more everyday practices such as the planning, conduct, and evaluation of classroom teaching. Implied then in this paper is the view that political discourse may not at all be just a matter of what we find in the news but also, and perhaps more importantly, a matter of how we organise the socialisation of children through the massive sociocultural institutions of our society.<sup>1</sup>

As we live in a country in South East Europe which is far away from the United States and yet greatly affected by changes in the Middle East, we did not view the war-time events in the way that the American people might have, so our understanding and interpretation of the situation is necessarily somewhat different. This distance, on the other hand, may add to the advantages of this study. In addition, having had to experience the effects of our own centralised educational system, we were intrigued by the wealth of educational materials available on the Internet after 11 September 2001, materials which deal with current political issues and military conflicts such as the Afghanistan war and the Iraq war.

## 2. The war as pedagogic discourse

A view of war as curricular subject matter, legitimate school knowledge and object of pedagogy results in the war as pedagogic discourse. Assuming that "pedagogic discourse selects and creates specialised pedagogic subjects through its contexts and contents" (Bernstein 1996: 46), we turned our analysis to the 'contexts and contents' of these sites investigating the ways they are

constructing pedagogic subjects in an attempt to answer the question: what discourses are selected and recontextualised by the two electronic sites in their attempt to ‘teach’ the war from their different perspectives? The discourses of other curricular subjects, for instance physics, are drawn mainly from the discourse of Physics. What happens, though, in the case of war as school subject matter, since this has not traditionally been an object of knowledge for schools? Moreover, how are the media and other discourses transformed into pedagogic discourse during the recontextualisation process? Considering that each different theory of instruction “contains within itself a model of the learner and of the teacher” (Bernstein 1996: 49), which theories of instruction are embedded in war-related pedagogies, and what models of learners and teachers do they imply?

In the next sections we present some of the main elements of the war-related pedagogies which develop in the context of the lesson plans and the suggested materials of the two websites. We look primarily at the contents and methods proposed, their ‘what’ and ‘how’, with the purpose of identifying their potential for the construction of pedagogic subjects. The collection of lesson plans in *NewsHour Extra* and *Rethinking Schools* together with other resources (newspaper articles, various texts from historical and political discourses, interviews, graphs, maps etc.) available on the sites comprises, in our view, a kind of an informal curriculum on the subject of the Iraq war. As is the case with other types of curricula, the curricula of *NewsHour Extra* and *Rethinking Schools* have implied in them knowledges, skills, meanings and values which are ideologically specific (cf. Kress 1996). What is included or excluded in each curriculum is, as we shall see, determined to a certain extent by adopted pedagogic approaches, and, most importantly in this case, by assumed positions on the Iraq war.

### 3. Teaching the Iraq war in *NewsHour Extra*

#### 3.1 ‘Critical analysis’ of war

*NewsHour Extra* lesson plans focus primarily on reading comprehension activities that ask learners to identify the main idea(s) and supporting arguments. The purpose of this ‘critical analysis’, as this approach is referred to in the beginning of some lesson plans, is to enable learners to analyze some texts in order to understand the arguments about the necessity of this war, while developing at the same time some knowledge concerning aspects of the war. The texts used

are drawn primarily from media discourse, political discourse (e.g. President's speeches), administrative discourse (e.g. US official documents) and historical discourse (primarily concerning US involvement in WWI and WWII). The pattern is the same in most cases: a warm-up activity with a few initiating questions introduces the topic and helps the teacher identify how much students know about it, a main activity in which students read an article drawn from the hosting portal and answer reading comprehension questions, and a discussion part in which students relate the discussed topic to their own experiences and knowledge. The following extract of a plan concerns the story *US Forces Capture Eight Iraqis Pictured on "Most Wanted" Playing Cards*, 4/21/03:

**"Initiating Questions:**

1. What is the latest information about Iraq? Who is in charge? What is the status of Saddam Hussein's regime?
2. What do you know about playing cards? How are they organized?

**Reading comprehension questions:**

1. How many Iraqi officials from the "most wanted" list have been captured so far?
2. How are the "most wanted" cards organized?
3. What card is Saddam Hussein? Why?
4. List and explain the ways in which the military has used similar playing cards in the past?

**Discussion questions:**

1. Does this use of cards trivialize the US mission in Iraq? Why or why not?
2. Why might this method be effective in searching for members of the Saddam Hussein regime? Explain."

General techniques such as pairwork or groupwork are frequently suggested and learners are trained in transferable skills (e.g. learning how to analyse something in groups and report back to class). Looking at the types of activities used in *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans, we were intrigued by the types of activities which involve students in political decision and policy making. For instance, in the following activities, students are invited to work individually or in groups in order to decide upon

issues concerning Iraq's payment of debts:

"Have each group reflect upon the following question for the reconstruction of Iraq: Should Iraq have to pay back billions of dollars in debts incurred by Saddam Hussein? Keep in mind the fact that Iraq has enormous potential economic resources, if the oil embargo is lifted." ("Reconstruction of Iraq: A lesson of historical precedents")

the role of the United Nations:

“As Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz recently stated, after the fall of Hussein’s regime the UN should be more involved in the dispensing of humanitarian aid to the people of Iraq than in the rebuilding of their government (see *Online NewsHour* article). In light of this, should the United Nations primarily be oriented towards humanitarian efforts? Due to recent complications such as those in the governing of Kosovo, should the UN be kept out of political or military campaigns altogether? (‘The role of the United Nations in postwar Iraq’)”

or, the most appropriate person to become the future leader of Iraq

“Have interested students research the lives of Ahmed Chalabi, Ayatollah Mohammed Bakral-Hakim, Massoud Barzani of the KDP and Jalal Talabani of the PUK and report to the class. Have the class write an essay on which leader appears to be more qualified to lead.” (‘Who should rule the Interim government in Iraq? What should be their priorities?’)

