

The Interplay of the Global and the Local in English Language Learning and Electronic Communication Discourses and Practices in Greece

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This paper describes dominant discourses and practices which permeate English language learning and information and communication technologies (ICT). Through the adoption of a critical discourse analytic perspective, and drawing on New Literacy Studies research, it discusses how English language learning and ICT practices have come to take variable forms in the Greek context. The paper argues that, in the light of changing developments at both the European and global levels, the role of 'literacy-learning for progress and development' as a powerful social discourse over the last 40 years has taken on new meaning in contemporary globalised conditions, placing emphasis on English language learning and ICT skills development. Two distinct discourses are identified in these new versions of 'literacy learning for progress'. The first is found mainly in working class and lower middle class families and is about equipping young people with a strong 'portfolio' of formally acquired basic skills and qualifications that will ensure them future employment in the information society. The second, a 'cosmopolitan' discourse, is characterised by a more 'outward looking' or internationalist orientation. The two strands are based on different perceptions of skilling and progress.

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Introduction

This paper reports on a research project, which was organised by the Centre for the Greek Language and aimed to investigate Greek adolescents' (14–15 years old) out-of-school ICT literacy practices. The project's design was based on the premise that societies are going through a period of transition in which global discourses and practices permeate people's everyday lives, impacting on values, ideologies, literacy and language practices. In order to understand the changing language and literacy practices of Greek adolescents it is necessary to take account of these discursive shifts, including their global and local dimensions. As conceptual resources in my analysis, I draw on discourse-theoretical resources and the study of literacy as a situated social practice.

Theoretical resources

The concept of discourses used here as an analytic category draws on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) and refers to particular ways of representing and acting in the world. In a discourse-analytic perspective 'different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people' (Fairclough, 2003: 124). Informed by these understandings, this article investigates prominent discourses which permeate Greek adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices and examines them as examples of different parental strategies which are enacted in discursive practices.

The view of literacy as a social practice drawn on here is closely associated with work in the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 1996; Street, 1993). This perspective on literacy argues that literacy practices are 'always and already embedded in particular social forms of activity', and are both constructed and, at the same time, shaped by both institutionalised and informal relations of power (Baynham & Prinsloo, 2001: 83). This perspective thus recognises that there are multiple literacies, or situated communicative practices, which are always contested in relations of power. Literacy practices are seen as variably 'embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles' (Street, 2003: 77), related to conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. This ideological view of literacy (Street, 1984) also entails a discourse analytic turn. During the last decade, for instance, many literacy studies have drawn on critical discourse analysis to illuminate the connection between texts and practices (see for example the articles in the volume edited by Barton *et al.*, 2000).

Research Outline

The research project, located at the Centre for the Greek Language, was conducted from late 2005 through 2006 and included 30 ethnographic case studies over five months, 90 in-depth interviews with adolescents and parents and over 3500 detailed questionnaires returned from urban as well as rural areas of Greece, the analysis of which is still ongoing. The research combined ethnographic work with quantitative methods and semi-structured interviews, and included visits to schools in the wider area of Attica and Thessaloniki and smaller towns of northern Greece. To the best of my knowledge, it is the most extensive research project ever undertaken to explore out-of-school literacy practices in Greece. In this article I draw primarily on data from the in-depth interviews with parents and adolescents, focusing on two ethnographic case studies.

Two key methodological points informed the overall research design and are also important in the context of this article. First, ICT literacy practices should not be studied on their own but in the context of the range of out-of-school literacy practices of the adolescents and their families. Thus, the research was designed to investigate Greek adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices in general, with particular emphasis on their ICT literacies. It was hoped that this perspective would provide insight into the position of ICT literacies in relation to other out-of-school literacy practices, and the ways in which the various

literacy practices intersect with each other; in contested, complementary and other ways.

Second, since literacy practices are historically situated (Barton & Hamilton, 2000: 13), the research design needed to incorporate a diachronic dimension. In practice, this entailed a design, which would allow the investigation of Greek adolescents' personal literacy histories. It also entailed an analysis of the broader sociohistorical and cultural context (the ideology, culture and traditions) within which any attempt to understand current literacy practices needs to be located.

