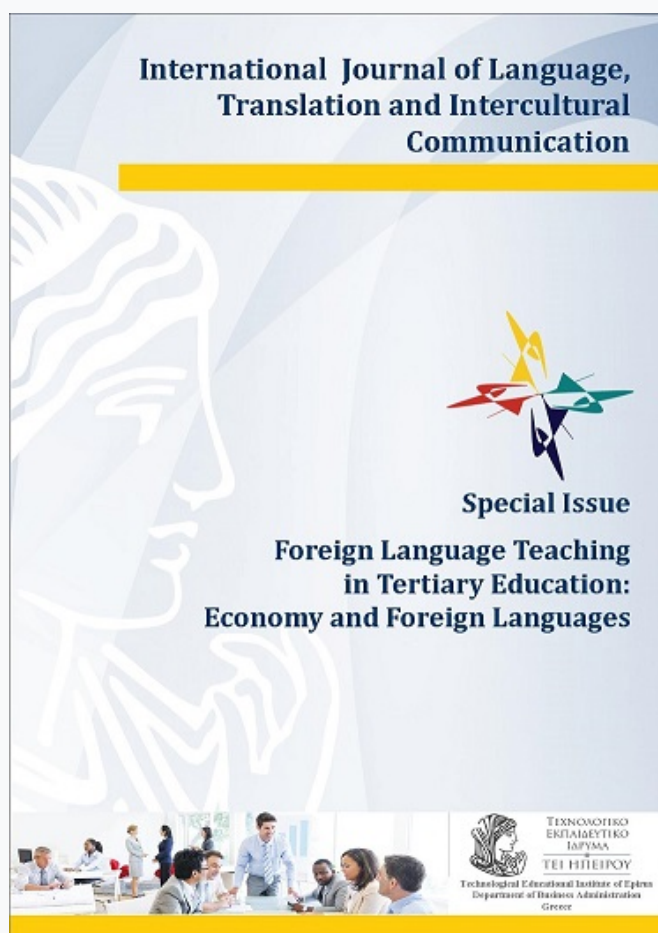


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**Developing a foreign language policy in Greek higher education (HE): striving between Scylla and Charybdis.**

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# Developing a foreign language policy in Greek higher education (HE): striving between Scylla and Charybdis.

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## Abstract

*The present study analyses foreign language (FL) policy in Greek higher education (HE) taking into consideration the multiple interrelated factors that development and implementation of a successful FL policy hinges on. A brief overview is presented of European initiatives that have contributed significantly to the promotion of language learning, multilingualism and the harmonization of university language policies. This was considered necessary so as to lay the context for the presentation of the practices documented in the Greek HE arena, with specific examples provided from Greek institutions. To address the aims of this research project, the state legislation relevant to FL issues in HE is examined and discussed, as it unavoidably influences and mirrors observed trends and priorities in language education. Finally, extensive data is analysed from five Greek HE institutions and their FL instructors, with regard to language practices implemented, programmes of study, instructors' professional status, etc. The results of this analysis show that great effort and extensive co-operation among all stakeholders is still required in devising a holistic FL policy in Greek HE, to which end this paper also offers some useful recommendations.*

**Keywords:** foreign language policy, Greek Higher Education, English for academic & specific purposes (EAP/ESP), language management.

## Introduction

Over recent decades, the European higher education area (HEA) has experienced a number of challenges set primarily by demands for mobility, internationalisation, knowledge dissemination and intercultural communication. In this context, multilingual competence and the provision of all the required language skills for students, staff and all members of the academic community have been recognised of central importance. For this reason, specific directives, formal practices, projects and action plans have been initiated by the European Commission, scientific committees and other networks, aiming at the development and implementation of national and institutional HE language policies. Arguably, the proliferation of these initiatives has increasingly affected European HE institutions which have undertaken specific language planning activities, promoting language diversity, fostering plurilingualism and embedding languages in their strategic planning. That said, it has been equally acknowledged that a lot remains to be done to this end, and very often the case is that “a language policy and its cultural dimension are rarely a priority on the university agenda” (Ritz, 2011: 109).

