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Semiotics and Translation in support of mother tongue teaching

Abstract:

This paper includes a number of observations which derive from an interdisciplinary approach to teaching Greek as a mother tongue using the course books recommended by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Semiotics, translation and teaching are studied comparatively, perhaps for the first time in Greece, in an attempt to record the effectiveness of multi-semiotic texts in the teaching and learning of mother tongue in primary schools.

Keywords: semiotics, translation, mother tongue teaching, semiotic systems

Introduction

In 2006, after twenty-four years of continuous use, all reading books used in Greek primary schools changed. The new course book “Language” was introduced to both private and public primary schools throughout the country. The title of the course book remains the same for all six levels of primary school education.

Before the new course books were introduced the law concerning primary, secondary, as well as, tertiary education, was also modified to meet the needs of the school system¹. What follows is a brief and concise presentation of the new sixth grade Study Programme concerning mother tongue language teaching in Greek Primary Schools. A synoptic presentation of the Teacher’s Book as well as the course book will also be carried out in the sections which follow.

Sixth Grade Language Programme

Today, the purpose of mother tongue language teaching in Greek primary schools is to aid students in using their oral and written language effectively, productively and creatively thus participating actively both within and outside the classroom. Language is now understood as a system of communication. The new School Programme takes into consideration both the synchronic and

diachronic aspects of the language. Language is now considered one of the major factors which constitute the national identity of the Greek people, their common code of communication and a “carrier” of cultural tradition. The heterogeneous characteristics of the Greek language including its social, geographic and ephological variations are also promoted. The multicultural dimensions of the Greek language become the means with which people of another culture and language are integrated into the Greek society.

What follows is a brief account of the School Language Programme for Sixth Grade Greek Primary School students as this appears in the Language Programme.

Oral Language Learning and Teaching

Students are introduced to different types of spoken language and different levels of expression. Students are also encouraged to actively participate in the production of spoken language within the classroom, this is accomplished through group work, theatrical plays, debates, class conversations, etc. Student’s should also be able to identify the different types of spoken language and are also encouraged to use them appropriately within and outside the classroom. In certain cases students are introduced to specific terminology (for example terminology in mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc.) which will aid them effectively in the understanding of that particular field of studies. Students are also encouraged to become “critical listeners”.

Reading

Sixth grade primary school students should be able not only to read a text but also to understand the subtle nuances of language. Students should be capable of either reading through a text carefully gathering information and details or to skim and scan a text so as to acquire a general but adequate idea of its contents. When gathering information from a text students should be able to specify, compare and classify particular text components, as well as understand the

idiomatic language and structural differences which exist in the language. A student's reading skill should be viewed as a dexterity which will aid him in the reading and understanding of his other school lessons, including his need for written communication.

Writing

During his sixth grade studies a student will be encouraged to write legibly, clearly, without spelling mistakes and relatively quickly. At this stage a student should be able to judge whether a text which he has produced is illegible and unclear and needs to be rewritten. Students at this language level should be familiar with all types of written language, as well as text types which exist in all their lessons (for example, science, history, etc.) and should be able to produce written language using these text types and their language. He should also be able to produce small essays based upon his experience of the world, the content of which should also be of interest to his readers. To round off, at this stage, a student should also ponder upon which language to use depending on his reading audience. In this way students gradually acquire a confidence in their ability to write in their own unique manner.

Literature

Students are introduced to different types of writing and different writers. They become aware of a writer's writing style and the linguistic devices he uses to convey a meaning, or can induce a particular impression, perhaps even elicit a particular feeling from his readers. Students are familiarized with the structure and context of a piece of literary work and are also able to narrate to an audience what they have read using the appropriate vocabulary, syntax and conceptual structure. Special emphasis is placed upon the literary work of national and Balkan writers, as well as upon the work of world famous literary writers.

Vocabulary

Students become aware of the vocabulary used in different thematic fields starting with vocabulary which is commonly used. Gradually students become familiar with more complex or polysemous vocabulary while at the same time they become aware of the semantic relationship of words such as synonyms, antonyms, metaphors, the literal meaning of a word, etc. Students realize that by means of production and synthesis (compounding) thousands of - often new - words are produced. Through the use of vocabulary students also become aware of the diachronic aspects of language. They realize that the choice of vocabulary may differ or change depending on the occasion or purpose of communication. Students will finally understand that the use of appropriate vocabulary will facilitate communication.

Grammar

Students gradually become aware of the concept of structure in language, they realize that by adding or removing language components or grammar rudiments within a sentence they transform it - often - changing its meaning. A sentence becomes a carrier of meaning and communication, and students realize that the choice of grammar forms and syntactic structures not only aid in the understanding of its contents but also lend insights to the unique features and characteristics of the Greek language. Students empirically recognize a word's morpheme and its role within the broader meaning of a sentence, paragraph, text, etc., while at the same time they associate the linguistic part of a text with its visual representation (for example pictures, charts, tables, diagrams, etc.).

Information management

The purpose of "information management" is to guide students in the search, evaluation and processing of information. Students locate the information which they need, they evaluate, analyze and compose the information given. For the needs of "information management" students are also taught to use a computer.

In the next section we will be looking at the methodology used in the teaching of language to sixth grade primary school students.

Teaching Methodology

Teachers must take initiative and responsibility so as to adjust the means and way of teaching to suit the needs and purposes of each lesson. Thus the purposes and aims of each lesson have to be clear and teachers should be capable of evaluating their teaching practice daily so that if need be they simply read it once more. It becomes clear in the programme that no particular methodology is proposed. It is rather a teaching approach which is highly recommended in this case, in other words a set of principles or a specific philosophy on how to deal with the teaching material, a philosophy which will permit the enforcement of different methodologies depending - each time - on the needs of the lesson.