This paper examines the complex ways in which English language learning, understood as EFL (English as a foreign language) due to the particular position of English in the Greek context, and ICT literacy learning are interwoven in the everyday practices of Greek adolescents. These everyday practices are then considered within the context of the development of the literacy learning for 'progress and development' discourse. As suggested above, this has taken on new meaning in the light of recent changes brought about by globalisation.

Researching English Language Learning and ICT Discourses

As already mentioned, the decision to focus on the discourses and practices of English language learning and ICT literacies together derived from a number of observations and research findings which link the two. First, as found in the research data, both employ a common rhetoric concerning their usefulness in the future lives of the young people. Second, both English language learning and ICT literacies count as 'powerful' resources or cultural capital, and are thus prioritised by Greek families. Third, both are underpinned by common sense assumptions about their neutrality and both are viewed as resources which all literate people of the 21st century should develop. Fourth, for the Greek context in particular, both English and ICT skills and practices have an 'outside' dimension: they come from elsewhere, are imported and not self-invented or indigenous.

As Street (2003: 80) suggests, it is the distantness of these literacies, 'their relative power over local literacies and their "non-invented" character as far as local users are concerned' that make them 'new' and 'hegemonic'. This means that in order to study these literacies and the prominent discourses which permeate them, there has to be a theoretical framework that can characterise the relation between the 'local' and the 'distant'. We should not only attempt to understand literacy events and the patterns of activities around them, but also the various discourses and practices which link these to the broader sociohistorical context that give rise to the new local and global conditions and their complex dynamics. (For such an analysis in the Greek context, see Koutsogiannis in this volume.)

While there is interest in studying and problematising the ways in which discourses permeating 'global' literacies are instantiated at a 'local' level, especially in non-technologically advanced, English-speaking contexts, such description is of limited use unless it is placed in a broader discussion of globalised political economies of literacy. Such a perspective enables us to consider the material consequences of literacy in local sites (Luke, 2004). The material consequences of the identified discourses and practices around English language learning and ICT literacies for families and young people in Greece today are the concern here.

Recent sociolinguistic work has explored the use of English in electronic environments (eg. Bloch, 2004; Lam, 2004) and there has been a lot of discussion on the role of the English language in the new communication order (Crystal, 2003). However, there has not been any systematic research which explores the intersection between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or Second Language (ESL) learning and ICT literacies, a need identified by Snyder (2001). In order to capture the complexity of literacy practices in contemporary society, we need not only to study the various literacies as if they functioned simply on their own, but also to explore the ways through which they interact, and the discourses embodied in these practices. For instance, quite often in the study, Greek parents refer to English language learning and ICT literacies together: 'What our children need today is English and computers'. Embedded in this discourse is a naturalised assumption which acknowledges the development of English language resources as a precondition to develop ICT literacies (since 'even the simplest words are in English'). At the same time, the children reported that they mainly use English language outside the classroom on the Internet. They frequently acknowledge the benefits of English language skills for systematic use of ICT, on the Internet in particular. As 14-year-old Chara said: 'How can you learn how to use a computer if you don't know English? They are woven together, interrelated.'

The following two interview excerpts, which feature two adolescents with limited knowledge of English, are revealing about the ways that English language resources and ICT literacies are interwoven in everyday life:

In the past when my English was not good enough I had difficulty using the computer. There are some signs which cannot be translated into Greek ... for some instructions when I was trying to load a game, there were some buttons which I should ... or some codes which I should type in English and when the program would tell me, 'go there', and it was in English, I would say, Upps! Where is this? (Mary, 15)

When I first started playing a strategy game and I came across a word I didn't know in English, I saved the game and continued playing. As I played I could later understand what the game had asked me to do. If I did something I shouldn't have done because I couldn't understand what the program had asked me to do in English, I used to go back to the point I had saved my work and change what I had done, so that I didn't have to start the game from the beginning. Other times, I could guess what I needed to do from the games' short videos. (Angel, 14)

There are several issues raised in the above remarks which relate to the strategies employed by young people and their creativity, to the role of English in gaming, to their 'ways with words' (Heath, 1983), as well as to the role of multimodal texts. What stands out though is the complex ways in which English language resources and ICT literacies intersect in this supposedly 'non-English' environment, and the need to examine this further.