The Greek educational context, in particular, presents an interesting case to be studied, mainly owing to its traditional conflicting language policies and opposing social conclusions regarding multilingualism and multiculturalism (Kiliari, 2009). In the higher education sector, specifically, very few actions have been implemented so far in the wake of the aforementioned initiatives, let alone in the direction of forming coherent institutional language policies. Therefore, this paper aims at documenting the current Greek HE foreign language practices by

five Greek HE Institutions (*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University of Ioannina, University of Macedonia, University of Thessaly and Athens University of Economics and Business*). The data are presented and discussed in terms of organisation of overall language planning strategies, language courses, curriculum issues, and language teachers' status. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to address these issues in Greek HE so extensively, presenting both qualitative and quantitative data. It actually constitutes the initial part of an on-going, large-scale study analyzing the present language policies, initiatives and debates in Greek tertiary education in the light of the current socio-economic and political context. The overarching aim of this study is to contribute to the requisite development of a national HE language policy, embracing all stakeholders and taking into account the complex factors that would allow for a realistic implementation of such a policy, as has also been proposed by Δογορίτη and Βυζάς (2015). Some relevant statistical data have only been presented by Γκορέζη (2011), who documented in her dissertation the foreign language (FL) courses for academic/specific purposes, offered in Greek HE curricula.

In view of the above, our large-scale study is placed within the broader framework proposed by Bruen (2013: 101). As she aptly posits:

“According to this model, in order to identify the policies to implement we must first have both a clear picture of where we currently stand and a vision for the future. Our understanding of our current position should relate to the actual use of languages (language ecology), attitudes towards languages (language ideology) and the prevailing socio-economic context”.

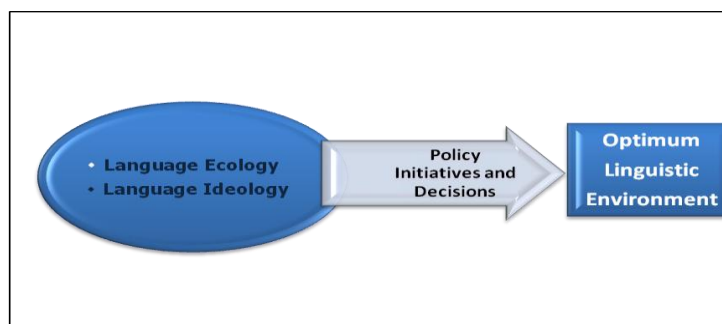


Figure 1: Bruen, (2013: 100)

Bruen's model is in fact a visual representation of Spolsky's (2004) tri-partite interrelated components of language policy, i.e. language practices, language attitudes/beliefs and language interventions, or language management, as Spolsky later defined the third component (ibid. 2009). Hence, at this initial stage, our first aim is to document the current language practices in Greek HE institutions, as these are depicted in their curricula and courses of study. It is beyond the scope of this paper to present extensively the observable language behaviours and beliefs of students, academic staff or administrative personnel, as these data will be elicited at a second stage of this study. Furthermore, it is argued that university practices do not exist in a vacuum; we endorse Fortanet-Gomez's position (2013: 77) that "university policies are subject to national and regional documents concerning the use and learning of languages. Bylaws or statutes establish the general rules for the institutional use of languages". Thus, universities, while maintaining their autonomous status which allows them to implement separate institutional language policies, are still expected to operate within the policy framework devised by the state. All of these (HE & state policies) are outlined in the following sections, investigating different aspects of organised language management.

## 1 Short overview of FL policy initiatives in European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Before delineating the Greek HE context, it would be useful to present briefly some significant milestones in EU initiatives and regulations regarding HE language policies – whether binding or non-binding – since these have been expected to benefit all Member States. Arguably, many other could deserve mentioning (e.g. the MAGICC project, the CELAN project, the IntIUI project in Lauridsen, 2015) but for the purposes of this paper it was considered appropriate to include the more overarching, high-impact level initiatives.

First of all, in 1989 the Council of Europe devised the CEFR, aiming to provide “a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe” (2001:1). It is explicitly stated that “[the CEFR] is intended to overcome the barriers to communication among professionals working in the field of modern languages arising from the different educational systems in Europe” (ibid.). In essence, these common Reference Levels provided language educators with useful descriptors so as to be able to measure students’ proficiency levels by referring to a common apparatus and, thus, adjust their courses’ objectives accordingly (Räsänen and Fortanet-Gómez, 2008).