In these and other similar activities, high school students, equipped with a few reading texts and some background information provided by the teacher, are invited to discuss and eventually take up a position on complex issues concerning governmental policies and international politics. In fact, these activities take place within the context of what is suggested to be a ‘critical analysis’, an approach widely known as ‘critical thinking’ which has been quite popular since the beginning of the 1980s in US language education from primary to college level. In this tradition, the purpose of ‘critical thinking’ is to enhance clarity and comprehension through close reading. Harris and Hodges (1981: 74) define critical thinking as the process of making judgments in reading, “evaluating relevancy and adequacy of what is read”. Critical thinking skills involve identifying author’s intent, main arguments and supporting evidence; distinguishing between fact and opinion; making detailed observations; uncovering assumptions; and, generally, making assertions based on sound logic and solid evidence (Ellis 1997, Halpern 1996). It is often considered synonymous to logical thinking because, according to its proponents, it is concerned with reason, intellectual honesty and open-mindedness, as opposed to emotionalism, intellectual laziness, and closed mindedness (Kurland 1995).

At this point it is worth noting that Atkinson (1997), Martin (1992) and Walters (1994), among others, criticised this model of critical thinking for its exclusive and reductive nature arguing that it is a highly normative and ‘logistic’ model which claims objectivity and rationality. The ‘critical thinking’ approach has also been criticised for its insistence upon the development of

generalised and transferable thinking skills which are assumed to be universal and thus can be used beyond their original domains of application, a point that Atkinson (1997) elaborately refutes showing that thinking skills do not appear to transfer effectively beyond their narrow contexts of instruction. In the same way that the model of 'critical thinking' is applied to freshman composition courses or courses which develop academic study skills (e.g. Ellis 1997), it is also used in lessons which deal with analysis of current events and the teaching of the Iraq war: students are asked to read a text and express their opinion on an issue of their academic life in the same way they are asked to decide who will be the most appropriate leader of another country, or the role of the United Nations. However, in this task, it is clear that students are not left unguided. A careful reading of such activities reveals a strong regulation which directs students' answers. Notice the following examples, "taking into account Iraq's wealth from oil, should Iraq pay back its debts?" or "due to recent complications such as those in the governing of Kosovo, should the UN be kept out of political or military campaigns altogether?"

### 3.2 The war as episodes in a TV series

*NewsHour Extra* lesson plans closely follow the progress of war from its beginning until its official ending. The war is construed as a kind of a TV series which progresses day by day. As stated in the initial web page, two new lesson plans are added every week, which, in the form of new episodes, invite students to discuss most recent events, to predict, to assess new situations, to find analogies with the past or to calculate the cost of the war. This is one of the two key elements of these lesson plans whose main purpose becomes to construe subjects who are well aware of the progress of war and who vigorously support the government's decision to go to war.

This tendency is also apparent in the title often used on pages, "teaching the Iraq war", in which the Iraq war becomes the Goal in a material process (Halliday 1994) instead of the unmarked circumstantial element in "teaching *about* the Iraq war". Quite interestingly, we soon realised this was not only a lexico-grammatical construction. Students were actually "taught the war" by being involved in activities which asked them to:

research weapons of mass destruction:

"Ask your students what they already know about the weapons of mass destruction Saddam Hussein is thought to have. Give them the following background as necessary.

- mustard gas — blisters / burns exposed tissues, fatal if untreated
- nerve agents (such as sarin and tabun) — can cause convulsions, unconsciousness, and death if untreated immediately

**Extension Idea:** Select a particular weapon of mass destruction (anthrax, nuclear weapons, nerve agents such as sarin, mustard gas, etc.). Research its development and/or discovery, its history and usage, and where it is now believed to exist.” (“Weapons of mass destruction in Iraq”)

analyse war strategies:

“Map activities: In order to determine whether the Doctrine is being observed, have the students closely examine maps of the region that highlight the ongoing war strategy, bombing campaigns and troop deployments. Various maps can readily be found in daily newspaper coverage of the war as well as on most news websites.” (“The Powell Doctrine”)

or, compare military technologies:

“Write a report comparing and contrasting the use of military technology in the following conflicts: World War II, the Vietnam War, and the current war in Iraq” (“War expectations”)

This perspective narrows dramatically the context (Chilton 2002) within which discussion can be conducted in class and from which teaching materials are selected. For instance, it excludes any discussion about the necessity of the war or its ethics and focuses exclusively on current events. Granted the site presents a positive stance towards the war, the construction of war as a TV series has the following effects. First, it restricts discussion from the general to the specific. Thus, any kind of ‘critical analysis’ is inevitably located within this limited context. For instance, discussion concerning freedom of speech in the press centres on limited themes such as the ethics of embedded journalists or the ethical dilemma which resulted from CNN’s decision not to report on Saddam’s atrocities prior to war. The war is taken as a given, and there is no challenge concerning its necessity in the first place. Second, it allows the use of articles from the daily press for educational purposes. In fact, following the progress of the war is largely facilitated by the use of current news articles from the hosting portal.

