

Summary – The story in short

The case study is based on 4 interviews organized by HCC with 4 key-persons who talked to us about 3 different language Greek projects in their organizations or associations and also their opinions about our project's aims.

1. Arsis project in the Estia Prosfygon, a Home for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, mainly from African and Asian countries, including many monoparental families. (women with children or pregnant)
2. "Aghios Staphanos o Megas" Rumanian Community courses on Greek language run for 3 years hosting the "Odysseas" Program.
3. "The Afghan Community in Athens" organizing Greek lessons for the last 5 years.

Aims/Objectives - Why, Where?

The case study is based on 4 interviews organized by HCC with 4 people representing 3 different types of stakeholders, that are of crucial importance for Metikos Project for HCC. Two Greeks, a psychologist and a social worker from Arsis, a well known NGO working with refugees and asylum seekers from Asian and African countries mainly, who describe the situation of Greek language lessons' experience and express their ideas on our project and their availability to collaborate with us. And two key-persons of two different migrant communities in Greece, with very different profiles: a Rumanian lawyer - president of the Rumanian community in Athens with more than 2.000 people as members. And an Afghan health care employer, a teacher of Greek in the Afghan community addressing to the local population of around 2.000 Afghan workers in Athens. Both of them explain the different profiles of the courses they run or they would like to run and express their great interest in hosting a language café or helping us in

the pilot phase.

Our aims were to have a detailed view of how Greek language courses projects are held and organized, with which aims and by which means, in different profiles of organizations such as a Refugee's NGO working mainly with migrants from African countries and Community Associations of a Balkan community (different than the Albanians who are the biggest foreign community in Greece) and an Asian community. We aimed to have inside opinions of Greek experts who work professionally in this area and have a wide experience on the field of refugees and also from key persons of important migrant communities who present an interesting activity and could be of assistance in our ideas for the Metikos Project.

The case study included face to face and phone interviews organized by Ifigeneia Georgiadou and Chrysanthi- Christiana Katsarou in Athens in HCC.

The Project - How, Who, When?

1. Arsis project in the Estia Prosfygon, a Home for Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

Mrs Maria Kaldani, a social worker in the Home talked to us about the organization Arsis and its aims, explained in detail in the documents attached. (Interview reports, translated in English). At the current phase, due to the recession not all the capacity of the Home is used, as it provides shelter and general psychological and social assistance to 28 people, rather than to 48 persons as they could. This is due to the financial recession in Greece and Europe, as the financing is late and slow, while the needs are large. (Funds from European and national program: European Fund for Refugees) Now they host mostly families from African countries like Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, some of them being monoparental, that is one mother (pregnant sometimes) with children. The language lessons organized there are held 2 times per week for 2 hours, run by volunteer teachers, with a university degree in teaching, and have an informal character, using a lot the experiential methodology, such as working with the objects of everyday life e.t.c. As one of the basic aims of the Home for Refugees is the exposure of the people to the Greek language for the 6 months that they can stay there, all Greeks that work there (social workers, psychologists e.t.c.) try to speak to them in Greek in the everyday life so

to help them learn faster, as a policy. (although they have translators for the needs of communication) So, there is an indirect way of a “language exchange” approach, as refugees are encouraged to talk about their language and how they say various words, so to enhance their self-confidence and make them feel that their languages are also important and not only the language- target, which here is the greek. The idea of a language café interests them greatly but in a more protective way, as these people are in a very vulnerable state and this should be organized with other volunteer teachers and not the ones they already have, so not to confuse the social roles and routines, that in their state are of vital importance.

Mr Andonis Antoniou, a psychologist in the same NGO but in the central Offices, working in all the activities of Arsis, explained to us that refugees of all countries and profiles are visiting Arsis on a daily base for support, so a language cafe in their place, would be a very interesting idea, since they do not have any more greek courses there, as they stopped 2 years ago their volunteer’s group of teachers and they have been advising people to go to KEK running programs of greek languages on a non formal basis and providing also some certifications. But he believes the idea of informal learning through a practice as proposed by Metikos would be of an essential help to them, since their experience until 2 years before, as they have been trying to do such work in an experiential basis, was very good for the migrants / refugees addressing to them.

2. Aghios Staphanos o Megas” Rumanian Community courses on Greek language run for 3 years hosting the “Odysseas” Program.

Mrs Nina Ghitta, an active Romanian lawyer and current president of the Aghios Stephanos community talked to us about the great success of the Greek language Courses they held until last year. They had 180 students of Greek per year. The courses were in a non formal basis, organized with funds from the Program “Odysseas” run by the Ministry of Education with European funds also for the promotion of language learning for migrants and refugees and the aim to help them receive the Certificate of Greek, levels A1 and A2 that they needed for their legal status papers in Greece. The Ministry was sending qualified teachers of Greek and was paying them. Due to the recession, the Program has stopped to the great disappointment of all Romanians interested a lot in the Greek language and culture. Nina feels that the idea of a language café would be great for them as they also have a huge place they can organize. She also pinpointed that the cyber language café would be a great idea for their community as Romanians have a very good contact with the internet even if their educational background is not of a high level: even simple workers know already the basics about internet and they would

be really helpful in such an initiative. Their experience from their Project is that Romanians already have a good communicational skill in Greek as they have been living and working in Greece for a long time and what they need is more focus on grammar structures and the cultural awareness. The language exchange practice could be valuable to them, as they already have 10 Greeks that learn Romanian as they aim to study in Romania.