Ten years later, in 1999, 29 European Ministers signed the Bologna Declaration, essentially a commitment (for each signatory country) to reform its higher education structures towards an overall convergence at European level. The main objectives included:

- adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees,
- adoption of a two-cycle system, undergraduate and graduate, for all universities
- establishment of a system of credits (ECTS) for all
- promotion of mobility and of quality assurance
- promotion of the necessary reforms in curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation and integrated programmes of study, training and research (Confederation of EU Rectors’ Conferences and the Association of European Universities, 2000).

Most importantly, all of the above were to be attained “taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy” (ibid.: 8).

As a response to on-going challenges, the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission issued an Action Plan 2004-2006 for “Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity”, acknowledging universities as a key player in the promotion of societal linguistic diversity and individual multilingualism (European Communities, 2004). The document stated that “all students should study abroad, preferably in a foreign language, for at least one term, and should gain an accepted language qualification as part of their degree course” (ibid.: 20), while emphasis was conferred upon the facilitation of both national and regional languages.

An initiative devoted particularly to achieving these aims was the ENLU project, namely the European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning among All Undergraduates, funded by the EU and the ELC/European Language Council (ENLU, 2005). A number of surveys in this project proved that, despite FL learning being a common practice at undergraduate level in most universities, the implementation of a languages-for-all policy still requires the resolution of many quality issues (i.e. learning outcomes, group size, learning environments and number of credits awarded). The project members underscored the need for the provision of (at least two) foreign

languages to all students and staff, the enhancement of language-learning skills and intercultural awareness, and the significance of acquiring first-hand experience of working in and collaborating with foreign countries (European Commission, 2008). In tandem with this, the ENLU project identified as pivotal to the success of a FL learning the use of distance education, e-learning as well as the integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Finally, a high degree of consensus was given to the establishment of a permanent network named HELP (Higher Education Language Policy), fostering the development of university-wide language policies. The goal of this network was to assist all HE Institution stakeholders in addressing the requirements of structuring a FL policy by providing (not prescribing) useful recommendations. In accordance with this view, “a language policy establishes the languages of instruction and of administration and communication as well as the aims and objectives of language programmes, language support measures [for students, lecturers/researchers and administrative staff] and the way in which these are put into practice within a particular HEI” (Lauridsen, 2013: 3)”. The concrete implementation of such a framework is, of course, expected to be adjusted to the specific needs, constraints and conditions of each HE. Hence, the following sections provide evidence as to how some components of a FL policy are addressed (or not) in the Greek HE area.

## **2 Foreign language policy in Greek HEA**

In the Greek educational system, the development and implementation of a national FL policy has so far addressed mainly primary and secondary education, where a number of efforts and commitments have been undertaken in the last 15 years to promote FL learning from an early age (Griva and Iliadou, 2011). In this context, all Greek pupils are taught two FLs (English and one other ‘major’ FL, i.e. French/German) throughout compulsory education (i.e. end of Junior High School). In particular, English – owing to an extensive EU funded Project entitled “New Foreign Language Education Policy in Schools: English for Young Learners” – has been introduced since 2010-11 as a compulsory subject from the first grade to a number of primary schools that have adopted the enriched school curriculum (Dendrinou, 2013). Other foreign languages (such as Italian, Spanish, etc.) have also been offered to pupils at a pilot stage since 2008, but, due to current lack of funding, this is not the case any more. Nonetheless, one needs to be aware of the long tradition of private FL tutoring in the Greek society. Even nowadays, “most of the public are sceptical about the effectiveness of school foreign-language teaching, which has led to concomitant language-tutoring in the private sector, starting at even a younger age than language-teaching in the public sector” (Kiliari, 2009: 25).

On the other hand, the pursuit of an explicit FL policy in Greek HE has not been accorded equal importance either by policymakers or HEIs themselves, at a formal, institutional level, at least at a nation-wide extent. Despite the abundance of European Commission initiatives, there has not been a homogenous favourable response to the promotion of language learning in tertiary education. Greece is actually one of the countries where strong opposition and a number of caveats have been expressed concerning the degree reforms recommended by the Bologna Declaration (Huisman and van der Wende, 2004).