A second main characteristic of the *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans is the reproduction of the dominant discourse and its argumentation concerning the necessity of the war and the construction of a national consciousness. The step-by-step following of the war becomes the starting point for class discussion of wider issues which aim to achieve the aforementioned aims. For instance,



when discussing the US attempt to establish an ‘interim authority’ in Iraq, discussion also centres on democracy; when discussing “the recent rescue of Private Jessica Lynch”, the topic of women in the American army and their invaluable contribution to the nation is also discussed. In this context, the teaching material is carefully selected aiming to inspire certainty of the victorious outcome, trust in the justification for going to war, national pride and alertness. There are some remarkable similarities with traditional patriotic cinema films or TV series.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, the democracy theme is quite popular: ‘we have democracy and we are trying to restore democracy in a non-democratic country’. For instance, in one case, students are given an extract from Thomas Jefferson’s first Inaugural Address and are asked: “Are there aspects of this vision that are uniquely American? Why or why not?” (“Getting to democracy”). In another lesson plan, through stressing the importance of respecting international conventions in a democratic country, students discuss the Geneva Convention:

- “1. Introduction: Begin by discussing the overview of the Geneva Convention...”
2. Next, have the students analyze the Iraqi media’s use of images of the prisoners of war (POWs) to determine whether it is contrary to the tenets of the Convention, particularly Article 13.
3. Lastly, ask the students to compare the use of the Al Jazeera images of American prisoners to recent media images of Iraqi prisoners held by U.S. soldiers.” (“The rules of engagement: The Geneva convention”)

Comparison with previous wars is quite prominent in *NewsHour Extra* and serves mainly two purposes. First, it is used to stress the positive role of the US in critical moments in history:

“Following the end of WWII, much of Europe, both victor and vanquished, was ravaged. Infrastructures had been destroyed, millions killed, cities levelled. However, rather than punishing the German aggressors with billions of dollars in war reparations, the United States engaged in a massive campaign to rebuild Germany from the ground up. Germany is once again a world leader, and boasts one of the strongest economies and democracies in Europe” (“Reconstruction of Iraq: A lesson of historical precedents”)

Second, it is employed to identify differences with previous wars. In the case of the Vietnam war, the focus is on the knowledge then gained for the US and on outlining that war’s differences from the Iraq war, due to rapid technological developments and the present supremacy of US army:

“Discuss with the class the tenets of the Powell Doctrine. Help them to see that the Doctrine was an outgrowth of US involvement in previous military campaigns (such as Vietnam and Korea) that were ambivalent, tentative and poorly planned.” (“The Powell doctrine”)

“After the students have gained a solid foundation on the war strategy, have them respond either in essay or discussion format to... the following: ‘How might this war be different from previous ones with which you are familiar, such as the Persian Gulf War, Vietnam, World War I and World War II? How are they all similar?’” (“Military strategy”)

#### 4. Teaching the Iraq war in *Rethinking Schools*

##### 4.1 Critical pedagogy

The purpose of the *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans is repeatedly stated to be the development of an alternative perspective to education: “Our pedagogy has to be more political. We need to invite students to consider alternatives — we need to invite them to become part of making alternatives” (“Defeating despair”). In order to raise students’ critical awareness, educators often stress the need for relevant teaching materials:

“As I sat down recently to figure out how I was going to teach about the impending war against Iraq, I was struck by how much information was available and yet how little curriculum... This is not the time for educators to hole up in our classrooms and play curricular lone rangers. The issues are too complicated, the pedagogical challenges too stiff” (“Teaching Gulf war II”)

In *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans, students are involved in a variety of activities such as pairwork, groupwork, simulations, role play and project work using a variety of resources such as Internet sites, war statistics, maps, videos, articles and books. Some of the materials are offered through hyperlinks, while for some others reference information is provided (e.g. electronic address, publisher). New technologies are extensively employed in these lessons. In addition to anti-war documentaries and war films, the Internet is regularly used as a source of information for both teachers and students since “the Internet makes it possible for us to seek out different perspectives from non-corporate, alternative media, and from media of other nations” (“Drawing on history to challenge the war”). The texts used are primarily drawn from literary discourses (anti-war literature, e.g. poetry, novels, short stories and extensive use of songs), historical discourses (particularly concerning Gulf War I, Vietnam,

and Afghanistan) and political discourses. The suggested activities generally encourage students to

“think about the frameworks that the media fashions for us — the purely bad guys and the purely good guys, the cleansing role of violence, the contempt for non-Western cultures, etc. ... to recognize how we are often led to organize information about today’s global conflicts, especially those in the Middle East, into these frameworks” (“Teaching Gulf war II”),

“think about social events as having concrete causes, constantly asking ‘Why?’ and ‘In whose interests?’” (“Rethinking the teaching of the Vietnam war”),

“look back at the history of US relations with Iraq in order to better understand US objectives today” (“Predicting how the US Government will respond to the Iraqi Government”).

To this purpose, language analysis of texts is quite often employed: “I pointed out the mechanics of Priest’s use of questions, followed by a list of images. Students underlined the images that made them see or hear war” (“Entering history through poetry”).

In a recent article entitled “Rethinking Our Classrooms”<sup>3</sup> from the *Rethinking Schools Journal* (Fall 2003), the editors outline the main elements of their adopted ‘critical pedagogy’, according to which a

“critical curriculum should be a rainbow of resistance. Through critiques of advertising, cartoons, literature, legislative decisions, foreign policy choices, job structures, newspapers, movies, consumer culture, agricultural practices, and school life itself, students should have opportunities to question social reality”.

