FROM GREEK SCHOOL TO GREEK’S COOL

HERITAGE LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN ONTARIO
AND THE ARISTOTELES CREDIT PROGRAM:
USING WEBLOGS FOR TEACHING THE GREEK LANGUAGE IN CANADA

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Heritage Language Education is considered the cornerstone of Canada’s multiculturalism policy. In Ontario, the mission to preserve the cultural capital of the various ethnic communities is carried out primarily by non-profit organizations and groups with limited official support.

My thesis is the autobiographical inquiry of an internationally educated teacher who is involved in a Greek language credit program in Toronto. My commitment to understanding the needs of the new generation of learners guided me through a series of professional development initiatives and the creation of an educational blog which is currently used by students, parents and teachers of the Aristoteles Credit School.

By presenting my experiences as I navigated the multidimensionality of HLE in Ontario, I hope to offer a case of a bottom-up reform attempt which is based on transformative pedagogy and brings heritage language education to the epicentre of community activity and educational change in the 21st century.
Acknowledgements

"I owe to my parents my life and to my teacher my well-being (good life.)"

These great words of Alexander the Great (Wood, 1998) encapsulate the role of teacher and education and provide me with the opportunity to begin this writing adventure by acknowledging those who have played pivotal roles in my life. My teachers may have not been as glorious as Aristotle, but the name of Aristotle is connected to my research because it is the name of the school where I work. The Aristoteles School is not in Greece, the place where I was born and educated, but in Canada, the place where I chose to emigrate in search of my own Ithaca (Fagles R. 1996).

I owe my life to my parents, two people who were unlucky, as they did not have the same opportunities that I enjoyed, but who had the wisdom and the willingness to provide them for me. My mother and my father did not even graduate from elementary school—given the harsh conditions brought to Greece by the Second World War, the years when they were supposed to be educated. Nevertheless, before I even started school, when I was only five years old, they sent me to learn English and thus provided me with the foundation for this life journey that brought me here today. My parents gave me both life and a good life because of the choices they made for me when I did not have the physical and mental maturity to make decisions on my own; they cultivated my land so that I could live better than they did.

Throughout the course of this paper, I refer to parents as key partners of teachers in the educational field as, in my opinion, those two factors working closely together can achieve much more than even the most advanced education systems, programs, facilities, infrastructure and policies. Indeed, since my focus is heritage languages, in which the components of identity and
tradition are instrumental, it is impossible to project success in schooling and teaching without the active support of interested parents.

Another person responsible for my “good life” is my teacher of my last three years of elementary school in Greece, Elias Papanastasiou. Gifted with the talent of creating and telling wonderful stories, he was a great teacher. When he spoke, I loved to listen to him so much that I gave him my full attention. I didn't want to miss a single word of his stories. My concentration on his narratives proved to be of enormous benefit to me. Thanks to this dynamic teacher, I realized that our lives are full of stories, and I learned how to enjoy and to analyze them. I also learned that if you enjoy stories (as the narrator or the listener), then you have a serious advantage if you choose to become a teacher.

Many others have contributed so far to my well-being and it is impossible to list them all here but I will refer to the most recent ones.

Momoye Sugiman was my ESL teacher when I was refreshing my English skills before taking proficiency exams to receive certification of my teaching status in Canada. She was the one who made me feel welcome in the Canadian education scene, encouraging and guiding me to give continuity to my studies and pursue the Canadian dream.

The people whom I met at OISE—professors, support staff and colleagues—are those who have been contributing to my well-being in this present turn of my life. I am particularly thankful to Pericles Trifonas, my academic advisor, and Jim Cummins, a member of my thesis committee and a source of inspiration. They have been mentoring, advising and reinforcing me at every opportunity.
My friend Betty Skoutakis supported me enormously and made me realize that getting started is more than half a job accomplished.

Magda Sigalas, my colleague and friend, helped me out in all phases of my professional adjustment in the Heritage Language reality in Canada. She played an active role in initiatives to improve our school, such as the development of an educational blog which is at the core of this study.

Finally, my wife Daphne and our two children Andreas and Matoula are my life partners. Their love is an everlasting and precious source of empowerment.

I thank them all.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements .............................................................................................. iii

Chapter 1: Introduction ......................................................................................... 1
Prolegomena ........................................................................................................... 1
Situating Myself as a Researcher ............................................................................ 3
Identification of the Problem .................................................................................. 5
Purpose and Significance of the Study .................................................................... 7
Organization of the Thesis-Research Questions ....................................................... 9

Chapter 2: Method: Narrative Inquiry ................................................................. 13
Introduction ............................................................................................................ 13
Selecting a Method and the Importance of Experience in Education .................... 14
Gathering Experiences as Research Material ......................................................... 17
Education and Narration ......................................................................................... 19
Narrative Inquiry and Analysis ............................................................................. 20
My Narrative Navigation ......................................................................................... 22
Limitations of the Study and Ethical Considerations ............................................. 23
Conclusions ............................................................................................................ 25

Chapter 3: Literature Review ............................................................................... 27
Introduction ............................................................................................................ 27
PART A: Greek Presence in Canada: Educating the Third Generation .................... 28
The journey ............................................................................................................. 28
Political participation and organization. ................................................................. 30
Toronto’s Greek Community .................................................................................. 33
Greektown .............................................................................................................. 34
The missing link ..................................................................................................... 36
Student profiles ..................................................................................................... 37
The program limitations .......................................................................................... 40
Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 42
Part B: Heritage Languages in Ontario: Rhetoric, Ambiguities and Instructors ........ 44
The faith schools public funding debate and the lost opportunity. ......................... 44
Heritage languages: The suspended step of the stork ............................................ 47
From heritage to international languages ............................................................... 51
Teaching on the Sidelines ....................................................................................... 55
A Study of Greek Language Education in Canada ................................................ 59
The trans-generational leak .................................................................................... 60
The grievances of teachers ..................................................................................... 60
Conclusion: From History to Action ..................................................................... 61
Part C: Blogs in Education .................................................................................... 63
Introduction .......................................................................................................... 63
Weblogs ................................................................................................................ 66
The history of weblogs. .......................................................................................... 67
Web 2.0 tools. ................................................................. 68
Blog features. ................................................................. 69
Edublogs. ......................................................................... 70
Applications on educational blogs. .................................. 80
Pedagogical Analysis....................................................... 88
Conclusion......................................................................... 90

Chapter 4: From Greek School ........................................ 92
The "Aristoteles" Credit School.......................................... 92
History............................................................................... 92
Operation.......................................................................... 93
Students........................................................................... 94
Teachers. ........................................................................... 95
Parents............................................................................... 97
Administration.................................................................... 99
Stakeholders..................................................................... 100
Advantages and disadvantages. ....................................... 101
In the hallways................................................................. 104
A discussion with Andreas............................................... 105
The agreement between Andreas and Cummins.............. 107
Looking upward............................................................... 108
Looking inside myself...................................................... 110
OISE and the "Routes"...................................................... 111
Conclusion: Overcoming Fear Is the Beginning of Wisdom ...................................................... 116

Chapter 5: To Greek's Cool ............................................... 119
Entering the Second Century of Greek-Language Education in Toronto ......................................... 119
Consciousness.................................................................... 121
Learning From the Students ............................................. 122
Teaching, Learning and Playing at www.easterngr.blogspot.com .................................................. 124
The language...................................................................... 124
The objectives.................................................................... 125
Commencement............................................................... 128
Name and Colours ........................................................... 128
Photographs and Multi-Disciplinarity ............................... 129
The First Posts ................................................................. 130
The First Partners ............................................................ 131
The Sidebar Column......................................................... 131
The Presentation to Parents and Students ....................... 140
The Blog as a Benchmark of the School ......................... 141
The Blog and Our Identity ............................................... 141
The Blog and Local History ............................................. 142
Our Greek Fat Blog: The Blog as a Connector to Other Ethnic Communities ................................. 144
Discovering the "Others" Through the Blog .................... 145
The Blog and the Significance of the Greek Language .... 146
Resources and Tools......................................................... 148
The Frustrations ......................................................................................................................... 149
Other Initiatives ........................................................................................................................ 150
Archives and Alumni .................................................................................................................. 150
Parent Council .......................................................................................................................... 151
Student Council ...................................................................................................................... 152
Guest Speakers ....................................................................................................................... 152
Community Involvement ......................................................................................................... 153
Links to Universities .............................................................................................................. 154
New Events ............................................................................................................................. 154
Summer Camps ....................................................................................................................... 155
Epilogue .................................................................................................................................... 155
References ................................................................................................................................ 161
List of Figures

Figure 1. The networked teacher (Couros, 2006)........................................................................72
Figure 2. Nested pedagogical orientations (Cummins, 2007, p. 7)............................................79
Figure 3. “A framework for maximizing literacy engagement and literacy attainment among CLD students” (Cummins, 2007, p. 16)......................................................................81

List of Appendices

Appendix A A Project Is Posted ..................................................................................................174
Appendix B Posts of Film Reviews by the Students of “Aristoteles” ...........................................175
Appendix C Notification for the Program “Routes”.....................................................................177
Appendix D E-Mail to the Director of the Program “Routes” ......................................................179
Appendix E Memo to the Director of Education of the Greek Community of Toronto ..........181
Appendix F My Application for Admission in the “Routes” ......................................................182
Appendix G E-Mail to the Director of “Routes” for the Acceptance of More Applicants From Toronto ...........................................................................................................................184
Appendix H The Program “Routes” .............................................................................................185
Appendix I Chronology of Multiculturalism in Canada (1948-2005) ........................................186
Appendix J Links and Resources ...................................................................................................188
Appendix K Blog Posts ..................................................................................................................189
Appendix L Announcement by the Greek Ministry of Education for the Cancellation of Greek Teacher Secondments Abroad for the School Year 2009-2010 ................................................191
Appendix M History of Greeks in Canada .....................................................................................192
Appendix N Elected Canadians of Greek Descent .......................................................................193
Chapter 1:
Introduction

Prolegomena

“To The Unknown Priest and Teacher of the Dodecanese
The Homeland Grateful 1309-1947”

For more than six centuries, the Dodecanese, a Greek island complex comprised of twelve major and several smaller islands in the southeastern Aegean Sea, remained under foreign occupation.

In the 13th century, the Italians began invading portions of the Dodecanese; Venetians and Genoese each held some islands for brief periods. In the 14th century, the islands were taken
by forces of the Knights of St. John. Rhodes, the largest of all, was conquered in 1309, along
with the rest of the islands over the subsequent few decades.

In 1522, Rhodes fell to the army of Suleiman the Magnificent and a period of several
hundred years of Ottoman rule began. Then the islands were invaded once more by the Italians in
1912. Following the Second World War, the Dodecanese became a British military protectorate
and were formally united with Greece in 1947 (Foundation of the Hellenic World, 2007).

How is it possible that the people of the Dodecanese managed to preserve their Greek
identity after so many centuries of rule by the Italians, the Knights, the Ottomans and the British?
A small monument, pictured above, now located in front of the Teachers College in Rhodes,
provides us with a brief explanation: “The homeland is grateful to the unknown priest and
teacher of the Dodecanese” [for the preservation of national identity, which did not fade despite a
prolonged foreign occupation].

Often do I visit Rhodes and the surrounding islands during my summer vacations in
Greece. Being a teacher, I could not help noticing the above monument among the other more
significant and attractive tourist sights—castles, churches, temples of various historical periods.
Hidden from the eyes of the tourists is this small sign of genuine appreciation. I cannot help
wondering about the untold stories of brave teachers of the past who did for their countries a lot
more than following a curriculum or official guidelines.

Being a heritage language teacher in Canada is about appreciating, respecting and
preserving cultural identities. It is not about fighting foreign rulers as no one is foreign here.
Culturally, we are all unique, yet we live in harmony. As a teacher of the 21st century, I strive to
become worthy of those great ancestors who are not remembered individually but are and will
always be acknowledged for what they have achieved.
Thus, I dedicate this thesis to the teachers of the world because I know that they work with their hearts as much as they work with their minds. I wish that they could all be remembered and recognized for their contribution to humanity.

**Situating Myself as a Researcher**

When I began my studies at the Maraslios Teachers College in Athens, I was under the impression that the main protagonists of education are the students and their teachers. I thought that these two groups of partners, clearly influenced by other stakeholders, were the key players and those who determine how successful or not the relationship between teaching and learning might be in any educational practice.

Over the years, as I gained experience, I came to realize that there are other factors that determine what happens in a school community. There are stakeholders who pull the strings in the educational praxis, and they influence it to such an extent that we may consider their contribution perhaps more decisive than the capacity and the working spirit of those who collaborate within the four walls of a classroom, that is, the teachers and the students.

Politics and politicians with their voters—along with the economy and entrepreneurs—are equally accountable for the accomplishment of educational objectives because they either provide conditions and cultivate the ground for an educational production to flourish or they condemn it to failure from its inception.

Having served in the education field for more than two decades, in many different posts, in two different continents and countries, I think I have the right but also the responsibility and obligation to express my humble opinion on a number of issues that I have dealt with. My current task is to explore education from the viewpoint of the researcher, as this is my new role,
one which comes after the role of student, teacher, administrator, father, immigrant, voter and citizen in a modern democracy.

My study is essentially autobiographical. Therefore, I will reflect on what I have seen and experienced under the auspices of the positions listed above. In order to become more credible and scientifically adequate, as the academic community requires for a graduate student who composes a thesis, I will engage in narrative inquiry and analysis through the perspectives and research of scholars who have experienced and analyzed in depth the educational matters which interest me.

This thesis is also an informal case study, since the initiatives that I will present further on and that have occurred within the settings of a Greek language school in Ontario, may be linked to any school that deals with Heritage Languages, regardless of the geographical location.

I dare to consider myself a specialist on the issue of Heritage Language teaching, particularly teaching the Greek language in Canada, for a number of reasons related not only to my studies but also to my own identity as an immigrant whose perceptions derive from both the place of residence and the place of origin. As an immigrant, I understand the importance of gaining recognition in the new professional and social environment. In fact, it is the driving force for my empowerment and for the sense of completion and fulfillment that any newcomer craves.

As a teacher, native speaker of Greek and student-learner of English, I also acknowledge how difficult it is to become fluent in a second language while maintaining the wealth and knowledge concentrated through the first language. Sometimes these two languages and the worlds that they represent collide. The conflict is internal and its management determines the cultural balance of the individual. Without such a delicate stability, one of these two worlds will dominate the other. However, by finding the balance, the person is empowered (Cummins, 1981)
As a parent of immigrant children, I am sensitive to the struggle to shape their own identities by combining two different worlds, two different languages, and perhaps two different philosophies.

Finally, as a citizen of two nations, I have a clear picture of the actions in the political realm which provide the conditions that enhance or restrict the opportunities for teachers and students to succeed in their work.

**Identification of the Problem**

Teachers, parents and students involved in the Heritage Language programs operate on the edges of the education map (Feuerverger, 1997), not only in terms of the host country but also in relation to the country of origin. Maintaining the dual linguistic and cultural entity of the students involved in these programs is not only to their benefit but to the benefit of the two countries involved.

 Apparently, this "benefit" is not always reflected on the practical level. For example, in Ontario, Heritage Language programs are still standing at the starting point. Besides the fact that they have been operating for more than 30 years, there has been no substantive improvement to be measured in economic or educational terms (Burnaby, 2008, p. 10-11).

The public funds dedicated to the education of immigrants in their heritage languages are minimal compared to the costs of the public education system, while the ethnic communities contribute significantly to the national growth and the international competitiveness of the country. On the other hand, the benefits that derive from the multilingual and multicultural mosaic of the province and the nation are not only known but also constitutionally documented and protected (Government of Canada, 1988).
The minimal support at the practical level for the cultivation of Heritage Languages results in minimal incentives to teachers and stakeholders to invest in professional training and development. It also limits attempts to modernize the curricula and the teaching methodology used in this marginalized education field.

While there is an explanation for inaction on the part of the host country, which we will have the opportunity to discuss later, we can also detect a similar attitude on the part of the countries of origin. If it is in the interests of Ontario and Canada to invest in strengthening the sense of ethnic identity (by facilitating the multilingual proficiency and the academic success) of their citizens, let us say the ones of Greek origin, we imagine that this goal is also of interest to Greece.

Using the example of Greece to explain how politics and the economy can affect the students in relation to Heritage Language education, one needs to mention that at least half of the seconded teachers who were sent by the Ministry of Education of Greece to enhance the Heritage Language programs of the Greek community in Toronto during the school year 2009-2010 were forced to return home due to budget cuts.

Facing major economic problems (Reuters News Agency, 2010), (Telegraph.Co.UK, 2010), the Greek government reduced the salaries of public employees, (Washington Post, 2010), including the reduction of wages and positions of teachers who are sent abroad. Subsequently, many teachers from Greece who served in programs, such as the community-based Heritage Language schools in Toronto, which are not supported financially by the Canadian federal and provincial authorities, have left without being replaced (Cuts in Greece, 2010), (see Appendix L). Those teachers offered substantial assistance to the community programs, at a financial and educational level (Constantinides, 2001). Therefore, their withdrawal deprived, to some extent,
the right of the descendants of immigrants to learn the language of their ancestors, since for both authorities (the country where they live and the country from which they originate) do not consider as a high priority the teaching and learning of heritage languages. This can be concluded simply by taking into account the lack of financial support provided to these programs.

Consequently, heritage language students, along with HL educators, are not only at the margin of the educational mainstream of one country but of both. Clearly, something must be done to support HL education. In this direction, a first step could be an internal upgrade, starting with the implementation of new pedagogical approaches and the use of new technological tools.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

Through my autobiographical narrative research and analysis on the following pages, I attempt to express the belief that even while remaining on the margins of the education mainstream, the teachers, students and parents involved in Heritage Language programs, can improve substantially the teaching and learning conditions by developing a series of initiatives and by taking advantage of the new achievements in Information and Communication technology.

The Aristoteles School of the Greek Community of Toronto owes its existence to the public sector spending cuts made in the mid-2000s by the provincial government of Ontario and reflected in the budget of the Toronto District School Board (Community Equity Reference Group Report, 2003, p.5-6). Despite the significant problems in terms of infrastructure and the lack of financial support for the program from all the stakeholders surrounding it—and despite
the apparent lack of motivation on the part of teachers, students and parents—there could be some light at the end of the tunnel for this school.

The initiative for change at the school began as a personal challenge. I could not accept that my workplace and the school where my children and their friends meet once a week (every Saturday) should make us feel as second-class citizens. Bottom-up education reform attempts (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), as in this case, are interesting because they help us realize that students, teachers and parents, as the active partners of the education process, have the power and the opportunity to improve their position in the education system. All of us who participate in the Heritage Language education field are striving for recognition by the mainstream society. This objective aim can be achieved if we disengage from relying only on external aid, which is not always guaranteed.

We can base our hopes and expectations on two ‘allies’. One is our positive energy and our determination to work together harmoniously and constructively towards attaining the common goal. The other is the adaptation of modern teaching orientations blended with new technologies which provide the means so that we might emerge from our shells and show the world who we are, what we deserve and how we are trying to achieve it.

The title of my thesis, "From Greek School to Greek's Cool”, reflects the essence of my project. In order to achieve what we envision, our creation has to be more enjoyable, entertaining, “cool” but also more efficient. That is what the new era imposes—and what our children deserve. Our school operates on a part-time basis, but that fact does not diminish our goals, let alone our identity.

"Only our school is part-time, not our identity". This is the motto of our change process, appearing on the web site banner of the educational blog of “Aristoteles”. This blog is a tool
which I developed as part of my plan to enhance our program and strengthen our school community. In the course of this paper, I will provide details for this optimistic forecast.

**Organization of the Thesis-Research Questions**

In the four chapters that follow, I seek to establish practical proposals on the issue of the operation of Heritage Language programs in Ontario, Canada, through my experiences which I gained by my involvement with the teaching of Greek language and culture in a school of the Greek Community in Toronto. My approach is not only narrative but also critical. Hence, I will not confine myself to what has happened until now, but rather, I will focus on highlighting the prospects for the future.

The second chapter refers to narrative inquiry as a method of education research. I will illustrate the characteristics of this method and explore how we can use its research tools as efficiently as other qualitative or quantitative methods. My goal in relation to this chapter is to underline the importance of narrative inquiry as a method of linking human stories to education and transferring experiences which are anthropocentric to those upon which educational change can be founded. One of the basic dimensions is the presence of open rather than fixed possibilities.

Particular importance is given to the opportunities gleaned by this method to externalize the voice of people and professionals who remain, for various reasons, at the margin of the central educational arena. With the selection of the specific research method, I do not attempt to express only my personal thoughts, ideas and hopes for the education setting in which I serve but also give scope to all those who have interest in the future of Heritage Languages and the protection of the identities and the cultural treasures embodied in these languages.
The third chapter is divided into three parts and is the link between theory and practice, between history and the future. Canada is the country that recognized first, along with Australia and Sweden, the importance of national minorities and became an official multicultural state entity (Wayland, 1997). The Heritage Language programs in Canada, among the foundational components of this entity, are running on their fourth decade and it is reasonable for Canadians to have a great concern about their development. However, it is obvious that the current HL scene is characterized by stagnation.

The third chapter starts with an overview of the history of Greek migration to Canada, because as a member of the Greek community, I have concentrated my experiences and professional initiatives here. The report will focus on the Greek community in Toronto and will result in the outline of the profiles of children of the third generation who are now the majority of the student population at my school. Through the presentation of the diversity of these students and of their educational needs in relation to heritage languages, it will be easier to understand the rationale for applying appropriate teaching methods and new educational tools that are now available through various technological developments.

In the second part, building on my experience with the 2007 election campaign in Ontario that directly addressed the question of education for the ‘ethnic’ minority communities, I will try to cross-examine the rhetoric for the protection of heritage languages (and their importance) with the indecision at the level of practical application and support. This will be done through the projection of two studies conducted during the same period, both of which reveal the concerns of the teachers who work for the HL programs (one case concerns only Greek language education in Canada). The feedback from the teachers, as expressed in these studies, will facilitate an understanding of how modern teaching developments and tools can be used to respond to some
of the teacher anxieties and, at the same time, foster the cultivation of heritage languages in Canada and internationally.

The third part of this chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the development of blogs as mechanisms used to establish collaborative learning communities. Specifically, it examines the ways in which blogs can articulate in praxis progressive pedagogical approaches, such as the Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy (Cummins, 2009). I will refer to the use of weblogs in education and the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 applications to infuse into the work of students, teachers, parents and administrators more attractive, creative and productive tools and methods.

In the fourth chapter, I am presenting the case of “Aristoteles”, a Greek Heritage Language School operated by the Greek Community in Toronto. Through the narrative of my experience from my three-year presence in this school, we will follow the path of a teacher who is experiencing the same anxieties as those of his colleagues from the 1990s. This narrative will help us find the departments under which a teacher will try to play an active role in the evolutionary process of an education system that has a lot of room for improvement.

We will follow step by step the process of change, which starts from the bottom and aims to extend in all directions, searching for scaffolds. We will explore the role of the teacher-training program "Routes", which I took as part of my self-development initiatives along with some colleagues-teachers of the "Aristoteles" school, as the starting point of an attempt to overthrow a climate of inaction and marginalization in which most members of our school community had been deprived. In order to achieve the overall upgrading of our role as teachers and erase the "second class" stigma, which came from a prolonged period of marginalization, we had to initiate our self-evaluation and development. During my participation in this online
training program, which lasted for one year, I overcame certain fears, liberated and empowered myself and discovered new aspects of knowledge and tools which I tried to implement by dragging them into my workplace. Since the education authorities are not always able to provide or to support the professional development of teachers involved in HL programs, self-development opportunities (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992) are the only option and are provided now through the Internet. A teacher working in the margin of the central education system, will find himself involved in a lifelong learning process, not because he is encouraged to do so (through financial or other external incentives) but because he realizes the need for a single note of optimism. It is not only for the future of Heritage Language programs or for the teaching and learning of a specific language and culture. It is about looking for a better place in society, looking for a place under the sun.

In the last chapter, we get to the presentation of an educational blog that I created as I experimented with ways to improve the state of Greek-language teaching in Toronto. An edublog in the service of Heritage and Second Language education could be permissible as an example of further applications. Blogs are now used extensively in many education programs with great success. For various reasons, which we will explore throughout this thesis, blogs can be quite suitable in establishing or enhancing Heritage Language learning communities.

We will navigate through the blog of “Aristoteles” and try to identify the actual pedagogical usefulness of each post. The narrative element will allow us to understand the interactive communication between members of a school community under the creative winds of change. We will see a number of initiatives in which teachers, learners and parents get involved and we may find out how far an educational utopia stands from reality. How far is it to go from “Greek School to Greek’s Cool”? 
Chapter 2: 
Method: 
Narrative Inquiry

Introduction

The use of narratives, and the epistemological frameworks through which these embody and convey meaning, not only provides an important way to think about curriculum and teaching, but also is vital to understanding what goes on at school. (Eisner, as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p.x)

I love stories. They offer me an exciting way to arrange my knowledge and to organize my experiences. Quite often I feel that if there is not a story left to tell from something I have lived, then it appears as my lived experience never happened. My favourite teacher, the one who influenced me subconsciously in my choice to pursue a career in education, was the teacher who told the best stories in the most vivid and theatrical manner. Later on, as a teacher too, I continued the "tradition" of using the narrative means every time I wanted to capture the interest of my students, every time I could not imagine another more attractive method than storytelling to convey hidden meanings, like undiscovered treasures that my students had to search for.

The use of narratives as a research tool was introduced to me through the epic poems of Homer, which stood for centuries as the main curriculum for Greek students. Homer in his Iliad and Odyssey (Fagles, 1990, 1996) enriched his poetic narration with quite substantial socio-cultural elements and provided us with a remarkable source of information about a historical period when no written texts had been produced or saved. His narration linked the adventures of mythical heroes with perceptions, values and historical realities of his era, which otherwise would have remained unknown to the future generations (Nieto Hernandez, 2007). Homer, apart
from his poetic talent, became for us, all his future students, an excellent teacher of language, history and culture.

**Selecting a Method and the Importance of Experience in Education**

Admittedly, selecting a method for my thesis proved to be quite a complicated task. It involved some serious thinking on my part as I had to explore the several methods proposed by the modern research literature. Also, it was more complicated than I had anticipated balancing the advantages and disadvantages of such a plethora of quantitative and qualitative methods that have been produced.

Convinced that the language of numbers cannot always unveil the hidden meanings of the human experience, and because education is a prime area of exchanging experiences (Dewey, 1938), I joined the qualitative "camp". Then I started another series of searches to identify the most suitable method for my study within this vast and subtle research field (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Experience is a key term for those engaged in educational research. Experiences are gained collectively, in relation to other people and within specific environments: in a classroom, at home, online, in a community, at work. Experiences are not generated in isolation. Continuity is one of their most characteristic aspects, as experiences are always based on previous ones and lead to new ones. For every educational process involving schooling, learners, teachers, administrators and policies, there is always a story to tell and a change in progress to follow (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2).

Heritage Language teachers’ development in Canada, the area of my professional interest, constitutes a problematic field to researchers. I looked thoroughly for data from existing studies that reveal the evolution of these educational programs over the last two decades, and
surprisingly, there are only a moderate number of investigations that shed light on the issue of HL teacher development programs or the use of new technologies to support the curricula and the pedagogical orientations applied in this "informal" educational zone. The reason for such a limitation is not alien to the fact that although our official multicultural policy encourages their acquisition, heritage languages have not received the public support that they deserve, at least not at a practical economic level. (Burnaby, 2008). Of course, there are many studies reflecting the benefits of multilingualism, for the students and the society at large, as well as studies illustrating the importance of heritage language programs for the psychological and academic development of involved students (Cummins & Danesi, 1990; Krashen, Tse, & McQuillan, 1998; Bialystok & Viswanathan, 2009; Prior & MacWhinney, 2010; Bialystok, 2010).

In short, while there are many inquires available which help us understand the importance of these programs, there is a limited variety of studies dealing with the protagonists of them—that is, their teachers. Perhaps such a lack of interest is indicative of the substantial depreciation of a professional field that has huge potential (Valdes, 2001).

As Heritage Language Education, first implemented in Ontario in 1977, is already in its fourth decade, there is a major research interest in relation to the third generation of immigrants (Veltman, 1983, 1988; Appel & Muysken, 1987; Valdes, 2001; Suarez, 2007; Nesteruk, 2010), which as noted, is the most crucial generation for the salvation of the linguistic and cultural identity of ethnic communities in multicultural societies like the Canadian mosaic.

Undeniably, in this era of explosive innovations in Information Technologies, a vast array of new tools and features exists to enhance any educational-training program. However, are these instruments used broadly in the service of heritage language teaching and learning? Are heritage language teachers denied access to those means, or what is it that makes them hesitate to apply
computer technologies in their professional development and their teaching? Has any educational authority the interest or the capability to attempt a comprehensive reform which will bring HL programs into the 21st century?

Seeking answers to the above questions, I have decided to present my own story. Perhaps through my narratives and applied initiatives, I might be able to give voice and hope to those professionals who teach Canadian students but are not considered as Canadian teachers, to those professionals whose work is appreciated by many but brought attention to by only a few. I decided to base my thesis on narrative inquiry and approach it autobiographically for three main reasons.

First, I believe that this method offers unlimited freedom for the reader to interpret and judge a study, having an integrated human/professional story to deal with and not isolated segments of data that do not always allow the understanding of an evolving process. In addition, the author as a narrator has the opportunity to combine his or her life experiences with research and use his or her observed and recorded material as a foundation for further investigation. Providing some details about my personal life choices, my concerns and my philosophy, the reader gets a general idea about who I am. Thus, it becomes easier to clarify my actions and to follow the same route as I did. The reader gets to know, not just what I did but why I did it and how every step of this course is connected to the previous and the following one.

The second reason is related to my personal pleasure in telling stories. In the lengthy and often tedious process of formulating a thesis, I found it very useful and liberating to be able to speak boldly and to enjoy what I write because it constitutes the natural progression of what I observed, noted and lived. I believe that if I have managed to enjoy my story and my study as a writer, then there are great chances that readers will enjoy it, too. After all, a human story can
sometimes be more interesting and persuasive than reams of statistical data and tables which are sometimes harder to understand and to interpret.

Furthermore, I was motivated by the concept of narrative thinking as analyzed by Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p.29-31). In human lives and, of course, in my case as well, each period is a developing process of personal change. In the education sector, it is important to connect people with their historical routes. A narrative approach is a way to reach the "location" of a person or a process under study. If it is a student, a teacher or a policy that we are trying to analyze, following the path of an individual’s story often extends our perceptions beyond the narrow spatiotemporal context of a school which is where educational functions usually take place, but not always their birthplace. What is clear is that in order to understand ourselves, our students, our parents, all our partners in relation to education, we need to include their experiences, that is, the story of their experiences, in which the school is only one part (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988 p.27).

To make it possible for someone to comprehend a particular initiative, such as my decision to develop an educational blog, one should be able to determine the reasons, motives and circumstances through which this process has evolved. Otherwise any attempt to interpret it may be fragmented and probably inaccurate.