The New 'Power of Formal Literacy' Discourse

Out-of-school English language learning and ICT literacies are shaped by a broader discourse around the 'power of formal literacy', a dominant discourse

in Greece that first appeared under different circumstances during the 1960s and which is related to that described elsewhere as the 'autonomous model of literacy' (Street, 1984). The assumption in the autonomous model is that substantial benefits follow from basic skills development in formal literacy practices. Koutsogiannis (this volume) provides a detailed account of this discourse in Greece over the last 40 years. In the past, this discourse celebrated the importance of literacy in the Greek language and encouraged higher level education as a means of social recognition. However, recent changes led by globalisation and developments in Europe have created new literacies of power. Whereas in the past the literacy of status was related to reading and writing in the Greek language, today this discourse places particular emphasis on English language learning as well as ICT literacies, thus affecting both education policies and out-of-school literacy practices, as we shall see below.

A number of changes have been effected at the level of education policies in Greece. Over the last few years, state policies concerning foreign languages have moved in three main directions: the introduction of English language from the third grade and consideration of introducing a second foreign language later in the primary school; the changing of curricula, including the incorporation of new teaching methodologies (see New Cross-Thematic Curriculum for Compulsory Education at www.pi-schools.gr/download/programs/depps/english/14th.pdf) and the development of new textbooks to be used in state schools; and the introduction of the State Certificate of Language Proficiency.¹

At the same time, over the last decade, electronic communications development has been considered as fundamental to the country's modernisation programme (see, for instance, related survey of the Southeast Europe Investment Guide 2006 at www.seeurope.net/en/pdf/ig2006/At_Glance.pdf) with both the Greek government and the European Union funding the upgrading of the country's technological structure in education, government² and business. In state education there have been provisions for the purchase of large number of computers and the creation of computer laboratories in schools (Greek Ministry of Education at <http://www.yppep.gr/el.ec.page2084.htm>), the connection of educational institutions to the Internet, the development of curricula for basic education (including both primary and secondary education) (Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework for ICT at www.pi-schools.gr/programs/depps/index_eng.php), the training of teachers, the development of educational software and the implementation of ICT research projects. Measures are also in effect to increase the relatively low rate of connectivity in Greece. Internet penetration is still at 33.9% of the overall population (Computer Industry Almanac, 2005, see www.c-i-a.com/) whereas broadband penetration is limited compared to other EU states³, although recent research (Mitsikopoulou & Tzanne, 2006; Nikolopoulou, 2002; Papastergiou & Solomonidou, 2002) suggests this is a transitional period for Greece which is moving towards what is often called 'an information society'.

While the Greek education system and state education policies are changing the curricula and books to account for the changes brought about by economic and cultural globalisation and the outcomes of their effects remain to be seen, Greek families undertake to provide the conditions for the linguistic

and technological development of their children. In fact, out-of-school practices have, to a large extent, become formalised in the Greek context, involving a number of material and financial consequences for the Greek families. Perhaps the most well known structured form of out-of-school literacy practices is small-to medium-sized private language centres, known as *frontistiria*, which provide extra, user-pays evening classes. Most children in Greece from the time they are eight years old attend evening classes, ranging from three to six 45-minute lessons per week to improve their knowledge of English.⁴ Only a small number of students whose families can afford private tutoring learn English at home, and most immigrant students learn through the medium of English only at school. According to a 2003 survey,⁵ one million students in Greece attend foreign language institutes, and Greek families spend more than 750 million euros per year on out-of-school foreign language learning and an extra 30 million euros on books (EFL teaching at *frontistiria* is textbook-based and students are overloaded with a lot of books every year. In fact, there is a local flourishing ELT publishing market). Because of this family investment in English language learning, there is a lot of pressure on students to obtain language certificates, at least to the B2 level.⁶ This affects the quality and kind of education offered and as a result a lot of English language teaching in Greece is oriented towards particular types of exams. In fact, as stated in the official site of the British Embassy in Athens at www.british-embassy.gr approximately two thirds of all those worldwide who sit for the Cambridge Certificates in English are Greeks.

For out-of-school ICT development, parents' associations in primary schools often fund afternoon ICT courses, offered as an 'extra' at school. In addition, a number of private firms offer evening classes on ICT literacies. For instance, franchise companies aiming at earlier ages (for instance, Future Kids at <http://www.futurekids.edu.gr>) introduce children to new technologies through project work, while others specialise in preparation for ICT literacy certificates, eg. ECDL certificates.