There are, however, some noteworthy EU funded projects in which Greek HEIs have participated, fostering the role of FLs in tertiary education. The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and, more specifically, the Centre for Foreign Language Teaching was a member of

the MOLAN network (Network for the exchange of information about good practices that serve to Motivate Language learners) (<http://www.molan-network.org/>). This project focused not only on promoting language policies but also on developing and disseminating ‘success stories’, i.e. innovative, collaborative endeavours that would stimulate students’ motivation for language learning (Tudor 2009). A number of pilot courses were designed that aimed at enhancing students’ academic literacy skills and increased future employability opportunities; the courses received great interest and high participation on behalf of the students (Kiliari and Hatzitheodorou, 2008). Furthermore, two more projects were realised in an effort to provide certification of students’ language skills in specific academic disciplines. The Medical School of the University of Ioannina participated in the sTANDEM project (<http://www.standem.eu/>) by organising exams for its students that were tested for the Standardised Language Certificate for Medical Purposes, tailored to the CEFR requirements. The interest on behalf of the participants was more than expected and the success rate was very high (Tseligka, 2015). In a similar vein, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki contributed to the creation of TESPiS, i.e. "Testing English for Specific Purposes In Science" (<http://ecampus.chem.auth.gr/tespis/>), the first examinations for chemists, conservation scientists and therapists, again within the CEFR framework (Zeller, 2011).

Not surprisingly, the above few initiatives did not have a cascade effect at a wider level, although this would have admittedly been a more than ambitious goal. Despite the intra-institutional positive acceptance reported, no centralised FL policy has been recorded so far in any of the above universities.

### 3 The study

The first part of this study outlines laws and statutes enacted by the Greek Ministry of Education that relate to FL practices, since these constitute “the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs”, i.e. language management practices in Spolsky’s words (2009 : 4). This was considered purposeful because, as already mentioned, even though universities are self-administered bodies, their policies are unavoidably influenced or determined – to some extent – by state authorities.

#### 3.1 Synopsis of relevant laws and regulations

The table below presents a conspectus of Greek State laws implemented in the last 25 years, which pertain in some way or another to language issues in Greek tertiary education.

Laws	Language Teaching/Teachers’ issues
Law 1268/1982	- No reference to the language of teaching in HE or to FL learning - Senior Teaching Fellow positions in FL teaching are first introduced [ <i>Required qualifications: BA &amp; MA or 3yrs teaching experience</i> ]
Law 2083/1992	- Greek graduates ( <i>to be admitted in post-graduate programmes</i> ) should demonstrably know a foreign language
Law 2552/1997	- non-Greek language courses in the Hellenic Open University (H.O.U.)
Law 3404/2005	- non-Greek language courses in all post-graduate programmes
Law 3391/2005	- exclusively English programmes of studies in International Hellenic University

Law 3549/2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organization of (post)-graduate courses in languages other than Greek is allowed</li> <li>- University websites should be composed in Greek &amp; English (at least)</li> </ul>
Law 3685/2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post-graduate programmes should include information about the language of instruction</li> </ul>
<b><u>Law 4009/2011</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A <b>Doctoral degree</b> is required for appointment in this position. Senior Teaching Fellows' positions are distributed to Schools by the Dean or the Rector.</li> <li>- Graduate programmes include <b>compulsory courses for the learning of at least one foreign language</b>.</li> <li>- For the award of a degree, <b>it is compulsory to have demonstrated knowledge or have successfully completed courses in (at least) one foreign language</b>. The foreign languages required, the number of courses, the level of language attainment and the proof of language competency in one or more foreign languages <b>are set out in the Institution's Organization</b>.</li> <li>- Courses of study (in part or in whole) can be organized in a foreign language.</li> <li>- In addition to the compulsory FL courses, additional programmes of study can be organized for the teaching of foreign languages to students.</li> </ul>
Law 4115/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graduate programmes of study <b>may include</b> FL teaching courses.</li> </ul>
<i>Draft Law 2015/16?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graduate programmes <b>include</b> compulsory courses for the learning of, at least one, foreign language.</li> </ul>