**Gathering Experiences as Research Material**

In my case, narrative inquiry is the only way I imagined using to convey the experiences which I gathered through participatory observation in the field of education over a quarter of a century. Since my personal experiences were collected in a narrative way, and since narrative
research is a form of interpreting experiences through storytelling, it makes sense to study my educational experiences narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.20).

During the years that I have been involved in heritage language teaching, dozens of documents have passed through my hands. I have joined several discussions with stakeholders. I participated in various professional meetings and seminars. I exchanged ideas with colleagues. In fact, the pages of my personal journal and letters or e-mails to and from students, parents, administrators and associates number in the hundreds. School documents, including newsletters, memoranda, policy and curriculum documents and records—combined with other material, such as personal stories and interviews, diaries, letters and journals—are useful and valid sources of information for narrative research (Walker, 1985); (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p.41).

Four methods can be used when one has the possibility of cooperation with colleagues or a group of colleagues and wants to understand their personal and interpersonal points of view: the narrative, the exchange of letters, interviews and participant observation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p.44).

This unpublished material constitutes part of the data basis which fed the composition of my thesis and my desire to begin an effort for change, which I will present in the final chapter. It has been quite challenging to use material from experiences gained over several years. I searched for ways to categorize and process it, in such a manner that it would facilitate a narrative approach. This problem helped me realize that connecting the narrative inquiry method with the organization of my experiences would become one of the central aspects of my study.

Narrative research has not been revealed as only one version, a simple type of qualitative research. It is directly related to the field of knowledge and information management.

Consequently, narrative research focuses on the organization of human knowledge rather than to
a simple surface of collecting and processing information. What makes this method distinctive is the concept of the significance of human knowledge even if it derives from the experiences of only one person (Coles, 1989); (Wikipedia, 2010).

**Education and Narration**

In the introductory chapter, I mentioned the name of my teacher in Greece who played an important role in my life. To some extent, I think that he strongly influenced my choice to get professionally involved in the field of education. He had the ability to create and narrate stories that were directly or indirectly connected with our daily lessons. Since school subjects became interwoven parts of stories, they were more interesting and exciting to learn. His narratives often contained autobiographical elements and linked the content of each lesson with personal (imaginary or real) experiences. This connection was crucial in allowing the learners to analyze, correlate and interpret meanings. It also triggered their imaginations and critical thinking.

My teacher’s lessons included myths and stories from our cultural tradition, the epic poems of Homer, the myths of Aesop, the feats of Hercules and the heroes of Greek mythology, the adventures of Alexander the Great, as well as personal references to events and situations—but always related in some way to the curriculum. I am certain that within the three-year period that I spent with this teacher, there was not even a day, even a subject, be it history, language, mathematics, physics or geography, that did not include the narrative element, which did lead my imagination to mysterious, adventurous words and helped me capture and connect the meaning of each story with reality.

The narrative as a method of teaching and research helps us to expand our concept of education beyond the school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Education is in a sense, the narrative
of experiences that broaden and strengthen the capabilities of a human to face life. It is true that such experiences occur in school, but it is probably also true that many of the most significant educational experiences in our lives take place away from the school settings, in family relationships, in friendships, in love stories, in journeys. . . . The experiences we all recognize that make a difference in our lives. These experiences are educational.

Moreover, narratives are the basis for understanding what education is all about. We cannot appreciate a single child by considering him or her only in the capacity of student. Similarly, we cannot identify with teachers if we only consider their professional lives within the classroom. We may be teachers, but we also have many other facets that play an important role in shaping our persona and in explaining our behaviours, beliefs and actions. How we are as teachers reflects the life we live and our experiences. The biographical narration of our lives is perhaps the most appropriate foundation for exploring the individual, practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p.39).

**Narrative Inquiry and Analysis**

One way of describing narrative inquiry and providing the interpretation of the term, is through the presentation of what the narrative researchers do (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). They search for phenomena that constitute what can be seen as evidence in research and they narrate the experience. Connelly and Clandinin argue that it is equally correct to refer to “inquiry into narrative” or “narrative inquiry” because they regard narrative both as a phenomenon and a method, given that it illustrates the structured quality of the experience under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). Another approach to this method of inquiry is narrative history that describes a sequence of events that are important to the narrator and his or her audience (Denzin, 1989).
The narrative analysis as a linguistic form fits the presentation of human existence as an action. The narrative mode is either an analysis of narratives (studies whose data are based in narratives or stories, but whose analysis produces paradigms) or narrative analysis, that is, studies whose information is based on actions or events whose analysis produces stories (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.5-6). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) indicate that people are storytellers who individually or collectively, experience stories. Hence, the study of narrative is essentially the study of ways in which people acquire their own experiences in life. Narrative research is a collaborative document that is created upon each life story of both the researcher and the participant.

Some of the methods of narrative inquiry are autobiographies, letters, field notes, journals, interviews and oral stories. For example, a researcher studying how students of a particular social class identify their roles in the school may examine the notes and references to diaries or scrapbooks, may interview children and devote time for their observation. The next stage consists of the creation of one’s own narrative of the study using a time line with a beginning, middle and end, adding elements such as the plot, a hero or heroes, a focal point and a specific context (Denning, 2006).

Narrative inquiry is suitable for many areas of social sciences, including education. Some researchers, such as Czarniawska and Polinghorne, who engage in narrative inquiry, use theoretical terms borrowed from other research fields to understand the narration, while others, such as Coles, Clandinin and Connelly, are learning about narrative inquiry as they apply the method.

Such a plethora of terms exists within the narrative discipline that it resulted in the creation of a dictionary for narrative terms under the rubric of "Narratology" (Prince, 1987). It is
characteristic that research based on narrative is described in many different terms, including autobiography, history, narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 1999, 2000), biography, personal narrative (Carter & Doyle, 1996), and autobiography including reflectivity (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). For the economy of this study, I mainly use the terms history, storytelling and narrative research as the most commonly used terms.

**My Narrative Navigation**

There are two basic types of narrative approaches: one that revolves around a fact, an incident or an action and one that focuses on a character, the protagonist. These two types of narrative are identified as "drama" and "autobiography" (Charniawska, 1997). Under the first type, we have a group of people, the "actors", performing at different levels in relation to an event. In the case of my study, reference could be made to the roles played by my colleagues, my teachers, my students and even the members of my family who interacted with me, resulting in initiatives that shaped my personal and professional life. The second type, the autobiography, sheds light on an actor and the story (with its events and other characters) evolves through the eyes of that individual (Leijon & Soderbom, 2008).

My approach, albeit autobiographical, attempts to combine these two types as the trend of my story is based on both collective and personal actions and experiences. The time sequence is not always followed as closely as expected. Human stories are normally based on the past and move backwards, although life is a story towards the future and every new turn does not necessarily depend on continuity (Petranker, 2005).
**Limitations of the Study and Ethical Considerations**

Since I chose to use the autobiographical version of narrative inquiry, which defines the angle of study within the microcosm of the experiences of the narrator, I understand that the concepts of objectivity, generalization and validity of my study are at risk of being challenged. But this risk is present even if one chooses a quantitative research method, where questions may arise on whether it is possible for all the components to be accurately measured and analyzed under conditions which ensure pure objectivity (Heopfl, 1997).

In my case, concerns could also arise from the fact that my research field, the Heritage Languages sphere, is limited within a country, a province, a city, a specific ethno-cultural community and a particular school. Circumstances regarding the teaching of the Greek language in Ontario are perhaps not applicable to other ethnic groups in the same province and even to the same ethnic community in other Canadian provinces. In Quebec, for instance, some Heritage Language programs are fully embedded in contexts of daily trilingual schools (Georgiou, 2008). However, my personal journey and the initiatives being developed in limited geographical and cultural settings may be permissible for use in a wider context. As we are going to see in the next chapter, progressive educational trends, such as the Multiliteracies and Transformative Pedagogy orientations, invite us to understand how the concepts of spatial and cultural limitations are currently expanded, given the increasing mobility of people and cultures and the new means by which communication and information exchanges function.

Information technology provides us with tools, such as weblogs, through which I am attempting to explore the possibilities of expressing professional and personal identities and of the significance of educational programs that remain underestimated. My initiatives, my actions, even my mistakes or my dependencies, have a specific address that is accessible by anyone
worldwide via the Internet. Who I am, what am trying to accomplish and in which ways, are all questions answered through my postings that are available to all interested individuals with Internet access. The address where anyone may search for my work, my identity and for information and evidence concerning my narrative inquiry is as follows:


Regarding the objectivity of research in terms of the method and especially in matters of collection of material and its presentation, no specific platform should be considered as a panacea for a narrative researcher, since the process followed is also an integral part of the journey that the narrator experiences along with his or her fellow travelers. In the course of this study, I have worked and exchanged information, feelings and ideas with people who share with me a relationship of trust that weighs the same, perhaps even more, than several commonly accepted scientific criteria and conditions.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry is no different in this respect from other qualitative research methods. As Connelly and Clandinin note:

Like other qualitative research methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability. It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 7)

My decision to give an autobiographical dimension to this research was made under the belief that my experiences, which probably share common features with the experiences of other members of my educational and cultural community, are constructed on a personal level, based on how I see myself and my relationships with the people with whom I have collaborated. The nature of the cooperative relationships that I experienced with the people surrounding me releases me of any stress that may stem from the distance between the personal and the collective
experiences; instead it reinforces the belief that as together we learn, together we could/should change (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Any of my moral barriers to reveal aspects of my professional life and of my identity as an immigrant, and as a member of a learning community that strives for the preservation of linguistic and cultural wealth, are offset by my determination to present, through my personal experiences, the insights of a larger group. Narrative research, among other things, aims at allowing the expression of the stories of those who have not been presented (or are under-presented) in educational research (Chase, 2005).

Conclusions

Narrative research is a tool which I am using as I strive to reach the goal of this study: to examine and analyze the experiences of a teacher, of a non-official language (Greek) in Canada and the factors which influenced him to search for ways to improve a Heritage Language school in Ontario, by undertaking a series of initiatives. The narrative analysis will help us understand, through personal life experiences, which were the factors that influenced a teacher and made a matter of priority to look for change.

What was the driving force that led the educator out of professional apathy towards a self-development process which included simultaneous participation in training programs on both sides of the Atlantic? What led the teacher to regard the role as an agent of change related to the curriculum, the ongoing training and support of colleagues, the involvement of parents, the use of new technologies and the emergence of the hybrid identity of the students? The process delineated in this study follows a bottom-up path, starting with the teachers, the students, the school and seeking for recognition and support in the community, the educational authorities, the state and the society at large.
In this work, I intend to examine the Internet’s role, specifically Web 2.0 applications, such as the edublogs, for distance and collaborative learning purposes. I will illustrate functions which tend to improve the quality of curricula and the pedagogical directions that have been applied so far to the field of Heritage Languages in Canada. I will try to associate teaching and learning experiences from both sides of the Atlantic with regard to the acquisition of foreign languages and especially the Greek language. Additionally, I will provide an internal perspective on the ways in which teachers can overcome obstacles that impede their personal and professional development. Sometimes it takes just one person's will and initiatives to blow the winds of change and set in operation a mechanism of improvement that may affect a marginalized part of the society.

Central to this study is the narrative method, as it gives voice to the teacher, the one who experiences daily what is happening within the classroom and the school, and who is able to determine the factors that positively or negatively influence her work, and in extension, the learning process which is the main target of any education project. Teachers work interactively with all stakeholders in education: students, parents and administrators. Hopefully, my story might help other colleagues see their own experiences under different light, since we often find that through reading the biographies of others we can better understand ourselves in different ways (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988. p.37).
Chapter 3:
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is divided in three parts. I am starting with an overview of the history of Greek immigration in Canada, as I concentrated my experiences and developed my professional initiatives in the Greek community. The report will focus on the Greek community in Toronto and will lead to an outline of the students (Heritage Language learners) of the third generation who now comprise the majority of the student population at my school. Through the presentation of the diversity of these students and their educational needs, in regard to the acquisition of a heritage language, it will be easier to understand the necessity to apply more progressive teaching methods in Heritage Language programs and use new educational tools which are now available through the Internet.

The second part refers to the Heritage Language education scene and the conditions faced by teachers of these programs in Ontario, Canada. The presentation is based partly on my experiences from teaching the Greek language in Canada, in one among the dozens of ethnic communities who are struggling to resist assimilation and to defend their cultural heritage, by passing it on to the next generation. The narrative analysis will connect history with research to shed light on the framework that has been developed as ‘international’ languages in Canada have been formally taught for four decades. The critical eye of the teacher-researcher stands mainly on two studies referring to how Heritage Language teachers view their careers and their own lives. As their professional competence and potential is challenged, they also question their roles in a marginalized educational system.
The third part will investigate the “blogosphere”, particularly the space of educational blogs and will exhibit their characteristics that could make them useful for programs of special conditions such as the Heritage Language ones. I will attempt to show how blogs, building on a synthesis of progressive concepts about educational practice such as the pedagogy of Multiliteracies, the collaborative, co-constructive, scaffolding and transformative pedagogy can evolve into learning communities (communities of praxis) and provide practical support to educational systems awaiting solutions for decades.

Further on, I introduce some new technological tools, known as Web 2.0, which are available via the Internet and I am going to examine edublogs as a vehicle for literacy enhancement and as instruments for the creation of dynamic learning communities. The viewpoint of this study is focused on the principles of dialogue and consciousness, two terms initially coined in Ancient Greece (Grant, 1997) by great teachers and philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle and Plato to find in the previous century a modern theoretical application in the school of critical pedagogy and the work of another great educator and thinker, Paulo Freire.

The connection of these three parts will be made in the last chapter where we examine the practical implementation of an educational blog in a Heritage (Greek) language school in Toronto, Canada.

**PART A: Greek Presence in Canada: Educating the Third Generation**

**The journey.**

“Migration” and “Greeks” are two terms that have gone hand-in-hand throughout history. From the mythical, epic journey of Odysseus described by Homer four thousand years ago, to the colonization of ancient metropolitan Greek cities (Orrieux, C. & Schmitt-Pantel, P., 1999),
Greeks have travelled and migrated for reasons very common to the contemporary globalized scene. Being at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, Greece, despite its ideal climatic conditions, often became a battlefield. Ongoing wars and political, social, and economic pressures are among the most significant forces behind Greek migration which reached a peak during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, when many Greeks immigrated to Canada (Tamis & Gavaki, 2002) and established communities, especially in Montreal and Toronto. According to George Vlassis (Vlassis, 1953), the history of the Greek presence in Canada began at the end of the 16th century, when Ioannis Focas explored the coast of British Columbia. However, the first minor wave of Greek immigrants did not arrive until the early 20th century. Greek communities in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec City, Halifax, Edmonton, and Vancouver soon followed.

Peter Chimbos, a specialist in the early Greek experience in Canada (Chimbos, 1980), reports that Greeks primarily settled in Montreal and Toronto after their countrymen had arrived in New York and other eastern ports. Many were sailors who gathered in nearby cities, including the two Canadian urban centres. Villagers settled near their co-villagers and large local concentrations of Greek immigrants developed. Greeks avoided rural areas, possibly because they disliked farming, associating it with memories of harsh conditions they had left behind (Vlassis, 1953).

By concentrating in areas where their compatriots were established, newcomers overcame social barriers. Since most of them spoke neither English nor French, their first employment was conveniently found within the immediate Greek social environment (Chimbos & Agocs, 1983), e.g. in businesses owned by relatives or people from the same hometown. In many cases, more than one family shared a house, and they engaged in social activities, such as extended family gatherings, and attended the same churches and schools, which paved the way
for the establishment of community centres (Chimbos, 1986). For the first generation of immigrants, the general goal was to establish their own businesses, save money and return to Greece to a more comfortable life. Consequently, many Greeks became shopkeepers and restauranteurs.

World War II left Greece in ruins. Between 1945 and 1971, almost 110,000 new Greek immigrants arrived in Canada, and in 1967 alone, the number of newcomers rose to a record 10,650 (see Appendix M), as many fled the country in order to avoid involvement in the political turmoil in Greece created by the tyranny that had been enforced by a regime of army officers (1967-1974). By 1981, immigration to Canada had slowed considerably. In fact, quite a few Greek Canadians repatriated in the early 1980s to enjoy the new era of prosperity and stability, encouraged by the country’s participation in the European Union (Fontaine, 2007). This return home indicates that Greeks maintain a strong sense of “nationalism for the old country” (Haenni-Hoti, 2006).

Political participation and organization.

The Greek origin of the word policy/politics (polis is a Greek word meaning city) (Babiniotis, 2010), is an obvious indicator of the tendency among Greeks, despite social or economic circumstances, to be politically active. Inevitably, political developments in the homeland affected the Greek Canadian communities.

In the early 20th century, during the Balkan Wars and during World War I (1914-1918), Toronto, Montreal and other major Canadian cities witnessed scenes of ethnic solidarity and preparation among young immigrants who volunteered to join the Greek Army. At the same time, political differences at home had consequences on the other side of the Atlantic. Peter Chimbos describes the situation vividly:
When World War I broke out, Greek Canadians expressed concern over the role of Greece in the conflict—the Venizelists supported Prime Minister Venizelos, who favoured the Allies; the Royalists favoured the German-leaning, Neutralist monarchy. A bitter struggle for control of positions within the Greek communities in Canada followed, with debates taking place in coffeehouses, restaurants, and community centers (Chimbos, 1999 p. 623)

During that time, violent anti-Greek riots took place in Toronto (August 2-3, 1918). The incident was provoked by some Torontonians who accused Greeks of being pro-German when in fact the majority of Greek Canadians supported the Allies. Greece’s strong support of the Allies during the WWII, the entrepreneurial success of many Greek immigrants in Canada, and the large waves of Canadian tourists to Greece in later years, were among the principal reasons behind the change of Canadian attitude towards Greeks.

The old country’s politics caused more activity in the mid 1960s and also between 1967 and 1974 when international Cold War political developments affected Greece and led to a seven-year-long dictatorship. Political rallies, such as the one that took place in Montreal in 1965 (condemning King Constantine’s dismissal of Prime Minister George Papandreou), anti-junta movements, such as the Rigas Ferreos in Toronto and the PAK (Pan-Hellenic Liberation Movement) in 1968, organized by the former Prime Minister of Greece and York University Professor Andreas Papandreou, prove that Greek communities in Canada were not simply discussing what was happening in Greece; they were participating (Tamis & Gavaki, 2002).

In spite of their occasional political differences, Greek Canadians have demonstrated passionate support for their national issues. In 1974, massive demonstrations took place in many Canadian cities against the Turkish invasion in Cyprus (BBC, 1974). Then, in a 1992 demonstration, more than 30,000 Greek Canadians urged Ottawa to work with the United Nations to ensure that the name Macedonia along with the territory’s culture, symbols and
history could not be used at will by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Chimbos, 1999).

The political involvement of Greek Canadians has not only centered on specific issues of ethnic interest (Constantinides, 1993). They have also consistently played their role as active Canadian citizens. They have been involved in issues concerning the Canadian Multicultural Policy by supporting programs, such as the Heritage Language Program, which enable thousands of new immigrants to preserve their language and culture. The political involvement of Greek Canadians was clearly exemplified when the large Greek community in Quebec endorsed the pro-federalist position of unity in the critical provincial referenda that took place in 1980 and 1995 and stood against the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. Such a scenario did not become a reality, to a great extent, due to the position of ethnic communities (Wikipedia, 2008), (CBC, 2008) that feel as much for Canada as they do for their home countries.

Greek Canadians representing various political parties have been elected at the municipal, provincial, and federal level (see Appendix N). One of the peculiarities of the Greek communities in Canada (Liodakis, 1998) is the development of many different types of organizations: civic communities, religious oriented communities, cultural centres, professional associations, political groups, and sports clubs (Chimbos, 1986). They synthesize a polymorph map that indicates the need of immigrants to establish networks in the new country, while setting a challenge for their next generations who are expected to maintain traditional ties to all those groups or establish new ones that will better reflect their interests.

Greece has attempted to institute a connection between all such groups through the establishment of “SAE”, the World Council for Hellenes Abroad, since the diaspora of Greeks extends across the globe (Damanakis, et al.,2004). Within SAE’s organization, Canada is an
independent region in the Greek diaspora; thus, the Council’s goal is to represent and address problems of all Greek Canadians. Currently, the centre of SAE in Canada is in Toronto, where the majority of Greek Canadians live (SAE, 2009).

**Toronto’s Greek Community**

In 2009, the ethno-cultural organization Greek Community of Toronto (GCT) celebrated its centennial anniversary. In 1909, the Community was first established to accommodate religious, educational, social, and cultural needs among the few hundreds of Greeks, concentrated then in downtown Toronto.

Incorporated in 1965 as a non-profit organization, the Greek Community of Toronto represents more than 100,000 Canadians of Hellenic decent in the Greater Toronto Area. The affairs of the organization are overseen by a Board of Directors (elected every two or three years) and vary from operating Greek-language schools to providing a network of cultural and social programs for all members of the Greek community at large. As provided in the Articles of Association (Greek Community of Toronto, 2009), the directors and members of the GCT are: “Commited to providing an environment for Greek culture and heritage to flourish, thus enriching the unique social and cultural fabric within a vibrant and diverse Canada.”

Significant activities of the community (Liodakis, 1998) are the following:

- the operation of schools such as afternoon heritage language programs, Saturday schools, credit language programs and adult language courses
- music, theatre, and dance lessons as well as the organization of concerts, performances, plays, and maintainance of various groups and agencies in culturally-related fields
- provision of social services such as support to persons who are homebound and in need of special assistance, counselling, translation of documents, assisting in completing government applications, and activities for seniors
- the operation of the four Greek Orthodox Churches and services in relation to religious activities, such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals
- the maintenance of Community Centres associated with the churches

**Greektown.**

One of the most colourful and cosmopolitan areas of Toronto is Greektown, also known as the Greek Village or simply, “The Danforth” (Myrvold, 1992). Situated in the city’s east end, Danforth Avenue is the continuation of Bloor Street along the subway line and what is known today as Greektown is the strip between Broadview and Donlands. Most of the Greek restaurants are between Chester and Pape. Greektown, established by the Greek community of Toronto, is the third largest Hellenic community outside of Greece. Listed as a tourist attraction, it is considered among Toronto’s most vibrant and attractive neighbourhoods and contributes significantly to the city’s multicultural profile.

Along with many fashionable retail shops and multi-ethnic restaurants (Thai, Japanese, Mexican), there is a substantial number of restaurants, bars, cafes, and bakeries featuring traditional Greek cuisine, thus providing a dominant Mediterranean atmosphere and hospitality. While for the visitors and the rest of the city’s population, it is a place to have fun, eat well and feel like escaping to an exotic destination, especially during the long winter months, for Greek Canadians, the Danforth constitutes the centre of the community’s social activity, and thus, a bridge to Greece.
Another element that has added to the Danforth’s reputation in recent years is the “Taste of the Danforth”, a street festival launched in 1994, which, according to the organizers, (Greektown Business Improvement Association) is the largest Greek festival in the world outside of Greece. During this three-day festival, there are many social and educational opportunities to experience Greek culture and delicious food. Showcasing Hellenic cuisine and culture, the festival started in 1993 with the participation of 23 restaurants. Subsequently, the Business Association carefully analyzed Toronto’s weather and moved the event permanently to the second weekend of August. The number of visitors swelled to 500,000 by 1997 and last summer, the attendance skyrocketed to an impressive 1.7 million crowd, coming not only from Ontario, but from other provinces, some neighbouring American states and from around the world. As an owner of one of the Danforth’s busiest restaurants commented, “If it is August and you are not lucky enough to be in Greece, the only thing you can do for a similar atmosphere, is to join our party and be Greek for the weekend.”

This outline of the Greek presence in Canada and particularly in Toronto, one of the greatest centres of the Greek diaspora in the world, will help us understand the need to preserve this rich heritage, now carried on the shoulders of third-generation Canadians of Greek descent. The Aristoteles school, which we will examine in detail in Chapter Four, is one of the educational institutions that is already addressing this generation of students, who differ in characteristics and educational needs from previous generations.

Before proceeding to the next part of this chapter, in which we will refer to the development of heritage language programs in Ontario, particularly from the educators’ point of view, it is appropriate to scrutinize the third generation of students and search for their specific needs and conditions as language learners. By doing so, we will have a clearer understanding of
the students for whom I developed the educational blog and whom I try to represent through the initiatives that will be presented in the last chapter of this study.

**The missing link.**

Hellenism in Ontario nowadays is challenged. The hard-working Greek immigrants who chose to make this land their new home, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, did well for themselves, but now the time has come to pass the relay of their culture to their grandchildren. The focus is currently on this third generation for an obvious reason which is also an uncertainty: will it maintain, cultivate and preserve such a glorious and distinct heritage or it will become the missing link?

This part of the thesis examines the role of the Heritage Languages programs in relation to the special sociolinguistic and educational needs of the new set of students, the third generation. By attempting to define the third generation, I do not generally refer to the grandchildren of a Greek immigrant. The term itself requires explanation because through this exploration, we might be able to identify the gaps and the needs in relation to a “non-official language” system and those who appear to be the vast majority of the Greek HL program students in Ontario from now on. The third generation is examined in this study for two reasons:

First, as far as the Greek community is concerned, along with other communities that were established and expanded in Toronto between the 1950s and the 1980s, the vast majority of its school-aged members nowadays, belong to the third generation.

Secondly, as, according to several studies (Appel & Mysken, 1987; Kouritzin 1999; Rivera-Mills 2000) the third generation stage is usually the “missing link” of the heritage language route, that is the point where it is most likely that the dominant language will overcome the resistance of the linguistic heritage.
Student profiles.

As we are examining the Greek community at large, we might, at this point, try to illustrate what the third generation actually consists of in terms of their characteristics and special educational needs. Clearly, this generation is not a homogeneous group, as it includes:

- children born and raised in Canada by parents who are (one or both) second generation Canadians of Greek descent and fluent in Greek
- children of the above category whose parents are not fluent in Greek
- children who have their Greek grandparents living with them or near them, so they have the natural exposure to the heritage language
- children who don’t have their Greek grandparents around them
- children with a network of relatives and friends of Greek origin, attending regularly Greek social functions, church etc., thus socially exposed to the H.L.
- children isolated from the Greek community whatsoever
- children who appreciate their cultural and linguistic background
- children who feel ashamed of their Greek heritage or are for different reasons are estranged from it
- children of all above groups who have access to G.H.L. programs, in their neighborhood, area or city
- children who reside far from a Greek school or program
- children whose parents—both second generation Greek Canadians or not—encourage them to learn their H.L.
- children whose parents do not feel that learning their H.L. is important
- children from families where Greek is the only H.L.
- children from families where more H.L’s are part of the linguistic-cultural background
- children from all above groups who visit Greece regularly
- children who have not visited Greece at all or infrequently
- children who have access to or attend a Greek language program where all ages—
  from kindergarten to grade 8—share the same classroom
- children who attend a class of G.H.L. for their age group
- children who have a Greek-language instructor certified to teach in Ontario
- children who have a non-certified instructor but who is a native Greek speaker
- children whose instructor, certified or not, is not a native speaker
- children whose instructor has been specifically trained to teach Greek as a
  second/foreign language
- children whose instructor has not been trained to teach Greek as a second/foreign
  language
- children who are engaged in after school activities (other language program/s,
  tutoring, sports, dancing, work, and so on

The list could definitely be extended as more categories may be added in relation to the
shaping of the profile and the forming of a special educational needs and interests’ platform for
G.H.L. (Valdes, 2001) students. As I have been instructing in various Greek Heritage Language
programs in Canada for a decade in total, over two different time periods (1992-1999) when the
majority of my students were second generation Greek Canadians and presently, since 2007,
where I am mostly dealing with third generation HL learners, I have encountered at least one
child from all groups mentioned.

For the economy of this paper, I will try to categorize the above students into two large
groups, in terms of:

1. their motivation, exposure and expectations in relation to Greek language acquisition,
   which are all aspects of the linguistic background of the learner (in other words what
is the profile of the student when he or she comes to the Greek heritage language school)

2. the availability, accessibility and quality of the program and whatever comes with it, such as the curricula, the teaching methodologies, the instructors and their professional and academic background, their training as Heritage languages instructors (In other words, what is the capability of the organized program or school to accommodate the various needs of the students?)

In relation to the first group, too many factors seem to interlock such as:

- Do the parents or grandparents speak the H.L. at home?
- Is the H.L. a means of communication between members of the family, or the extended family?
- Are the children expected to speak Greek to their grandparents?
- Do the children have access to the Greek Internet community? Do they have access to Greek-language television programs (sports, news, movies, series, and music) at home?
- What is the use and operation of the H.L. today in their social environment?

The more opportunities the learners have to speak Greek, for practical reasons, the more they engage naturally with the language and they feel comfortable in doing so, not as a schooling process but as a social necessity where rewards for the acquisition of the H.L. are embodied in the presence of beloved friends and relatives (Valdes, 2001). Furthermore, if the family visits the “home-country” often, then the motivation factor strengthens and for the HL learner, the
language is upgraded from a tongue related to family tradition to a very useful communication tool.

Conversely, if the HL is not exercised by the child’s social cycle or if he or she is not expected to become fluent, then the motivation is absent, and the chances for a positive attitude towards the HL are fewer (Cummins, 1993). In this case, the student feels that there is no need to spend time and effort to study the language, so he or she will likely remain on the surface of the HL without pursuing academic fluency.

In relation to the second group, we are dealing with the nature of the program, the organization and the structure of the institution-provider and the quality, availability and accessibility related to the HL course which is offered.

**The program limitations.**

Again, for the economy of the study, we cannot examine Greek HL courses organized and offered by the church, private entrepreneurs, associations or other providers (Damanakis, 2007, p. 75–76), but we will focus on two “partners”, the Greek Community of Toronto and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

A variety of Greek HL courses is available in Toronto, most of which are offered by the Toronto District School Board’s International Language programs and communities such as the Greek Community of Toronto. It is interesting to observe some aspects of their existing programs, in terms of their location and the time frame of their operation. Most of the Greek HL schools/programs where a 2.5 hour per week TDSB program is followed by a Greek Community program (so students receive almost five hours of instruction-class time per week) are found near or in the East York and Scarborough areas, which is where most Greek immigrants established their communities and centralized their social activities.
Therefore, the more extended (longer than 2.5 per week) Greek HL programs are available to the concentrated Greek population, basically the first and second generation’s most preferred zones, while only 2.5 hours per week programs (offered by Boards such as the TDSB) are offered throughout the city, where a significant part of the third generation of Greek-Canadians resides, works and socializes.

If we take into account the quotas imposed by the Ontario Ministry and the Boards of Education in accordance with the numbers of students required for a formation of a HL class (25 students), then we can see clearly that accessibility is a factor that we should not underestimate when examining the present and the future of HL programs in Ontario.

In terms of time, the set frame of 2.5 hours per week stands for all H.L. programs since the introduction of the programs 30 years ago, even though such a limit sets under question the vitality of second language acquisition. Educators, including parents and experts in bilingualism, have stated repeatedly that 2.5 hours weekly may be insufficient time (Cummins & Danesi, 1990) to meet the needs of minority students, especially when these needs are various in so many ways.