ICT courses have also been offered by language centres in fully equipped computer laboratories. Since the late 80s, some language centres expanded their business and started to offer ICT literacy courses. They had a marketing advantage over the other language centres as they advertised the use of an innovative method: computer-assisted language learning. Today, it is common practice for many language centres to have their students visit their computer labs regularly (eg. once a week), often to do with computers what they used to do with print (eg. multiple choice tests), and other drill-based language exercises of what has been called 'first generation educational computer software'. The potential of new technologies has rarely been explored at these centres. However, even the mere mention of the word 'computer' in brochures and advertising labels for these centres satisfies parents who proudly proclaim that their children learn English with computers.

From the above it becomes clear that the linguistic and cultural capital associated with the 'power of formal literacy' has variously affected out-of-school English language learning and ICT literacies. First, Greek families today attach great importance to the development of ICT literacies and English language learning, and they invest heavily in out-of-school related activities. In fact, the impact of this out-of-school investment is so great and so extensive that it has led

to a new appreciation of the priorities of the Greek families, and as claimed by the recent National Statistics Service survey (NSS, reported at www.statistics.gr), it has affected consumer habits over the last 20 years. Second, the development of out-of-school English language learning and ICT literacies has taken a unique structural form leading to 'curricularisation' (Buckingham & Scanlon, 2001) of out-of-school learning.

Similar tendencies have been identified in other contexts. For instance, Buckingham and Scanlon (2005: 41) argue that parents in the UK are being placed under pressure by the UK government to invest in their children's education 'by providing additional resources at home'. They particularly refer to the commercial provision of supplementary classes, a practice which they characterise as a 'largely unregulated market'.

In the case of Greece, however, out-of-school learning takes a distinctive direction, where classes are set up in ways that are very similar to school practices (eg. adolescents systematically attend structured afternoon classes). The direction followed is therefore not simply a local version of the global, as has often been claimed (cf. Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou, 2003). Instead, we could talk here about a 'glocal' (Robertson, 1995) situation, a local version of a global phenomenon in literacy studies, which involves a locally distinctive appropriation of global practices and giving rise to new discourses and practices.

The 'Progress and Development' Discourse

Within the broader discourse of the 'power of formal literacy' two main discourses concerning English language learning and ICT literacies have been found to emerge. The first is a 'progress and development' discourse with a local orientation, found primarily in families from lower socioeconomic classes. In their attempt to enhance their children's English language learning and ICT literacies, these families invest in out-of-school practices with the aim of enriching their children's portfolio with English and ICT certificates and diplomas, thus feeling that they are preparing them to participate in local Greek forms of the knowledge-based society. Important, then, in this discourse is the development of English language resources and ICT literacies for future employment. This emphasis on employment, prominent in the data, may be related to the decision of the Greek state (see www.asep.gr) a few years ago to include in its requirements for any state position, whether temporary or permanent, certified knowledge of English at a particular level (B2) and some kind of ICT certification. While the local orientation of this discourse relates to the preparation of youths for the local job market ('that's what employers want'), the influence of the European Union is often acknowledged here. In addition to employment, the benefits of English language learning and ICT literacies for everyday life are stressed, primarily by parents who lacked English language resources and/or ICT literacies and would like their children to have them. The main elements of the 'progress and development' discourse are presented below through an illustrative profile of a young participant in the study.

Roxan: Example of progress and development discourse

Roxan, a 15-year-old girl, attends the third year of *gymnasium*⁷ in one of the less privileged areas in the west part of Athens. She lives nearby with her younger brother and sister and her mother, who works in a small shop selling pies. Despite her parents' separation, her father lives in the area and is involved in family decisions. Roxan is a very low school achiever, partly due to severe dyslexia, a hindrance which also affects her natural speech production. For this reason she has decided not to continue her studies in the *lyceum* (the senior high school) but will probably attend a technical school. Roxan spends most of her free time watching TV, mostly TV serials and reality shows: 'TV is always turned on in our house.'

Roxan started learning English at a language centre when she was in the fifth grade, but two years later she stopped as she had great difficulty especially with productive skills (speaking and writing). However, she plans to go back to the same language centre which has a special class for '2nd chance learners' or returners:

If I go to enroll now, they [parents] won't agree, so I say wait until I've grown up a little and then I will go from the beginning. There is a class you do for three years and you start from scratch, you learn English again, some things, to read. I remember most stuff, I remember ABC, to count, and read. When I hear English, sometimes I can understand it but I cannot speak it.