However, it is also noted that a critical curriculum should encourage students to “see themselves as truth-tellers and change-makers” since “part of a teacher’s role is to suggest that ideas have real consequences and should be acted upon, and to offer students opportunities to do just that”. In this context, the main purpose of the suggested lessons is to change students’ attitudes towards the war. This may be the reason why changes of students’ views are so frequently reported:

“When the video ended, they jumped right into an angry critique of the rhetoric surrounding the present war. One indignant student asked, ‘If our companies gave Hussein weapons of mass destruction, why are we going to bomb him because he might still have some?’” (“Drawing on history to challenge the war”)

“One student wrote: ‘To me, this cartoon is saying that we (the US, portrayed by Popeye) can do whatever we want to other people in other cultures, because we’re always right. Violence is alright and gives you power and control’” (“Teaching Gulf War II”)

In another case, students prepare an educational session to teach their fellow students about Iraq, and in another part of the same lesson a student is reported to take up an active role attempting to persuade others: “I was so proud to know how to argue with my dad. I told him. I’m telling you realities. You think what they want you to think” (“Drawing on history to challenge the war”).

However, it should be noted that the preoccupation with developing an alternative pedagogy is focused on the presentation of anti-war argumentation and not on a multi-faceted and disinterested presentation of the Iraq war. As a result, it leaves out of discussion any arguments of the opposite side. In our analysis of lesson plans, we came across only one instance in which students were asked to research both mainstream and alternative press in order to record argumentation of both sides. Even then, however, the ideological context was given to students since the purpose of the analysis was to show that the opposite position was wrong. In most other instances, the attempt to develop students’ critical awareness generally ignored the arguments of the opposite side, perhaps assuming that since this was the prevailing view, it was well known to all students.

## 4.2 Challenging the war

In *Rethinking Schools*, the day by day progress of war is ignored. Topics discussed focus on challenging the war’s necessity and calling for the investigation of its deeper causes. Instead of dealing with current events, these lessons focus on the general, the underlying and the global as their titles indicate: “Drawing on history to challenge the war”, “Entering history though poetry”, “The world up close”, “Whose terrorism?” Actually, the topics discussed in the classroom often do not relate directly to the current war, the name of which is systematically avoided. In the opening page, the collection of lesson plans is placed under the heading “The war” with no reference made to Iraq. Four of the lesson plans on the site were written prior to the war (e.g. Winter 2000/2001, Winter 2001/2002), whereas the other six appeared in the Spring of 2003. As stated in the introductory page of the site: “This collection includes lesson plans and teaching ideas created by the editors of *Rethinking Schools*, as well as teaching materials created by other teachers around the country who are trying to come

to grips with the issues raised by the war". For instance, in "*World up close*", "A fifth grade teacher aims to help his students explore issues of war and terrorism as they look at the war in Afghanistan" and in "*Songs with a Global Conscience*" songs are used "to build international understanding and solidarity".

In the lesson plans of *Rethinking Schools*, the term 'coalition', so frequently used in *NewsHour Extra*, is avoided and the US is presented as a powerful super power with financial and geopolitical interests. A great number of the lesson plans aim to illustrate this powerful position of the US and to provide answers to 'why war' by closely examining the wars that the US has been involved since WWII:

"The most important question wanders in and out of these lessons but still remains to be confronted directly in my classroom: Why? Why is the United States so intent on overthrowing Saddam Hussein? Why now? Why not other oppressive regimes, like China? Why not other nations in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, like Israel? Why not other nations which, unlike Iraq, are known definitively to possess weapons of mass destruction, like Pakistan? Why not other nations with alleged links to terrorists, like Saudi Arabia?" ("Teaching Gulf War II")

Moreover, to illustrate the determining role of the US, *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans often attempt to connect the present with the past, yet in a different way from that employed in *NewsHour Extra*:

"The second day, I showed the first part of Hidden Wars. The video opens with crucial history about US activities in the Middle East, history that our mainstream media ignores. To control Mideast oil, from WWII to 1988, the US encouraged war, helped install dictators (Hussein and the Shah), and supplied them with billions of dollars of weaponry. In the 1980s, US corporations supplied Iraq with biological, chemical, and nuclear components." ("Drawing on history to challenge the war")

"A video I've found useful in prompting students to explore a bit of the history of Vietnam and the sources of US involvement...offers an overview of Vietnamese resistance to French colonialism (which began in the mid-19th century) and to the Japanese occupation during World War II." ("Rethinking the teaching of the Vietnam war")

Analogies between past and current situations are frequently drawn on in order to encourage students to challenge the war, not to justify it. Role-play activities are prominent here. In one case, students get involved in an activity, simulating members of the Congress in 1964. In another case they become members of the Viet Minh and the French government invited to a meeting

with President Truman to present their position on the question of Vietnamese independence. Through these activities, students are expected to develop an alternative perspective to historical events and are encouraged to search for deeper reasons and motives.

If some lesson plans aim at equipping students with knowledge concerning this and the previous wars and at raising anti-war consciousness, some others aim at sensitizing them to issues concerning the brutality of the war, and at promoting the global peace movement. Anti-war poetry and songs are heavily drawn in this case:

“Poems are not a substitute for information. Students need to investigate why this war is happening. Poetry is not social analysis. Students’ poems won’t help them figure out the role of oil in this war... However, the poetry will help students understand the human consequences of those decisions. And by humanizing the war, students may care enough to join our investigation into its causes.” (“Entering history through poetry”)

“I want my students to be comfortable expressing their fears about war and terrorism. This allows for emotional release and also provides insight into my students’ thoughts on topics such as stereotypes, Islam, immigration, or grief about loss of a family member” (“A world up close”)

Through a number of different activities students are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions: for instance, they write their own poems, they prepare bulletin boards with photos, maps and student writing or they prepare a poster on landmines with pictures of victims, maps, essays and facts.