Apart from the location and the time factor, one crucial parameter for heritage language programs is the professional background of the teachers-instructors; some are less proficient in the target language than others or they have never received systematic pedagogic training. Analysts of the second language teaching and learning process agree that “heritage-language classes which children enjoy and find interesting are extremely valuable in helping them develop language proficiency.” (Cummins, 1981, p. 42).

Not all students and heritage language learners who belong to the third generation have the same expectations, motivations or linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, even when grouped
together, taking into account the age criterion, they become a polymorphous group and a challenge to their instructor. Especially in the case of Greek HL, the lack of experience in handling such a heterogeneous student blend is also related to the fact that teaching Greek as a foreign language is not such an old story as the language itself.

**Conclusion**

Simply by mentioning all the above categories of Greek HL learners, it has become obvious that teaching and learning a heritage language today is not a simple task, especially among the most linguistically vulnerable fraction, the third generation. This generation is actually a complex grouping of learners who vary in terms of the quality and quantity of their exposure to the heritage language. They also vary in terms of their internal or external motivation for the language acquisition. Their variation from the spectrum of their linguistic needs and idiosyncrasies has to take into account the existing programs available to them, their specific characteristics according to the organization that offers each program and the time and place factor which is essential because, regardless of the motivation and the enthusiasm for learning a H.L., access to such a program is not always a reality.

What is also important to consider is that the third generation of Greek Canadians, as all other descendants of immigrants, have an unquestionable right to become fluent in their H.L. Despite the fact that a percentage of their parents or instructors could be satisfied if their language acquisition reaches a basic communication level (Cummins, 1979), the goal should be to become fluently bilingual, why not trilingual, if we hypothesize that they are adequately instructed in French, which is also an official language in Canada.
Heritage languages have been taught in Ontario through the public International Language programs and other community-based and organized schools for the last 30 years or more. The question is what we are expecting from these programs and when or how we are evaluating them. For the publicly funded programs, we are entitled to know how the taxpayers’ dollars are spent and to be able to evaluate their success (Cummins, 2000). For the communities involved, we should also find out how they are keeping up with their education objectives and what sort of support they should expect from our society. After all, maintaining and ensuring the viability of our provincial and national multilingualism is to our common best interest and not only a matter of ethnic and cultural community survival.

The need to integrate into these programs progressive teaching methods, to exploit modern technological applications so that the subject and the environment of school and class become more enjoyable (Feurverger, 1989), (Tse, 1998) and to establish a network between HL schools and the wider community, triggered a series of initiatives- within a Greek heritage language school in Toronto- that have been actualized mainly through the use of an educational blog, in which a variety of communication and educational tools was infused.

After highlighting the history and the presence of the Greek community in Canada, we described the students of the third generation, we analyzed their diversity and the varied needs that relate to their education in the HL. Subsequently, we should explore the broader context within which HL teaching and learning has been implemented since the establishment of the programs in the late 1970s.

I will investigate heritage language education mainly from the perspective of teachers who do not often have the opportunity to express their anxieties and claim improvements for their professional conditions.
Part B: Heritage Languages in Ontario: Rhetoric, Ambiguities and Instructors

The faith schools public funding debate and the lost opportunity.

When I returned for a permanent relocation of my family to Toronto, Ontario, it was 2007, an election year (Perrella, et al., 2008). My knowledge of the political situation in the province was limited to the fact that since the early 1990s when I first came to Ontario, all three major political parties—the New Democrats, Progressive Conservatives and Liberals—had had their chances to form a government of the most populous province in Canada (Wikipedia, 2009). The issue that dominated the political agenda of the 2007 election campaign and to a great extent determined the outcome of the elections, concerned education.

John Tory, the leader of the Progressive Conservatives, proposed, among other campaign promises, public funding of religious schools (Howlet, 2007), which hitherto operated as private schools—with the exception of the Roman-Catholic ones (Smith, et al., 1995). In Ontario, the public system of primary and secondary education has two divisions: English-language public schools, operated by local Boards of Education and French language schools operated by different Boards (language division) and public Catholic schools, which operate respectively with programs in English and French language by Separate Roman-Catholic Boards of Education (religious division) (Ontario Ministry of Education 2010c).

Under the Constitution, in Canada and in Ontario there is no official religion and the indoctrination of any particular faith is not permitted in public schools:

The court rulings and Ministry of Education and Training policy emphasize that the public schools do not have a mandate to instruct students in one faith to the exclusion of others, or to encourage students to believe in or profess a particular faith. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010d)
Nevertheless, in practice, the Catholic faith is cultivated through Catholic schools, where the teachers employed are, normally, followers of the specific religious dogma of Catholicism (YouTube, 2009). This inequality on the issue of religion in public schools was addressed and challenged through the proposal of John Tory, who spoke on the need for students belonging to all religions other than Christianity (Protestant/Catholic) to overcome their isolation and to have access to respective faith schools, subsidized by the province (Fatah & Siddiqui, 2007).

The reactions aroused by this proposal of the leader of the Progressive-Conservatives were loud (The Canadian Press, 2007). Tory’s political opponents and representatives of parents, teachers and other interested groups vehemently opposed this proposal which has since been considered as the symbol of John Tory’s political demise, as he was defeated in the election (Laurie, 2007) and relinquished the leadership of his party soon after the election.

The issue of funding faith schools had been driven to mitigate a clear inequity, which has deep historical roots (Patterson, 1992), (Smith, et al., 1995), too complex to be addressed adequately in this study. Tory had hoped that his proposal was going to be endorsed largely by members of many ethnic communities in the province, which logically should be happy to accept public funds for private (community) schools, where different religious denominations were going to be promoted. However, Tory failed to witness his expectations. Judging from the negative responses to his proposal within the Greek community in Toronto, his ideas did not receive the expected support for the following reasons.

First, with the exception of a private day-school operating under the umbrella of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Canada, (The Metropolis, Metamorphosis Day-School, 2010) in Ontario, the vast majority of students of Greek descent attend Greek language and cultural programs operated by communities, individuals and the local Boards of Education in afternoon
or Saturday classes, that is, outside the official day school program and, more importantly, they do not all include religion in their curriculum (Constantinides, 2001). Therefore, a potential public subsidy of faith schools would force parents, who want their children to study the Greek language and culture, to seek enrolment in the particular school or respective schools that would be created, consistent with the religious dimensions of those schools.

Furthermore, there was a genuine concern that heritage programs and educational activities of ethnic communities would pass under the control of religious leaderships. The proposal for public funding of faith schools did not include the Heritage Language community schools afternoon or Saturday programs. Parents who send their children to these schools would continue to pay private tuition. Realistically, a large number of HL students would be transferred to subsidized schools, thus harming the public education system, which would lose students and the relevant government grants that are linked to the students’ population per Board. In other words, Tory's proposal, while attempting to address a particular disparity, both "threatened" the public education system and focused only on the religious aspect of the cultural identity of ethnic communities—instead of the linguistic identity.

It is reasonable to assume that if John Tory had amended his proposal so that the promised financial support would include all programs and schools that teach heritage languages (Duff & Li, 2009), without necessarily connecting them with the religious element (secular HL programs are attended by tens of thousands of Canadian students-members of ethnic communities), he would have received much greater levels of acceptance from the ethnic communities. In addition, he would have addressed the issue of marginalization of Heritage Language programs, which relates to the lack of resources and political will to consider those
programs as significant for the education of Ontarians and Canadians (Cummins & Danesi, 1990).

**Heritage languages: The suspended step of the stork.**

On the occasion of this purely political aspect of an important educational issue relating to the multicultural and multilingual character of contemporary Canadian society, I got a first glimpse of the complex nature of a matter which concerns me as an educator involved with the unofficial languages scene in Ontario.

There was a missed opportunity in the political debate during the election campaign in Ontario in the autumn of 2007. I am referring to the misleading discussions about the importance of maintaining the multicultural "treasure" of Canada, mainly because the notion was limited only to the religious dimension of the cultural heritage of the ethnic communities—and also because it was developed too narrowly into a confrontation between the public education system (two official languages, one state-supported religious faith) and private (shown as promoting the educational interests of ethnic communities preserving the cultural heritage of their members). However, such a legacy can only survive through the deliverance of the languages that carry and express these cultures (UNESCO, 1996).

Further on, I will outline the state of heritage language education in Ontario, as formulated in the last 33 years, since the programs were planned and implemented at a provincial level. Although my experiences and the context in which I am moving is confined to a particular ethnic community and one specific language program, that is, Greek, I am convinced that in fact the concerns arising from this case are indeed applicable to all ethnic communities and all language programs associated with "informal-minority" languages and heritage education not only in Canada but internationally.
The main objective of this study is to demonstrate that the future in the teaching of heritage languages in the province, in the country and around the world, could be brighter provided that these programs leave from the margin of the central educational scene. My optimism arises from the following key points.

First, under the current economic and social conditions, the phenomenon of immigration, on temporary or permanent basis, will not be halted. On the contrary, it is expected to increase in the next decades of the 21st century. People migrate seeking better living and working conditions and as they do they carry with them distinguished cultural characteristics such as language, religion, customs and traditions which cannot be severed as they are inseparable and precious facets of their identity (Cummins, 2001).

Second, countries, such as Canada, that base their growth to a large extent on the influx of human resources, have already entered a process of informal competition for the attraction of valuable human resources, that is skilled workers. The unskilled workers immigrants no longer comprise the majority as they did in the last century. Instead, most of the recent newcomers include a substantial percentage of scientists and highly educated and experienced professionals:

Forty-two percent of immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 had a university degree compared to 22 percent of immigrants who arrived prior to 2001, with only 16 percent among the Canadian-born. (King, 2009)

Countries that will provide better conditions for new immigrants, including the smooth social integration and respect of their cultural particularities, will have a better chance to attract the human resources that they need:

Immigrants to Canada are highly educated and yet, as a group, recent immigrants are falling behind native-born Canadians in economic achievements ... Ongoing investments in language training and in skills attainment are required to help
recent immigrants be part of the Canadian dream.(Martin Prosperity Institute, 2009, p.34)

Third, the rapid developments in telecommunications and information technologies has a huge potential application in the field of education, as they come to solve traditional problems associated with distance (between the metropolitan centre and the outlying communities or between the physical space of the school and the residence of the students) and time (of information transmission). The potential to foster heritage language teaching with modern, more efficient and friendly for students and teachers means are greater than ever (Skourtou, Kourtis-Kazoullis, and Cummins, 2006).

Finally, the phenomenon of globalization has spread from an economic to a social, cultural and political level. For a significant population of the developing world, access to knowledge is now more affordable; there is rising awareness of their rights and realization that issues in education like those relating to health, social security and environmental protection, are of global concern and demand informed and sensitive to human rights citizens.

In contrast to globalization and the homogenization/uniformity which serve primarily the interests of corporate giants, who tend to treat people as consumers, there is now growing rapidly via the Internet and social networks, a trend of return and revaluation of "the different”, the local, and the particular. The struggle for the protection of cultural and linguistic rights of minorities is back on track (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

Thus, at a linguistic level, where the predominance of a single language (Melitz, 1999), (Crystal, 2003), for communication between people of the world will serve the idea of globalization as perceived by representatives of big business and supporters of linguistic imperialism, (Phillipson, 1992), the preservation and cultivation of different languages (which is
the philosophy of heritage language education) would be beneficial to the cultural diversity and linguistic variety that is vital to the course of humanity. “As the disappearance of any one language constitutes an irretrievable loss to making, it is for UNESCO a task of great urgency to respond to this situation by promoting and, if possible sponsoring programs of linguistic organizations” (International Linguistic Congress, Quebec, 1992, on Crystal, 2000, vii).

The issues of language rights for minorities have been consistently a subject of inquiry (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; Zajda, 2005). In the field of Heritage Language education, Canada has heavy responsibilities as a dynamic economic force on the international level and through its historical role as the country which has developed over many decades the idea of multiculturalism and supported at the political level respect for minority rights and protection of cultural characteristics, as shown by the federal multicultural legislation:

• (A) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;

• (D) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development;

• (H) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures;

• (I) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; (Canadian Multicultural Act, 1988)

If anything characterizes the current situation with respect to the state of Heritage Language programs in Canada, there is no title more appropriate to describe it than the expression "the suspended step of the stork", to borrow from the translation of the title of the latest feature film by the Greek filmmaker Theo Angelopoulos. Coincidentally, this film deals with the issue of
migration and the negotiation of identities: “We passed the border and we're still here. How many borders do we need to cross to go home?” (Angelopoulos, 1991).

The metaphor of the “suspended step of the stork” essentially represents the reluctance or the indecision about the next step. It is what, in the subtitle of their book *Heritage Languages*, Cummins & Danesi (1990) point out as "the development and denial of Canada's linguistic resources". This book, which analyzes the progress of the Heritage Language education system during the first two decades of implementation, concludes with reference to the substance of Canada's reluctance to move the program to the level of complete integration into the mainstream education system, thus serving the country in every respect. Despite complaints about the administrative challenges, financial burdens and their educational utility, the main reason for not attempting the full integration of the languages of ethnic communities in the public education system, (that is, with the creation of day-trilingual schools) can be attributed to the power relations between dominant and minority communities within the Canadian society. “To implement such trilingual schools would amount to an explicit valorization of multilingualism and an elevation of the status of minority schools whose languages would now be institutionalized within the mainstream educational system” (Cummins & Danesi, 1990, p. 114).

*From heritage to international languages.*

In Canada, the term "heritage language" refers to languages other than the two official (French and English) and indigenous languages (Cummins 1992). Heritage Language Programs in Ontario have operated for over thirty years (Canadian Education Association, 1991). Their intent is to implement the policy of multiculturalism in education, and in particular, to enable members of ethno-cultural communities / minorities in Canada to maintain contact with the
language and heritage of their origin and through this process to strengthen and legitimize their cultural identity:

(C) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society…(Canadian Multicultural Act, 1988.)

Since the program was launched in the late 1970s, in most Canadian provinces, no major changes have occurred. The program is basically implemented by Boards of Education, on a 2.5 hours per week basis for as many different languages as the ethnic communities speak, given that at least 25 students are enrolled in order for a class to be formed. The only actual change that has occurred within the program is the name which "evolved" from “Heritage Languages” to “International Languages” (Duff, 2008) in 1993, without a clear theoretical framework to explain this renaming.

Despite the protests from opponents to teaching "unofficial" languages (Cummins & Danesi 1990, p. 1-7) at the state's expense, many recognize the undeniable importance of the program, which in the time of its implementation was quite progressive. It actually contributed to Canada’s reputation as a model host country for immigrants, and to some degree, it constituted an antithesis to the example of other host countries such as the U.S (“Mosaic against the Melting Pot”, Levine & Serbeh-Dunn, 1999).

At the political level, the need to respect the linguistic rights of ethnic communities in Canada was initially expressed in 1969 when the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism proposed the introduction of teaching languages apart from English and French in the curriculum of public schools (The Canadian Encyclopedia: Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism).
In 1971, the formation of the national policy of multiculturalism within the context of the two official languages, provided potential for subsidized heritage language programs outside the regular school day. It paved the way for financial support to develop teaching materials and curricula and establish a National Heritage Language Centre to monitor and promote the progress of the system.

In 1988, multiculturalism was officially legislated and by law with the Multiculturalism Act of Canada. Through this act, the federal government laid the foundation for the cultivation of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada (Dewing & Leman, 2006). A year later, in 1989 the establishment of the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute was designated in the city of Edmonton, Alberta. The purpose of the Institute is the research and development of programs to train teachers and produce educational materials and general support for the teaching of heritage languages across the country (Government of Canada, 1991).

In Ontario, the official policy of multiculturalism was adopted in 1977 but was applied substantially in 1982, when the provincial government initiated a Ministry of Citizenship and Culture (now the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration), which claimed responsibility for the implementation of multiculturalism in the province. "...Recognizing the pluralistic nature of Ontario society, to stress the full participation of all Ontarians as equal members of the community, encouraging the sharing of cultural heritage while affirming those elements held in common by all residents ... " (Dewing & Leman, 2006)

Despite all these signs of political determination, Heritage Language programs have worked and continue to operate on the fringes of the central educational activity. It is characteristic that since 1977, the only increase in resources for the operation of heritage languages by the provincial government, through funds earmarked for continuing education, was
offered in 2001 and it was at the scale of approximately 2% while, in the same year, the Toronto Board of Education decided to cut integrated International Language programs due to financial constraints.

According to data from the Ontario Ministry of Education for the proposed funding of Heritage Language programs planned for the coming school year, the Toronto District School Board (the largest in the country with the widest variety of language programs), will receive a portion of the amount of $25,324,000, which is the total budget for the department of Continuing Education. Considering that this year the TDSB's operating budget reaches $2.5 billion, one realizes that for Heritage Languages, the proposed spending is limited to a portion of 1% of the total amount. Interestingly, a similar percentage was allocated for HL programs for the entire period from 2003 to date (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b).

The lack of cooperation between Canadian education authorities on language policy issues (Cumming, 2000) and the discontinuation of federal funds available to the provinces to support heritage language education in 1991 indicates the lack of political will for effective and systematic teaching and learning of the languages of the ethnic communities in the country.

At the theoretical/rhetoric level, the support for heritage languages looks ideal and unquestionable at the federal level. "Multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future.” (Government of Canada, 1988)

Echoing the above policy is that of the provincial government: "The ability of many different cultures and races to thrive together strengthens our society and provides a richness of heritage and understanding that can benefit us all." Each person has the right to "choose to
preserve or share aspects of his/her culture” within the Canadian context (Dewing & Leman, 2006).

It should also be noted that the Ontario Ministry of Education claims that “[it]... is committed to ensuring that the philosophy of multiculturalism permeates all aspects of school life and that all children are able to see their own culture reflected in the curriculum. Since language is a primary vehicle for cultural awareness, understanding and expression, an important aim of the Heritage Languages Program is to help students to deepen their knowledge of the cultural context of the languages of study. “(Ontario Ministry of Education, 1991)

Substantially, though, the reality is that the system is not supported as it should be. This fact is highlighted through two studies which refer to teachers who work in heritage languages (Feuerverger, 1997); (Constantinides, 2001).

**Teaching on the Sidelines**

The teachers-instructors of Heritage Language programs (Feuerverger, 1997) are marginalized professionally and frustrated with several aspects of their career. Undeniably, they are the black sheep of the education system. Their professional credibility is challenged—largely because they are not certified by provincial education authorities and their teacher status goes unrecognized in a system that fails to provide them with sufficient upgrading.

This condescending attitude towards Heritage Language teachers was evident during the long process (2008 to 2010) of my application for teaching certification in Ontario. The Ontario College of Teachers informed me that my past experience as an instructor in heritage language programs could not be taken into account, since it is not considered an accredited teaching
experience, despite the fact that it was gained while working for a recognized program of an official Ontario school board, that is, the Toronto District School Board.

Heritage Language instructors are employed on a part-time basis. Usually, they work on Saturdays and/or weekday afternoons on an hourly wage. Their income is significantly lower than that of “normal teachers”, and it varies depending on the institution employing them. Most of the Boards of Education, pay their Heritage (International) Language instructors an average of $30 per hour for actual classroom instruction time only, and less money is paid to the same instructors working for community schools that are not subsidized by the state (e.g. the respective payments for teachers of the Greek community in Toronto are $15 per hour, on average).

A large percentage of these teachers are immigrants (Constantinides, 2001) who did not attempt or failed to join the mainstream educational system. Apart from their limited income, HL instructors do not receive the same benefits and privileges enjoyed by certified Ontario teachers. Additionally, they are denied the right of tenure (contract) as their job depends on the number of students they instruct (a minimum of 25 children per school to set up a class/program of International Languages) and they do not have a possibility of professional development as Heritage Language teachers, in a systematic way, beyond a few sporadic seminars organized by the Boards.

Teachers in the system of international languages are not even deemed worthy of the title “teachers”. Instead, they are referred to as “instructors”, a term that usually suggests a technical transfer of information or skills (no pedagogical reference whatsoever)—and which would better describe the job title of professionals who train machine operators or driving licence applicants. "You don't need a teaching certificate to teach in a non-credit international language program
"..." (Teaching in Ontario, 2007)

Obviously, in terms of work conditions and professional development, teachers of Heritage Languages are not offered the same opportunities as are their colleagues in the mainstream education field. The frustrating struggle of these HL teachers to express themselves, to seek professional recognition—and to defend the hybrid identities of themselves and of their students—are presented in a study "on the edges of the map" (Feuerverger, 1997) where the researcher attempts to enter the world of HL "instructors" by mobilizing her own experiences as a member of an ethnic community in Canada.

These programs were fiercely opposed in the early years of implementation (Cummins & Danesi, 1990), but there were also people who defended them strongly, offering arguments supported by scientific studies which demonstrated that besides the profit of multilingualism and enhancing the multicultural nature of country, learning a heritage, second language enhances the confidence and self-esteem of students (Cummins 1991, 1995, 2001). Feuerverger bases the rationale for the importance of her inquiry on three key parameters:

The views of teachers regarding their role in education and the attitude towards their own self and the students could play a significant role in the learning process taking place in a classroom. (Purkey, 1970)

The lives of teachers are affected by what happens inside as much as outside the classroom. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995)

The perception of how to teach in a culturally sensitive and responsible manner is a key objective for all prospective teachers regardless of where and whom they teach. (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1993)

The data revealed by this research, obtained through personal interviews with twenty teachers of heritage language programs, illustrate the phenomenon of marginalization, the lack of
clear objectives, guidelines, incentives and cooperation as well as the traditional pedagogical approaches applied often on these programs. Among other statements, teachers who participated in the research identified:

- the lack of official recognition (formal accreditation) of their program, as there is no clear definition of objectives given to students i.e. a certificate to recognize their language proficiency (Cumming, 2000)

- the lack of proper books, teaching materials for certain language programs

- the existence of many different levels in terms of age and language proficiency of students per class (Constantinides, 2001; Feuerverger, 1997)

- the lack of clear incentives for students, especially considering that teaching in heritage languages usually takes place after and on top of the student's daily or weekly schedule

- the statement that they would prefer to have their own classroom, their own physical space within the school to avoid friction with "regular" day teachers who often react when their class has undergone some changes or damage by the pupils of Heritage Languages who share the same space in the afternoon

- the need for better cooperation and communication between home and school, as it was often stated that the home is the area of friction and conflicts between students and parents-immigrants for social and cultural distance reasons. (Some students are forced to dress and behave differently in their HL class compared with their regular school program. It is important, as they point, to train parents to bridge the huge gap separating them from their children, who inevitably adopt a Canadian identity through their socialization inside their day school.)

- the need to recognize that heritage language schools, like the regular day schools, are places where students are making significant gains in respect to their academic, social and cultural development
We examined with a particular interest Feuerverger's study and discovered that the views of the HL teachers interviewed, represents a reality that has not been addressed, yet. As Feuerverger notes, "..These HL teachers speak to the crucial task of creating a new pedagogical map that opens a legitimate space for alterity—the school as a meeting place for all”...
(Feuerverger, 1997, p.50).

My task comes as a response to the calls of my colleagues to do something to shake up the stagnant waters in the heritage language education and pedagogy scene, which whether we like it or not, claims a distinguished space in mainstream education.

**A Study of Greek Language Education in Canada**

In 1997, the Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies at the Department of the University of Crete, under Professor Michael Damanakis and with the support of the European Union and the Ministry of Education of Greece, launched a project entitled "Education Abroad" (*Pedia Omogenon*, in Greek) to serve the maintenance, cultivation and promotion of Greek language and culture worldwide, which included implementing training programs for teachers working in this field.

As part of this program, the Greek Research Centre of Canada, coordinated by the director Stephanos Constantinides, undertook the task of composing a study about Greek language education in Canada, which included investigating the conditions concerning teaching and learning the Greek language in Canada where approximately 350,000 people of Greek descent live. The figure is roughly estimated based on records of the SAE (SAE 2009) while according to the 2006 census, in Canada, Greek as a first language was declared by 123,575 citizens while 242,685 citizens claimed their Greek identity (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2010).
Although it is not possible within the scope of this study to fully report and analyze all the valuable findings revealed by the research (both in Canada and other countries with large Greek communities such as USA, Australia, Germany), I will focus on two elements that are relevant to my thesis and are indicative of the situation regarding not only the Greek language, but most of the other heritage language programs of Canadian ethnic communities.

**The trans-generational leak.**

The number of students in Greek language education across Canada in the period 1997-8 fell by about 35% compared with 1980 (from 15000-16000 in elementary and secondary age groups, the number of students was narrowed to 10000-11000). According to data from the Bureau of Education of the Greek Community of Toronto a greater proportional reduction in the number of students occurred the next decade. The survey identified as key reasons for this decline, apart from the disruption of Greek migration to Canada (Tamis & Gavaki, 2002), the phenomenon of mixed marriages (Chimbos P., 1971) between members and non-members of the Greek community and the passage between the first to the second generation of student population (Campbell & Christian, 2001), (Constantinides, 2001 p. 206).

**The grievances of teachers.**

A survey was conducted recording 238 of the 400 teachers of various Greek language programs throughout Canada. Through questionnaires, the researchers collected teacher views on Greek language education in Canada from which some concerns stand out: (a) The inadequacy or shortages of teaching materials, resources, and infrastructure; (b) the lack of proper pedagogical approaches/teaching methods; (c) a wide variety in proficiency levels among Greek language learners within a class; (d) financial problems; (e) lack of motivation on the part of parents and
students and (f) the need for ongoing teacher training and development programs (Constantinides, 2001, pp. 223-224).

It is worth noting that the researchers of this study were led to a series of conclusions and proposals for the future of Greek-language education in Canada. These include:

- the need to address the fragmentation and competition between agencies involved with the Greek-language schools
- upgrading the system and solving problems concerning teachers’ development, evaluation and modernization of curricula and textbooks
- addressing the reduction of the validity of schools particularly among parents of second and third generation
- addressing economic problems associated with the inability of parents to meet school fees, where the Greek language programs are not provided by government agencies such as the local Boards of Education

**Conclusion: From History to Action**

Based on the above, I will attempt to engage in a new role—from that of a Heritage Language teacher and participant observer of the system for the last two decades, to role of a researcher looking not only for expressions of identity (my own and of my students and colleagues), but also for ways to improve a program that must keep in pace with the evolution of the central education system and, why not, exceed it.

As a professional in Heritage Language education, *I am not an instructor; I am a teacher.* I am teaching an "unofficial" language in the afternoons and Saturdays to students who are tired of the burden of their "regular" school days. I am struggling to make my workplace, the "sixth
day school", the "after-hours school" more enjoyable and more creative for me but especially for my students (Cummins, 1981), (Curdt-Christiansen, 2001).

I am looking for motives. I believe that what we do, as Heritage Language educators, is not just providing a language tutorial service. Heritage languages are not foreign or international languages but they convey a part of the cultural heritage and the identity of the students and the teachers who are involved. I consider our school not a child-care site but a field for the emergence of a dimension of our personality, without which we are not complete, we are not who we feel we are.

In day schools, my colleagues cannot possibly know the stories that my students learn and narrate in my own class, because these stories have no meaning, no fun, they are not entertaining and interesting if you do not know the language and cultural context, the characters and tradition, in which they have been devised.

Being in a continuous dialogue with my colleagues in the last three years, I confirmed what the above mentioned studies have brought to the surface in the mid and late 1990s, and I found that, to date, nothing substantial on those issues addressed by the HL teachers themselves has changed.

I wish to highlight two points that I believe reveal the substance of what can be done realistically in relation to Heritage Languages which do not get the official support that they deserve.

The first point concerns the need to strengthen the sense of community, cooperation and applied interest by the ones involved in Heritage Languages and who are genuinely concerned about their development.
Perhaps most significant of all were the many comments made that focused on the need to create a professional, reflective community that displayed an ethic of caring and that was based on interaction among teachers, students and parents. (Feuerverger, 1997, p. 49)

Second, it is necessary to address all issues of teacher and curricula development and exploitation of new technological capabilities to support the HL programs. As Constantinides (2001, p. 251) notes, "The technological opportunities that exist today should be used...like audio-visual methods...Furthermore, to explore the enormous potential of the Internet." He continues,

If this is realistic, to maintain the Greek-language schools in Canada, will have to blow this new wind, a new philosophy ... which will allow to raise their performance to renew their teaching materials, curricula, training of teachers on teaching methods taking into account the specificities of the area, strengthening any exchange opportunity with Greece. (Constantinides, 2001 pp. 251-253)

These two suggestions are the basic pillars behind my initiative on the development of an educational blog for the HL school "Aristoteles" of the Greek Community of Toronto, and the application of a series of changes starting from the bottom (the school itself), initiated by the people who are actually part of the program, as we shall encounter them on chapters four and five.

Part C: Blogs in Education

Introduction.

My children, a 16-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, spend most of their leisure time each day in front of a screen, as do most young adolescents today. My son is primarily concerned with participation in games where he communicates while playing with his friends and he participates in groups that collaborate via the Internet to achieve the goals of their game (Gee, 2003). My daughter, on the other hand, shows a greater interest in social networking sites,
primarily Facebook, where along with 500 other million users, she manages her online profile and communicates with her friends by exchanging text messages (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007).

My decision to allow my children to use these communication tools was not a decision that my wife and I made lightly. We weighed the pros and cons of this modern adolescence (and beyond) mania. I understand that there is a good chance for my children to meet their future partners through their "games". They may be people of different ethno-cultural backgrounds, perhaps individuals who live currently hundreds or thousands of kilometres away from them. I also realize that my children spend more hours in front of electronic environments than in front of their books. Indeed, I notice that they read by far more electronic than written texts. They write less and they use their keyboards more. Their electronic world is conveniently transferred from their games’ consoles and PC screens, to laptops, "smart" e-agendas and their mobile phones.

As a parent and educator, I often appear annoyed by the dependency of my children on electronic devices. Nonetheless, I must admit that I have often seen my arguments to shattered one after another by my children, as exemplified in the exchanges below:

Observing my daughter, I comment, “Again playing with your computer, Matoula?”

She replies, “I am not playing. I am working on a group project that my teacher gave us at school.”

“And where are the other members of your group?”
“Online"...I am talking to them dad ... right now we discussing the project...we are working on it...I am sending Mary the video that I took of the flowers in our garden, and she adds her own pictures…”

And, turning to my son, I ask, “And you, Andreas, why don't you do some work for your Greek school?”

His response is similar: “But that's what I am actually doing!”

“Playing with your Play Station?”

“But dad, the game we play is about Greek mythology; that's the chapter we are in at school...you should see it, it is so cool...I am Hercules and I am trying to navigate the Aegean islands.”

This family interaction is typical, I think of similar discussions that take place in millions of homes or schools—between “troubled” parents and teachers on one side and “glued” children-students on the other. The world of my children is different from the world I grew up in, but that does not mean that mine was necessarily better. My children can certainly learn more things through their games than I had imagined. As I did decades ago, they do their homework. The difference is that they use images, audio, video and graphics instead of the “boring” pencil and paper or the black and white book of my own generation. Another difference is that they gather with friends not only in the basements or yards of their homes but also in electronic environments.