Table 1

The first thing that becomes clear from the above synopsis is that acknowledging the crucial role of FLs in Greek HE has been a rather long, if not incomplete, process. Even though it had been stipulated in 1992 that Greek graduates should possess demonstrable knowledge of a FL in order to be admitted to post-graduate programmes, it was not until 2011 (i.e. 19 years later !) that the Ministry of Education explicitly mandated the compulsory teaching of FLs in tertiary education. It seems that it had been taken for granted that HEIs fostered students' language competence acquired in previous stages of education, without of course any obligation imposed upon them. The truth is that FLs have been taught in most university departments even before their compulsory status (that lasted only for two years). A new draft law that is being currently prepared includes a proposition for the reinstatement of obliging all HEIs to teach FLs, but it has not been voted yet. Although this might seem as a top-down, restrictive measure, it might be, unfortunately, one way to convince some departments to provide advanced academic and intercultural language skills to their students. It is sadly the case that both in the Greek as well as in the European arena, "the consequences [of the European harmonization process] for many language departments (including ESP) have been rather negative with a considerable reduction of the courses both in number and in credits" (Räsänen and Fortanet-Gómez, 2008: 49).

Overall, the recording of the specific pieces of legislation over the years foregrounds the lack of a holistic approach on the Greek state's side towards the formation of a HE language policy. At different stages in time, 'fragmented' decisions have been made, without a reference to a more general language policy vision. An exception could be considered Law no. 4009/2011, which was adopted with 255/300 votes by the Greek Parliament, the first time in Greek history that a law by the Ministry of Education was so widely accepted. The provisions made by this law were a step in the right direction, especially as it clearly placed a requirement upon institutions to design some aspects of a FL policy in their internal organizations, even if it was not stated in that way (i.e. *the foreign languages required, the number of courses, the level of language attainment and the proof of language competency in one or more foreign languages*).



Ironically, the specific law will remain in history both because of its broad parliamentary acceptance but also because of the innumerable debates and vehement criticism it caused. Many sections and articles of the law were amended in the following years, including the removal of the obligation of university programmes of study to include FL learning courses (Law 4115/2013). The internal organizations were drafted by each institution separately but they never achieved an official status (and have not done so up to the moment of writing), thus whatever changes were proposed by universities were never implemented in practice.

In addition to this, one cannot ignore the fact that language issues are mostly approached from an implementation point of view (e.g. courses, credits, language of instruction, etc.) rather than from a strategic planning perspective. For instance, no explicit reference is made to multilingualism, intercultural communicative competence and enhancement of regional languages, even if these goals constitute a serious political priority in Europe (Lauridsen, 2015).

Finally, with regard to the professional status of Senior Teaching Fellows, few developments have occurred over the years, apart from the upgrade in the qualifications required for their appointment in 2011, when possession of a Doctorate became obligatory for this position. However, it needs to be borne in mind that in Greek HE, Senior Teaching Fellows belong to a category of instructors composed of a wide range of specialities, including not only FLs but also physical education, arts and music. Their role is rather dissimilar in terms of the type of courses they teach and services they might offer. As an example, “English for Business Purposes” (for students of the Department of Business Administration), a university choir, physical education activities (in University Sports Facilities, e.g. dancing classes), “Art design” (for students of the Department of Plastic Arts), “Teaching Skiing” (for students of the Department of Physical Education) are all taught by Senior Teaching Fellows (the examples are authentic and have been taken from Greek HEIs). Consequently, all these instructors’ professional needs and goals are quite disparate and cannot be easily addressed by the State when treated as one single category.

### 3.2 Foreign language practices in five Greek HEIs

This section presents FL practices as implemented in five Greek HE institutions, namely *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH)*, *University of Ioannina (UoI)*, *University of Macedonia (UoM)*, *University of Thessaly (UoTH)* and *Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB)*. The specific institutions were selected at this initial stage because they represent different types of institutions in terms of size and specialization. Thus, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is one of the largest Greek universities, while the University of Ioannina and Thessaly are two provincial institutions of similar size. The other two, the University of Macedonia and Athens University of Economics and Business are two renowned institutions specializing in business and economics studies. The data were gathered by drawing relevant information from the institutions’ websites as well as by contacting (via email and face-to-face/phone interviews) Senior Teaching Fellows from the respective universities or administrative staff, where necessary. The answers were categorised and presented in Table 2 below and more analytically in the Appendix tables. Every effort was made to collect accurate data, yet discrepancies were not always avoidable, so in some cases information (especially about number of courses offered) was not accessible or it might need slight amendments.