3. "The Afghan Community in Athens"

It has been organizing Greek lessons for the last 5 years. Now they have 15-18 students, as the recession is also affecting Afghan migrants. (in the past they had the double number) They are mostly interested in teaching the beginner Greek as people coming to them have a very poor knowledge and a very low education level, some being illiterate. Mr Muhammadi who is Afghan but a fluent speaker in Greek is helping them as a language and cultural mediator to be able to communicate for the basic everyday needs. Their approach is also informal and experiential and they are very open in new approaches such as Arts and Theatre, as they already organized with the help of the Tameio Thrakis (Thraki Fund) such activities in their association and they feel language learning can be promoted through these practices. They have 3 volunteer teachers now helping them.

Results/Evaluation

The Greek Language lessons or Projects the different stakeholders have organized show to us that:

- there is an interest in the field of informal learning and language exchange practices, that needs to be more systematic and gain from other countries' best practices, as all of them have told that in a way such informal methods are used but accidentally and not on an organized basis, from the volunteer teachers mainly

- the more standardized courses organized through European and National Funds (Odysseas program) had a more “traditional” character (exams, books, certificate orientated learning e.t.c) and is not sustainable once the funding stops
- The internet facilities of the associations/ NGO has never been systematically used as a practice like the one we aim to encourage in Metikos. Teachers (paid or volunteers) have been using it to find resources and material mainly and learners use it for communication in their language or for general internet searching.

Sustainability

Not clear ideas on sustainability yet, as we feel the piloting phase could prove this.

As the HCC can not fund itself such activities, we could possibly provide Teacher Training Guidance and Practices in the future, once the Associations organize their own Language Cafés. This seems more realizable in the Romanian community, since it is a very active one, the place is large and available and already attracts Greek students for the Romanian language. Furthermore, the great interest for Greek Culture and their promotion of Romanian culture in fields like the dance, music and folk art, could be a element to bring together cultural associations that could provide Language Cafes a pool of interested volunteers in language exchange.

Lessons Learnt

The results from our research were the following:

- all organizations are interested in the basic ideas about the language café or cyber language café, as described from us and feel they can be of a great help to their efforts in Greek language learning
- organizations have also an interest due to current economical conditions in Greece, which have stopped all national funding in Greek language learning, so they need to inaugurate new strategies and methodologies for sustainable courses, since they can not be based on national funding any more (Romanian community)
- refugees and asylum seekers of a special target group (new mothers/ pregnant women with children) living in special Hostels as the Estia Prosfygon are also interested in this approach but in a more protected way, so not to destabilize the whole balance that they try to establish (e.g. one workshop per week)
- there is already some experience on tandem-language exchange practices like in the Greeks learning Romanian, but not on an organized nature and methodology, it has been a practiced adopted by chance and people being together in the same place for some time
- the cyber language café is a whole new concept for them and all said that expert guidance shall be needed as many are not familiar with the tools – nevertheless of a surprise to us was the great interest of the stakeholders as they say that it is a tool that they learn very fast once people are a bit guided and they feel a real pleasure once they have some acquaintance with. As they use it to establish contact with home, Skype is something refugees learn fast and Romanians migrants from all educational levels are mentioned to be doing a wide use of the internet.
- Topics of interest for all are in our area of propositions (every day language use, basic communication skills for areas of their interest such as job search) and are already in our proposed Curriculum. Nevertheless very interesting is the approach of the Romanian president, emphasizing in the special needs of 2nd generation migrants, who already have developed the basic communication skills and look for something broader and deeper in the structures of grammar and the general knowledge of Greek politics, economy and culture.

All these findings are of high importance to us as we are verified in our choices and priorities for

the Curriculum proposition we have done (the Curriculum draft) and through this case study we got acquainted with people and associations/ organizations we can collaborate with in a good level. We already gave a scholarship to Mr Muhammadi, so that he can attend our known teacher training seminars (Eurolta accreditation, Ginco award of Quality assurance from the E.U.) and thus facilitate his work in the Afghan Community and our possible cooperation.

Influencing agenda

Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (former Institute of Intercultural Education, Greek Ministry of Education), URL: www.inedivim.gr

- General Secretariat for Youth (Greek Ministry of Education), URL: www.neagenia.gr , e-mail: info@neagenia.gr

Modern Greek Language Teaching Center (University of Athens), www.nglt.uoa.gr , e-mail: nglt.info@nglt.uoa.gr

- Centre for the Greek Language (Ministry of Education), www.greek-language.gr

- PYXIS (COMPASS) - Intercultural Centre for the Promotion of the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (part of the Greek Council for Refugees), www.gcr.gr , e-mail: pyxidaesp@gmail.com.

- ARSIS-Social Organization for Supporting Young People, www.arsis.gr , www.arsisathina.blogspot.com

- Sunday School for Immigrants, www.ksm.gr

International links

http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=30845

<http://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/node/606>

<http://migrationeducation.de/23.0.html>

<http://www.w2eu.info/greece.en/articles/greece-contacts.en.html>

<http://www.demotix.com/news/1573944/free-greek-language-lessons-immigrants-and-refugees-athens#media-1573909>

A freelance reporters' blog presenting photos of the greek language courses in Athens just 10 days ago in the Network of Social Support to Immigrants and Refugees.