Despite limited finances, the family owns a number of technological goods such as mobile phones for every member of the family and two game consoles (Playstation 1 and 2), as well as a computer which is used by all members of the family. Roxan's mother uses Excel to keep track of family expenses, while Roxan loves drawing and uses a drawing program. She also uses the computer to write her own poems, decorates them with pictures and keeps them in PowerPoint slides. However, she neither has a printer at home to print her work (at the time of the interview she was saving money for a printer) nor does she have internet access. However, since September 2005, Roxan has been attending evening computer classes to obtain a European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) certificate and she has covered the basic units. As she says:

We need ECDL to get a job, when I grow up and will have to get a job. No matter what this job is to be, we'll have to know information technology, English and generally foreign languages, to help us in our job.

Roxan's ambitions are consistent with the 'progress and development' narratives around English language learning and ICT skills development. Despite the economic problems faced by Roxan's family and her dyslexia, her parents have invested in both English classes and ICT literacy development, aiming to equip her with the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that will enable her to function effectively in her future professional life. The focus on ECDL has a purpose for Roxan: not only that she can develop ICT literacy but in addition acquire the required certificates to enhance her opportunities for future, white-collar employment.

The 'Cosmopolitan' Discourse

The second prominent discourse is a 'cosmopolitan' discourse, with an international, 'outward looking' orientation and found mainly in families from middle and upper socioeconomic classes. Taking for granted their children's advanced ICT literacies and English language competence, these parents build upon them by providing their children with additional material and other resources. The focus of these families is not on collecting various certificates and diplomas for their children's portfolio but in preparing their children to become citizens of the world. Whereas in the case of the 'progress and development' discourse, where out-of-school English learning and ICT literacy learning seem to operate in the direction of formal literacy practices, in the case of the 'cosmopolitan' discourse, involvement with English and new technologies constitute part of the everyday life of adolescents in both in-school and out-of-school practices. Advanced knowledge of English and new technologies is here taken as a given, and not as an educational aim. Moreover, the focus here is not on the local (eg. local market, local education etc.) but on an 'outward' orientation. Related activities involve family trips abroad, preparation for studies abroad, purchase of goods such as latest technological gadgets, reading of international press and English literature, among others. The case study described below illustrated these points.

Giannis: Example of 'cosmopolitan' discourse

Giannis is in the third year of *gymnasium*, attending one of the most prestigious private schools in Greece. His father owns an architecture firm, and his mother is a philologist who works in her father's business, a chain of car stores. They live, together with his twelve-year-old sister, in an elegant suburb north of Athens in a complex of three luxurious villas which they own. Their house has been photographed several times for lifestyle magazines. The family also owns a flat in Washington DC which they visit every summer for a month. At home in Greece, the extended family meets for lunch every Sunday, including grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles. They also go on holidays together, using their mini van when travelling in Greece, but also abroad quite regularly.

Giannis is an achiever at school. It is important for him to get good grades so that he can go to a good university in the future. He will probably choose between becoming an architect like his father, or a doctor like his uncle who is a successful cardiac surgeon in the US. In fact, Giannis hopes that his uncle's reputation will help him to be accepted into a US university to study medicine without having to go through the pre-medical programme. Despite the fact that he wants to study abroad, Giannis wants to sit for the Pan-Hellenic matriculation examinations which will qualify him to enter a Greek university. In addition to his studies, he also talks about becoming a successful businessman, like his grandfather, and is thinking of focusing on real estate which seems financially promising as a future. His ultimate aim is to become an MP in the Greek parliament after the age of 50: 'I want to play a leading role, I cannot be simply a spectator ... and through politics which plays a decisionmaking role ... I think I can achieve it.'

As a child he had an English nanny and because of his excellent command of English he attended the ENL (English as a Native Language) programme

in his school taking courses such as geography, economics and psychology in English. He reads a lot of English literature (he likes Agatha Christie and Sherlock Holmes) and he buys the *Herald Tribune* every week from the kiosk in his neighborhood which sells mainly foreign publications. He is interested in international politics and has recently written a report on Iran for his school magazine. In addition to English, he also takes private lessons in Spanish, a language he considers useful for his planned studies in the US, as well as German, which he does not particularly like but thinks would be good to know. He says that he has always watched only international programmes on satellite TV and channels in cable TV (NOVA) such as Discovery, Animal Plant and Super Sport, rather than local programmes. The other members of the family also watch cable TV, his mother preferring the History Channel.