	<b>A.U.TH</b>	<b>U.o.Ioannina</b>	<b>U.o.Thessaly</b>	<b>U.o.Macedonia</b>	<b>A.U.E.B</b>
<b>University</b>	Greek/English	Greek/English	Greek/English	Greek/English	Greek/English



<b>Website language</b>	(extensive)	(shorter version)	(extensive)	(extensive)	(extensive)
<b>Explicit reference to language policy (on the website)</b>	no	No	no	no	no
<b>Foreign Language Centre/Unit</b>	Yes (self-governed under the School of Philosophy)	Yes (recently established by the Univ. Senate)	Yes (but not officially established)	Yes (but not officially established)	No (BUT there is a separate webpage for FL teaching)
<b>FL syllabus (aims &amp; objectives)</b>	Emphasis on teaching FL for Academic & Specific Purposes – in accordance with CEFR	Emphasis on teaching FL for Academic & Specific Purposes with use of ICT – in accordance with CEFR	Emphasis on teaching FL for Academic, Specific & Occupational Purposes & on multilingualism	Emphasis on teaching FL for Academic, Specific & Occupational Purposes	Emphasis on teaching FL for Specific Purposes

Table 2

At first sight, might be noticed that, despite their differences in size and orientation, the specific HEIs present a fairly similar picture in terms of their FL practices. In compliance with legal requirements, they retain websites in Greek and English, as well as Foreign Language Centres (except A.U.E.B.), not stipulated by state law. As many participants in this study attested, the latter were established – primarily on the language teachers’ initiative – not only for a better organisation of FL teaching but also as a means of acquiring a more advanced ‘status’ and a unified entity. The explanation for this argument lies in the fact that all the Senior Teaching Fellows in the above universities (except for three members at the University of Ioannina) have been elected by the Senate and not by specific Departments. Consequently, even if they are in close co-operation with the Departments covering a number of FL courses, they are usually not invited to General Assemblies (officially, they are not expected to be invited) and thus do not have a say in the decisions made in relation to their courses. As characteristically noted by one participant (from the University of Macedonia), “*We don’t participate in General Assemblies. We weren’t asked about the course content or the semester of teaching. There were cases when we didn’t agree with the decisions made....They credited some of our courses simply with the ECTS that were left over...*”. This is of crucial importance considering that General Assemblies can decide about the languages to be taught, the attribution of ECTS, the compulsory/elective status of each course, the semester of teaching and the course content (i.e. general English or EAP/ESP). And all of these in absence of FL instructors!

However, even in cases where some Senior Teaching Fellows participate in General Assemblies, their recommendations are hardly taken into account, as put forward by another interviewee (from the University of Ioannina): “*Even though we do participate in the General Assembly, we don’t have the power to change some decisions, as in the case when they ‘downgraded’ our courses from the core programme of studies (they used to be integrated) to the Diploma Supplement, where the course’s grade is not considered for the final Degree grade*”. In fact, departments might even decide against propositions submitted by FL instructors, should that suit their programmes of study. The following testimony by a Senior Teaching Fellow from A.U.E.B. is very characteristic: “*No, we don’t have an official Foreign Language Centre. Yet, we*

*did manage to submit a serious proposal about a unified approach to FL teaching that was accepted by the Senate. Most Departments do follow it, but, imagine, there's a case of a course, the same course, with the same content, taught in two Departments, that has a different status in these two Departments, in terms of ECTS and grade granted!"*