I am tired of wrangling with my children about their new work habits and cyberspace playgrounds and learning environments. Rather than fighting against them and their technology, I have decided to join them. I recently transferred my energy and my interest in heritage languages and the teaching of Greek language and culture in Canada to an environment similar
to the one used by my children. I created a blog through which I can write and read, listen to music, watch videos, display pictures, interact with friends, colleagues, and often with my students not only as teacher but as a learner too (figure 1).

Now my children and I squabble about who is first in line to use the computer, and I spend more time in the same environment with my children. Not only do I combine my work with fun, but I also feel less isolated from the modern mainstream.

**Weblogs.**

The term "weblog" was coined by John Barger in 1997 (Blood, 2000), and shortly thereafter, it was simplified to “blog” by Peter Merholz, in 1999. Peter Scott, a Canadian expert on blogs, has developed a commonly accepted definition of blog as “a Web page containing brief, chronologically arranged items of information” (Scott, 2001), but that is up to where common acceptance stands. Some speak of blogs as personal websites with frequent row of information, personal experiences, analyses, comments and links, which are managed by one person. This is partially true as not all blogs are personal pages, anymore. Schools and businesses, clubs, and organizations create different types of blogs all the time.

Apart from the common characteristic of all blogs, which is the reverse chronological order so that the newest post always appears first, other features like personal administration, the hyperlinks to other blogs, posts’ archives and free, public access and comments on their content, may differ from blog to blog. Some blogs have a group of administrators working together or alternatively; others are not accessible to the public without a password or do not allow unregistered users to comment on the postings (the blog content).
**The history of weblogs.**

Blogs appeared in the late 1990s. For many observers, their appearance was marked by the blogger weblog development software by Pyra Labs in 1999 and the following statement of the *Guardian's* journalist, Neil McIntosh: “It is not often you can say a website has changed the face of the web, and had an impact far beyond the confines of its own domain. But, for many, Blogger is such a site. For a little over two years now, Blogger has brought its ‘Push button publishing for the people’ to the net…” (McIntosh, 2002).

Kevin Werbach wrote that, although personal pages have appeared since the early days of the Internet, the first sites self-identified as blogs joined the World Wide Web in 1997 (Werbach, 2001). Others consider this "entrance" a bit earlier. Ancestors of the blogs, according to Delan Tweney, are the online diaries such as "Justin Hall’s Links from the Underground" (1994).

Depending on everyone's definition of blogs, we get contradictory stories about their birth, but we all agree that blogs became known and started to flourish when the first free software for their creation was allocated in 1999.

The evolution of blogs and their impressive development is related to the practice facilities that they provide. It is the only way that any writer can publish directly. Also, these new "tools" require no special knowledge of software programming and application and do not require a new set of skills.

Through blogs, ideas can travel with the click of a mouse to a global audience that has the ability to consider them, read and comment on them, to research and analyze or even influence them. The theory of social networks gives us a clear explanation of why blogs have such a powerful social impact (Granovetter, 1993). Through these tools, people can shape and influence
their social networks, and this facility, in turn, is something that can influence their own happiness (Christakis & Fowler, 2009).

**Web 2.0 tools.**

Blogs, along with the opportunities that they carry, are currently placed in the category of web 2.0 tools. These Web applications, interactive features and tools allow users to run interactive communication and to create and share information, using the Internet as platform. In other words, we have a flow of information in multiple directions. This information current can be created and shared by many. The world of web 2.0 is, however, fickle in terms of applications and forms (Kelly, 2010). There are systems of participatory content, such as blogs and wikis, services, social sharing (del.icio.us, Slide share), communication tools, social networking sites like Facebook, tagging, mashups (combination of two services), RSS feeds, and so on, acting as glue that connects all departments together. All these tools—together with search engines such as Google, Wikipedia and the blogosphere—provide teachers with a bridge to the generation of the Internet, while offering a vast array of new ways and opportunities to teach them (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007).

It must be stressed, however, that the tools of web 2.0 generation cannot teach or replace the dynamic interaction of students and students and students and teachers. Based on the theory of collaborative and experiential learning, and the theory of constructivism and scaffolding learning, those features and capabilities of web 2.0 means can be used as educational tools (Vivitsou et. al., 2007). Their usefulness for learning depends on how well students are prepared to use their critical thinking in order to address problems associated with the vast supply of sources of content which may be educational, informative, dangerous or just promotional. How many videos of YouTube, for instance, are purely promotional, and how many have an
educational potential? The role of the teacher as a mentor is not threatened, but upgraded in this seemingly practical but essentially vast and complex learning environment (Barnes, Marateo, & Ferris, 2007).

**Blog features.**

In the few months that I have dealt systematically with blogs, I cannot say that I am still able to understand and operate them at full capacity. The reason is simple. New functions (most of them free of charge) are added daily, and as mentioned earlier, no explicit software analysis knowledge for processing and development is required. It is simply a matter of how much time the interested blogger has available to experiment with the new applications. Even though some applications may preoccupy an inexperienced administrator, there are open groups in the form of online communities, including the "Blogger Help", where fellow-bloggers are ready to clarify everything at zero time. Some of the most common and useful features of blogs are:

- **Weblog archives:** the posts are kept in the blog after the removal of the current page. Records may be searched by posting dates of by content through a keyword.
- **Weblog search engine:** it can be done either by the title-theme of related topics or by the author's name, if many authors are contributing postings to one blog.
- **Webcam:** fixed or mobile camera connected to the Internet can provide picture, images from an event in evolution such as conference presentations, or a lesson that is presented in a classroom.
- **Opinion polls:** some blogs conduct polls/surveys to their readers, often concerning issues of interest to the blog and its audience. Thus interactivity is encouraged and a synthesis of viewpoints among participants is presented.
- Permanent links: a permanent connection allows the provision of identity URL for every single post with a code that was given to it when it was first published. So every posting may be accessed on the Internet independently.

**Edublogs.**

The first educational blogs or “edublogs”, as they are known, are indicated by the records of the Wayback machine to be published on the website edublog.com in May 2001. The name of these blogs refers directly to their usefulness. These blogs are created for educational purposes, such as the cooperation and information exchange between teachers and students or between teachers and parents, or between individual or groups of students (figure 1). Today there are many platforms for multiple developers and users of educational blogs, such as: Free Edublogs (with more than 500,000 members), Edu Spaces, Twitter, Teach for Us, Teacher Lingo, etc.

While blogs did not start off for educational or training purposes, it can be said with ease today that they are cut and sewn for education depending on how we use them; they may provide a faithful application of educational principles widely accepted, such as the theory of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978).

By facilitating language and text, not necessarily presented in a written form, educational blogs enable a student or any member of a learning community to share ideas with others. The possibility of the commentary of these ideas, allow interested parties to participate in the social construction of meanings and knowledge. The constructive process of negotiating meanings is fostered when, for example, the author of a post accepts the comments of others and returns to his original idea to rethink it.
The amazing element is that in this process, the roles can be reversed. As you accept comments on your posts, you might also comment on posts of others. The teacher can comment on posts of students and vice versa. This feature sets a paradigm of critical dialogue between those who teach and those who are taught (Freire, 1973) and allow blogs to go beyond formal education policies by providing a unique field for critical pedagogy practice. “As blogs enter mainstream public consciousness from the margins of the Internet where they originated, they bring a hidden and newly awakened army of interactive participants who may be experiencing the kinds of unsettling (to the powers that be) critical consciousness that is within the goals of an increasingly democratized culture such as Paulo Freire as an educator sought to foster...” (Boese, 2003).

We will examine next, in detail, the advantages of using blogs in relation to different pedagogical theories and we will consider them both as mechanisms for literacy enhancement and as tools for building learning communities, such as the one I attempted to create for the Aristoteles Greek Heritage Language School in Toronto.
Blogs for literacy enhancement: The theoretical-pedagogic framework. From literacy to Multiliteracies, Communities of Praxis and Transformative Pedagogy

With the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies since the last decade of the past century, and the dramatic strengthening of the phenomenon of human mobility, the concept of school literacy education had to be reviewed. In 1996, a group of scientists (New London Group) from different areas of education, coined the term Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), as a concept that attempts to combine two adjacent changes.

The first change relates to the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity and differing versions, new ways of speaking and writing, even within the same language. With globalization
(economic and social) and the intensity of the migration phenomenon, linguistic diversity and multilingualism acquires local dimensions.

The second change relates to the nature of the new technologies of communication and transmission of meanings, in multimodal settings (visual, audio, territorial...) which weakens the traditional dependence of the meaning on the grammar of written texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Multiliteracies as a new approach to the substance and pedagogy of language and literacy emphasize the friction of the students with a wide range of textual types, linguistic and cultural resources and connect the learning process with the development of a critical meta-language that enables learners to understand the cultural and social dimensions of texts. On this basis, those involved in the learning process are required to understand the historical and social dimensions of designing texts in order to be able to redesign and to regenerate them, creating out of them a new meaning which includes self-perspectives.

The teaching procedures that are described in the Multiliteracies pedagogical orientation are incorporated into four phases which are not to be presented as successive stages (New London Group, 1996, p. 86). These phases are:

- the “situated practice”, which refers to the use of available genres and text forms through the experiences and the different points of view of the learners
- the "overt instruction”, a systematic, detailed and conscientious approach to the sense of understanding of the design process in different cultural environments
- the phase of the “Critical Framing” which invites students to distance themselves from the object of study and its cultural surroundings
the “Transformed practice”, as the phase where the meaning produced can be transferred to different contexts and cultural environments

As part of the Multiliteracies framework, literacy is associated with new technologies, new forms of text that are emerging, visual communication cultivated by the modern multimedia, and new social requirements and business conditions, such as the need for continuous learning and assessment, as well as problem solving practices, leading all to an overall goal of individual development that can be achieved through education and literacy. This new theoretical approach to literacy and the practical applications of Multiliteracies, occurring in different cultural and educational contexts, (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), has opened new avenues in education and provided examples of various pedagogic approaches through new technologies. Later on we will see how these applications can be adapted to educational blogs.

If Multiliteracies help us realize the new opportunities and demands for the connection of education to new social-cultural and communication environments, the theories of scaffolding-constructive learning and transformative pedagogy provide a framework to integrate our teaching in this "new world" and create a balance between where we should go and how we should get there.

Scaffolding learning is based on the socio-cultural model of co-constructivism and stems from positions expressed by scholars such as Vygotsky, Rogoff, Bruner, Hillocks and Dewey (Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube, 2001). When asked how students learn, the theorists of behaviourism (Phillips & Soltis, 2003), such as Skinner, Pavlov and Thorndike, indicate that the answer lies in the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, both of which are passive carriers and receivers of curricula. Progressive “cognitivists”, notably Piaget, Rousseau, and Chomsky,
describe learning as a natural process, achieved through the activation of students, who are using their teacher’s assistance to overcome biological limits that determine how and when learning is achieved.

In the socio-cultural model of co-constructivism (Wells, 1999), knowledge is described as a product of social and cultural integration. How and what students learn depends on the opportunities that "experts" (such as parents and teachers) provide to them. This process is interactive and not a given or a "natural" phenomenon. The roles of student and teacher according to the three above mentioned pedagogic-learning models are quite different. For the "behaviourists", the role appears as passive because it all depends on the curriculum, while for the “cognitivists”, it is more active, as the student is required to reach the construction of knowledge within an environment created by the teacher, in such a way that will allow individual development into concrete steps. According to representatives of the socio-cultural model of co-constructivism, the student enters a collaborative process with the participation of the teacher who should observe the students individually and in groups and assist learning through their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher’s obligation is to adapt the curriculum to the needs of his or her students and cultivate an environment of critical inquiry.

As the theoretical background of the three “schools” and the roles that each one provides for students and teachers vary, so do their proposed teaching methods. In the case of behaviourism, the teacher teaches (orally or in writing), and the student is required to learn by memorizing the material on which she will be examined. For the progressive cognitivists, the student has choices in the sense of choosing the texts to be read or the type of work to be undertaken in order to discover knowledge. The socio-cultural model calls for the creation of small and large groups, working under the supervision and support of the teacher who guides,
records and analyzes the progress of each student and provides individualized assistance to achieve the maximum results.

Finally, we come to the question of who is to blame if the student's progress is unsatisfactory. The answer for the first two "schools" is common: the student. In the first case, it is because he or she failed to meet the demands and pace of the curriculum, and in the second, because there is an "evolutionary delay"—a failure/weakness, or because he or she is not ready for this school/program and the causes can be sought frequently in family or other social conditions.

In the third case, the responsibility lies with the "experts" (parents, teachers, administration, and so) and is attributed to the failure of close observation of the student to overcome difficulties met in different stages of the learning pathways, or failure on the part of the "expert"-administrator in selecting an appropriate teacher for every student, for not making informed decisions or due to the inability of the expert to properly prepare the student.

If, as an active teacher, I am called to answer the question of which of these three "schools" of pedagogy I believe is appropriate for the current educational conditions, I will reply that the socio-cultural, co-constructivist model best fits the current circumstances in (let us say) a Canadian, American or European school context. But I could not reject the possibility of coexistence of these models and their complementarities within a broader framework that includes all three, or some aspects of each approach.

Before addressing this model of synthesis of pedagogical approaches, I should point out a shortcoming found in the theoretical formulation of the above teaching concepts. This is the social element, the question of identity of those involved in the educational process (Cummins, 2001), whether students or teachers, that according to the new circumstances discussed earlier, as
we outlined the Multiliteracies pedagogy platform, appears nowadays very important to education.

The question of the identity of students and teachers is one aspect of the education process which is very important in the case of this thesis, as the teaching and learning of heritage languages is inextricably linked to notions of identity and its continued negotiation at all levels—in the relations developed at school, in the family or in the society at large. As identities are shaped at an individual level (e.g. between teacher and student) or at a group level (among communities), relationships and forces are developed that are either authoritarian, with the dominance of one party over the other, or balancing, characterized by mutual understanding and mutual respect (Cummins, 2001).

In any case, these relationships are not static. Thus, we must take them under serious consideration on the quest for a fuller picture of ideal contemporary pedagogical practices. While we have been preoccupied with whether learning depends more or less on the teacher, the student or the environment, current conditions require us to understand that the learning process occurs within a community, composed of and influenced by many interested parties.

Such communities are often referred to as Communities of Practice which are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2006). In education the central constituent of these communities is learning, thus we may acknowledge them as learning communities. Rogoff, Matusov and White (1996) refer to a learning community as an environment that includes both the active learners and their more mature or expert partners, usually adults, who will guide and encourage the less experienced (as proposed by Vygotsky). In such an environment, everyone cooperates in what evolves metaphorically into a community of praxis, which is described as
“reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970). In these communities, members attempt not only to create meaning but also to be activated and learn how to apply their knowledge in order to solve problems as in "real world" circumstances.

Within these communities, learning goes beyond the context of transfer and acquisition. Rather, it is produced as a result of a transformation process. As students are supported and their representation evolves, their role is transformed, turning them into more active members of the community who will eventually undertake, in turn, the role of the experts. Similarly, the roles of the experts (teacher-specialists) are also transformed, as they have to adapt their participation according to the progress of students or as new ways of cooperation to achieve the common goals are searched and identified.

Having outlined the concept of transformation, in relation to participation in a dynamic educational environment, we can complete the notion of the synthesis of behaviourist, cognitive and constructivist pedagogical approaches, including the transformational aspect, which is essential because as we are about to explore the implementation of educational blogs in the Heritage languages context, participation in learning communities is one of the most fundamental points. The synthesis of such pedagogical orientations is shown vividly in “Promoting Academic Achievement in Multilingual School Contexts through Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy” (Skourtou, Kourtis-Kazoullis & Cummins, 2006). As illustrated in figure (2) the central, inner circle represents the traditional pedagogical approach of directly transferring knowledge to students. Here, the pedagogical value is limited to the re-establishment of previous knowledge on the part of students and the development of learning strategies but learning occurs in specific units and no opportunities for expansion of knowledge and motivation for critical inquiry occurs.
The second mid-circle reflects the progressive socio-constructivist approaches which include the use of higher mental functions by the students and the participation in an exploratory learning process, theoretically based in Vygotsky's views on the construction of knowledge through collaboration between the teacher-expert and the student.

![Diagram of nested pedagogical orientations](image)

**Figure 2. Nested pedagogical orientations** (Cummins, 2007, p. 7).

The outer circle of the transformative approach expands the horizons of our pedagogical quest beyond the transmission of knowledge, based on the implementation of curricular requirements and the construction of knowledge with scaffolds provided by experts to consider the need for student understanding of the connections between knowledge and power relations. Transformative pedagogy builds on collaborative critical inquiry in order for the student-learner to be able to understand and explore the social conditions and the coercive relations in her community and her life. The student is required to develop skills of critical literacy to gain personal perspective in relation to issues such as social equity and justice. Transformative
pedagogy is influenced by Freire and Vygotsky (Cummins, 2000) and effectively introduces the social relations factor to the act of teaching. This is an important addition to the procedures of transfer, construct and integration of knowledge as the aim of education is not only to pass on knowledge but to make the student an active member of society.

**Applications on educational blogs.**

Next, we will examine how the use of educational blogs can incorporate a variety of teaching approaches, and in particular, how it can provide the appropriate environment for transformational pedagogical practices, which in combination with Multiliteracies can be described in a framework of five key principles:

1. Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy: constructs an image of the child as intelligent, imaginative, and linguistically talented; individual differences in these traits do not diminish the potential of each child to shine in specific ways.

2. Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy acknowledges and builds on the cultural and linguistic capital (prior knowledge) of students and communities.

3. Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy aims explicitly to promote cognitive engagement and identity investment on the part of students.

4. Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy enables students to construct knowledge, create literature and art, and act on social realities through dialogue and critical inquiry.

5. Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy employs a variety of technological tools to support students’ construction of knowledge, literature, and art and their presentation of this intellectual work to multiple audiences through the creation of identity texts. (Cummins 2009, p.p. 38-56)
My particular interest is to explore how the above principles can be practically expressed and implemented through blogging.

Discourse, according to Gee, involves more than issues of syntax, phonology and vocabulary. It includes the element of identity which is being constructed by members of a learning community through an interaction of principles, personal attitudes and social practices (Gee, 1990).
In the environment of a classroom, student texts (in all different forms) are presented to a limited audience, mainly consisting of teachers and classmates, but in the blogosphere, talented readers can judge a student as a writer for his or her views and the means he or she chooses to use in order to communicate. If the comments are positive, feedback empowers the student as a talented writer-researcher and communicator. However, even a negative comment might be a reason for the student to be more careful the next time, concerning the information sources used or the development of arguments (Penrod, 2007).

In blogs, every learner has the opportunity to work on topics of individual interest, using the means with which he or she is comfortable. Therefore, learners can create posts on their favourite sport or the music that represents them—or even on a particular school subject that excites them. Their passion for the subject-topic of their choice, and the sense that through the blog (which is a "real" environment) they can teach the world, may have greater meaning as a learning incentive than a weighty written project that they have to present in the classroom.

Especially in the major educational issue of cultivating writing skills, blogs may be quite successful for two reasons. First, blogging is a pleasurable activity (Penrod, 2007, p.7), so student-writers consider posting on blogs not as academic writing but as an extracurricular activity, which results in their view of writing in this case as "fun." Additionally, students often spend more time in posting than in doing other writing work because of the practical, self-directed, enjoyable and creative nature of dealing with blogs.

In blogging, the theory of Lev Vygotsky "Zone of Proximal Development" finds a perfect application field because an experienced mentor (who may be a teacher, a parent or a classmate) taking advantage of the practical possibilities of current technology available in blogs, can create the basis on which every student, with minimal assistance, can develop various skills (Penrod,
The expert has the opportunity to keep a distance and observe this development process as the student goes through a continuous dialogue with members of the community. The mentor monitors the student who may eventually assume the role of the expert as he or she becomes comfortable with content and technology, and as new, inexperienced users are entering the community.

Here the possibilities of collaborative learning are enormous, since learners can work in groups or pairs where each member has different levels of expertise, be it more technologically proficient or better in writing, and so on (Penrod, 2007, p.21-22). They can collaborate in researching sources, in familiarizing themselves with new software and applications. It is also important to note that they can engage in these learning activities at their own pace and on chosen time, beyond the restrictions of a classroom environment.

As a collaborative action, blogging teaches students that writers depend on their readers and readers on the writers. The performance of a reader or a writer depends greatly on the other part. Communication requires a transmitter and receiver or, as in the case of blogs, the writer and the reader. Students as bloggers, begin to develop the feeling that the writers should be careful in building a relationship with their readers to ensure an accurate understanding of their message.

In the process of blogging, the appearance of a student or any special needs of the student-writer are not important (Penrod, 2007, p. 25), since in such an environment the discrimination factor is absent. Through blogs, students can bridge cultural, social, economic, emotional and spatial gaps. Thus, they can take control of the learning process.

With their versatility and the plethora of instruments or genres that can be used for posts, students who write on blogs can take advantage of their particular skills (e.g. the comfort of synthesising rap music lyrics, or familiarity with graphic arts) to develop and present an
illustrated text. At the same time, the bloggers/authors have the incentive of immediate and tangible feedback. They see their text being published at once and anticipate comments as recognition of their efforts (Penrod, 2007, p. 22). When they are satisfied with the action of writing, they tend to write more and pay more attention. Student-bloggers practise research both for the use of appropriate means of expressing their ideas and for the identification of resources that will help them look informed and intelligent to their readers. The exchange of comments in which they get involved, frequently with audience far beyond the boundaries of a class or a school, locates them in actual social dialogue settings.

Bloggers consider critically the nature and accountability of the information that they are about to present as well as the methods/means of presenting their ideas and messages. Since those messages are intended for a broad public audience, bloggers should take into account social, cultural, emotional and political dimensions of their texts and whether their writings will challenge or cause the response of readers.

As they construct a blog and create content, students are concerned with the quality of their posts (audiovisual material, articles, images etc) to keep their readers interested. This process of research, analysis, synthesis and final selection, is a process of genuine critical inquiry that mimics the situation that "real authors" have to go through.

In the case examined by this thesis, the use of weblogs for teaching and learning a heritage language, studies demonstrate that blogs can support students with such second-language learning needs (Penrod, 2007, p. 30). The dialectic element which is evident in blogs empowers students to practice their writing skills (with written posts) or their oral communication skills (with audio blogging, podcasting). As many students of second/ foreign language are reluctant to express or share their oral and writing abilities with native speakers,
blogs allow the practice in which, for example, the experienced and the inexperienced can work together, creating their own community, before opening to more "central" language activities. Through blogs, students can narrate their own stories, display their cultural wealth, share photos or videos from their home, their interests, and combine written text (which they may not have comfort with) with audio-visual material.

In conclusion, through participation in an educational blog, learners can engage alternatively or in succession in the role of the writer and the reader-commenter. They can expose their talent and build on prior knowledge, using the instrument/means they have the greatest comfort with. Initially, their efforts may be supported by experienced instructors. Then, they assume this role for themselves. They can practise just their writing skills or use the enormous blog development opportunities to apply multimodal communication of meanings. Bloggers who are familiar with new applications of Information Technology actually get the chance to teach those skills to others, members of their learning community, and get empowered by such a role shift. As a result, they become active participants in knowledge construction within their community.

In brief, blogs are excellent tools, the proper mechanisms for transformative and Multiliteracies pedagogy's applications, given that they are used sufficiently with adequate support on the basic stages by experienced mentors who can help users overcome any initial fears and difficulties, thus minimizing the risk of early disappointment.

**A project is posted: Application of the framework "literacy-engagement and literacy attainment" among CLD students, according to the Transformative-Multiliteracies Pedagogy model, in Toronto's Aristoteles Heritage Language school blog**
In promoting the use of new Information and Communication Technologies, and in particular the opportunities offered by the development of educational blogs for Heritage Language schools (especially for teaching the Greek language and culture in Canada), I requested the collaboration of students and teachers of the Aristoteles school during the school year 2009-2010. A grade ten student (intermediate class) expressed an interest in contributing to the school's blog by submitting a post on one of the books she had recently read (see Appendix A).

The process evolved as follows. The student had already read the book in her native language (English), thus she was familiar with the content and she created simple sentences in English, which included the key elements of the book (author, case, space-time context, characters, plot). Using her prior knowledge of the Greek language, she attempted to translate her sentences into the target language (Greek). A teacher provided support for her to correct some errors in spelling and syntax and to turn the sentences into a text form. Via e-mail, her text reached the blog administrator who searched for images/pictures and proposed a text layout. The student added her personal comments, stating the reasons why she liked this book and specifying the elements that made it interesting and enjoyable. Before publishing the document, the student had the opportunity to observe it again from a distance, as an integrated posting display. She proposed further changes by adjusting her content to the comprehended skills of the readership. At this stage, she demonstrated awareness of the reading capabilities of her less experienced readers, that is, her classmates.

**The development of the project and the student**

The original text, comprised of simple sentences in English and commenting on a book previously read by the student, became a literature presentation article written in Greek, in a text
format enriched with visual material. Through the experience of publishing a blog post-article (book review), the student used her initial writing skills (creation of simple sentences) and expressed different aspects of her talent and identity, as a reader and book reviewer. Later on, she found her own way to further develop her skills (within her Zone of Proximal Development) by creating a grammatically correct and conceptually comprehensive written text. Feedback was an important factor since the publication of her post was recognized first by the teacher and classmates and then by each visitor-viewer of the blog.

The student was empowered not only by the idea of getting positive responses but also through the collaboration of at least two experienced mentors (the teacher and the administrator) who acknowledged her efforts, worked with her by editing her text and by providing assistance for spelling and grammatical corrections. In addition, there were several written communication opportunities between the collaborating individuals, as text messages and e-mails (between the student and the experts) were exchanged. Support and empowerment was even stronger for the student in finding out that with her work she established an example. In fact, it was right after her publication that students of the Grade 12 (senior-advanced) class collaborated with another teacher and the blog administrator in posting their comments in the target language about films they had recently watched (see Appendix B).

Based on the five principles of Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy, as presented above, the following results were evident:

1. The student was recognized as smart, imaginative and linguistically capable. The idea to present a book through a blog review post was original since it was implemented for the first time in the Greek school blog where she had the opportunity to show her abilities in the target language as a reader as well and as a writer of a specific genre.
2. Her cultural capital and her prior knowledge were acknowledged. The ability to read a book in English and to analyze it (the reader’s talent), was recognized by the experts and classmates as well as the fact that she managed to present her content in the second language, in a comprehensive written manner (two more aspects of her talent acknowledged; the writer and the language learner since a skill was acquired in one language and transferred to another).

3. She developed the cognitive capacities to writing a new genre, and she had the opportunity to present aspects of her personal identity by explaining what it was that she liked in the book, what she found interesting and entertaining.

4. She took the risk to express her opinion, to critique a literary work, and through the dialogue which developed with the comments of her classmates, the teacher, the administrator and users of the blog, she exercised the skill-concept of critical inquiry, in practice.

5. Rather than limiting the presentation within the classroom’s narrow range of audience, using a draft text written by hand, she published her text as a blog post which allowed her to develop electronic text composing skills (using audio-visual material) and she addressed a potential worldwide audience, thus she overcame the fear of public exposure, quite characteristic of the holdbacks that language learners experience.

**Pedagogical Analysis**

If the whole process had been reduced to the traditional pedagogical model approach, the student would be invited to read a book offered by the teacher, memorize it and face assessment
(on her memorizing skills). If we had followed the progressive cognitivist model, the student would have the option to read a book of her choice and to select the method of presentation. The teacher would still reinforce her efforts at every stage, but the audience would have remained restricted to the classroom level. However, using the school blog and the implementation of the socio-cultural model of constructive learning and the principles of Transformative Multiliteracies pedagogical approach, the benefits were greater.

The student produced "fun" work because her prior knowledge and talent was recognized. She realized her self-development as a language learner, as she evolved from the initial stage of writing simple sentences in English, to translating in the target language and publishing a comprehensive text which included the use of new technologies.

Furthermore, she engaged, through the process of her article preparation, in dialogue with other members of the school community (the teacher and administrator) and saw her role transformed, from the stage of a student-observer of the blog to an active member-author and mentor of her classmates. The post did not limit her to merely inform others about a book that she read. She offered an example of blogging as a means for the cognitive development of students and for literacy enhancement in a collaborative learning environment.

With her critical stand, she assumed the risk of expressing her personal thoughts and ideas and she received comments from other members of the learning community which was extended far beyond the confines of a school classroom. Through the student's blog posting experience and as her role evolved, it became obvious how such a community can be transformed into a community of collaborative practice. Skills from different cultural backgrounds were used in parallel and constructively. The assessment process was automatically initiated, as comments and observations of those who read this particular post prompted the
student to self-evaluation of her work and encouraged her towards further improvement. The example of a simple student posting on a school blog became a point of reference for other teachers and students in adapting new, more creative forms of school work.

Finally, it revealed to the broad community, an aspect of the work done in an isolated, to date, educational program which claims recognition and upgrading.

**Conclusion**

Along the path of the third chapter, we were able to describe the context in which a heritage language school of a particular ethnic cultural community in Ontario, Canada, operates. We observed the Greek migration journey to Canada and outlined the organizational structure and characteristics of this dynamic community in Toronto. We presented aspects of the profile of the new generation of HL learners, the members of the third generation. We have outlined the diversity of these new students and distinguished the characteristics and problems recorded in connection with the development of heritage languages, especially from the perspective of teachers working in this field. Next, we presented some aspects of the blogosphere and of new IT tools, and we attempted to prove the great pedagogical potential of applying them in marginalized educational programs. We investigated the pedagogical implications of such an application and gave an example of the synthesis of progressive teaching directives, in student blog postings.

I believe that I have highlighted the enormous potential of students and teachers in heritage language programs. They are the proud relay holders of their ancestors’ adventurous journey in this land of opportunity, and they have the right to expect better days in relation to their educational quest. The evolution in information and communication technologies has
opened new avenues that can provide significant scaffolds as they give room for the submission of modern teaching tools and methods that can foster the creation of learning community networks, bridging students, teachers and people interested in the development of heritage languages.

One such example is found in the great pedagogical advantages of edublogs. In chapters 4 and 5, I will present my experiences in relation to "Aristoteles" Heritage Language School and the attempt to transform it from GREEK SCHOOL to GREEK’S COOL. A focus point will be the implementation of an educational blog, which I created as part of a larger initiative for the cultivation of teaching and learning the Greek language and culture in Toronto, taking into account the given socio-political conditions in which Heritage Languages in Ontario, Canada have been operating for more than 30 years.
Chapter 4:
From Greek School

The "Aristoteles" Credit School

In 2007, when I was seconded by the Ministry of Education of Greece to the service of Greek-language education in Toronto, I was assigned as site administrator in the Saturday credit school "Aristoteles". Operating at two different sites in the areas of East York and North York, this school provides courses of Modern Greek language to high school students, most of whom are of Greek origin, giving them the opportunity to use their Greek language credit for admission to colleges or universities.

History.