## 5. The genre of lesson plans in *NewsHour Extra* and *Rethinking Schools*

*NewsHour Extra* and *Rethinking Schools* also differ in the ways each site realises the genre of lesson plans. On the one hand, *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans have elements of traditional lesson plans which are descriptive and procedural, follow a strict format resembling that of a technical document, and have formal and ‘objective’ language. On the other hand, *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans are very different and have elements of the reflective lesson plan (Richards and Lockhart 1994). They have been written mostly after a particular class has been conducted, and in this sense they are retrospective. Instead of the formal language adopted in *NewsHour Extra*, in *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans teachers present materials directed to other teachers for use in the classroom, and they

discuss their personal experience, including personal evaluations, uncertainties, failures as well as successes.

Viewing after Volosinov (1986: 23) genre realisations not as simply moments of the choice, assembly and reproduction of forms and techniques, but as sites where “differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community” intersect, contest and struggle, we approach the genre of lesson plan as “a nexus for struggles over difference, identity and politics” (Luke 1996: 317). We thus consider the differential manifestations of the genre of lesson plans in *NewsHour Extra* and *Rethinking Schools* as articulations of their different ideological positions which are, as we shall see, about the Iraq war as much as they are about wider pedagogic and educational matters.

### 5.1 The genre of *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans

The lesson plans in *NewsHour Extra* all follow the strict format of a traditional lesson plan which consists of Overview/Background, Materials, Procedure, Extension Ideas/Homework and National Standards sections. The section on National Standards is not part of the traditional lesson plan format, but its incorporation is related, as we shall discuss below, to a significant component of US education in the last decade. The fact that the same format is generally followed in all lesson plans leads to the assumption that some general specifications are followed as to how each section is to be organised. The lesson plans are quite detailed, usually ranging from three to five printed pages, and they also adopt the formal language usually found in traditional lesson plans. Emphasis is placed on objectives and a detailed description of activities to be handled in class in a pre-specified order.

The Overview/Background section generally provides useful background information concerning the topic to be dealt with in the specific lesson plan, specifies the objectives, the time required for the completion of the suggested lesson (ranging from an individual activity which requires 20–30 minutes to a complete lesson or series of lessons), and the target group (varying from primary to high school and university students and covering a variety of areas: English, mathematics, journalism, history, world history, government). The information may all be included in one paragraph or may be separated in more sections, as in the following example:

**“Overview:**

President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair met in Ireland Tuesday to discuss who should run the interim government of Iraq. This lesson plan asks

students to consider whether the United Nations, the US and British, members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party or Iraqi exiles should make major decisions in the interim government and what the priorities of that government should be (transportation, hospitals, schools, police force, sanitation, etc.).

**Objectives:**

- Students should look at the potential groups and individual leaders and decide who should have power in postwar Iraq.
- Students should consider the priorities of the new government.
- Students should understand who the potential leaders are and the issues they will confront." ("What should be their priorities?")

The Materials section describes what will be needed for the completion of the suggested lesson. In addition to *NewsHour Extra* articles and downloadable handouts (with activities, definitions of terms, quotes, transcripts with extracts from discussions, interviews etc), a wealth of electronic materials is available to the teachers such as maps of Iraq, articles from other sources and various public documents. Less frequently, teachers are invited to collect their own materials (e.g. copies of local, regional and national newspaper articles). In addition, computers with Internet access, notebooks and pens are noted among the materials needed.

The Procedure section provides a detailed description of the steps to be followed for the completion of the activities in the classroom. It is the largest part of the lesson plan, usually extending from one to three printed pages, and it consists of numbered parts which address the order to be followed. The next section, Extension Ideas/Homework, describes in detail further activities (e.g. project work or writing tasks) to be used for homework. The last section of the lesson plan is entitled National Standards. Its length varies from a few lines to a page. Reference is made to the specific national standards the suggested lesson adheres to, and occasionally the content of each national standard is provided:

**"National Standards:**

National Council for the Social Studies

**Standard V: Individuals, Groups and Institutions**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

**Standard VI. Power, Authority and Governance**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance." ("Reporting on war in the 21st century")

Actually, National Standards hold a prominent position in *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans. In addition to their placement at the end of each lesson plan, there



is a hyperlink entitled “Correlation to National Standards” (in bold letters), placed as a separate section after Materials and before Procedure sections, which leads to the last section of the lesson plan directly.

The language employed in *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans is formal and impersonal, appropriate to the ‘objectivity’ that a technical document is endowed with. Imperatives are used in the attempt to describe the ‘what’ as well as ‘how’ to teach. ‘How’ is described in detail in the form of instructions to be followed:

“Distribute copies of today’s *NewsHour* article (Handout #1). Have students read it silently. Provide students with a copy of the *Hague regulation* from 1907 (Handout #2) and have them read that silently. Then provide students with an excerpted copy of the *NewsHour* transcript “*Days of Disorder*” (Handout #3) that discusses the issue of responsibility for restoring Iraq. Have students read it silently for background information.” (“Choices in war: what would you save first?”)

Interesting also is the categorical tone when describing the purpose of the lesson plan: “Students *will understand* that the United States hopes to set up an ‘interim authority’ in Iraq that *will aid* the country in establishing self-rule” (from the Overview, “Getting to Democracy”). Median and high modality (Halliday 1994) are constantly employed:

“This lesson *may* be used to discuss with your students President Bush’s decision to go to war with Iraq soon after that decision has been made. It *should* take 20–30 minutes, although you *may* choose to extend your discussion or have students write responses to the quotes given below.