If we, now, examine more closely the Appendix tables, some interesting conclusions can be drawn about FL teaching in Greek HE. Firstly, FLs are taught in most departments (of the HEIs examined), with English being ubiquitous (87,6% on average, in the five Greek HE), followed by German (66.3%) and French (59.5%). The proliferation of (primarily) English and a few other 'major' FL courses is well explained by their dominant position in the HE arena and the professional work context. Participants also confirmed the disproportionately large number of students attending English courses in relation to French or German. Apart from the privileged position of English internationally, the serious shortage of FL staff, especially in other-than-English languages, restrict the popularity of these languages. As an example, four out of five HEIs in our study have only one (!) FL instructor in French. No matter what laudable endeavours these colleagues might make, it would be highly unlikely that they met the learning needs of the students of the whole institution. All in all, the grave economic crisis which has persisted in Greece since 2009 has created serious staff shortages in FLs with no hiring taking place in the last 6 years. The latter could provide an additional explanation for the lack of provision of any additional '(non)-prestigious' or regional languages taught in the HEIs studied (e.g. Albanian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Russian, etc.), languages from countries that constitute major trading partners for Greece. As evidenced in most participants' comments, the current economic difficulty on the one hand, combined with the EU propositions for university reforms and the lack of conscious support from the State and HEIs leadership on the other undermine the promotion of plurilingual proficiency in Greek HE. *"Sometimes I really feel we are striving between Scylla and Charybdis"*, one Senior Teaching Fellow very pertinently said.

With reference to the content of the courses, they focus mainly on (specific) academic and professional purposes, a finding confirmed by Γκοπεζή (2015) too. Nearly all English courses (93% on average) focus on EAP/ESP, while half of the French courses (50%) and three quarters of German courses (73.3%) adopt a similar approach. It is evident that, as students enter university with a fairly good knowledge of FLs, instructors have turned their attention to students' specific study, research and future professional needs, a practice implemented in most EU institutions (Fortanet-Gomez, 2013). Nevertheless, a significant gap is still documented by many FL instructors between the language proficiency levels of their students, especially as more often than not they have to teach groups of more than 50, 80 or even 120 students. Furthermore, the majority of FL courses are compulsory, primarily in English (74% on average) and less in French (54.3%) and German (50%), although many Senior Teaching Fellows verified the significant reduction of teaching hours and courses in all FLs in recent years. ECTS are most of the time awarded to FL courses, but not always, even though it is stipulated by law that no less than 2 ECTS are to be awarded to any independent academic activity of a programme of study (Official Gazette no.1466/13-8-2007, Article 1, para. 4). Additionally, on many occasions the FL course grade is not computed to the final degree grade, a practice which often compromises students' motivation to become fully committed to FL courses, as reported by most Senior Teaching Fellows. Finally, none of the examined HEIs had an explicit language policy statement in its website, a finding corroborated by many other European Universities (Lauridsen, 2015).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we have to admit that the journey to reach our ‘*Ithaka*’ set out at the beginning of this paper, i.e. the formation of solid foundations for an optimum language learning (Bruen, 2013) is going to be “*a long one, full of adventures, full of discovery*” (Cavafy, C.P., ‘*Ithaka*’). Greek universities are sadly not alone in this situation since, in the Memorandum prepared recently by ELC, numerous issues regarding FL policies in HEA appear to be still unresolved in the European arena: lack of explicit HEI language policies, lack of ECTS accreditation in language courses and insufficient support of students’ multilingual study skills (Lauridsen, 2015).

Hence, if we were to propose a nation-wide language planning strategy, we could, first of all, recommend the following actions to be taken at a research study level:

- Record current language use/language background of all members of the academic community
- Analyse FL skills required at each academic, disciplinary and professional level
- Survey stakeholders’ beliefs about languages as well as factors of influence (e.g. the mass media)

Only by gaining a thorough understanding of the requirements of the current foreign language situation in HE along with the exigencies placed by the wider socio-economic and political environment, will we be able to design a successful and effective FL policy in tertiary education. Thus, at the implementation level, it is believed that the subsequent recommendations could have a positive impact

- Require a pass grade in (at least) one foreign language for university entry
- Require that all HEIs draft their own language policies according to EU directives and in response to local demands
- Promote accreditation and certification of FL learning in HE
- Support and upgrade Senior Teaching Fellows in HEIs (e.g. offer them Lecture posts in Departments/Schools so that they can specialise in one discipline, upgrade FL University Centres as research institutions and allow self-funding possibilities)
- Senior Teaching Fellows should co-operate with Members of Academic Staff and try to implement innovative methodologies, fostering plurilingual education in HE, e.g. *CLIL & team-teaching, use of web tools for inter-departmental & inter-institutional courses, blended learning, attractive course content* (professionally oriented/ intercultural communication skills).