The Aristoteles Credit School was founded during the school year 2003-2004, when the Greek Community of Toronto received permission from the provincial Ministry of Education to operate a Greek language program, as part of the International (Heritage) Languages credit courses. Until then, students of grades 9-12 had the opportunity to take courses in Greek language through the International Languages Credit program, offered by Toronto’s public school boards. When the provincial government of Ontario, under Premier Mike Harris of the Progressive Conservative Party, imposed significant cuts in public spending (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 1997), the budgets of the local school boards, funded by the province, were drastically reduced.

As a result of this economic squeeze, the Toronto District School Board decided to transfer the Saturday International Language Credit classes (approximately 110 instruction hours per year) on weekday-afternoons in order to lower the operational cost of the program. Consequently, a low turnout of student enrolment was recorded, since most of them were unable
to find time during the week for "Greek school". Thus, the credit program did not actually function during the school year 2002-03, and it was feared that it would disappear forever. Faced with this reality, the Greek Community of Toronto, after collecting requests of parents and students who demanded the operation of the Greek school on Saturdays, decided to take over the operation of the program. Having obtained permission from the provincial Ministry of Education, the Greek Community proceeded to rent classrooms in two public schools: G.S. Henry, covering the needs of students living in the northern outskirts of the city, and Eastern Commerce, for students of the central and southern suburbs.

Operation.

“Aristoteles” operates every Saturday, from the second week of September until the second week of June. Students are divided into four grades: 9, 10, 11 and 12. Depending on the number of students enrolled, classes are arranged under the provision that each class hold up to 20 students. At the end of the school year, successful students, upon participating in final exams, receive a credit (LBHAD-Gr.9, LBHBD-Gr.10, LBHCU-Gr.11, LBHDU-Gr.12). The course is organized in two semesters. Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m., with a 15-minute break from 11:00 to 11:15 a.m.

The courses are organized into modules, and the evaluation process closely follows the instructions/policy of the Ministry of Education of Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a), which inspects the school every two years and monitors its operation, ensuring that the administration and the instructors implement the educational principles and the curriculum laid down by the Ministry. Teachers are free to choose the textbooks. In recent years, they have essentially been books created under the program "Education Abroad", developed by the
University of Crete in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Greece and the European Union (Damanakis, 2007).

The annual fees for the credit program courses are approximately $450 per student (about $4 per hour), while a significant discount is offered to parents for their second and third child enrolled in any program or school of the Greek Community of Toronto.

**Students.**

The school's student population overwhelmingly consists of students of Greek origin with very few exceptions. Most students are second and third generation Greek-Canadians with the latter tending to grow constantly. In summary, we can classify the students of the school in the following categories:

- Second-generation Greek-Canadians whose parents (both or at least one) are immigrants and born outside Canada.
- Third generation Greek-Canadians whose parents (both) were born in Canada.
- Second or third generation Greek-Canadians who come from a mixed marriage (one of the two parents are of Greek origin)
- Students who are not of Greek origin

The trend in recent years is towards an increase in the percentage of students in the second and third category with a particular rise in students of the third category who currently comprise one quarter of the total student population. During the school year 2009-2010, the total number of students was 270, with 115 at the Eastern site and 155 at G.S. Henry.
The presence of many students with varying levels of Greek language proficiency in each class is a constant challenge for the teachers (Feuerverger, 1997), (Constantinides, 2001) who are required to teach beginners and advanced students simultaneously, constantly seeking the right balance to accommodate quite different learning needs.

Typically, the program is designed so that even a student of no Greek origin, of no previous knowledge of the language, may be able to attend classes. In practice, this multi-level nature of each class poses a major challenge, since most of the students have already had some exposure to Greek courses in various other community schools and programs, from kindergarten to the 8th grade. In addition, some students regularly visit Greece and they use Greek language at home, or attend various programs in the cultural department (theatre, traditional dances) and are active members of the Greek community. Conversely, however, there is a percentage of students for whom Greek is essentially a foreign language and the relationship with Greece or the Greek community is remote.

*Teachers.*

All the teachers of Aristoteles work on a part-time basis. On average, they are paid $30 per hour, and their annual income generated by teaching the Greek language is approximately between $3,000 to 3,500. Most of them are professional teachers and they are all university graduates in either Greece or Canada. Of the 16 educators of Aristoteles (14 teachers and two administrators) who were employed during the school year 2009-10, we can distinguish four basic categories.

First, there are those teachers who are seconded from Greece without salary. These are teachers who studied in Greece, joined in the Greek educational system and then immigrated to Canada. If proven to work continuously in Greek schools abroad (at least 18 hours per week), the
specific teachers maintain their position in the list of nominated teachers on the Greek public education system, and they have the possibility either to return to Greece and take a position at a school there, or in case they choose to remain in Canada, to claim a basic pension for civil servants in Greece, given that they have completed the required years of the Greek-social insurance scheme (at least 25 years).

The next category is that of teachers seconded from Greece with salary. These teachers are detached from Greece where they are employed at regular (elementary or secondary) schools in the public system. They are given the opportunity to work for five years in Canada (or any other country where Greek communities exist), in Greek schools, completing also the main time of 18 hours of instruction per week. Selection criteria for their secondment are the years of experience (seniority) and knowledge of official languages of the region in which they are to be detached (English for Ontario). Overall, Greece has more than 2,000 teachers posted in several foreign countries. However, in 2010, the economic crisis severely limited their number and their salary. (Out of ten teachers who were seconded to Greek schools in the region of Toronto, at the end of the previous school year, four returned to Greece).

The third category consists of Greek-Canadian educators who work for the “regular” day-education system (as teachers employed in public and private elementary or high schools). These are teachers who studied in Canada or received official recognition of their studies in Greece by the provincial education system of Ontario. They can be divided into two sub-categories: those who are immigrants whose first language is Greek, and those who were born or grew up in Canada and for whom Greek is a second language. In comparison, teachers of the first category are older and they comprise the permanent teaching staff of Aristoteles while the ones of the
second category are primarily teachers who have not yet secured a job in the day system or work occasionally.

Non qualified teachers who are graduates of Greek or Canadian universities constitute the fourth category. Generally, they have been working for many years in schools of the Greek community. Although they have never acquired formal educational training, they gained valuable pedagogical experience over the years. For most of these teachers, Greek is their first language.

One of the characteristic features of “Aristoteles” is that the variety of the existing categories in terms of students and parents is also reflected in the teaching staff. There are teachers who belong to the first and second generation, with knowledge of Greek as a first or as a second language. The teachers of Aristoteles are no exception in relation to teachers working in similar schools of other heritage (international) language programs.

Parents.

The vast majority of Greek immigrants came to Toronto in the 1960s and the early 1970s, while the oldest had begun to arrive in the early 1950s. Immigration from Greece virtually stopped in the 1980s (Constantinides, 2004). Therefore, the majority of current Greek immigrants in Canada are now pensioners. The students of Aristoteles are primarily their grandchildren. If we attempt to integrate parents, as we did with students and teachers, in general categories, three major groups emerge.

First, there are the immigrants. For them, Greek is their first language, the one they usually use at home. Generally, they view the learning of Greek as a priority for their children, and they usually maintain close relations with the Greek reality. However, they do no longer comprise the majority of parents as they did back in the 1990s.
The second category of parents consists of those who grew up in a purely Greek environment, whose parents spoke Greek at home and who attended Greek community schools. Most of them have maintained social relations with Greece and the Greek community, and they believe that it is important for their children to continue this legacy. However, in most cases, for this group, Greek is no longer the first language spoken at home. In fact, they communicate in Greek only occasionally, using a combination of Greek and English, known as Greeklish or Grenglish. Their language, as far as they are concerned, has undergone significant changes.

Finally, in the third category, we have parents who grew up in an environment where the Greek language and social relations with other Greeks were not favoured. Most of them do not speak Greek, but they chose to encourage their children to learn the language and culture of origin.

For most of the parents of the “Aristoteles” students, regardless of whether they speak Greek or not - or if they visit Greece or not - Greek language attainment is valued as important for their children, for a variety of reasons: in order to maintain their dual national identity and cultural tradition, because they consider the Greek language and history significant—and because they expect that their children might one day wish to return in Greece (for work or for studies).

The Aristoteles parents consider it their obligation to give their children the opportunity to communicate in Greek with relatives (in Canada and Greece, mainly grandparents), while many admit that the knowledge of Greek will help their children in their studies, given the large number of Greek words used in academic English in many fields such as medicine, education, science and arts.
From the contacts that I have made with parents at my school, I have found that many regret not having learned Greek properly during their youth. Some dropped out of Greek school or did not dedicate the necessary time or effort to learn the language. They would not want to allow their children to experience the same regret in adulthood. On the other hand, they complain that they have to bring their children to school by force (especially the students of the last two classes for which having to wake up on Saturday mornings after Friday-night parties is a tough chore).

In addition, many students are often involved in other activities, particularly participation in organized sports, forcing parents to choose either Greek school at the expense of the sport or trying to combine both, leading to absences from several classes.

Finally, a significant number of parents consider part-time employment important for their children, for economic, academic and/or social reasons. As a consequence, attendance at Aristoteles is often in "conflict" with professional obligations. However, nearly all parents consider it important that our school offer credits which are incentives for students as they can use their scores from the Greek school for high school graduation and/or for admission to university.

Administration.

“Aristoteles” operates as a private school (according to the education policy of Ontario) by the Greek Community of Toronto, which is a non-profit organization. Currently the G.C. has approximately 1200 students in 15 different schools and employs 60 teachers on a part-time basis. Teachers are hired by the Greek Community's education department. School administration is exercised by the Office of Education (with a director and a secretary) under the organization's Department of Education. The president of the Department of Education is a
volunteer and is elected by members of the Community every two years, as are the rest of the members of the governing committee. An advisory role to the Office of Education is provided by an Education Committee, which consists of representatives from parents and teachers, the Director of the Education Office, the Chairman of the Board and General Director of the Greek Community. There are also several committees appointed by the Office of Education, with specific tasks (developing curricula, the adaptation of schools to changes in Canadian education legislation, the preparation of cultural events, and so on). All members of these committees serve on a voluntary basis.

The Aristoteles School operates under the collaboration of the Education Office and two appointed educators-administrators: a principal and a vice principal. The principal is responsible for both school sites and the school's cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Ontario. The vice principal supervises the operation of the Eastern school site and the cooperation with the Greek education authorities.

**Stakeholders.**

The Ministry of Education of Ontario is the body that has ultimate authority over the school. Apart from the inspection and evaluation of the program on a biennial basis, the Ontario Ministry determines the curricula and ensures that the school follows the provincial educational legislation/policies laid down for each private school.

The Ministry of Education of Greece is interested in teaching the Greek language and culture abroad. Thus, it assists in the school's operation by providing free books, a number of teachers, and by organizing training seminars for teachers and administrators. (Until recently, seminars in Greece were offered through the "Education Abroad" program at the University of Crete), (Petraki, 2003).
The local school board (TDSB) rents school classrooms to Aristoteles and is responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the school unit during the school hours that it accommodates the classes of “Aristoteles”. The teachers of Aristoteles who also work for the day education system have access to “Canadian” educational support materials and training programs.

Advantages and disadvantages.

The major advantage of Aristoteles is that it provides an additional incentive for students who want to learn Greek in Ontario. It gives them the opportunity to acquire one of the (six in total) credits needed for admission to higher education. In Canada, there are no entrance exams for universities. University admission depends purely on the final marks of the students in the last two years of high school, especially their Grade twelve marks. As a result, some students of Greek origin have an extra reason to devote their Saturday mornings to learning the Greek language by attending "Aristoteles". Having acquired some knowledge of the Greek language, from previous years of attending Greek schools and from the use of the language in the home, they assume that it is relatively easy for them to earn a "high score" through the Greek school credit, which may help them maintain high levels on their final average marks. Sadly, however, this “advantage” may often switch to a disadvantage, when some students (and parents) feel overly confident that prior knowledge of the Greek language guarantees them high marks in Greek school without applying special effort or attending classes regularly.

In the crucial period of puberty, when children are likely to synthesize and crystallize their identity, tracking a heritage language program that is especially suited to the conditions and circumstances of Canadian education, enables students to reconcile their dual/hybrid cultural and ethnic identity which they hold.
At the social level, at "Aristoteles", Greek-Canadian students are able to socialize with their "own"—with peers who are familiar with Greek history and tradition, Greek music, sports, cuisine...They discover similarities with youth of their common ancestry and acquire a more comprehensive and integrated picture of Greece, the language and tradition, which some have met only through the experiences of their immigrant ancestors (Feuerverger, 1997), (Curdt-Christiansen 2001).

“Aristoteles” bridges the gap between different generations and different Greek worlds. In this school, representatives of the first, second and third generation of Greek-Canadians coexist and share the same classes and courses. The students, the teachers and the parents of “Aristoteles”, synthesize a Greek-Canadian variety. Some speak Greek fluently, and others broken or hardly at all. If students perceived their Greek identity as secondary or degraded because of their inability to express themselves comfortably in Greek, they discover that there are many others like them. The Greek identity becomes “legitimate” even for the learners with very low Greek proficiency.

In day school classes, as they progress through the grades, students come across more references to the Greek language and culture. “Canadian” teachers widely use educational elements from the Greek mythology, the Greek history, the Olympic Games, the Greek philosophy and the Greek origin of thousands of "difficult" words in the English academic language. Children of Greek descent may hear daily the English teacher to refer to "complex" Greek literary or linguistic terms, such as “onomatopoeia” or “oxymoron”. The drama teacher may speak with admiration for Aeschylus and Sophocles. The history teacher may refer to the glorious achievements of Athens, Sparta and Alexander the Great. The gym teacher may talk about the Olympic Games and their Greek origin or about the value of the Greek-Mediterranean
diet. The math and science teachers have to mention the names Pythagoras, Thales, Democritus and Euclides, while the teachers of social studies, philosophy and political science cannot miss Socrates, Plato, Aristotle or the Athenian democracy. The students of “Aristoteles” have every reason to feel proud because they learn about those names, this glorious legacy, first in their Greek school. They realize that most of what they learn in Greek school can be very useful for their "regular “school, too.

On the other hand, “Greek school” never ceases to be the school of the sixth day. By Saturday, students are already weary, burdened by the program of their day school. Considering that we all like to rest on weekends, to engage in pleasurable and entertaining activities, watching TV or just recovering some lost sleep, it is logical that the students (and parents and teachers) of "Aristoteles" are no exception. As strong as the motive of the high school credit may be, as "persuasive" as the pressure from parents may be at times, the Saturday Greek School cannot be addressed by all students with the same seriousness as they are dealing with their day school—especially when teaching is practised in traditional, "boring" ways and students are stranded in passive roles (Cummins J, 1981), required to memorize "complicated" grammar and spelling, write essays and copy lengthy passages from the blackboard. Inevitably, given such a scenario, waking up for Greek school on Saturday mornings becomes unbearable.

In addition, the distances in Toronto are great and many students come to school from many kilometres away. The two school sites can hardly meet the geographical-demographic distribution of Hellenism in the city. Dozens of students are forced to abandon or avoid the school simply because access to it is problematic. Often, parents work on Saturdays and there is no means of transportation to school.
In the hallways.

When I took on the responsibility of "running" the Eastern site of Aristoteles, in the fifth year of the school's operation by the Greek Community of Toronto, I had no experience of school administration. That was the reason for some serious holdbacks, on my turn, when I was asked to effectively exercise the duties of School Principal, when I had only received training as an elementary school teacher up to that point in my career in Greece. Having worked in various Greek schools (primary and secondary) in Toronto in the 1990s, for three different organizations (the Community, the Church, and various Boards of Education/Heritage language programs), I had a good idea of how to teach Greek to students in Canada. Thus, it did not take long for me to adapt to the Greek-Canadian educational reality, as perhaps may have been the case for my colleagues who were seconded from Greece and had to teach their language for the first time in a foreign country and in a second/foreign language context.

Apparently, my role was easy. I simply had to follow the orders of the G.C.'s Office of Education, to deal with the smooth running of the school, to resolve minor problems and address issues related to student behaviour, compliance with the school timetable and the collaboration between teachers, students and parents.

Actually, I spent the two initial years of my term in “Aristoteles” observing what was happening at the school and cultivating relationships with my colleagues, the students and the few parents whom I had the opportunity to meet. I confess that the idea of working in a part-time school without any major claims, no high stakes, without any pressure from any direction, essentially placed me on a professional nap. I was working in a school where I had, like everyone else on the same site every Saturday, a feeling of relaxation. Nobody seemed to expect something specific from me. I used to observe students arriving often sleepy and late for their
classes, teachers struggling to retain their class in working order during lessons, parents leaving their children in the school parking lot in the morning and returning to pick them up at one o’clock.

Passing by the classrooms, on the hallways, I could hear from the inside mostly dialogues in English among students who impatiently waited for their lunch-time break when they would run out to "socialize". The break was for most of them the best time at Greek school. Out to the Danforth, the famous street near our school, which happens to be the commercial heart of Toronto's Greek community, my students attempted to prolong their break-time, citing a bunch of excuses. There were cases where the bulk of students returned half an hour late, which did not seem to concern anyone. The teachers waited patiently for their students' return and I kept on "threatening" that I would contact their parents. That is something I tried several times, indeed. I attempted to invite parents to the school in response to various events, but my efforts were unsuccessful. Within these two years, the so-called Parent Council was represented by one person, a father of second generation, who never missed an opportunity to communicate to me his disappointment at the apathetic climate prevailing in our school.

* A discussion with Andreas.

That is how I spent the first 2 years as a vice-principal. We were all resigned to the state of the school as it worked in a loose, relaxed manner. Then, in the spring of my second term, a few weeks before completion of the school year, I had a talk with my son who, at the time, was a Grade 10 student. This discussion changed forever the lens through which I viewed the Greek school and my professional career in Canada.

Having attended school in Greece for seven years, Andreas was fluent in Greek and his presence in “Aristoteles” was an opportunity for him to maintain his proficiency in the Greek
language and especially to socialize because when we returned to Canada, he had to leave his friends, among other things, in Greece. My son and most of the other students came every Saturday morning to “Aristoteles” with no particular joy. At the beginning, he was nagging and trying to convince me to remove him from this trouble by claiming that since his Greek was already good, there was no need for him to come to Greek school. I explained that it was a good opportunity for him to retain the language, to get a credit that would be useful when the time comes to go to university and also to forge friendships with other children of Greek descent. The latter rationale seemed the most interesting to him.

That day as I sat at my ‘office’ (two desks placed in the corridors outside the classrooms), I noticed my son moving around his classroom and looking troubled. When I asked him what was wrong, he expressed his indignation about how some classmates behaved towards the teacher, yet he demanded that I not say anything because he did not want to be labeled an informer. When we returned home that afternoon, he “blasted” me. He told me "no one listens to the teacher when she speaks; everybody talks to each other in English and they listen to music while in class; only a few do their work; there is chaos in the classroom and nobody learns anything!"

Then Andreas asked me, “Why don’t you try to fix things”? He was so resentful of the situation, that I said, and I meant it, that if he wanted to quit, he was not compelled to continue coming to the Greek school. I suggested that I could tutor him at home and that he could do anything that he wanted on Saturdays, perhaps joining a sport team.

"Indeed, we are now living in Canada,” I told him. “And we'll stay, here, so why don't you learn how to play hockey like the other kids at your school? After all, you're Canadian."
He looked at me in an unusually serious manner and told me that he feels “100% Canadian but also feels 100% Greek”.

"This school is important to me," he said as he moved away in anger. It was the first time that I spoke with my son about an issue related to Greek school, and at first, I was surprised by his comments. I remember that when we lived in Greece, the sense of his Canadian identity distinguished him from his classmates. He often said that he would prefer to live in Canada, as he could not be like the other children. Now, in Canada, I saw him defending his Hellenic identity insofar as not wanting to quit Greek school.

**The agreement between Andreas and Cummins.**

In those days, I had made my final decisions regarding my professional future in Toronto. I submitted an application for certification as a teacher at the Ontario College of Teachers and waited to receive permission to seek employment in the public educational system. The decision was delayed, so I decided to take one more step in my studies by registering for a Masters program in the Department of Curriculum and Teacher Development of OISE, the University of Toronto. One of OISE's professors is Jim Cummins, who has devoted a considerable part of his career to multicultural education, studying issues related to language (and second language) acquisition. He has researched and worked on programs such as Heritage Languages and the educational system in Canada which supports the teaching and preservation of languages spoken by members of the ethnic communities in the country.

Reading an introductory book on the work of Jim Cummins (Baker, Hornberger, & Cummins, 2001), with whom I chose to take courses, I found a quote of his from an interview, where on the question of whether he considers himself more Irish (the country of origin) or
Canadian (the country of migration), he responded just as my son had. He indicated that he feels “100% Irish and also 100% Canadian”.

The identical response of my professor and my son shook me out of the lethargy into which I had fallen. Until that moment, I considered myself incompetent to take any initiative regarding Greek school. As far as I could think about my professional obligations, I had no responsibility, knowledge and, above all, will to do anything that would stir the waters. I was completely hesitant to try to improve the functioning of the school. I did not know where to start, and I did not think anyone expected me, a teacher who came from Greece, to "reform" a system that operated in such way simply because this was a marginalized school, a program operating at the sidelines of the mainstream education (both the Greek and Canadian). Even if I wanted to do something, I would need help. Looking around me, I could not see anyone or anything that I could rely on.

Looking upward.

For the Canadian education authorities, our school is like a grain of sand. It is a program that is not burdening the taxpayers—even with one dollar. It is a program that exists to meet the cultural needs of an ethnic community and to maintain the prestige of our multicultural perspective, the image of the Canadian mosaic that is admired internationally, in contrast to the assimilation model applied by other countries with a large numbers of immigrants. For the Ontario Ministry of Education, it is very important that we operate in accordance with the official policies, and above all, that we apply the suggested assessment procedures, since our credit is the only thing that connects us with the mainstream education system of the province and indicates our "legitimacy." Our education program is running in rented public school classrooms, which seems like we are provided with housing instead of a school. We use, at the
school site of Eastern, just six classrooms and two washrooms. There is no office available for teachers to work together or for the principal to perform duties or to welcome visitors. There is no school courtyard available to our students. There is no cafeteria. There is no meeting room, staff room, no auditorium. Everything is done in the hallways. There is where I distribute photocopies to the school population, where I make my announcements, where teachers get their pay-cheques, where I meet the parents, and where I try to solve any problems presented each Saturday.

Our school is thousands of miles away from the “homeland”. For Greece, a small and relatively poor country, expatriates are a bridge to the world, but the seven to eight million Greek immigrants who live abroad are scattered all around the world (Tamis & Gavaki, 2002). There are Greeks in the United States and Canada, in Australia, in Europe even in Africa. Some of the Greeks who live abroad are first-generation immigrants, but the majority are members of the second and the third generation. Some speak Greek and some do not. Some have even anglicized their surnames to adjust to the linguistic understandings of the communities where they live. Some left Greece with the name Papadopoulos, but now they are called Pap. Some maintained Greek ties, travel to Greece on a regular basis, while others live with the remote memory of the country through the stories and the experiences of their ancestors.

The Greek government is interested in our school. The Greek Ministry of Education provides us with books, and sometimes, when the circumstances allow it, with teachers, too. Seconded teachers are expected to teach the Greek language and Greek culture, but are they responsible for the conditions, the attitudes, the schools? What can be accomplished by a teacher who comes to work for three or five years in a Greek community abroad? How much can he/she change, in which ways, and by what authority?
These questions perplexed and frustrated me. Looking up the educational hierarchy, I could not identify any command or any call for reform. "Our school is what it is because it is shaped so by the given conditions and those conditions cannot possibly change by one person”, or can they?

**Looking inside myself.**

Greece perceives the students of Aristoteles as Greeks. Canada perceives them as Canadians. However, my son is not just Greek and not just Canadian. He is both—in parallel, simultaneously, uniquely. Experiencing this synthesis of ethno-cultural identities, I realized that for our students (and for parents and teachers as well), our program, our school, is part-time only in terms of its infrastructure and perhaps the official perception towards it.

In essence, it is a unique educational setting for the members of our community, perfectly adapted to our own needs. Here we learn and speak a language that gives shape to who we are. The proper cultivation of this language may depend on how well we develop this dimension of our identity that needs the most support, since the environment in which we live does not always provide the stimulus to foster minority-unofficial languages (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977).

Suddenly, I felt a huge responsibility on my shoulders, realizing that I was a piece in a puzzle which I had to solve. I felt enormous accountability towards my son and his friends, towards my friends, the parents and colleagues. Perhaps I am just a teacher, but on this occasion I felt the internal drive to do something beyond my official responsibilities.

"Why don't you try to fix things?" I hear again my son’s question in my head. Still, I do not know what I should do. I still imagine that I do not have the strength, the knowledge, the resources and the responsibility, but now I have something very important that I did not have before: the determination.
Further on, I will refer to what I did in the third year of my term in "Aristoteles". It was for me a very challenging year, since I tried to combine my work in the Greek school with my studies at OISE and my decision to initiate a reform effort that came more as an inner need rather than a professional obligation. Based on the notion that a teacher, and particularly a teacher working in Heritage language programs, cannot expect the resolving of all of his professional problems from "above", I entered a self-development process in which I "dragged" a few colleagues who have been sharing my concerns and who keep supporting me throughout this path. Our goal is to change our school into a more pleasant and creative professional environment, for ourselves and, simultaneously, for our students who need to study their heritage language in a more engaging, entertaining manner. Our aim is to go from GREEK SCHOOL to GREEK 'S COOL.

**OISE and the "Routes"**

If I can change, then my school can change. If my school is changed then my community will change too. If my community is changed then, perhaps, our society will change as well. (Journal notes, August 1, 2008)

In May of 2009, I received an e-mail announcement from the Greek Ministry of Education about the introduction of an online in-service training program for teachers. Called "Routes", this program was developed to support the teaching of Greek as a second/foreign language, abroad (see Appendix H). Coincidentally, at that time, ideas for my contribution to a drastic change of the Greek school were brewing inside me. I knew I had to begin with my own training and further professional development, in two dimensions: the Canadian and the Greek.

My exploration and adjustment process to the educational reality of Canada had already started by attending the graduate program at OISE. The Department of Curriculum and Teacher
Development provided the opportunity to become intensely involved in the philosophical, political and pedagogical dimensions of contemporary Canadian and international education. It opened the gates for me to acquire useful knowledge of curriculum development, especially under the principles of bilingualism and multiculturalism which were issues of particular interest to me and quite relevant to the context of a Greek language school operating in Canada. The basic pillars of what the CTL Department's graduate program concentrates on: "to play a leading role in the development of education for the 21st century locally, nationally and internationally" (OISE, 2009) seemed to fit perfectly with my professional, educational ambition.

My only problem with my "Canadian" studies concerned the absence of a course related to the teaching of the Greek language, despite the fact that Ancient Greek is a central part of Classical Studies, one of the subjects offered to high school students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a). I was looking for ways to develop expertise in teaching the Modern Greek language in Ontario (or generally in Anglophone mainstream environments).

My academic advisor, Pericles Trifonas, a second generation Greek-Canadian, gave me that opportunity through an independent study and research course which we developed jointly in order to meet my special professional interests. The course "Research in Heritage Language Pedagogy; the teaching of Greek as a second language" involved my enrolment in an online teacher training course that offered specialization in the teaching of the Greek language in international settings.

That is how I was driven to the decision to apply (see Appendix F) to the program "Routes in teaching the Greek language", a unique e-learning distance program for educators involved in Greek language and culture for bilingual students. The program "Routes" is implemented by the Center for Greek Language", an organization which is part of the Greek
Ministry of Education and supported by professors of the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki-Greece, specialists in Greek language, linguistics, pedagogy, literary and the new technologies.

The program consists of the following modules:

- Planning and managing a course, teaching the four skills
- Teaching foreign language with Information Technologies
- Teaching grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation
- Language teaching to children
- Assessment of student performance
- Aspects of language (see Appendix H)

Once I discovered this program, just days before the beginning of the courses, I attempted to inform as many of my colleagues as possible (who were unaware of its existence). I exchanged several letters and e-mails with the administrators of the program (see Appendix D) and wrote a memo to the Greek Community's Office of Education, referring to the nature of the program and the opportunity for colleagues who wished to participate (see Appendix E).

Specifically, I suggested that such a training program could be equally important for all categories of teachers working in Greek language schools of the Community:

- The ones who were seconded from Greece and with a pedagogical background could benefit from the orientation of the program in teaching Greek as foreign language, a very important specialization to any Greek educator who works in international school settings (such a specialization was not offered until recently in most Greek Universities’ Pedagogical Departments). The only relevant training for Greek teachers who are seconded to schools abroad has been their participation in a weekly seminar organized every summer by the Greek Ministry of Education, basically
aiming at preparing the Greek teachers to adjust in the social and professional conditions that they will face—with no particular focus on practical teaching issues in relation to methods matching the needs of teaching the language as foreign. (Vamvoukas, et al., 2004).

- Colleagues who are first-generation Greek (native speakers) but have not received official teaching training would have the additional benefit of its acquisition since the program included many pedagogical-related subjects.

- The biggest gain, however, would be for Greek teachers of the second generation, the ones who learned the language abroad. For them, the program not only offered training for teaching the Greek language but also enabled them to improve their Greek and receive an official language proficiency certificate.

Apart from the special advantages accruing to each separate category of educators, the program had some other equally important characteristics, most notably:

- It was free, so the problem of the prohibitive cost for any attempt at massive training of teachers who lived and worked away from Greece did not exist.

- It was a distance online program; therefore, no physical mobility was required as long as the applicant had access to a computer and the Internet.

- It was a very good opportunity for all teachers to acquaint themselves with new technologies and the principles of distance education. For educators, as in my case, suffering from computer illiteracy, the program provided a first class opportunity to become familiar with Information Technologies and online collaborative learning environments (such as Facebook, Twitter, My Space etc.) by means of synchronous
online communication (such as Skype), with various programs and Web 2.0 tools (blogs, wikis, hot potatoes etc.) that are currently used in all kinds of online education environments, globally.

- Finally, the applicants could participate in final exams at the conclusion of the program and obtain an official recognition of their Greek proficiency and their teaching expertise of the Greek language as second/foreign. That advantage was very important both for practical and for psychological reasons to those "instructors" who had never before received an official document to 'legitimize' their professional involvement with the teaching of the Greek language. (Constantinides, 2001)

All these parameters clearly indicated that the program "Routes" was an ideal form of training for each teacher involved in the Greek HL programs in Canada. As we encountered in the third chapter on Heritage Language Teachers, professionals involved in this field need ongoing support, training, "legitimacy" and recognition. Participation for a whole year in a learning community, with continuous support by specialists and professionals from around the world, extracts the instructors from the edges of the central education and reinvigorates their interest for their careers (Bronack & Thornton, 1999).