This lesson *is most appropriate* for use in a government or history class but *may* be used in any social studies class.” (“The decision to go to war”)

## 5.2 The genre of *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans

The genre of lesson plans in *Rethinking Schools* is quite differently realised. Here we do not encounter the typical format found in the *NewsHour Extra* plans. Each lesson plan is written in the form of continuous text with sections which vary depending on the issue discussed. For instance, in “*Teaching Gulf War II*”, the lesson plan is divided into the sections *Creating the ‘enemy’*, *Bush’s blank check*, *Silent war of sanctions*, *Why war?*. In “*Whose terrorism?*” the sections are entitled *Lesson on terrorism*, *Defining terrorism*, *Economic terrorism*, *Terrorism’s ghosts*. No lesson plan follows the strict typical format of the first set.

Perhaps the most prevailing characteristic of the *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans is their close connection to the classroom, through the use of narrative

accounts of lessons which have been already tried out along with a detailed description of what happened in the classroom. Instead of the use of imperatives and high modality to describe steps to be followed, extensive use of past tenses narrating classroom events is employed:

“I *introduced* the cartoon by telling students that I *wanted* them to think about the images ... I *read* aloud a quote... I *told* them ...I *wanted* them to think about aspects of the secret education children were exposed to. On the board I *wrote*: .... After the video, students *wrote* ... before we *talked*.” (“Teaching Gulf war II”)

The objective account of an authoritative voice is here replaced by the subjective tone of a teacher talking to other teachers, often in first person singular, not only about procedural matters as in the above extract, but also about personal experiences. In another part of the same lesson plan we read: “And there I am, feeling my way along, trying to piece together a curriculum that urges students to think critically about the antecedents to the coming war.” Personal information is also included: “As I’m on leave this year, my colleague invited me into her classroom to teach this lesson to her 11th grade Global Studies students” (“Whose terrorism?”).

It was, in fact, surprising to find accounts of failures: “Frankly, when I’ve tried to design lessons to get students to imagine overarching social alternatives, these have not been compelling” (“Defeating despair”), teacher uncertainties: “I didn’t know for certain, but my hunch was ...” (“Whose terrorism?”), comments on future improvements: “The next time I teach this unit, I’d like to increase the focus on international media.” (“Drawing on history to challenge the war”), and teachers’ own evaluations of activities. Moreover, quite surprisingly for a lesson plan, student voices are frequently recorded: “It was Sept. 12 when Rafael, one of my fifth graders, pointed out the window and asked, ‘What would you do if terrorists were outside our school and tried out to bomb us?’” (“A world up close”).

On the basis of the above analysis, one may wonder whether these texts are actually lesson plans. They certainly do not look like any of the typical lesson plans teachers are generally trained to prepare. They are more like diaries of teacher experiences, similar to the ones teachers, mostly novice ones, are encouraged to keep in the tradition of reflective teaching. In language education, reflective accounts of lessons have primarily been explored either as a way to enhance teachers’ professional development (Richards and Lockhart 1994) or as methods of data collection in classroom research (Wallace 1998, McDonough and McDonough 1997). For instance, Holly (1984) discusses

teacher diaries as a narrative genre which includes three main themes: an account of what the teacher did in the classroom, a description of what students did and how they responded and an account of interactions.

Although, in analyzing these texts we recognised most of the parts of a typical lesson plan such as background information, descriptions of objectives, target groups and procedures, these texts, they did not have the typical form found, for instance, in the *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans. The part which varied considerably was the Procedures section. Whereas some lesson plans describe procedures in detail (e.g. “Drawing on history to challenge the war”, “Teaching Gulf War II”, “Rethinking the teaching of the Vietnam war”), some others (e.g. “Entering history through poetry”, “Teaching with protest songs”, “A world up close”, “Songs for global conscience”), have less explicit reference to the steps to be followed in the classroom.

Overall, in contrast to the objective account of the traditional lesson plan, we could say that the *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans provide a subjective alternative, voicing students and teachers needs, and thus suggesting a more student-centred pedagogy.

### 5.3 National Standards

Another point of difference between the two sets of lesson plans concerns formal evaluation and adherence to national standards. Contrary to *NewsHour Extra*, *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans do not include any kind of student assessment based on the suggested activities. In fact, assessment as a separate procedure does not exist, either in the form found in *NewsHour Extra* (e.g. through completion of reading comprehension questions) or in any other way. In addition, there is no reference as to how the suggested lesson plans adhere to the aims of the national standards.

To understand the significance of the extensive reference to national standards in the *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans and their absence from the *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans, it is useful to look briefly at the history of the standards and some of the issues which have been raised during their implementation. National curricula and standardised testing were at the centre of educational reform in various English-speaking and other countries during the 1990s (Tyler 1999). Discussion about national standards in the US originated in early eighties when policy makers primarily called for national intervention in education (Kirst and Guthrie 1994: 159). World-class content standards and a set of achievement tests in five core subjects were announced by President Bush in 1990, a position

which was followed by the Clinton administration in the later years. 'National standards' and 'performance assessment' became the buzz words of the 1990s in US education. Educators, administrators and policy makers were to decide whether and how they would incorporate national standards into their program of study, but more often than not there was disagreement among them as to what quality standards are (Rhoads, Sieber and Slayton 1996).