It is hoped that the current study will form part of this ambitious effort and contribute to a significant quality enhancement in FL teaching/learning in higher education.

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## APPENDIX

### Athens University of Economics and Business

Languages taught	Number of Instructors	Departments (8 in total)	Courses offered	Elective/ Compulsory
English	3	8/8 (100%)	12/12 (100%) EAP/EBP	8 (67%) Elective 4 (33%) Compulsory
French	1 <i>on contract</i>	7/8 (88%)	6/6 (100%) FBP/FAP	4 (67%) Elective 2 (33%) Compulsory
German	1	7/8 (88%)	6/6 (100%) GBP/GAP	4 (67%) Elective 2 (33%) Compulsory

### Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Languages taught	Number of Instructors	Departments (41 in total)	Courses offered	Elective/ Compulsory
English	8	26 (63%)	75/76 (99%) EAP/ESP 1 (1%) Post-graduate level	8 (11%) Electives 67 (89%) Compulsory
French	1	9 (22%)	4 (100%) General Purposes	4 (100%) Compulsory
German	4	20 (49%)	66/71 (93%) EAP/ESP 4 (6%) General Purposes 1 (1%) Post-graduate level	11/71 (15%) Electives 60/71 (85%) Compulsory
Italian	1	9 (22%)	4 (100%) General Purposes	4 (100%) Compulsory
Russian <i>(not on a permanent basis)</i>	1 <i>(on contract)</i>	41 (100%)	1 (100%) General Purposes	1 (100%) Elective

## University of Thessaly

Languages taught	Number of Instructors	Departments 18 in total	Courses	Elective/ Compulsory
English	6 3 (on contract)	18/18 (100%)	EAP/ESP (100%)	
French	1			
German	1 (on contract)			
Italian	1			

## University of Ioannina

Languages taught	Number of Instructors	Departments (15 in total)	Courses offered	Elective/ Compulsory
English	4 2 (on contract)	13 (87%)	21/32 (66%) EAP/ESP 11/32 (34%) General English	4 (12.5%) Elective 28 (87.5%) Compulsory
French	1	8 (53%)	3/6 (50%) FAP/FSP 3/6 (50%) General French	5 (83%) Elective 1 (17%) Compulsory
German	1	8 (53%)	3/6 (50%) GAP/GSP 3/6 (50%) General German	5 (83%) Elective 1 (17%) Compulsory

## University of Macedonia

Languages taught	Number of Instructors	Departments (8 in total)	Courses offered	Elective/ Compulsory
English	6	7 (88%)	31/31 (100%) EAP/ESP	4/31 (13%) Electives 27/31 (87%) Compulsory
French	2	6 (75%)	3/6 (50%) General Purposes 3/6 (50%) FAP/FSP	2/6 (15%) Electives 4/6 (67%) Compulsory Or 6/6 (100%) Dept. of Economics
German	2 on contract	6 (75%)	3/6 (50%) General Purposes 3/6 (50%) GAP/GSP	2/6 (15%) Electives 4/6 (67%) Compulsory Or 6/6 (100%) Dept. of Economics
Italian	1 on contract	4 (50%)	19	4 (21%) Electives 15 (79%) Compulsory

## About the Author

**Theodora TSELIGKA** is a Senior Teaching Fellow in English for Academic and Specific Purposes at the University of Ioannina (Greece). She holds a BA in English Language and Literature (*from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, with 'Distinction'*), an MA in ELT (*from the University of Essex, UK, with 'Distinction'*) and a PhD in Languages and Linguistics (*from the University of Brighton, UK*). She has published in international journals and books, and has participated in many international conferences and EU funded projects (e.g. sTANDEM, MEDINELingua, open courses, etc.). As co-director of the Foreign Language Learning Centre at the University of Ioannina, she has been working towards the promotion of institutional and national foreign language policies in tertiary education. Her main research interests include: English for Academic/Specific Purposes, the use of ICT tools in language teaching/learning, computer-mediated discourse, CLIL and foreign language policy in Higher Education.