Personally, along with my colleagues (originally eight in total, with four completing it) who attended the program, I gained a lot from my participation. It is not within the scope of my current study to refer in detail to the "Routes" course, but I have to underline two fundamental aspects of my participation in this program that contributed significantly to the re-enforcement of my impetus for personal-professional development and the improvement of the school and the educational program which I serve.
Conclusion: Overcoming Fear Is the Beginning of Wisdom

Reflecting on my gains from the “Routes” course, the first benefit was that I had the opportunity to shake off the anxiety of using new technologies in which I was never really trained in systematically. At the time when my journey in the electronic environment of "Routes" started, computers were a constant cause of fear for me. I knew that the generation of students that I was about to teach in Canada were a lot more confident than me in the IT sphere. However, I also knew that certain electronic devices and applications would be extremely useful as educational tools. Becoming familiar with such an environment was quite beneficial for the renewal of my teaching methods as well as for attracting the interest of the students in my school. Through the "Routes" course, I met and conquered not only the modern communication and training programs that I mentioned above, but mainly, I realized how many attractive and practical tools I had at my disposal to make better use of in my work. This course reinforced the fact that I could combine fun with educational productivity. If I could convey this message to my “partners” (parents, students and colleagues), it would be a great start in fulfilling my son’s request. After all, Andreas had demanded that I try to “fix things”!

My second important profit from “Routes” was my integration into an online learning community; my acquaintance and collaboration with one hundred school teachers of Greek language—and the dialogue which we engaged in through the forum of “Routes” as well as via e-mails and Skype. For a whole year, we were exchanging ideas about teaching particular subjects of Greek grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. We shared proposals and concerns on how to combine teaching both a language and a culture when the ancestral home is thousands of miles away from our classrooms and the students. With fellow Greek teachers from Spain, Poland, Australia, Mexico, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and many other countries, I
swapped stories in relation to my professional experience. We became a group of friends and we are still in contact today, several months after the end of the course.

Unexpectedly, the notion of teaching the Greek language took a global dimension. My professional life escaped the confines of my school and my community. The isolation which I had internalized and the resulting neglect on my part for a dynamic and productive professional approach did not exist anymore. I learned how important, beautiful and fruitful it is to study with others, to teach and to learn without pressure, without keeping to yourself or remaining locked in your library.

In the next chapter, I will refer to the development of a blog that was a first, practical step in the direction of change, for my professional evolution and a new approach for my school. The occasion was seeded in "Routes" where I learned for the first time the possibility of using blogs for educational purposes. As a "rookie", I spent a significant part of my free time experimenting and navigating the "blogosphere". It was a painful process, but at the same time, enjoyable. The hundreds of hours spent on "Routes" while developing the educational blog for my school was a small price to pay in order to satisfy the need for my personal and professional improvement. I dedicated all this time and effort not after any order or suggestion from my superiors.

I entered into this process for reasons that are both, I feel, an obligation and a right of each teacher. What takes place at a school or in relation to any educational program is often applied without considering the will, the opinion, the consent of the actual participants. Changes in education are directed more often (or in some cases almost exclusively) from top to bottom (Fullan, 2000). Decisions on what to teach, what resources to use, what goals to set and the time-frame for all the above is not the result of a dialogue between teacher-student-parents.

School and educational operations are usually driven by political decisions, decisions made by individuals or groups that do not always have direct contact with school life or share the
same sense of the educational reality with the participants. Also, what is happening in a school, in a class, often may remain hidden from the stakeholders.

As a teacher, parent and administrator of a school, as marginalized as it may be from the mainstream education (as it is the case with the "part-time" Heritage Language schools), I have a much clearer picture of the curriculum, the school, the problems that we face and what we should change. Nevertheless, I have no one to report to because I feel that no one considers what I am doing as a matter of priority.

If the responsible authority for my school is the Ministry of Education of Ontario, the Ministry of Education of Greece or other intermediaries, they cannot have a better perception of my professional environment than I have. It is not my intention to replace the interested authorities, but it is up to me to show them what the nature of my job is, how fragile the identity of my students is and how enormous our capabilities are.

The space of the Internet is ever-expanding, multicultural, and global. The World Wide Web is larger than our school, our community and our city. In this vast, limitless environment, "Aristoteles" has a distinguished address. On line, we are housed in www.easterngr.blogspot.com, and this site, our electronic home, remains always open. There, everyone can see what we do, what we learn and what we are concerned about. There anyone has access to our identity.
Chapter 5:
To Greek's Cool

Entering the Second Century of Greek-Language Education in Toronto

In September of 2009, I began the third year of my second term in the schools of the Greek Community of Toronto. This particular organization was founded in 1909 and has been providing, since then, ongoing Hellenic education programs for more than a century. As part of the celebrations to mark the centennial of the Greek Community of Toronto, I participated with other teachers in writing an album about the history of Greek schools that have operated in the city of Toronto all these years. Collaborating with colleagues who had worked in Community schools for thirty, forty or even more years, I came across priceless files, photographs and personal histories that touched my soul, since I realized how many hard-working individuals had dedicated their lives and their professional careers over decades in pursuit of a common aspiration: the protection and maintenance of the Greek language and culture in Canada.

Browsing through dozens of pages of material that had to be evaluated and categorized, I noticed the actual deterioration suffered by the Greek language education programs in Toronto in recent years. Schools and programs that had flourished in the past (especially during the 1970s, 1980s and even the 1990s) no longer exist or they operate with a marginal number of students. At first, I thought this trend might be interpretable. Immigrants from Greece have stopped coming and interest in teaching the Greek language faded "normally" as we moved from the first to the second and third generation of the student population.

However, the adverb “normally” aroused inexplicable anger inside me. It was “normal” for our ancestors to maintain, to teach their language and tradition to nearly four hundred years of Ottoman conquest (Foundation of the Hellenic World, 2007), and it is not “normal” that we
continue this legacy nowadays when in fact the social, political and economic conditions have clearly improved? My anger had a basis. Only that searching of the blame for this "normal" decline and our submission to the causality of wear I could not avoid looking toward my direction, too.

I reached the conclusion that 2009 would be for me a year of final decisions regarding my professional future in Canada. The moment of recognition of my teacher standing (my certification) from the Ontario College of Teachers was near. Despite the problems and the delays that the process of certification of internationally educated school teachers often includes, I was about to experience the opening of a door that would ensure for me and my family a steady income and a secure and decent work environment in the sector of public education. The thought that I would find myself again in mainstream education and that I could exercise my beloved profession, supported by an established system, made me put in a somewhat secondary position the need of change for my Greek school and any responsibilities I could have in this general and abstract duty. I decided that if I got a job as a teacher in a day school, I would continue to offer my services, even on a voluntary basis, to the Greek language education, so I had a clear conscience.

However, with the start of the school year at Eastern (the site of Aristoteles, which I headed on Saturdays) in September, 2009, something interesting happened. The number of our students increased unexpectedly from 80 in the previous year to 115. We created two classes for each grade and we renewed the teaching staff by replacing two colleagues who had decided to retire. Added to our team were two young, professional teachers: one seconded from Greece and a second generation Greek-Canadian who had completed her Ontario Teacher’s Certificate. This
staff renewal and the increase in student enrolment brought back to my mind and my heart the sense of responsibility for a new perspective in the Greek school.

**Consciousness**

As my courses at OISE and "Routes" were developing, I had started to regain my interest in pedagogy. The courses “Cultural Studies and Education” with Pericles Trifonas, “Foundations of Bilingual and Multicultural Education” and “Research in Multiliteracies Pedagogy” with Jim Cummins helped me to conceive the new challenges for education at the theoretical and research level. I also acquired orientation with regard to my place as a teacher of the new era and the place of my school in the 21st century. The ideas of Freire and other scholars—representatives of the Critical Pedagogy "school"—for the need of empowering the students and cultivating their awareness as for their right to become active partakers in the educational process and their right for a better society (Freire, 1970) effectively aroused me. I followed with great interest the orientation of Multiliteracies (reference to Chapter 3, pp 73-75), and the reflection on how it is possible and crucial to connect school practices with the strengthened phenomenon of cultural and linguistic diversity, the development of new communication technologies and the new forms of literacy that have emerged.

I realized that my school and the education system that I serve, is no longer the exception but the rule. Teaching and learning the Greek language and culture in Canada should no longer be considered as a marginalized educational program, as the globalization of communications has changed not only the demographic but also the cultural world map. People who are learning English as a second/foreign language are significantly more than the native speakers (Crystal, 2003). The schools of second and third languages, including ours, have their own place in the contemporary educational scene. Given the existence of the Internet and associated
communication media, the previous distance of one language and one culture from the metropolitan centre hardly exists anymore.

**Learning From the Students**

Observing the students in my school during breaks or on several occasions during class time, being wired with small miraculous electronic appliances, listening to music, playing games, exchanging written messages or pictures, checking their e-mails and updating their personal pages on Facebook (and all of these actions taking place while in Greek school), what came to mind was the "multiliteracies" call for teaching to expand the linear, mono-dimensional written form of language and literacy and to engage more text forms and discourses that derive from a wide spectrum of modes and cultural sources.

Our students, with such a comfort in the new communication media, which they use for their socializing and entertainment, are expecting us to follow them in this new reality and to relieve them from the enclavation of their eyes and minds in certain school handbooks that were written for them decades ago without including their interests and concerns. The memorization of grammar and spelling rules, the writing of lengthy texts, the adherence to the school textbooks and other traditional instruments and methods that we had been using in my school, appeared as primitive to most of our students, but for some of us (the teachers), these old-fashioned methods were the only ones that we knew how to handle comfortably.

My distance lessons for teaching Greek as a foreign language had reached the section that included the use of new technologies. It was with great effort that I managed to reconcile myself to the idea of incorporating the Internet into the HL curriculum. It was my technological awakening. In addition, I discovered the world of Facebook. Indeed, within a few days as a
member of this online social network, I had already acquired several "friends", including former students from the time that I used to teach in elementary schools, in Athens. I dedicated much time to communicating with my Facebook "friends". Soon, I recognized that within the environment of my personal "wall", there were quite a few participants.

A fellow of my age wrote about a beloved Greek singer, and a 15-year-old former student of mine responded to this contributor by "uploading" the singer's new video clip. A friendly couple whom I had met during my summer vacation shared photos of their city and their home with us. Others wrote jokes. Another spoke of a great film that she had recently watched, which happened to be the favourite motion picture for an Italian acquaintance. As my guests spoke different languages (some English, some Greek and others Italian or French), it occurred to me that such a myriad of languages did not create a communication dysfunction within my personal page. Search engines provided us with free and fast (albeit rudimentary) translation services. My Greek friends wrote Greek sentences but used the Latin alphabet, and English speakers often asked questions about words they could not understand. The "Wall", my little electronic corner, had become an improvised learning community where no one was coming necessarily to learn. Eventually, however, we all kept learning something new on a daily basis.

One day, my former students from Greece (and now "my friends" on Facebook) asked me to describe to them my Canadian-Greek School. They wanted to know what we do, what we learn and what my students in Toronto look like. That request was the reason behind the development of my school blog. That was how my school acquired an e- courthouse, an electronic forum.
Teaching, Learning and Playing at www.easterngr.blogspot.com

In the last part of chapter three, I presented a theoretical framework for the use of weblogs in education and the possibilities of blogs ‘usage for second/foreign language schools. In the frames of the program of “Routes”, I discovered how these “new” means did not require particular knowledge of information technologies and computational experience and that many bloggers had begun obviously from the same starting line as mine, that is, absolute computer illiteracy. Slowly and cautiously, I followed the steps that were outlined in the course "New Technologies in Education". Within a few hours, I had created my own blog. Google’s "blogger" provided me not only with free hosting of my web page but also with ready platforms and templates on which I could apply and customize my posts. Hence, the only task left for me was to create content, which demanded, of course, a lot more time and effort. My initial concerns, in terms of content, were various.

The language.

Since our blog would be involved in teaching the Greek language, which is the purpose of our school program and my principal professional interest, I had to create content in the Greek language. On the other hand, I was concerned with the limited linguistic ability of some of the students and parents who would be trying to comprehend the Greek content. Thus, I created my initial posts by combining the two languages. I wrote in Greek and translated into English and vice versa. I soon discovered that for practical reasons (mainly time constraints), I should choose only one language for my posts, the one in which I felt most comfortable. Therefore, I ended up using Greek, my first language.

However, from the time of my introductory posts, I discovered ways to provide direct access to aids for the users who would be struggling with the Greek alphabet. I offered them not
only lexical, translational references but also the tool of automatic translation from Google (see Appendix J.1) which, despite the limited possibilities of precise translation, does help the reader to at least glean some meaning from the text.

**The objectives.**

Every blog has a certain orientation that reflects the philosophy and the interests of the author-blogger (Penrod, 2007). The texts and all forms of posts serve specific ends that in my case were multifaceted. I aimed to achieve simultaneously several outcomes:

- To present the announcements of the Community’s Education Office to parents, teachers and students instead of overwhelming them with tons of photocopies. Those announcements were in relation to events, the school’s program, the curriculum, etc.

- To introduce articles, books and various sources concerning the teaching of the language, history and culture, thus providing support material that could be optimized by teachers and students in the classroom or at home. My basic concern was the composition of authentic texts (Cummins, et. al., 2008) that would offer the possibility of practicing reading comprehension and familiarization with the Greek language through topics that, contrary to a lot of school texts that we were using, would be related to the interests of the students, the school teachers and the parents. Those texts had to be relevant to the Canadian social and cultural reality and not just the Greek one, which is unknown or unfamiliar to many of our students.

- To update the school community on current issues (e.g., national, religious celebrations) and news or articles pertaining to our interests and the Greek-Canadian identity.
To provide links to sources for educational or even recreational purposes.

To outline utilities to support the work of teachers, sources related to their teaching modules: photos, videos or songs.

To provide a platform for students to present their interests and their work in whatever medium they choose (text, combining text and photo, video, PowerPoint presentation, etc.)

To provide a forum for teachers to showcase their work and their own interests, exhibiting and sharing lesson plans and teaching ideas open and accessible to all.

To give parents the opportunity to monitor what their children learn at school and to inform them through various posts and blog sources.

To allow the posting of homework activities, to inform students who are absent from school about their upcoming due dates for handing in projects and to allow observers (such as parents) to familiarize themselves with the school.

To offer the opportunity for representatives of the Community and its members, who support our school morally and financially, to get an idea of our activities and our school life.

To allow stakeholders to have access to the Greek school.

To demonstrate the methodology of educational research through the posts; the sources used for each subject-post are outlined; different versions or views are
presented and bibliographical references are available for further exploration of each topic.

- To provide methods of safe Internet navigation for those seeking their own sources.
- To provide entertaining educational games (puzzles, quizzes, etc.) and musical or amusing videos, enabling users to take a pleasant break while reading the posts or using the tools provided by the blog.
- To record the history of the school, through the presentation of events and all activities concerning the school-communal life.
- To open a permanent channel of communication with other schools or universities that also maintain blogs or websites, to investigate ways of further cooperation and communication with interested individuals or institutions, on a regular or occasional basis.

In summary, I could say that my objective through blogging was, on the one hand, the exploration and demonstration of our identity and the activities of the school (which included not only the students but also the teachers and parents), and on the other hand, the provision of support in our educational program, by offering access to tools and media that could enrich our program and foster the teaching and learning of our language and culture beyond the narrow boundaries in which we had been functioning.

Sources available through the Internet are increasing daily, as well as free services that can be used for training and education purposes. For a school and a program, such as ours, with limited resources and infrastructure, developing a blog that is updated continuously to include a
variety of Information and Communication applications could be beneficial to the curriculum and the teaching methods applied by the teachers.

Commencement

I began my posting on the "Aristoteles" blog on September 19, 2009. My first post was a brief message about the start of the school year with an explanation of the reasons the creation of the school blog (see Appendix K.1). I invited teachers, students and parents to contribute to this new communication tool that I hoped it could become our online learning community. By posting the program of our school year I provided the first possibility of practical utilization since with a visit in the blog anyone could learn the dates for our courses and for organised events or other relative school activities (Curriculum Day, national Holidays and celebrations, Parent-Teacher interviews, etc.).

Name and Colours

Deciding on a name for the blog demanded serious thinking and many different versions went through my mind. Finally, I decided to name the blog after the school, mainly for practical reasons, since it would be easier for anyone to search for it by typing in a search engine the name Aristoteles.

One of the options offered by the program Blogger is the choice of colours (for the frame, the text, the title and the dividing lines of the blog). I chose a combination of blue with white, the colours of the Greek flag, to symbolize the language and culture that we try to maintain and nurture through our program. In our school building, one may see only the Canadian flag waving, a symbol also reflecting our educational community. Adding the "Greek colours" in our
school blog, I felt I was filling a gap because the Canadian and Greek parts of our identity are not separating but uniting us.

**Photographs and Multi-Disciplinarity**

From the first days of the blog's operation, I began the effort of enriching the text-posts with images and photographs, considering it as a vivid element for the page and at the same time as a disengagement from the linear and mono-dimensional textual representation of the language (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). The famous Chinese saying “a picture is worth a thousand words”, finds excellent application in the case of the blog. Moreover, the possibility of our users to post their own photographs strengthens the sense of participation that I wanted to cultivate from the start. It was my hope that the students, the parents and the teachers would like to share with other members of our community images reflecting their experiences and their interests.

An excellent example in this direction was a photo posted by my colleague, Magda Sigalas: a personal picture from her visit to Vienna (see Appendix K.2). She took a photograph of the Austrian parliament, constructed on the model of ancient Greek architecture, with a statue of the goddess Athena (symbol of wisdom) dominating the front of the impressive building. This picture showed to our students the universality of Greek culture and the importance of the maintenance of such a significant heritage. My colleague’s photographic contribution to the blog provided the possibility of an integrated approach, since with related links, which referred to the text that accompanied the photograph, there was a reference to the presence, inside the Parliament, of a Greek immigrant who was the head of an Austrian political party. The participation of immigrants in the political life of their new country added another dimension that could be explored and commented on both via the blog and in the classrooms.
The First Posts

Within a few days of the blog's existence, and having informed teachers, parents and students, I received e-mails from members of the school community with many suggestions for posting ideas. The educational dialogue which I had anticipated had begun. A total of 17 posts in October, 2009, covered a broad range of interests and applications. These posts included: a presentation on the subject of contemporary Greek cinematography (see Appendix K.3); an update for the professional success of a member of our school community (see Appendix K.4); a statement on the first meeting of the School Council and the student elections (see Appendix K.5); a reference to the name day of Dimitra and Dimitris (see Appendix K.6); an article about the Greek National Day of the 28th of October (see Appendix K.7); an announcement on the festive events and the parade organized by the Greek community; a reference to Greek literature with a video-recitation of the poem “Ithaca” of Constantine Cavafy by the actor Sean Connery with the musical contribution of another Greek artist, the composer Vangelis (Pathanassiou), (see Appendix K.8); a post concerning education in Greece 2500 years ago (see Appendix K.9); a statement on a programmed meeting of students of our school with representatives of provincial universities for academic orientation purposes (see Appendix K.10); a video with funny Greek television commercials (see Appendix K.11); a video about the historical journey of Greece through archaeological discoveries and documents (see Appendix K.12)

The frequency with which we disclosed issues within the objectives of the blog were so great and my personal involvement so intensive, that I had become quite excited with my role as a blogger. I kept writing while constantly keeping up to date on new posts by e-mail, my colleagues, the parents and students.
The First Partners

Although the initial reactions from the application of the blog were very encouraging, it was a difficult task convincing my colleagues to contribute regularly to the blog content. Nevertheless, I received a number of useful ideas, many of which contributed decisively to establishing the blog in the minds of the members of the school community. Four colleagues decided to send me weekly the homework and projects that they had planned for their students. By doing so, the blog could provide another practical purpose: necessary information for those who wanted to know what each week's homework was.

Parents were thrilled with this application. The decision of the Greek Community of Toronto to place in its website a link to our blog (www.greekcommunity.org / Visit our School Blog), contributed substantially to an increase in the number of visitors beyond the ones who were directly involved with the school and added prestige to our electronic learning community. Within a short time, we had started to meet our goal of connecting the school with the Greek Canadian community at large.

The Sidebar Column

The "blogger" platform that I used offered the possibility, beyond the hosting of posts that followed chronological order, of developing the lateral column where—with the aid of "gadgets"—I could add permanent contacts and messages that would serve the blog objectives by promoting its usefulness and by demonstrating and outlining our identity. Thus, I kept adding more and more items, each of which had its own significance.

First, there is a picture of an owl, another symbol of wisdom, “reading” a book. The title "Education is a human right" and the subtitle "knowledge gives wings “(see Appendix J.2)
indicates the direction of the blog and the philosophy of our education program. Another standard feature is a bilingual presentation of the topics-characteristics of the blog allowing visitors to find out the general profile of the posts and the orientations of our learning school-community.

A connection to the "Filoglossia" series of Greek-language courses (see Appendix J.3) enables novice users-learners to access free lessons of Greek language via the blog. Through this link, a visitor gains access to language material with original dialogues, grammar lessons and tips on the writing, pronunciation and vocabulary of the Greek language. For interested visitors, this connection provides a useful contact with the Institute for Language and Speech Processing, a Greek non-profit institution that deals with the applied research in the teaching of the Greek language via computer and the technological support of teachers and students. The 15 courses offered by the "Filoglossia" program are part of a series of four multimedia CD-ROMs for learning Greek as a foreign language, addressed to beginners. This link helps not only students but also the parents who do not have sufficient knowledge of Greek, to take certain basic courses and to experience learning the language by using audiovisual material.

Often students and new users of the Internet (in our case the Greek-language environment of the internet) are unable to evaluate the web pages they visit as they navigate online, seeking sources of material for their school work, projects, etc. The column "Can you understand the quality of the sites that you visit?" provides some basic tips and invokes the visitor's critical thinking in finding and identifying serious and reliable electronic sources. A link to the Greek version of the web page entitled “safety in the internet” is also provided. This service is based on the site “School for the Safety of information” that was created for safe Internet surfing and online information distribution by the educational authorities of Finland in 2005 (see Appendix
Another link offered within the same column directs the reader to the quiz "is it a hoax?" created by the organizations IRA (International Reading Association) and NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), through the "read, write and think” web page (see Appendix J.4), to help unsuspected students who are surfing the Internet, to evaluate an unknown site.

The Greek grammar column: online access to a textbook of Greek grammar for the two last Grades of elementary school is included, created by the Pedagogic Institute of Greece (see Appendix J.7). It is a complete, comprehensive and simplified version of the Greek grammar, suitable to the students of our program. This book of grammar is divided into thematic units to facilitate the user’s search for grammatical phenomena of interest.

Another link provided on the sidebar list of columns, is the one with the program "Ellinomatheia" (see Appendix J.8) of the Centre of Greek Language of the Ministry of Education of Greece. The link offers, in both the English and Greek language, information material for those interested in applying for an official Greek language proficiency certificate. The link is accompanied by an illustrated cartoon image that criticizes the phenomenon of "mark hunting" which has increased worldwide in recent years. The Greek Community of Toronto, the authority under which our school operates, is also an examination centre for the "Ellinomatheia" certificate. Through the blog, and this particular element of the sidebar, those interested can get useful information and examples of exam questions to prepare for the test.

The column «Greek Sayings" is updated regularly and contains quotes from great personalities, mostly from the fields of philosophy and science, accompanied by references to web pages that demonstrate the biography of those who are quoted.

The game "Hangman", which is the theme of another sidebar column, is an entertaining leaning tool as it can be used effectively for the correct spelling of Greek words. The user is
asked to guess which Greek word is hidden by the "hangman" by applying letters of the Greek alphabet. When the word is revealed, another link connects the user with an electronic Greek dictionary (see Appendix J.9) where the word in question may be explained, translated or simply found in the alphabetical list of Greek words that is provided. A prerequisite for participation in this "game" is that the user has access to Greek language fonts.

The "Student Announcements" is a column where students can post various messages. The aim is to give students the opportunity to address the school community and take advantage of the blog's viewership to promote events or any other of their activities. During the last school year, the column hosted announcements of the school's Student Council promoting events that were organised by/for the students.

The "Language Tools" is a list of useful links-scaffolds for the learning of the Greek language. They include Greek dictionaries, free translation services, instructions for using the Greek keyboard, lessons in Greek grammar and syntax, Greek spell checker and a popular link to the ESOPOS site (see Appendix J.10) a computer-robotics program that can read with human voice texts written in Greek. The program was implemented by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and provides users with an important tool for listening comprehension purposes. All the above are useful practical tools to help students to study at home through their computer. They facilitate the learning process and activate the student-user as an independent learner.

The column "Favourite Links" has developed gradually to include sites proposed by members of the school community and the users-visitors of the blog. They are alphabetically organized links, related to various interests of students, teachers and parents. Among our favourite links are connections with other community-based Greek schools, departments of Greek language and culture in Greek and international universities, associations of students of
Greek origin in Canadian universities, various sites and blogs with content in relation to education, literary, history, culture, music, sports, folklore, travelling, recreation, etc. Aim of this column is to assemble and organise precious and appreciable web pages, to cultivate communication and collaboration with institutions, organisations and private individuals that are connected immediately or indirectly with the Greek-Canadian context and our education objectives; to provide useful resources for teachers, parents and students and establish the blog as a useful and practical electronic extension of our curriculum.

The features "Your Opinion Counts" and "Discussion Forum" "are part of the free services provided by “Bravenet” (see Appendix J.11). They allow mainly the teachers but also the parents or the students of holding informal surveys, via questionnaires that can be developed instantly, while providing access to chat rooms where two or more users can communicate by exchanging written messages.

The "Name Days" is a column with practical content that enables users to learn about Greek name day and religious celebrations. The content of this column is renewed automatically every day through a connection with a Greek site (www.eortologio.gr). For Greeks all over the world, their name-day is an important day (corresponding with that of birthday), as an individual whose name day is celebrated accepts wishes and gifts from relatives, friends and acquaintances and usually organizes a party to assemble the beloved ones and celebrate with them. This significant tradition, at a social and religious level, is a feature of the cultural identity of the members of our school community that is raised and nurtured through the blog.

"Europe in 12 Lessons" is a column that allows users to get useful information about the European Union. While Greece is a member of this important political and economic union since 1981, knowledge of our students and many members of the Greek-Canadian community about
the E.U's entity is relatively limited. After realising that in our current curriculum and the school handbooks that we use a European studies unit is absent, thus there is a gap in the modern European dimension of the Greek reality and identity, I sought a book that could be used as reference by our school teachers and students. I searched on the website of the European Union publications (see Appendix J.12) and discovered an educational booklet entitled "Europe in 12 lessons" that contains important information about the history, function, policies and prospects of The European Union. As many of our students obtain dual citizenship (Canadian and Greek) and Greece is a full member of the Union, its citizens, thus our students, have access to numerous potential opportunities for studies, professional development and employment that are available within the gigantic European market.

The addition of this permanent blog connection to European informative material, demonstrates a modern aspect of the Greek-Canadian identity (concerning its European dimension) and renews the existing curriculum; students gain access to knowledge of a new page in modern Greek history that remains up to this day (for various reasons) unknown to many of them. The booklet (Fontaine, 2007) is accessible to any user of the blog and it is an official publication of the European Union written in all the languages of the member states.

The column "From parents with love" is the corner of the school's Parent Council in the blog. It exhibits announcements for meetings of the Council as well as updates on events organised by the parents of our students. The involvement of parents in the blog and our learning community is important, as they are the most faithful ally of our teachers and students and provide moral and material support to our educational program.

Another practical tool for all users, especially those living in Toronto, is the column "Greek events" in town. With the collaboration of the electronic newsletter-service "Sneak
Previews of Greek Happenings Near You" that is provided, free of charge by two members of the Greek Community of Toronto, George and Michael Gekas, and is updated regularly, our users can follow community activities and arrange their attendance at cultural, educational or recreational events. In the same column, there are updated references to all school events for which all blog users, even the ones who do not attend or visit our school, may be informed.

The column "The Greek community is us" is a message outlining the objectives of the organization and its activities that include the operation of schools and various programs for the promotion of the Greek language and culture in Canada. Since the Greek Community of Toronto is a non-profit organisation that is supported mainly by voluntary offers and contributions by its members, our school is a vital piece of this effort and the cultivation of our community conscience constitutes an integral department of our cultural identity. This column provides a link to the website of the Greek Community of Toronto in which a link to our blog is also featured.

The existence of an archive of the blog postings is an important tool for the blog as it gives the opportunity to visitors-users to monitor the evolution of the posts and follow the lively history of this learning community. On the archives element, each month's posts are grouped together, thus anyone wishing to view the posts of a specific period can gain access, relatively fast, without the need to engage in scrolling on all past pages individually, which could be quite a lengthy process.

The column "Video Bar" offers music video clips hosted on «YouTube». The students and all members of the learning community may request their favourite Greek singer to be included in our music video list, which is automatically updated by «YouTube». The addition of musical videos, offers to the blog a more juvenile dimension; it offers the possibility for the users
of watching their favourite videos while reading posts or using the plethora of the blog’s contents.

The "Labels" is perhaps the most important element of the sidebar since it places in order and categorizes the posts on a content basis rather than in chronological order. By doing so, anyone interested in particular thematic posts such as sports, history or literary can conveniently locate them by choosing the relevant category. The categories, under which the posts are labeled and organised, include: community, arts, cinema, history, Greek language, social life, religion, sports, music, school announcements and activities, nominal feasts, sciences, presentations, Olympic Games, tradition, folklore, anecdotes, communication and more.

The side bar column is filled with various other useful tools, such as a daily calendar, a clock and a link to the translation service of Google, so that the posts can be automatically read in English but also in many other languages. The translations are not accurate, however, many non-Greek-speaking visitors can get an overview of the interests of our learning community and familiarise with the identity of the blog. The English translation of the blog, by the Google translation service, has been practically used in a class of our school, when a teacher gave her students the computer translated text of a blog’s post and asked them to collaborate in order to improve the translation so that it attributes the exact meaning of the original Greek text.

Another tool included in the "gadgets" of the sidebar is called "arrivals and departures". It offers the ability for anyone to see a list of the current blog visitors which is an important feature for two reasons. First, it reveals the global dimension that our isolated school can gain through the existence of a relative online learning community. Our school is located in Toronto but our learning community has no geographical limits. By viewing the trail of visitors who are joining our blog and reading our posts, from different parts of the world, including Greece, the United
States, Russia or Australia, we all share a sense of empowerment by such global exposure. At the same time, the service “live traffic feed” that is allocated, free of charge, by the company “Feedjit” (Appendix J.13), gives us the possibility to identify each visitor (if a user wishes to do so by registering as a blog follower) as well as to obtain information on his or her region of origin, the duration of viewership and the content that was read throughout a single visit.

Our visitors-users are the ones who keep the blog running. They are the ones who comment, question, participate and make us (all those involved with the blog and the school) renew our disposal for business and cooperation (Penrod, 2007). Google's Blogger also provides the possibility for the administrator of watching daily the blog viewership and offers interesting statistical elements with regard to the country/region of connected users, the content for which more viewers were interested, the search engine that was used in leading a user to the blog and also the key word-phrase via which users are connected. This service is called Analytics (Appendix J.14) and can be activated by each administrator while the information and statistical analysis offered is not accessible by the visitors. Conversely, the live element of the "Arrivals and Departures" makes blogging a less lonely process. A reader may be perusing a post and get the feeling that he or she is accompanied by other viewers who might be reading the same page simultaneously.