Apple (1993, 1996) views national standards as part of the neo-conservative agenda which aims to centralise control over 'official knowledge', and of the neo-liberal agenda which aims to turn schools into places whose primary function is to meet the needs of the economy, viewing students merely as future employees. On the other hand, national curricula have been seen as a defensive and protective device of an 'imagined national past' (Tyler 1999) which reaffirms national shared knowledges and values and produces subjects with a national identity (cf. Dendrinos 2001). Drawing on the above, it is not surprising that *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans, which voice the official view of the country on the topic of the Iraq war, also follow closely the official position of incorporating national standards in education. Therefore, through their content as well as their form (genre), these lesson plans support the US official programme in every possible way: both at the political and at the educational levels. On the other hand, it is not surprising that the *Rethinking Schools* site, which promotes an alternative view to education and which strongly supports the public nature of education, as stated in its introductory page, does not include any reference to national standards, in agreement with the aforementioned criticism. It would not then be unrealistic to suggest that the incorporation of the National Standards section in the *NewsHour Extra* lesson plans and their total absence from the *Rethinking Schools* lesson plans is perhaps related to the position adopted by site editors concerning this complex issue in the history of US education. Eventually, as Street (1995: 125) argues, "the pedagogized literacy... becomes an organizing concept around which ideas of social identity and value are defined; what kinds of collective identity we subscribe to, what kind of nation we want to belong to".

## 6. The great divide and the grand narratives

From the above analysis it becomes clear that the two sites do not merely present two different views on the war but, perhaps most importantly, aim at constructing different pedagogic subjects. On the one hand, *NewsHour Extra* clearly

attempts to manage pedagogic discourse in the line of the official US politics concerning the war. It may be seen as an articulation of 'compulsory patriotism' (Apple 2002: 305) recontextualised in lesson plans, and this may be the main reason why the opposite side is not voiced. The lesson plans of *NewsHour Extra* attempt to restrict the possibility of the creation of what Bernstein (1996: 44) called a 'potential discursive gap'. They do so through meanings which "create and unite two worlds": in this case, the students' and teachers' world with the world of the official US administration. Teachers are construed as professionals who produce and consume technical documents. They are willing to promote national standards and, at moments of crisis, such as this one, they help their student "follow the aftermath of war". Their task is restricted though to the implementation of pre-specified steps: information and materials needed for the completion of the lesson are all provided as well as detailed instructions concerning how to use them. No initiative is left to the teacher. Professionalism is based on objective accounts of the teaching situation, and there is not any reference to the effects of teaching. Students are expected to respond to the suggested activities according to the pre-specified lesson plan objectives and to develop skills in attaining national standards. Moreover, they are good patriots and they are proud of their country's glorious past and present.

On the other hand, the lesson plans in *Rethinking Schools* promote the creation of a 'potential discursive gap' aiming at differently thinking pedagogic subjects. They develop a critical stance towards the official US politics concerning the war, and through the lesson plans they suggest an alternative pedagogy, urging students towards the 'yet to be thought' in Bernstein's words (1996: 44). In this realm, teachers are construed as active participants in the pedagogic practice who are invited to select their own teaching materials from a variety of available resources. Here, the opposite side exists only to be refuted and the context is given: both students and teachers are assumed to adopt an anti-war position and to become missionaries or activists who restore truth and reverse misplaced views developing students' critical awareness. Generally, students seem to be easily convinced to adopt the suggested alternative explanation of events, and there is little account of their reservations or resistance.

A further difference between the two sites refers to the way each site adopts a global and local perspective (Apple 2002). In the case of *NewsHour Extra*, despite frequent references to 'coalition forces', the war is seen from a local point of view, as a US-Iraq war. There is no reference to the rest of the world or any attempt to discuss cultural, religious or other aspects. In *Rethinking Schools* there is a systematic attempt to connect the local with the global, the current

situation with previous situations in the past, the Iraq war with broader US foreign affairs and interests.

It is clear that the wider political conflict on the issue of the Iraq war finds its pedagogic equivalent in the two pedagogies described above, the 'dominant' and the 'critical'. The divide is great in this case too in most of the aspects that have been examined in this text. Our purpose has not been to question these pedagogies — this has already been covered extensively (see, for instance, Apple 1993, 2002, Koutsogiannis 2004, Lankshear 1997, Muspratt et al. 1997, Pennycook 2001) — but to foreground their deeper political nature (Gee 1996).

Closing, we would like to account for yet another reading of the above findings. It seems that in the late-modern period of fragmentation (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999), the grand narratives of nation, on the one hand, and (international) justice, on the other, are coming back — have they ever faded away? — and, quite surprisingly, by different pedagogies. Despite much theoretical discussion on the matter, any attempt to pedagogise issues related to nation and justice seems to raise more questions than provide answers. Apple's account of dealing with 11 September in the classroom is indicative of this controversy:

"I also had strong teacherly dispositions that this was also not the time to engage in a pedagogy of imposition. One could not come across as saying to students or the public, 'Your understandings are simply wrong; your feelings of threat and anger are selfish; any voicing of these emotions and understanding won't be acceptable'. This could be among the most counter-productive pedagogies imaginable." (Apple 2002: 302–303)

## Notes

1. The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this comment.
2. We have in mind Greek patriotic films and TV serials of the '60s and early '70s whose stories aimed at promoting national ideals and celebrating the uniqueness and significance of Greek culture. Several of these films were promoted in Greek primary and secondary schools during the dictatorship years, 1967–1974, for obvious reasons.
3. Available at [http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/18\\_01/roc181.shtml](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/18_01/roc181.shtml)

## References

- Apple, Michael W. 1993. The politics of official knowledge: Does a national curriculum make sense? *Teachers College Records* 95(2), 222–241.