Giannis is a competent user of new technologies. There are two computers in his house and he uses one very often for school projects. His school places a lot of emphasis on new technologies and at an early age, when he was in third grade, he learned how to type fast. He claims he has an extensive electronic archive with information on a variety of topics, all in English. He uses word processors, PowerPoint for presentations and often does projects on his own initiative. He once wrote a book presenting the Greek football teams. The texts were written in English, accompanied by photographs. His purpose for doing this was to promote Greek football which, in his view, has been treated unfairly by the international press. The book was bound and a few copies were sent to his uncle in the States and to some English friends he met while on holidays, while a few other copies were sold in school. This year he is preparing an improved edition of the book on his computer.

Giannis has developed a cosmopolitan profile which, to a great extent, has been enabled by his family's economic situation. Some of the practices which have shaped Giannis' international, outward-oriented profile include: having a house abroad, learning English proficiently as a child with an English nanny, reading literature in English, and reading English and American newspapers, having the intention to study abroad, showing interest in international politics, watching mainly satellite rather than local TV, and using the computer to write a book for an international audience to promote Greek football.

Parental Strategies and Preparation for the Future

Following Fairclough's argument (2005) that strategies are enacted in and through discourses, the 'progress and development' and the 'cosmopolitan' discourses can be seen to be indicative of two very different types of parental strategies and expectations for their children's futures.

Clearly, in the case of the 'progress and development' discourse, parental strategies tend to have a local orientation, and English language learning and ICT development seem to be the main aim of out-of-school investment. Indeed, according to the NSS 2006 survey (reported at www.statistics.gr), poorer families in Greece spend 72% more on out-of-school lessons (including on English and ICT courses) than wealthier families. This surprising finding can be explained on the basis of an old argument, according to which literacy is said to improve people's lives, and it can thus be seen as an indicator of high anxiety levels

amongst parents from lower socioeconomic levels, concerned to equip their children with the qualifications which will enhance their future career and life opportunities.

In the case of the 'cosmopolitan' discourse, parental strategies have a more 'outward' looking orientation. The notion of cosmopolitanism has, of course, historically been confined to elites and has been used to refer to those who are as comfortable abroad as they are at home and whose identities locate them both here and there, inside and outside. However, Silverstone (2007: 11) argues that globalisation has brought about an intensification of the condition of cosmopolitanism together with an increasing legitimisation of cosmopolitan status, due to the possibilities offered by the new media. He suggests that cosmopolitanism 'will stand as an actuality (for some), a possibility (for many) and as the basis for a plausible moral foundation of a global civic society (for all)' (Silverstone, 2007: 12).

Let us return for a minute to the two cases identified above. On the one hand, there is Roxan, a female adolescent with first language literacy problems, attending a state school in a relatively poor district outside Athens, and of a low socioeconomic background; on the other hand, there is Giannis, a male adolescent and a high achiever in one of the best schools in Athens, from a wealthy and upper-middle socioeconomic background. They are both users of new technologies, however, their practices differ significantly. For instance, whereas both adolescents watch TV, Roxan spends most of her free time watching whatever is on local TV, while Giannis selectively watches only NOVA and satellite TV, ignoring the Greek channels which he doesn't value. Although both young people get involved with new technologies, Giannis's school offers him the opportunity to capitalise on the ICT literacies he has developed since primary school, and on one occasion he produced a book in English to promote Greek football to non-Greeks, which he sent to English-speaking countries. In attending a school which does not place priority on ICT literacies, Roxan and her fellow students, in contrast to Giannis, have to turn towards the private sector to develop additional ICT literacies.