The final element of the sidebar is the profile of the administrator, that is, me. The inclusion of my name, photo and other personal information, such as my e-mail address, is not provided for self-promotion purposes. My objective is to give the opportunity to each user-visitor to communicate with me regarding any concern or suggestion in relation to any post-content or any matter of mutual interest, even disagreement that could relate to our learning community. One of the drawbacks of many blogs, despite their interesting content, is the fact that they
frequently remain anonymous. I think that any online medium that combines information and education may lose prestige and credibility if users are unable to know who is responsible for the content and are not given the opportunity to communicate with the administrator/s.

My personal profile, in conjunction with posted photos of the school teachers, parents and students (if they choose to do so), represents the human face of our learning community. This outreaching attempt toward the community—and the larger society—through our blog reveals who we are and what we do, what our common efforts and our interests are. Each person can learn about the issues that concern us, monitor our actions and the progress of our program and examine the reliability of our posts and our sources. Our struggle to get out of the margins and join the central educational arena, where we belong, is characterized by transparency and is reflected in our program. We are proud of our school, of our community and of our cultural identity, and there is no reason to keep it to ourselves.

The Presentation to Parents and Students

After the first weeks of experimentations and efforts from my part to overcome a few technical problems—from learning how to combine texts, pictures and videos to familiarizing myself with operations, such as the posting of presentations in various formats and the exploration for reliable sources and online tools—I decided to inform the school community about the creation and operation of the blog. The briefing took place via the electronic post and also with visits in classrooms, where I made presentations of the blog to students and my colleagues, pointing out a variety of ways to use this new medium for supporting the teaching of Greek as well as for enhancing communication among the members of our community. In general, there was a positive reaction, mainly from the students who considered it “cool” for our school community to have our own blog. My surprise was even greater for the supportive
reaction that my initiative received on the part of parents. Many of them expressed their willingness to participate in the dissemination of the blog. Starting from that point, an ongoing dialogue began on how to take advantage of the blog's existence and enrich its content.

**The Blog as a Benchmark of the School**

A fundamental objective of the blog was to expand the reputation of our educational program beyond the boundaries of our school community (the teachers, the students and their parents) and to inform the mainstream society on what a Greek heritage language program, such as ours, has to offer to the participants and the community at large. Since the residents of Greek origin in Toronto exceed the 100,000 mark, while the population of Greek-Canadians spread throughout the country is almost triple (Statistics Canada, 2009), the number of our students is relatively small, considering that we offer a unique type of heritage language credit program.

Are there only 250 interested adolescents in Toronto for a program that is recognized by at least two state educational authorities (the Ministries of Education of Greece and Ontario) and that cultivates an exceptionally useful language representing such a dynamic ethno-cultural group, as the Greek-Canadian community? Since we do not own a school building and we are *de-facto* forced to operate only once a week, our school needs a face, a presence—albeit electronic—in the outside world.

**The Blog and Our Identity**

On the issue of Greek-Canadian identity and the process of its continuous negotiation, as noted in previous chapters, our blog is clearly structured to provide a vehicle of self-expression for this evolving hybrid identity. It demonstrates several aspects of language, culture and current affairs that are all seen through the Hellenic-Canadian lens. Undeniably, teaching and learning
Greek in Greece is far different from teaching and learning Greek in Canada. The teaching of a language and a culture provided within the frames of a specific society, which is indeed multicultural, includes all those elements that bring learners at the epicentre of education. Clearly, one must take into consideration the unique conditions that prevail in the everyday routine of the individual learners.

Our school textbooks and curricula currently in use have, in my opinion, a gap which the blog attempts to cover. It is a reference to the interests of students and the presentation of the world of the students which cannot be done by those who do not belong to their community and who do not know the foundational parts of their identity.

If somebody visits the space where we work and learn the Greek language and culture on any day of the week other than Saturdays, when the school is ‘transformed’ into Greek, he or she will not find any trace of our presence. That visitor would not be able to determine that in this building, once a week, there are students and teachers working together for the maintenance of a Canadian ethno-cultural heritage. But we do exist 24 hours per day, seven days per week! The blog is concrete proof of our existence and a reference of who we are and what we do. In addition, we have, through the blog, a continuous presence beyond the narrow confines of our region. The Aristoteles school is spread all over the world!

**The Blog and Local History**

An example of shortcomings in our existing curriculum is the lack of references to our local history. Greeks in Canada have created their own stories throughout their migration journey and their history is ongoing. The blog attempts to record this aspect of history which interests the members of our learning community even more than the history of the remote 'homeland' that is
anyway taught to them through the school textbooks that we use, textbooks that are published in Greece for Greek students.

An example of such exploitation of the local-community history was on the posting of the Toronto's anti-Greek riots of 1918 (Appendix K.13), which no one had, up to this point, included in our books and in our instructional material. We "discovered" this incident, an unknown page of Greek-Canadian history, through an article on the website of York University, which had been posted originally in 2004. The article on the 1918 events remained unknown to most of us until November 6, 2009 when we presented the relevant post. The events of 1918, among the most violent attacks against an ethnic-cultural community in Canada, became later the subject of a historical documentary presented by the television channel OMNI, in spring 2010. After watching the documentary (Burry, 2009), we re-presented the story on the blog and added an excerpt from the documentary, which we found on YouTube, and provided references to relevant literature and sources (Gallant, Treheles, & Vitopoulos, 2005). Through the blog, this important historical document became known not only to our students but to interested viewers throughout the world.

Another example of recording local history in its development was the publication/posting of the reception of the flame for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics at the Greek Community in Toronto. This unique experience for all of us has been recorded in our blog, and enriched by photographic material which was concentrated by our students (see Appendix K.14). The members of our learning community who participated in or watched the relative events, realize the essential symbolic significance of this experience that constitutes henceforth a piece of our history. With the audio-visual material that we posted, this experience can comfortably supplement the Olympic Games unit in our program's curriculum.
Our Greek Fat Blog: The Blog as a Connector to Other Ethnic Communities

In 2002, the motion picture *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Robertson and Karagiozis, 2004), Nia Vardalos (writer and protagonist) and Zoel Zwick (director) became one of the greatest successes in cinematographic history, especially due to the fact that such a relatively low-budget (at a five million dollars scale) independent production managed to generate sales that exceeded the $400 million worldwide. This romantic comedy, mainly filmed in Toronto, presents the story of a young woman, the daughter of Greek immigrants in a North American city, who tries to combine her Greek-Orthodox family traditions with the discovery of her identity and the creation of her own independent course in life. Despite its stereotypical and satirical approach, the film showed the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of a typical immigrant family in today's multicultural mosaic.

I was wondering what the key element of this film was that brought such a tremendous success and attracted the interest of moviegoers, far and beyond the particular ethnic community which it represents. Certainly, this struggle for a point of balance between two worlds and two emerging identities of the protagonist, her effort to bridge two different cultures and to discover her own place somewhere in between, is a fight with which many viewers identified, specifically in countries where members of various ethno-cultural communities fight to maintain their traditions and distinguished characteristics as they attempt to integrate into mainstream society (in the USA alone, the income generated by this film exceeded $240 million).

Perhaps contemporary students of our Greek school in Toronto do not sympathize absolutely with Toula's (Nia Vardalos) statement that the role of a Greek-Canadian / American woman is to marry a Greek man, create Greek children and keep feeding everyone for the rest of her life. However, they were able to discover quite a few familiar references in the film that
demonstrated actual aspects of their relationships with the parents and their grandfathers, with their Greek school teachers and with the life stories of the Greek-Canadian community's microcosm.

Throughout the film, the immigrant Kostas Portokalos (Toula's father) teaches his children and their friends how all English words emanate from the Greek language (not all but quite a few is the truth) which reinforces the need to connect the two worlds. He also attempts to solve most of the daily minor health problems by using Windex, a household cleaning liquid. Kosta’s remedy represents an authentic, almost graphic, approach of new immigrants who attempt to conquer the American/Canadian dream without being ready to leave behind biases that are transported from their past. It seems that the success of “My Greek wedding” proves to all of us (members of ethnic-communities) that we are not as isolated as we feel, after all. Through reaching out initiatives, such as our blog, we attempt to send our messages to the outside world and we engage in constant contact with it.

Another film, that became a great success in 2010, Avatar, was the product of Hellenic-Canadian collaboration; the Canadian director and producer, James Cameron and the Greek-American writer Elizabeth Kalogridis. This is known to our students and to the members of our community because it was posted in the blog.

*Discovering the "Others" Through the Blog*

St. Patrick's Day (17 March) is the largest celebration of another, equally vibrant ethnic community in Canada, the Irish. The green colour and the clover, along with many customs and traditions of this community, come to the forefront of our mainstream society on that day. On this occasion last year, I thought about Jim Cummins, my OISE professor, as he is the only Irish-
Canadian whom I know. I expressed my wishes to him with an e-mail message. He thanked me and offered me a link to an article in the *New York Times* mentioning the book *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (Cahill, 1995). The article and the book refer to the significant contribution of St. Patrick and the Irish who, in the years of the obscurantist medieval period in Europe, copied and saved books from the ancient Greek and Roman non-Christian cultures, which form the basis of current western civilization.

Through the information he provided about Cahill's book, Professor Cummins offered me a bridge linking two cultures and communities that exist within the Canadian mosaic: the Greek and the Irish. That day I worked, for the first time as a heritage language educator, on the presence and history of an ethno-cultural community other than my own. Using various online resources and relying primarily on information found on the website of the Irish Embassy in Athens, I did my research. I listed reports about the history, the traditions and the identity of Irish immigrants. I used photographs and audiovisual material associated with Ireland and created an article-post (see Appendix K.15) that attempted to highlight that the links between our community and others, such as the Irish, are closer and deeper than we thought. This article has been used by teachers in our school, and as I found by monitoring the statistics of the blog, by dozens of users-viewers beyond our community.

The blog as an educational dialogue tool, gives us the possibility of connecting with the mainstream society, as well as with the other pieces of the Canadian multicultural puzzle.

**The Blog and the Significance of the Greek Language**

In recent years, the phenomenon of unexpected or sudden difficulties in reading for students in grade four (known as “fourth-grade slump”) has occupied the educational
community in North America and beyond (Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009). One of the main reasons attributed to this phenomenon is the introduction of academic-scientific terms in the school vocabulary, many of which are of Greek origin.

Our students who know these terms through their Greek school will likely not face difficulty when encountering scientific terminology in their day school. In fact, they are more likely to be empowered by the advantage of understanding "difficult words" through their Greek-heritage language. The influence of the Greek language in the English lexicon, including the multitude of Greek origin terms in academic terminology, is demonstrated by a speech of a former Prime Minister of Greece Professor Xenophon Zolotas (Zolotas, 1981) made on September 26, in 1957 at the International Monetary Fund. The professor spoke in English but used only Greek or Greek origin words (which on the text of his speech below are put it bold letters), except the connecting and auxiliary verbs. Here is the text of his speech:

Kyrie,
I eulogise the archons of the Pan ethnic Numismatic Thesaurus and the Ecumenical Trapeza for the orthodoxy of their axioms, methods and policies, although there is an episode of cacophony of the Trapeza with HELLAS. With enthusiasm we dialogue and synagonize at the synods of our synagonize at the didymous organizations in which polymorphous economic ideas and dogmas are analyzed and synthesized. Our analyzed and critical problems such as the numismatic plethora generate some agony and melancholy. This phenomenon is characteristic of our epoch. But, to my thesis, we have the dynamism to program therapeutic practices as a prophylaxis from chaos and catastrophe. In chaos and parallel, a panethnic unhypocritical economic synergy and harmonization in a democratic climate is basic. I apologize for my eccentric monologue. I emphasize my eucharisties to you Kyrie, to eugenic and generous
American ethnos and to the organizers and protagonists of this amphictony and the gastronomic symposia. (A second speech of Zolotas at the IMF containing only terms of Greek origin was given in 1959).

This text demonstrates the relationship between the two languages. For the members of the Hellenic Canadian community, this relationship is very important, because, it reflects the connection between the two parts of their identity. Despite the huge influence of the Greek language in our modern civilization, mainly due to the cultural wealth that it transports, the relatively small Greek population limits the presence of the language on the Internet, rendering it as one of the relatively weak languages of the World Wide Web.

Posting texts and sources in the Greek language has been from the beginning one of the key priorities of the blog. Perhaps the Greek language is not among the languages threatened with extinction (Crystal, 2000). Even so, there are Greek dialects that belong in this category. One such example is the Pontic-Greek (Salminem, 1999). We presented on our school blog an article for the salvation of the Pontic dialect in Canada, the home of several thousand Pontic Greeks. Unfortunately, the Pontic language is faced with extinction here, as it is spoken now only by a few seniors, first-generation immigrants. Our sensitization to the salvation of the language led to proposals through the blog which were presented to each interested institution. We offered our electronic forum as a learning community to play an active role in the questions of linguistic identity and the salvation of cultural heritage.

**Resources and Tools**

Visiting classrooms at my school, I noticed that very few students (and colleagues) carried a Greek-English dictionary regularly. This is one of the most valuable tools that a student in our program can have, as necessary as textbooks and notebooks. Practically, it is difficult for
most students to transport a heavy dictionary, especially since we do not have, as guests on Saturdays, some storage space on the school premises. Furthermore, dictionaries are missing from many home libraries. The existence of many online language tools (dictionaries, translators, spell checkers, text corpora), most of which offer free access, cannot be ignored now that we have acquired our own web site. Through the Centre of Greek Language and the teacher training program "Routes" (see Appendix H), I discovered many such tools, useful for anyone who tries to learn Greek. I organized them in a separate list of links. The collection of language tools and resources of appropriate authentic texts and audio-visual material makes the blog a useful partner for both learners and teachers.

**The Frustrations**

As great as the initial blogger's enthusiasm might be—especially for an educator who discovers new multimodal online means for teaching a language—as devoted as somebody might be in recording of the action that is produced each week in a school community, one can become disappointed when his/her work is not recognized (Penrod, 2007). Admittedly, I have felt this frustration primarily due to the lack of sufficient number of comments that users can post on the blog as a sign of (a positive or negative) reaction toward the content. There were times when I felt lonely in this course and wondered if indeed what I was trying to do had any educational or pedagogical value. However there have been people who have supported my effort and thus strengthened my resolve. A colleague, Magda Sigalas, who studied and worked with me in the training program "Routes", became a permanent partner on the blog and used this medium extensively with her own HL students. With her comments, criticisms and her own posts of articles and student projects, she helped alleviate my temporary frustrations and provided me with a source of insights. The blog was a product of personal inspiration, but I never felt it as a
mechanism of self-promotion. This fear of how I would be perceived within the narrow limits of our Greek educational community was allayed as I gradually watched the fulfillment, one after the other, of most of the objectives that I had placed at the beginning of this blog project.

**Other Initiatives**

The initiatives to make our school the best fit in the world (more “cool”) for our students was not restricted to the development of a blog. A detailed inventory of all change attempts for our integration into an interactive learning community, and especially of our shift of attitudes toward the school and the roles and responsibilities of teachers, parents and students, would be too long to mention within the limits of this paper. In summary, I will introduce a number of these initiatives which are all documented through the content of relevant blog postings.

**Archives and Alumni**

As an administrator of the Eastern site of the school “Aristoteles", one of my main tasks was to be in regular contact with members of the school community, to whom I often had to distribute several announcements and various messages. Traditionally, this communication was done via the distribution of photocopied material which, apart from the cost and environmental burdens, did not prove to be efficient, as there was no certainty that all members of our community had received them. This need for improved communication led to the formation of a group by volunteer parents and students who gathered all the emails of the members of our school community. After a few days, we had all the electronic addresses which enabled us to communicate better throughout the school year.

Another issue addressed in parallel was the creation of electronic archives which would help to keep graduating students informed about the activities of the Greek school. Our intention
to organize “Aristoteles” Alumni aims to reconnect our learning community with former students (also their parents and former teachers), for often after graduating from Greek school, students develop a social distance from the Greek community at large.

Now graduates of the school year 2009-2010 will continue to receive newsletters about events and activities going on next year and in subsequent years. They will receive invitations to our gatherings. They will become a core partner and remain close to us, as supporters on whom we can count, regardless of changes in their career and personal lives, regardless of where they live.

**Parent Council**

Parents are an integral part of every school community and, as mentioned above, we had not been communicating with them as directly as we would like. Through the process of collecting e-mail addresses I repeatedly invited parents to come to school so that we could meet and share views, ideas and concerns. We managed, after concerted efforts, to re-establish the school's Parent Council with the participation of 25 active members (a quarter of the total number of parents) whom we invited to a meeting. We asked from the office of Education of the Greek Community of Toronto to ensure us authorization for the use of an office in the school for the meetings of the Parent Council, and when we received the consent of the Toronto District School Board, we called the first assembly which was quite successful. The Parent Council met throughout the year, every second Saturday, and many parents who previously had not even entered the school premises, became regular visitors, as they had, now, their own meeting space. With our school parents in active roles, we managed to bring out several initiatives that we designed and organized together. Clearly, the cooperative nature of our relationship with the parents of our students guarantees the most hopeful aspect of our program in the future.
Student Council

The first meeting of the Parent Council raised the question of organizing some events for our students. Within this dialogue, a parent suggested that we invite students to hear their opinions. This concept led to the convergence of the Student Council. In each class, student elections were organized and student representatives were elected. These representatives would now have a presence in all meetings of the Parent and the School Council. The students enjoyed this invitation and responded with enthusiasm. They participated in several meetings and they even suggested measures for the improvement of the school and the enhancement of the school community. Each of their suggestions was adopted by the School Council. Students asked us (their teachers and parents) to help them organize events and expressed their views on matters relating to the operation of the school: the phenomenon of lateness, participation in projects, communication with students from other schools, and so on. This initiative has given to our students a new role as they were transformed from mere observers and receivers of our initiatives into associates jointly responsible for decisions concerning our school community.

Guest Speakers

One of the first proposals that materialized in the frame of the past school year was the invitation of personalities to the school from the wider community, thus strengthening the connection of our school to the community. The guest speakers would somehow be associated with units of our curriculum. In my first two years, as an administrator at the school, our students never received any visits, but this year, we had the opportunity to welcome a judge of Greek origin who spoke to the students of his personal road to this top public function. He described to them how the Canadian justice system operates (see Appendix K.16).
We were also visited by a University of Toronto professor of Greek origin. He delivered a speech-presentation on the issue of environmental pollution (see Appendix K.17), and in collaboration with the teachers, he assigned our students with inquiring activities that were completed at the end of year and yielded pecuniary rewards to the authors of the best projects.

A candidate for City Councilor, a former student of “Aristoteles”, came by the school to get acquainted with the members of our community and gave an interview to our blog (see Appendix K.18). Similarly, a school trustee, the elected representative of the citizens on educational affairs in our school district, responded to our invitation and visited us to inform students, parents and teachers on current issues in public education and to be informed about our problems and concerns (see Appendix K.19).

Community Involvement

Our school actively participated in events of community interest, such as parades on national holidays (see Appendix K.20), Greek theatre plays in which a number of our students performed (see Appendix K.21), and in the “visit “of the Olympic flame, which arrived in Toronto on its way to Vancouver for the 2010 Olympic Games. We participated in the events of the reception of the flame; we danced and all shared high emotions as we welcomed the immortal ancient Greek spirit of athletics to our community and in Canada. In addition, we joined the events for Earth Day (see Appendix K.22) and the campaign for relief aid for the earthquake victims in Haiti (see Appendix K.23) as we discovered through a related post in our blog of the historical ties between the people of Haiti and Greeks from the era when the two countries were fighting for their freedom.
Links to Universities

We responded to the invitation of the Association of Ontario University Professors of Greek Origin for the attendance of our students in an academic/university orientation day (see Appendix K.24), where our high school students were introduced to various higher education programs of the provincial universities, received tips and information for their future professions and met with members of the Greek community who are actively involved in the university studies.

New Events

We organized two new events which were met with a great success. A party for students and parents took place at a banquet hall which was offered to us by the Greek Community of Toronto (see Appendix K.25); Greek Canadian entrepreneurs, members of the community, donated food and beverages. We also organized a soccer game (see Appendix K.26). Students, boys and girls from both schools, and parents played the favourite Greek sport and celebrated the first ever athletic event of our educational program. Our enjoyment was recorded, in a video and photographs which were also presented, through related posts, on our blog. The importance of these new events is dual. First, as the events were organized jointly by students, parents and teachers, the idea of establishing a collaborative community (Garmston, & Wellman, 2000) seemed to work. Moreover, we explored the possibility of attracting support for our program from the broader community and we succeeded. The donations that we received for our functions established a connection with individuals who are supportive of our mission and whom we can count on for future ventures.
**Summer Camps**

Many of our students have never had the opportunity to visit Greece and see up close the modern lifestyle and cultural treasures which they study in Greek schools. We sought institutions that deal with the organisation of camps in Greece and we discovered that a local Greek-Canadian cultural association (Pan-Messenian Federation of USA-Canada) co-organizes in Greece each year the summer school of Kalamata, where young Greeks of second or third generation who live abroad are invited to visit sites of historical and archaeological interest and combine their vacations and their acquaintance with modern Greece with courses of language and culture that are provided for them by the University of Peloponnese. When a representative of the Federation came to our school and presented the program (see Appendix K.27), many parents and students expressed their interest and eventually participated. Representatives of our school also participated in an event to generate financial support for this summer program which opens a new gate in our communication with Greece and extends our courses beyond the limits of school hours.

**Epilogue**

Today, a few weeks before the completion of one year after the development of the blog, I feel that this mechanism, which I hesitantly used, has contributed significantly to our school and our learning community. It represents a small but decisive step forward.

Our Aristoteles blog is clearly having an impact. A student who was vacationing with his family on some Caribbean island this past winter sent to his teacher an electronic message asking her to post on the blog his Greek school homework. A student from a school similar to ours in Germany wrote to me that he is constantly monitoring us through our school blog and uses for
his homework sources, articles, and linguistic tools that we provide. A professor of a Greek university regularly expresses his support and wishes us to continue this effort.

A former teacher of our school expressed her “grievance” for not having similar teaching tools at her service as a Greek school teacher in Canada. The mother of a student mentioned that she is “jealous” because she did not have such means when she was taught the Greek language in Toronto during the 1980s. One father confided that he monitors his son (who previously denied doing any "Greek homework") constantly viewing the school blog, watching the Greek music videos on it and reading posts in Greek language.

A Greek-American/Canadian organization, with the cooperation of politicians, provided support to our program by sending us computers (see Appendix K.28). Another Greek university professor expressed an interest in our school blog as a learning environment and she intends to include it as a reference in her bilingualism and new technologies course, as well as for the development of a mentorship program involving Greek teacher candidates and the "Aristoteles" students.

My objective during the second year is to establish greater participation on the students’ part and pass on to them a great deal of responsibility for the posts and the content of the blog. We also aim, through the blog, to connect with more schools and other ethnic communities. We endeavour to use it in order to teach and learn more pleasantly, each at his or her ‘own pace’ and through individual interests.

Our school and our learning community hold more than the approximately 250 students currently attending our program. In the third chapter detailing the types of students of the third generation, we realized that among other problems concerning the attendance of heritage language programs was the issue of remoteness. The blog and similar electronic online means
can respond to this problem, as they may be used to expand educational programs. There are hundreds or thousands of other citizens in Canada—and all over the world—with interests that are parallel to ours, with not only determination to learn more about the Greek language and the Greek culture but also the fortitude to balance their Greek identity with others that coexist in our society.

I believe that blogs, along with other communication and information sharing electronic environments that are currently in the service of education, do not constitute a panacea for the resolution of problems that we face. Furthermore, blogs are definitely not substitutes for the precious relationship between students and teachers in the traditional school. Their significance is that they open a door for collaboration by establishing learning communities, and they offer to education a new medium to carry out the process of teaching in a more enjoyable and effective manner—a manner that is in tune with the daily reality of our children. This is a fact that we do not have the right to ignore.

Heritage Language Programs, in operation in Canada for almost forty years, need to seek scaffolds to help them overcome unsolved problems and force the mainstream society to stop ignoring or diminishing them. Teachers, parents and students who are or will be involved in the teaching and learning of a Heritage Language have the right to demand respect for the educational value that rightfully corresponds to their efforts. Professionals serving these programs are not “instructors”. They are teachers—and indeed teachers of special circumstances. I feel honoured to be part of the Heritage Language system. Through my narrative inquiry and personal history, I have attempted to demonstrate that the task of strengthening the HL programs, even after a long period of stagnation, may be accomplished.
In my school, we do not teach just the Greek language and culture. We teach values that transcend the boundaries of courses and curricula. We teach ourselves, our students and all those concerned that education is a human right and that knowledge raises self-aware, active citizens who claim a better society.

In the United States today, it is estimated that every 26 seconds, a child leaves school in secondary education. These children have an eight times greater probability to end up in prison, a 50% greater probability not to vote, and an even greater probability to depend on social assistance for their survival while they will not have access to the 90% of employment positions. Their salaries will be limited to 40% of the salaries of university graduates. The cycle of poverty continues ... (Waack, 2010). The phenomenon is universal, as universal as are the responsibilities to address it.

Through the development of a blog and the initiatives that took place this past school year in Aristoteles, a school of a Greek language and culture that functions on the fringe of central educational systems, I contend that it is feasible for each individual involved in the educational process to confront the problems in our schools and engage in the continuous improvement of professional and educational environments.

To achieve positive change in education, in bottom to top reform approaches, some basic conditions have to be met (Peterson, 1995). These include: a clear, strong, and collectively held educational vision and institutional mission; a strong, committed professional community within the school; learning environments that promote high standards for student achievement; sustained professional development to improve learning; successful partnerships with parents, agencies, businesses, universities, and other community organizations—and a systematic planning and implementation process for instituting needed changes.
The initiatives that we developed within the "Aristoteles" school of the Greek Community in Toronto address the above conditions. A clear vision is demonstrated on the part of all members of our community. We are attempting to upgrade our learning environment, and we have cultivated possibilities for professional development and improvement. We are building and strengthening relations with interested parties and planning our next steps systematically, as the change that we attempt to achieve is still in an initial stage.

The educational blog (www.easterngr.blogspot.com) that we have created is becoming a tool for a qualitative upgrading of our pedagogical approach. It was founded and developed according to the principles of Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy (p. 97-106) and can exploit the possibilities of literacy enhancement (p. 96) and other advantages that blogs obtain through the rapid evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (Chapter 3, part 3). Our aim is to reach out to all the external forces that can support us (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), thereby claiming the place we deserve in the educational scene. The blog and other initiatives accompanying its development allow us to be optimistic for our future as we rely on five key factors that may support our efforts: community and parents, technology, business, government policies and the broader educational community (Fullan, 2001).

The ultimate goal to move from GREEK SCHOOL to GREEK’S COOL—or from ENGLISH SCHOOL to ENGLISH’S COOL or from FRENCH SCHOOL to FRENCH’S COOL—can be achieved only with the participation and cooperation of many members in each learning community, and only through a continuous dialogue within and outside the community where everyone is treated as a respected equal interlocutor, in a community of praxis (Freire, 1970) where previously isolated students, teachers and parents' obtain consciousness of their rights and their abilities and “together with their allies will fight for the liberation-with their
allies, struggle for liberation”. This stands for the principle of democracy that may be a Greek word in origin but is also English, Canadian and universal.
References


Ο Περσέας Τζάκσον και οι Θεοί του Ολύμπου  Apr 20, 2010

ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑΣΕΙΣ ΒΙΒΛΙΩΝ

Από τη μαθήτρια της 10ης τάξης του Αριστοτέλη - Eastern Iolanda Montagnese

Η σειρά του Περσέα Τζάκσον μπορεί να φαίνεται παιδική και είναι αλήθεια ότι πολλοί από τους κύριους χαρακτήρες είναι αρκετά μικροί. Όμως πολλά άτομα μεγαλύτερης ηλικίας μπορούν να απολαύσουν αυτά τα βιβλία. Η σειρά Χάρι Πότερ, που θαυμάζεται από τα παιδιά αλλά και τους ενήλικες, μοιάζει πολύ με αυτή τη σειρά επειδή τόσο οι μικροί όσο και οι μεγάλοι μπορούν να την απολαύσουν θαυμάσια. Περιλαμβάνει πολλούς από τους ελληνικούς μύθους που δεν διδάσκονται μόνο στο ελληνικό σχολείο αλλά και στα ημερήσια σχολεία της πόλης. Για παράδειγμα, στην ενάτη τάξη στα Αγγλικά, κάναμε μια ολοκλήρωση σχετικά με την ελληνική μυθολογία. Το θέμα είναι ότι αυτά τα βιβλία ήθελαν κάτι που είναι ευρέως γνωστό στα παιδιά και στους ενήλικες και το μετέτρεψαν με μια διαφορετική ματά σε κάτι νέο, κάτι φρέσκο. Τα βιβλία μιλούν για ένα αγόρι, το οποίο είναι περίπου δώδεκα χρονών και έχει αποφασίσει να ... γίνει γιος του Ποσειδώνα!

Το αγόρι αυτό, ο Περσέας Τζάκσον, ( Πέρση το χαϊδευτικό του) παίρνει μέρος σε πολλές περιπέτειες στο σύνολο των πέντε βιβλίων της σειράς. Ορισμένοι από τους μύθους που βρίσκονται σε αυτά τα βιβλία περιλαμβάνουν το χρυσόμαλλο δέρας, τμήματα από την Οδύσσεια ενώ όλοι οι Έλληνες Θεοί αναφέρονται και διαδραματίζουν καποίο ρόλο στα βιβλία.

Ο Χείρων και ο Κένταυρος αναφέρονται επίσης καθώς εκπαιδεύουν ήρωες όπως τον Ηρακλή και τον Άτλαντα. Επίσης εκπαιδεύουν τον Περσέα Τζάκσον και τους φίλους του. Θα ήθελα να αναφέρω αυτά τα βιβλία σε παιδιά από την ηλικία των 8 ετών μέχρι κάθε ενήλικο. Πιστεύω ότι ανεξάρτητα από την ηλικία σας, αν ξέρετε να διαβάζετε και γνωρίζετε τους μύθους, θα απολαύσετε αυτά τα βιβλία.

Labels: GREEK LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, MYTHOLOGY, Student presentation
Appendix B

Posts of Film Reviews by the Students of “Aristoteles”

ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ ΚΙΝΗΜΑΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΚΩΝ ΤΑΙΝΙΩΝ-G.S. Henry Gr. 12 (M.Sigalas)

0 comments

Ο "ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΗΣ” ΠΑΕΙ ΣΙΝΕΜΑ!
Μαθητές και μαθήτριες του σχολείου μας μιλούν για τις ταινίες που παρακολούθησαν.

Percy Jackson and Olympians - The Lightning Thief

Πρωταγωνιστές: Logan Lerman , Brandon T. Jackson , Alexandra Daddario , Pierce Brosnan , Jake Abel
Σκηνοθέτης: Chris Colombus

Αυτό το έργο ήταν πολύ καλό. Ήταν γεμάτο με δράση, περιπέτειες αλλά και πολλές κομικές σκηνές. Εμένα προσωπικά μου άρεσε πολύ, κυρίως επειδή βασιζόταν στην ελληνική μυθολογία. Οι ηθοποιοί ήταν επιτυχημένοι το ίδιο και η ολόκληρη η ταινία.