- Apple, Michael W. 1996. Being popular about national standards: A review of *National Standards in American Education: A Citizen's Guide*. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 4(10). <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v4n10.html> (retrieved 6/11/2003).
- Apple, Micheal W. 2002. Pedagogy, patriotism, and democracy: On the educational meanings of 11 September 2001. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 23(3), 299–308.
- Atkinson, Dwight. 1997. A critical approach to critical thinking in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly* 31(1), 71–94.
- Bernstein, Basil. 1996. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity. Theory, Research, Critique*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Chilton, Paul. 2002. Do something! Conceptualising responses to the attacks of 11 September 2001. *Journal of Language and Politics* 1(1), 181–195.
- Chouliaraki, Lilie and Fairclough Norman. 1999. *Discourse in Late Modernity. Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Dendrinos, Bessie. 2001. European discourses of homogenization in the discourse of language planning. In: Bessie Dendrinos (ed.). *The Politics of ELT*. Athens: The University of Athens Publications, 30–42. It also appears in Macedo Donald, Dendrinos Bessie and Gounari Panayota. 2003. *The Hegemony of English*. Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 45–59.
- Ellis, Dave. 1997. *Becoming a Master Student*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gee, James P. 1996. *Social Linguistics and Literacies*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Halliday, Michael A. K. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halpern, Diane F. 1996. *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Harris, Theodore L. and Hodges, Richards E. 1981. *A Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms*. Newark, NJ: International Reading Association.
- Holly, Mary L. 1984. *Keeping a Personal-Professional Journal*. Deakin: Deakin University Press.
- Kirst, Michael W. and Guthrie, James W. 1994. Goals 2000 and a reauthorized ESEA: National standards and accompanying controversies. In: Nina Cobb (ed.). *The Future of Education: Perspectives on National Standards in America*. The National Center for Cross-Disciplinary Teaching and Learning: College Board, 157–173.
- Koutsogiannis, Dimitris. (2004). Critical techno-literacy and 'weak' languages. In: Ilana Snyder and Catherine Beavis (eds). *Doing Literacy Online: Teaching, Learning and Playing in an Electronic World*. New Jersey: Hampton Press, 163–184.
- Kress, Gunther. 1996. Representational resources and the production of subjectivity: Questions for the theoretical development of Critical Discourse Analysis in a multicultural society. In: Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (eds). *Texts and Practices*. London and New York: Routledge, 15–31.
- Kurland, Daniel J. 1995. *I Know What it Says... What does it Mean? Critical Skills for Critical Reading*. CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Lankshear, Colin. 1997. *Changing Literacies*. Buckingham: Open University Press.



- Luke, Allan. 1996. Genres of power? Literacy education and the production of capital. In: Ruqaiya Hasan and Geoff Williams (eds). *Literacy in Society*. London and New York: Longman, 308–338.
- Martin, Jim R. 1992. Critical thinking for a humane world. In: Stephen P. Norris (ed.). *The Generalizability of Critical Thinking. Multiple Perspectives on an Educational Ideal*. New York: Teachers College Press, 163–180.
- McDonough, Jo and McDonough Steven. 1997. *Research Methods for English Language Teachers*. London and New York: Edward Arnold.
- Muspratt, Sandy H., Luke, Allan and Freebody, Peter (eds). 1997. *Constructing Critical Literacies*. New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Pennycook, Alastair. 2001. *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Richards, Jack C. and Lockhart, Charles. 1994. *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rhoads, Melanie, Sieber, Ron and Slayton, Susan. 1996. Examining national standards. [http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/National\\_Standards](http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/National_Standards) (retrieved 6/11/2003)
- Street, Brian. 1995. *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education*. London and New York: Longman.
- Tyler, William. 1999. Pedagogic identities and educational reform in the 1990s: The cultural dynamics of national curricula. In: Frances Christie (ed.). *Pedagogy and the Shaping of Consciousness*. London and New York: Cassell, 262–289.
- Volosinov, V.N. 1986. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wallace, Michael J. 1998. *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walters, Kerry 1994. Critical thinking, rationality and the vulcanization of students. In: Kerry Walters (ed.). *Re-thinking Reason: New Perspectives on Critical Thinking*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1–22.

### *Authors' addresses*

Bessie Mitsikopoulou  
Department of Language and Linguistics  
Faculty of English Studies  
School of Philosophy  
National and Kapodistrian University of  
Athens  
Panepistimioupoli Zographou  
Athens 15784  
Greece

Email address: mbessie@enl.uoa.gr

Dimitris Koutsogiannis  
Department of Linguistics  
Faculty of Philology  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki  
Thessaloniki 54006  
Greece  
Email address: dkoutsog@lit.auth.gr



*About the authors*

**Bessie Mitsikopoulou** is Lecturer in the Department of Language and Linguistics, Faculty of English Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her research interests are in the areas of critical discourse analysis, educational linguistics, applications of new technologies in education, critical and academic literacies. She is the co-editor of *Policies of Linguistic Pluralism and the Teaching of Languages in Europe* (with B. Dendrinos, Athens: Metaihmio Publications and the University of Athens, 2004) and *Periphery Viewing the World* (with C. Dokou and E. Mitsi, Athens: Parousia, 2004).

**Dimitris Koutsogiannis** is Assistant Professor of literacy education in the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Philology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Deputy Director of the Portal for the Support of Greek language teachers, Centre for the Greek Language ([www.komvos.edu.gr](http://www.komvos.edu.gr)). His areas of special interest include educational linguistics, literacy and technology, literacy education, E-learning and critical discourse analysis. He is the editor of *Information-Communication Technology and Literacy: The International Experience* (Centre for the Greek Language 2001, bilingual edition).