The differences identified in the two cases clearly have their origins in different class positioning. But to what extent does this class dynamic exclude other variables? Undoubtedly, issues of gender, wealth and access to globalising resources, as well as overall literacy proficiency, make the situation much more complex than it first appears. For example, initial statistical findings from the quantitative part of the project provide an interesting account with regard to ICT literacies and skill training, as the following discussion shows. From a random sample of 1000 questionnaires (out of a total of about 4000), which have been statistically processed, a clear pattern emerges: whereas in private schools there is no statistically significant difference between the number of boys and girls who have a computer at home, there is a statistically significant difference on this issue between boys and girls who attend state schools, with boys having the lead. This is just one of the many investigated features, but is indicative of different parental strategies: whereas gender does not seem to be an important variable in adolescents' involvement with new technologies in private schools, it continues to be important for adolescents attending state schools. It seems, therefore, that wealthier families, who mostly send their children to private schools and whose

practices are permeated by an outward-looking, 'cosmopolitan development' discourse, equip boys and girls equally with training in new technologies. On the other hand, it seems that for less affluent families, whose children in general attend state schools and whose practices are permeated mostly by a 'progress and development' discourse, gender still continues to be an issue.

Conclusion

Kanno (2003) argues that different schools envision different future trajectories for their students, which in turn frame their policies and practices. From the above analysis it seems that different parental orientations and strategies envision different future trajectories for children which in turn frame children's practices. While the two case studies reported above indicate two distinct discourses and consequently two different parental strategies, in practice a number of variations have been identified in relation to these two strategies, variations which adopt more or less elements of the 'progress and development' or of the 'cosmopolitan' discourse. It is clear, however, that different parental strategies clearly envision children as members of different 'imagined communities' (Kanno & Norton, 2003). In designing their children's future (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), families enact ideas about different 'imagined communities' and imagined futures for their children.

Further, our data clearly suggest that parents regard English language learning and ICT literacies as literacies of power (Macedo, 2006; Warschauer, 2003), an important part of the knowledge and cultural capital they want to give to their children. Despite socioeconomic factors and different parental strategies employed, the fact remains that Greek families, especially of lower socioeconomic status, invest heavily in out-of-school development of these literacies.

A main purpose of this article has been to explore several of the main discourses permeating English language learning and ICT literacies, and to explore the degree to which these discourses have been affected by wider changes and new social conditions. For instance, changes which occurred during the last decades in Greece have affected social structures and social practices and have led to discourse change. One such example is the 'power of formal literacy' discourse which was found to have taken on new meanings and content in the light of recent developments. English language learning and ICT literacies hold a prominent position in this discourse since they are construed as offering opportunities for communication and employment, both at a local and at a European level. We could say that this discourse is perhaps indicative of an attempt to adjust to the conditions of the new world order.

The fact that Greece is now included in the European Union (EU) has been an important influence in shifting discourses and practices (Lykou, 2004) and has been influential in both of the identified parental strategies, although realised differently. Amongst the families studied in the research project, the international dimension is often linked to the European Union and the '*cosmos*' is often considered to be a symptom of Europe in the 'cosmopolitan' discourse. Even in the case of the 'progress and development' discourse, the notion of the strong 'portfolio' has become more methodically implemented after the introduction of

the 'European Language Portfolio' (cf. Panthier, 2004). It has been the purpose of the broader study of which this article is a part to reveal aspects of the local version of a new world order in one specific context, and the European dimension is important in this regard, while being only one of the parameters to be taken into account. The investigation of the discourses of English language learning and ICT literacies has revealed that this locality (Prinsloo, 2005) operates in much more complex ways than usually presented. In the process of examining the global–local dialectics, one has to take into account a number of factors related to social conditions of the specific locality in specific historical moments. It is suggested that any findings and tendencies which may be derived from the study should be approached in this light.

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Notes

1. See the website of the State Certificate of Language Proficiency at www.ypepth.gr/kpg and the Research Centre for English Language Teaching, Testing and Assessment of the Faculty of English Studies, University of Athens, at www.cc.uoa.gr/english/rcel
2. For e-government in Greece see Hahamis *et al.*, 2005.
3. According to Eurostat data (2004), the broadband penetration rate in Greece was 0.2% in 2004, with an average 6.5% for the other 25 EU states. See <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>
4. In the past, foreign language institutes used to offer other language courses as well, e.g. in French and German, yet today a lot have focused on English only due to increased demand.
5. Reported in 'Free education is too expensive' (30/3/2003) *TO VIMA* at <http://tovima.dolnet.gr> Article code: B13825A482.
6. Level is according to the *Common European Framework*. The minimum requirement in order to get a state job position.
7. The equivalent of the third year of junior high school and the last year of compulsory education in Greece.

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