Απόστολος Τοπστής (12η GS Henry)

Sherlock Holmes

Πρωταγωνιστές: Robert Downey Jr. , Jude Law , Rachel McAdams , Mark Strong
Σκηνοθέτης: Guy Ritchie

Η ιστορία αρχίζει με το Σέρλοκ Χολμς και το Δρ. Τζέιμς Γουάτσον που προσπαθούν να σταματήσουν τη δολοφονία ενός κοριτσιού από το λόρδο Μπλάγκοουν, ο οποίος δολοφόνησε πέντε ανθρώπους με τη μέθοδο της ιεροτελειακά.

Η ικανότητα του Χολμς είχε σαν αποτέλεσμα να σταματήσει το φόνο και να σωληνάρει ο Μπλάγκοουν από την αστυνομία που του καταδίκασε σε δέκα μήνες για την εγκληματική του άδεια. Μετά το δάνειο και τη ταράδα του ιστερα από δύο μέρες, κάποιος δήλωσε ότι ο λόρδος Μπλάγκοουν αναστήθηκε από τον θάνατό του. Αυτή η δήλωση προκάλεσε πανικό στην αστυνομία και την τριγύρω κοινότητα. Ο Σέρλοκ Χολμς και ο Δρ. Γουάτσον προσπαθούν να λύσουν το μυστήριο της ανάστασης ώστε να σταματήσουν τον Μπλάγκοουν πριν να εξακσηφίσει το διαβολικό του σχέδιο.

Το έργο δίνει μια ευχάριστη εμπειρία στο θεατή με δυνατή ηθοποιία η οποία υποστηρίζεται από ισχυρή δράση και πλοκή. Το έργο έχει δεχθεί αρκετά κριτική από τους κριτικούς κινηματογράφου διότι δεν έχει μεγάλη σχέση με το αρχικό μυθιστόρημα του Arthur Conan Doyle. Επίσης το φιλμ παρουσιάζει ένα διαφορετικό τύπο του Σέρλοκ Χολμς από το πραγματικό μυθιστόρημα. Όμως εγώ νομίζω πως η ταινία γενικά είναι πολύ καλή και θα τη συνιστούσα να τη δείτε και σεις σα μια ιστορία δράσης και μυστηρίου.

Χρυσόστομος Τσιλιγγήρης (12η GS Henry)

The Bounty Hunter

Πρωταγωνιστές: Jennifer Aniston , Gerard Butler , Jason Kolotouros
Σκηνοθέτης: Andy Tennant
Ο Milo Boyd και η Nicole Hurley χόρισαν περίπου εννέα μήνες μετά το γάμο τους. O Milo ήταν αστυνομικός και τώρα είναι κοννηγός επικηρυγμένος (bounty hunter) και πρέπει να εντοπίσει την πρώην σύζυγό του Nicole, η οποία είναι δημοσιογράφος. Η Nicole δεν παρουσιάστηκε στο δικαστήριο την ημέρα που έρευνε και τώρα την ψάχνει η αστυνομία. O Milo αναλαμβάνει να την παραδώσει στην αστυνομία και να πάρει τα χρήματά του. Στην αρχή της ταινίας νόμιζε ότι αυτό θα ήταν πολύ εύκολο, όμως αποδείχθηκε το αντίθετο.

Ήταν ένα αστείο έργο και όταν έχεις μαζί δυο από τους καλύτερους ηθοποιούς, ξέρεις ότι θα δεις μια καλή ταινία. Μου αρέσει πολύ o Butler και η Aniston και η χρησιμεύει μεταξύ τους στο έργο ήταν υπέροχη. O Butler έχει παίξει σε πολλά είδη ταινιών, όμως τώρα αρχίζει να δείχνει το κομικό του ταλέντο.

Αυτό που μου άρεσε ιδιαίτερα ήταν ότι είναι μια κωμωδία με ρομαντικά στοιχεία και γελούσα από την αρχή έως το τέλος του έργου.

Ελένη Παπακοσμή (12η GS Henry)

Labels: CINEMA, CULTURE, GREEK LANGUAGE, Student presentation
Appendix C

Notification for the Program “Routes”

Thessaloniki 30 Απρίλιο 2009

The pliable program method that was used was based on the Center of Greek Language (Center of Greek Language-YPΕΠΘ-Euro-Scientific-Evaluation) and it satisfied all the requirements for the implementation of the evaluation procedures in the field of the program method and the implementation phase. The method satisfied the criteria of the evaluation of the implementation in the field of the program method and the implementation phase. The method satisfied the criteria of the evaluation of the implementation in the field of the program method and the implementation phase.

The method was based on the title “Diadromes in the Didaskalia of the Greek Language as an Exams” (http://elearning.greek-language.gr) and is a way to go on the path of Greek Language in 2008 and 2009. It was named as "Evaluation and Improvement of Learning/Teaching/Improvement of Instruction". The program method has been implemented in the 1st and 2nd of May 2009 and is being carried out in the 1st and 2nd of May 2009. The program method has been implemented in the 1st and 2nd of May 2009 and is being carried out in the 1st and 2nd of May 2009.
Αν πιστεύετε ότι το πρόγραμμα σας ενδιαφέρει, στείλτε ηλεκτρονικά συμπληρωμένη την υπεύθυνη δήλωση που ακολουθεί (σε word) στις ηλεκτρονικές διεύθυνσεις: elearn diadromes@gmail.com ή antonopoulou@komvos.edu.gr

και τις 22 Μαΐου 2009 το αργότερο. Σας παρακαλούμε να κοινοποιείτε την αίτηση σας και στη δεύτερη ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση. Τα στοιχεία επικοινωνίας (ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση, διεύθυνση αλληλογραφίας, τηλέφωνο, φαξ) να είναι ευκρινώς συμπληρωμένα και μην αμελήσετε να συμπληρώσετε κάποιο πεδίο, γιατί είναι άλλα υποχρεωτικά. Τονίζεται ότι για την παρακαλουθήση του προγράμματος κατά το 2009-2010 θα γίνουν δεκτές/οί με σειρά προτεραιότητας 100 άτομα.

Αν θέλετε να επικοινωνείτε μαζί μας τηλεφωνικά, μπορείτε να τηλεφωνείτε (Δευτέρα-Παρασκευή 09:00-14:30, ώρα Ελλάδας) στη τηλέφωνα +30 2310 459 101 ή 459 574.

Σε περίπτωση που ως τις 25 Μαΐου 2009 δεν έχετε λάβει απάντηση, σας παρακαλούμε είτε να μας στείλετε και πάλι το μηνυμά σας ή να επικοινωνήσετε με άλλον τρόπο μαζί μας. Πριν το κάνετε αυτό ρίξτε μια ματιά και στο trash, γιατί πολλές φορές συμβαίνει κάποια μηνύματα να μη γίνονται δεκτά από το πρόγραμμα ηλεκτρονικής αλληλογραφίας που χρησιμοποιείτε.

Οι συνεργάτες/ες μου κι εγώ είμαστε στη διάθεσή σας για οποιαδήποτε πληροφορία ή διευκρίνιση.

Με φιλικούς χαιρετισμούς,

Νιόβη Αντωνοπούλου

αναπλ. καθηγ. Εφαρμοσμένης Γλωσσολογίας

Επιστημονική υπεύθυνη του προγράμματος και του Τμήματος Στήριξης και Προβολής της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας του Κέντρου Ελληνικής Γλώσσας
Appendix D

E-Mail to the Director of the Program “Routes”

Αγαπητή κυρία Αντωνοπούλου, Τορόντο, 15 Μαΐου 2009

Δεν έχω την τιμή να σας γνωρίζω προσωπικά, ούτε και τις/τους συνεργάτες σας, ελπίζω αυτό να γίνει σύντομα με την ευκαιρία της πιθανής συμμετοχής μου στις «Διαδρομές». Επιτρέψτε μου να σας συστηθώ.


Σήμερα εργάζομαι στο απογευματινό αναγνωρισμένο σχολείο της Ε.Κ. «Αριστοτέλης» σαν δάσκαλος της 6ης δημοτικού, και ως διευθυντής στο Σαββατιανό σχολείο «credit program” για μαθητές Γυμνασίου-Λυκείου που παρακολουθούν μαθήματα ελληνικής στα πλαίσια του ημερήσιου σχολικού τους προγράμματος(υπό την επίβλεψη του Υπουργείου Παιδείας του Οντάριο).

Παράλληλα συμμετέχω σε διάφορες επιτροπές της Ελληνικής Κοινότητας (Paiëdaïs, Αναλυτικών Προγραμμάτων κλπ) καθώς και σε διαδικασία για την επαγγελματική μου αναγνώριση από το Κολέγιο Δασκάλων του Οντάριο.

Αυτό το μήνα, (Μάιος 2009) ξεκίνησα μεταπτυχιακό πρόγραμμα στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Τορόντο(OISE – Master of Education in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development) υπό την επίβλεψη του καθηγητή Περικλή Τρίφωνα(Peter Trifonas).

Στα πλαίσια του προγράμματος σπουδών μου, μου δίνεται η δυνατότητα να επιλέξω σε συνεργασία με τον σύμβουλο μου, δύο μαθημάτα ανεξάρτητης μελέτης και έρευνας (individual Reading and Research courses) που αποφασίζω να είναι στην κατεύθυνση της διδασκαλίας της ελληνικής γλώσσας σε αγγλόφωνο γλωσσικό περιβάλλον.

Ιδιαίτερα θέλω να ασχοληθώ με την περίπτωση εθνικών οργανισμών, όπως η Ελληνική Κοινότητα Τορόντο, στην οποία και εργάζομαι και ιδιαίτερα με την έρευνα για το πώς μπορεί να γίνει επιμόρφωση των διαδικτυακών στις αρχές και μεθόδους της δεύτερης γλώσσας, να δημιουργήθουν-προσαρμοστούν ανάλογα αναλυτικά προγράμματα και να αναπτυχθεί σύστημα διδασκαλίας της ελληνικής γλώσσας από απόσταση, για μαθητές που δεν μπορούν να εγγραφούν για διάφορους λόγους στα απογευματινά ή Σαββατιανά σχολεία.(ένα μοντέλο που σε ότι αφορά τον Καναδά θα μπορούσε να επέκτεθε/εφαρμοστεί και σε άλλες εθνικές κοινότητες)

Εφόσον οι συνθήκες (οικονομικές, ακαδημαϊκές κλπ) το επιτρέπουν, φιλοδοξώ να προχωρήσω την έρευνα αυτή και σε διδακτορικό επίπεδο εκμεταλλεύομενος τόσο τις ερευνητικές δυνατότητες που μου δίνει το πανεπιστήμιο όσο και το έργο που έχουν ήδη κάνει οργανισμοί όπως το Κέντρο Ελληνικής Γλώσσας, στην ίδια κατεύθυνση.

Η συμμετοχή μου στο κύκλο μαθημάτων «Διαδρομές» μπορεί να είναι ένα πρότυπο βήμα για να έχω μια πρακτική και προσωπική εμπειρία από το πρόγραμμα σας και στη συνέχεια με τη συνεργασία καθηγητών του OISE, όπως ο Jim Cummins και ο Peter Triphonas, που έχουν ειδίκευσή στα σχετικά αντικείμενα (Bilingualism-Second Language-Multiculturalism-Distance Learning-New Technologies in Education), αλλά και σύνδεση με την ελληνόφωνη εκπαίδευση, να εφαρμόσουμε την έρευνα που θα προκύψει στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Τορόντο, ως ένα σύγχρονο μοντέλο-κέντρο ελληνικών σπουδών στη διασπορά, σε προτεραιότητα και δευτεροβάθμιο εκπαιδευτικό επίπεδο.
Παράλληλα, με δεδομένο ότι στο Τορόντο, μια πόλη με 100.000 περίπου Έλληνες και ελληνικής καταγωγής Καναδούς δεν υπάρχουν επιλογές σε σπουδές για την ελληνική γλώσσα, μπορούν να καλλιεργηθούν οι συνθήκες για να δημιουργηθεί ένα συναφές αντικείμενο σε συνεργασία με άλλα ενδιαφερόμενα ιδρύματα/οργανισμούς/κέντρα. Ειδικά στο "OISE" που ειδικεύεται σε προγράμματα εκπαίδευσης δασκάλων, ένα μάθημα/πρόγραμμα ελληνικής γλώσσας μπορεί να ενδιαφέρει καθώς υπάρχουν εκατοντάδες ομογενείς εκπαιδευτικοί αλλά και Καναδοί που ενδιαφέρονται για τα ελληνικά γλώσσα και τη διδασκαλία τους.

Γνωρίζω ότι άλλοι αυτοί οι στόχοι και προσανατολισμοί με ξεπερνούν και δεν τολμώ ούτε καν να σκεφτώ ότι μπορώ μόνος μου να φέρω σε πέρας ούτε κάποιο ποσοστό από τα παραπάνω. Αν όμως θεωρείτε ότι όσα αναφέρω είναι πραγματοποιήσιμα, έστω και σε κάποιο επίπεδο, παρακαλώ όποιος μου δώσετε τις συμβουλές και κατευθύνσεις σας.

Σε πρώτη φάση σας ξεκινώ να μου πείτε τη γνώμη σας για το κατά πόσο είναι δυνατό να συνδυαστεί η συμμετοχή μου στις «Διαδρομές» με τις επαγγελματικές και ακαδημαϊκές μου ανησυχίες και αν μπορώ να συσχετίσω το πρόγραμμα σπουδών μου με τη δική σας δουλειά αλλά και τη σχετική έρευνα που πραγματοποιεί το Κέντρο Ελληνικής Γλώσσας. Επίσης θα ήταν ιδιαίτερα τιμητικό για μένα αν μπέετε στον κόσμο να μοιραστείτε μαζί μου τις απόψεις σας γενικότερα για τις ελληνικές σπουδές στο εξωτερικό σε όλες τις βαθμίδες και πώς νομίζετε ότι θα μπορέσατε να αξιοποιήσατε καλύτερα τη διάθεση και τον ενθουσιασμό μου για να συνεισφέρω θετικά στην προσπάθεια καλλιέργειας της ελληνικής γλώσσας και του πολιτισμού μας στο χώρο που δραστηριοποιούμαι.

Με εκτίμηση,

Θεμιστοκλής Αραβοσίτας
taravossitas@yahoo.ca
ευθυγραμμισμένης έκθεσης και της αρμόδιας Κοινότητας

Το πρόγραμμα έχει διακριθεί για την καινοτομία και την αριστοτέτικη του με το Ευρωπαϊκού σήμα για 2007. Συμπεριλαμβάνει για μια πρώτη φάση όπως αντικατοπτρίζει στον έλεγχό και τη διαδικασία είναι διαδικασία αλλά με την κατάλληλη προβολή να δείξετε έμπρακτα στην ομογενεία ότι η ελληνική γλώσσα στον Καναδά, νέα από το προγράμματα της Ελληνικής Κοινότητας, έχει όχι μόνο παρόν αλλά και μέλλον.

Πρόσοψη, το πρόγραμμα έχει εκφράσει την 1η Ιουνίου, οι θέσεις είναι περιορισμένες και κάθε ενδιαφερόμενος πρέπει να κάνει τη δική του άιτηση στο συντομότερο δυνατό. Ακόμη και ένας μικρός αριθμός δασκάλων και ανταποκριθεί σε πρώτη φάση θα μπορούν να ενθαρρύνεται αφού τέτοια μορφή επιμόρφωση δεν έχει προηγούμενο σε ότι οφείλει στο παρακολούθησαν και μελέτης για τους συμμετέχοντες και η Κοινότητα θα πρέπει όχι μόνο να ενθαρρύνει τους δασκάλους που θα το παρακολουθήσουν αλλά να τους παρέχει κίνητρα και διευκολύνσεις.

Επισυνάπτει πληροφορίες από τους υπεύθυνους του προγράμματος καθώς και σχετική δήλωση συμμετοχής.

Με εκτίμηση
Θεμιστοκλής Αραβοπάτης
Appendix F

My Application for Admission in the “Routes”

ΥΠΕΥΘΥΝΗ ΔΗΛΩΣΗ

Δηλώνω ότι: διαμένω μόνιμα ή προσωρινά εκτός Ελλάδας, ότι επιθυμώ να παρακολουθήσω ανελλιπτός τα επιμορφωτικά μαθήματα με τίτλο «Διαδρομές στη διδασκαλία της ελληνικής ως ξένης γλώσσας», ότι θα είμαι απόλυτα συνεπής στις υποχρεώσεις μου και θα τηρώ όλες τις προθεσμίες. Στόχος μου είναι η βελτίωσή του επίπεδου ελληνομάθειάς μου καθώς και των γνώσεών μου σε θέματα μεθοδολογίας της διδασκαλίας της ελληνικής ως ξένης γλώσσας.

Γνωρίζω ότι: α. η εκπαίδευσή μου θα πραγματοποιηθεί εξ αποστάσεως β. θα διαρκέσει περίπου ένα χρόνο (11) μήνες (Ιούνιος 2009 — Αύγουστος κενός — Μάιος 2010), γ. το πρόγραμμα προς το παρόν είναι ΔΩΡΕΑΝ δ. θα πρέπει στα μέσα Μαΐου του επόμενου χρόνου να πάρω μέρος και στη γλωσσική εξέταση, εκτός αν έχω επιχείρηση ελληνικής φιλολογίας από ελληνικό πανεπιστήμιο, και στην εξέταση μεθοδολογίας της διδασκαλίας, ε. θα μου χορηγηθεί από το Κέντρο Ελληνικής Γλώσσας πιστοποιητικό επιτυχούς παρακολούθησης των μαθημάτων ή σε περίπτωση αποτυχίας ή μη συμμετοχής στις τελικές εξετάσεις βεβαίωση παρακολούθησης των επιμορφωτικών μαθημάτων στ. για να μου χορηγηθεί πιστοποιητικό ή βεβαίωση, θα πρέπει να έχω ολοκληρώσει όλες τις απαιτήσεις από το πρόγραμμα εργασίες επιτυχώς μέσα στις προθεσμίες που θα μου δοθούν.

Τα στοιχεία μου:

| Όνομα υποψηφίου/ας: _______Αραβοσιτάς Θεμιστοκλής |
| Φύλο: [ ] άνδρας [ ] γυναίκα |
| Ομογενής [ ] Αλλαγενής [ ] |
| Ελληνίδα/Ελληνας που διαμένει προσωρινά στο εξωτερικό [ ] Ναι |
| Μαθέας από: Μαθήματα Παιδαγωγικής Ακαδημίας. |
| Μονάδες Παιδαγωγικού Διοικητικού Εκπαιδευτικού |
| Παιδαγωγικό Τμήμα Παιδεπερπημάτων Αθηνών |
| Ηλικία: 25-30 [ ] 31-35 [ ] 36-40 [ ] 41-45 [x] 46-50 [ ] 51-55 [ ] 56-60 [ ] |
| Μητρική γλώσσα: Ελληνικά [ ] Επάγγελμα: Δάσκαλος |
| Είναι κάποιος συγγενής σας ελληνικής καταγωγής |
| Πατέρας [ ] Μητέρα [ ] Και οι δύο [x] Σύζυγος [ ] |
Εμπειρία στη διδασκαλία της ελληνικής ως ξένης

Διεύθυνση μόνιμης κατοικίας

Ο δός
ς:

Πολή:

Κωδικός:

Χώρα:

Τηλέφωνο:

Fax:

e-mail:

taravossitas@yahoo.ca

Συμπληρώνονται μόνο από ομογενείς και αλλογενείς

Ημερομηνία: 12 Μαΐου 2009

Υπογραφή ..Θεμιστοκλής Αραβοσιτάς ....
Γεία σας από το "δροσερό " Τορόντο,

Αναμένοντας απάντησή σας σχετικά με τη συμμετοχή μου στο πρόγραμμα "Διαδρομές".

Σε ό,τι αφορά την Ελληνική Κοινότητα Τορόντο, όπου υπηρετώ σαν αποσπασμένος δάσκαλος, από το 2007, ενημέρωσα σχετικά με το πρόγραμμά σας (στα πλαίσια της συμμετοχής σου στην επιτροπή παιδείας του εν λόγω οργανισμού) και εισηγήθηκα να ενημερώσουν οι "Διαδρομές" στο πρόγραμμα επιμόρφωσης των διδασκόντων την ελληνική.

Συγκεκριμένα πρότεινα να ενημερωθούν επιεικότερα όλοι οι εκπαιδευτικοί που εργάζονται στα προγράμματα και σχολεία της Ε.Κ. και να τους δοθούν οι κατάλληλες διευκολύνσεις και κίνητρα με σκοπό να παρακολουθήσουν τον κύκλο των μαθημάτων που ξεκινά τον Ιούνιο.

Προωθήσα το ενημερωτικό σας σημείωμα και τη σχετική αίτηση-δήλωση και αναμένεται εντός της επόμενης εβδομάδας να συζητηθεί το θέμα από τους αρμόδιους και να ληφθούν αποφάσεις. Ωστόσο, με δεδομένο τον περιορισμένο αριθμό θέσεων για το πρόγραμμα θα ήταν χρήσιμο να γνωρίζατε αν υπάρχει η δυνατότητα "ομαδικής συμμετοχής" σε περίπτωση που μεγάλος αριθμός εκπαιδευτικών θελήσει να λάβει μέρος.

Παρακαλώ σημειώστε ότι η Ελληνική Κοινότητα, που αυτή τη στιγμή έχει στα διάφορα σχολεία /τμήματα της πάνω από χίλιους μαθητές,

Συνεπώς οι "Διαδρομές" κατά την ταπεινή μου γνώμη έρχονται να καλύψουν μια πράξη στο σημείο σας. Μεγάλος κάθες σας θέσης για να αναπτύξει η διδασκαλία της ελληνικής στον Καναδά.

Κλείνοντας, αντλήματα μεγάλα κάποια δυσπιστία ή απορίες ή διάθεση μου να προωθήσα το συγκεκριμένο πρόγραμμα πέρα από τις δικές μου επιμορφωτικές ανάγκες. Ισοστασία των τριών παραπάνω, αυτό θα έχει την ευθύνη αλλά ως αποσπασμένος δάσκαλος που εμπλέκομαι στην πράξη με τη διαδικασία της διδασκαλίας ελληνικών σε μαθητές 2ης και 3ης γενιάς σε αγγλόφωνο γλωσσικό περιβάλλον νιώθω ότι προγράμματα όπως οι "Διαδρομές" έρχονται να καλύψουν ένα τεράστιο κενό και μπορούν να μας βοηθήσουν να γίνουμε πιο παραγωγικοί στο έργο μας.

Καλό Σαββατοκύριακο και να είστε όλοι καλά!

Θεσμικής Αραβοσιτάς
Appendix H

The Program “Routes”

“Routes in Teaching Modern Greek” is a distance training course that was developed within the project *Developing Levels of Certification of Attainment in Greek as a Foreign/Second Language. Certificate of Attainment in Greek for Greek Expatriates or Foreigners*. The program is co-financed via the European Union by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and is implemented by the Centre for the Greek Language.

The course is addressed to expatriates and foreigners who are involved in teaching Greek as a foreign language abroad. Their aim is to keep teachers up-to-date with developments in teaching foreign languages, and in particular Greek, to help them acquire the knowledge and teaching skills required for language teaching and to train them in the methodology of teaching Greek as a foreign language at all levels and to all age-groups.
Appendix I
Chronology of Multiculturalism in Canada
(1948-2005)

(Source: Library of Parliament-Dewing & Leman, 2006)

1948 - Canada adhered to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which applies to all human beings, regardless of sex, race, religion, culture or ideology.

1960 - Parliament passed the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, which prohibits discrimination for reasons of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex.

1967 - Racial discrimination provisions that had existed in Canadian immigration law since the early 20th century were abolished.

1969 - The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism released Book Four of its report, on the contribution of other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada.


1971 - The federal government announced a multiculturalism policy within a bilingual framework.

1972 - First appointment of a (junior) Minister for Multiculturalism.

1973 - The Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism (later renamed the Canadian Multiculturalism Council) was established as an advisory body to the Minister.

1974 - Saskatchewan became the first province to adopt legislation regarding multiculturalism.

1977 - Parliament adopted the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, which established the Canadian Human Rights Commission to monitor and mediate disputes over human rights in Canada.

1982 - The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* enshrined equality rights in the Constitution and acknowledged Canada’s multicultural heritage.

1984 - The House of Commons Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society issued its *Equality Now!* report.

1985 - Establishment of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Multiculturalism.

1988 - Royal Assent was given on 21 July to the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* after Parliament had adopted the legislation with all-party support.
1990 - Multiculturalism Canada tabled its first annual report on the implementation of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* by the Government of Canada.

1991 - Royal Assent was given to the *Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Act* on 17 January. On 21 April, the new Department was officially established with Gerry Wiener appointed as the first full-time Minister.

1993 - The Liberal government elected in October announced that Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada would be split along its two main components: the multiculturalism programs would be merged with the Department of Canadian Heritage established by the previous administration, and the citizenship programs would be amalgamated with the newly established Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

1994 - The federal government announced that it would not pay out any compensation to national ethnic groups to redress past indignities meted out by the Canadian government. This decision contrasted with the precedent set by the previous Conservative government, which paid out millions of dollars in compensation to the families of Japanese Canadians interned during World War II.

1996 - The federal government established the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

1997 - The Minister of State for Multiculturalism announced a renewed multiculturalism program.

2002 - The federal government announced that Canadian Multiculturalism Day will be held on 27 June each year.

2005 - In the February budget, the federal government announced commemorative and educational initiatives to highlight the contributions of groups that have troubling memories as a result of historical events during times of war, or as a result of immigration policies of the day.

2005 - In March, the federal government released *A Canada for All: Canada’s Action Plan Against Racism*.

2005 - Between August and November, the federal government announced agreements-in-principle with the Ukrainian-Canadian, Italian-Canadian, and Chinese-Canadian communities as part of the Acknowledgement, Commemoration, and Education Program announced in the February 2005 budget.
Appendix J
Links and Recourses

1. http://translate.google.com/#

2. From ancient Athens, the silver four-drachma coin bore the image of the owl on the obverse side as a symbol of the city's patron, Athena Pronoia, the Greek goddess of wisdom who, in an earlier incarnation, was goddess of darkness. The owl -- whose modern scientific name Athena carries this heritage -- came to represent wisdom from its association with the dark. The owl was also the guardian of the Acropolis (Marcot, B. G., Johnson, D.H.& Cocker, M. (2000).


Appendix K

Blog Posts

1. Welcome to the new school year 2009-2010 (Sep. 19, 2009)
   http://easterngr.blogspot.com/search/label/SCHOOL%20ANNOUNCEMENTS

2. From Olympus to Vienna (Oct. 7, 2009)
   http://easterngr.blogspot.com/search/label/MYTHOLOGY


5. Student Representatives (Nov. 21, 2009)

6. Happy Name-day (Oct. 26, 2009)
   http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2009/10/happy-name-day.html

7. National celebrations of the “OXI” day (Oct. 27, 2009)

8. Greek literature-“Ithaca” (Oct. 15, 2009)

9. Education in Greece 2,500 years ago (Oct. 18, 2009)

10. University Orientation day (Oct. 29, 2009)
    http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2009/10/university-orientation-day-tips.html

11. Smart Ads (Oct. 20, 2009)

12. The history of Greece in 10 minutes (Oct. 19, 2009)

13. Hellenic Canadian History (Nov. 6, 2009)

14. The Greek Community of Toronto welcomes the Olympic Flame (Dec. 17, 2009)

15. St Patrick’s Day (Mar. 17, 2010)
    http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/03/blog-post_17.html
16. A Greek Canadian judge at Aristoteles (Mar. 27, 2010)  
http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/03/blog-post_27.html

17. Learning about environmental pollution (Jan. 23, 2010)  

18. A candidate City Councilor visits Aristoteles (May 14, 2010)  

19. A School Trustee meets the Aristoteles Parent Council (May 30, 2010)  
http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/05/blog-post_30.html


21. A night with stars (May 15, 2010)  
http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/05/blog-post_15.html

22. Earth Day: Give Earth a Hand (Apr. 22, 2010)  

23. Earthquake in Haiti; let’s help (Jan. 17, 2010)  
http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/01/blog-post_17.html

http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2009/10/university-orientation-day-tips.html

http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/02/nice-party.html

http://easterngr.blogspot.com/2010/06/gs-henry-eastern.html


28. Computers offered to the Greek Community schools (Jan. 29, 2010)  
Appendix L
Announcement by the Greek Ministry of Education
for the Cancellation of Greek Teacher Secondments Abroad
for the School Year 2009-2010

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ
ΔΙΑ ΒΙΟΥ ΜΑΘΗΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ
ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ

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ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ ΟΜΟΓΕΝΩΝ
ΚΑΙ ΔΙΑΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
ΤΜΗΜΑ Β’

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ΠΡΟΣ: Γρ. κ. Ειδικής Γραμματέως

ΘΕΜΑ: «Ανακοίνωση της Διεύθυνσης Παιδείας Ομογενών και Διαπολιτισμικής Εκπαίδευσης για τη μη διεξαγωγή των εξετάσεων γλωσσομάθειας και των νέων αποσπάσεων εξωτερικού για το σχολικό έτος 2010-2011.»
Η Διεύθυνση Παιδείας Ομογενών και Διαπολιτισμικής Εκπαίδευσης ανακοινώνει ότι δε θα διεξαχθούν οι φετινές εξετάσεις γλωσσομάθειας που προβλέπονταν από την με αρ. πρωτ. Φ.821/2443Π/144249/Ε1/20-11-2009 προκήρυξη του ΥΠΑΒΜΘ, καθώς δεν θα πραγματοποιηθούν νέες αποσπάσεις εκπαιδευτικών στο εξωτερικό για το σχολικό έτος 2010-2011.

Η ΕΙΔΙΚΗ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΑΣ
Appendix M

History of Greeks in Canada

1502
First Greek reported to have visited Canada

1907
Montreal Greek Centre opens

1909
Toronto Greek Centre opens

1911
4,000 Greeks immigrate to Canada

1945-1971
110,000 new Greek immigrants

1967
Record-high 10,650 immigrants arrive in Canada

1979
Greece joins the European Union

1981
Many Greeks repatriate to Greece
Appendix N

Elected Canadians of Greek Descent

Federal Level

Eleni Bakopanos: Former Liberal MP for Saint-Denis (Quebec)
John Cannis: Liberal MP for Scarborough Centre since 1993 (Ontario)
Jim Karygiannis: Liberal MP for Scarborough-Agincourt since 1988 (Ontario)
Constantine George Midges’: Former PC MP (Ontario)
Tony Clement: Current Minister of Industry (Ontario)

The Senate

Pana Merchant: Senator
Philippe Gigantes: Former senator
Staff Barootes: Former Senator

Provincial Level

Marie Boutrogianni Liberal MPP for Hamilton Mountain since 1999 (Ontario)
Maurine Karagianis NDP, MLA (British Columbia)
George Samis Former NDP, MPP (Ontario)
Christos Sirros Former Liberal, MNA (Quebec)
Gerry Sklavounos Liberal, MNA (Quebec)