The principles which govern the aforementioned philosophy are the following:

- The teacher shapes his stance towards the language and his teaching according to the pragmatic needs of his students.
- Language teaching deals with a student's need to effectively tackle different types of language whether in written or oral form, for example, students are introduced to relative clauses and are taught that they depict a person an object, an event or even a situation. These relative clauses may be in the form of a description, an announcement, a narration, etc., and their style may be simple or complex.
- A teacher may enrich his teaching material with texts which are not included in the course book but which are of current interest or which interest his specific class of students. Unfortunately the Ministry of Education and Religious affairs allows only a 25% of the course book texts to be substituted by other material which also has to be authentic.

- A systematic utilization of the information found in the texts taught will aid students in the interpretation of the contents and forms of the texts under scrutiny. Text processing and utilization can only become effective if its structure is presented clearly, in this way contributing to its understanding.
- Language types need specific approaches in their teaching depending on the text type, and its characteristics, as well as its external restrictions. By “text characteristics” the Programme refers to the conventional organization of each text type (its syntactic structure, its vocabulary, etc.), by “external restrictions” it refers to the purpose of the text, the knowledge of the reader or listener on the specific subject, the conditions under which the text is read (time, place of reading, etc.).
- Both the texts and the language used should be characteristic of and in direct connection with people, objects or situations which exist within a specific and realistic circumstance. On the other hand literary work (which could be descriptive, narrative, ‘inciting’, etc.), could depict symbols, things, people, situations, etc., of the imagination.
- The production of written language is systematic and emphasizes upon:
 - a) preparation, in other words, the general planning of the essay (its subject, its length, etc.),
 - b) writing the first draft of the essay,
 - c) verification and auditing of the first draft and corrections, ameliorations and finally its completion.

Teachers should also guide students as to the purpose and aim of the text, its reader(s), the time and place of writing, etc., in other words all these features which determine the content and form of the text.

- A teacher should be able to take advantage of all circumstances which may arise and which concern the production of oral language. A student may become the epicenter of an event in the classroom, in this case he should be able to contribute effectively to the conversation and argue for or against a case, an

occasion or a circumstance. An occasion for a conversation may sometimes arise because of an incorrect use of an expression or wording by a student.

- The aim of the teacher is to encourage and motivate students to participate in all class activities thus producing novel language.

When teaching language a teacher also teaches the structure of the language, in other words the grammar of the language. This is carried out in three different levels:

a) the grammar of the word (the structure of the word, its semantics, its etymology, etc.),

b) the grammar of a sentence (the structure of a sentence, the semantics of a sentence, etc.),

c) the grammar of a text (the understanding of the structure and contents of a text the structure and connection of the paragraphs within a text, cohesion and coherence, appropriateness of linguistic choices.

- The teaching of grammar focuses upon the need for communication, in other words teaching the system of modern Greek should be carried out in connection with the study of the functional use of the language under realistic conditions.

- The teaching of specialized terminology can only be carried out if it is deemed necessary for a specific communicative purpose between the teacher and his students.

- The teaching of spelling is incorporated in the teaching of language in general placing special emphasis upon errors commonly produced by students².

The Teacher's Book for Sixth Grade Primary School Students

The teacher's book is in line with the School Language Programme presented by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. It presents the purposes and aims of the course book, the activities of the course book, the freedom of choice a teacher has as concerning extra text types and other language material which he can distribute to his students, the grammar in the book and how it is to be taught and last but not least the evaluation of students. More specifically:

Purposes and aims

The major purpose and aim of the course book is to help students communicate effectively (orally or in written form, as well as to produce different types of language and different text types (narrative, descriptive, etc.) thus enabling them to understand and utilize the Greek linguistic system.

Activities

The activities which are provided bring forth the particular features of each text type, the function of these linguistic features and the way they aid in the cohesion and coherence of the text type under scrutiny. They also stimulate the creative abilities of students as most activities require a certain amount of imitation, impersonation and mimicking of everyday situations (role-play). In this way students realize that they have to adapt their style of language according to the needs of the situation, the listener, the cause, the purpose, etc.

A Teacher's freedom of choice

The teacher is free to use other material besides the teaching material provided by the Ministry to suit the needs of his class. He may substitute part of the material provided by the Ministry with authentic or texts of current interest, or he may even skip a text from the course book on condition that his choice fulfills the communicative and grammatical purposes set by the specific material proposed by the course book and substituted by other material. The teacher may also decide not to ask his students to complete some of the exercises of the book if he believes that they are not appropriate for his students.

Grammar

Grammar is examined within the context of the text types given in the course book and its purpose is to aid students in producing verbal or written language (to propose, to guide, to describe, to narrate, etc.). In the sixth grade students

revise the grammar they had been taught in the first five grades of primary school. At this stage, sixth grade primary school teachers must make sure students understand the grammar they have already been taught. If students face a problem then the teacher is obliged to teach the problematic area under scrutiny.

Evaluation

The purpose of a teacher's evaluation is to improve his students production of a text. Evaluation is continuous, diagnostic, formulating and it verifies the level of knowledge and how this level is administered for the production of language. A final evaluation is always conducted at the end of each unit which is being taught (written exercises, questions - answers, etc.). Students also participate in the evaluation processes by either evaluating their own work or the work of their class mates. Thus students take initiative in their learning process. Language mistakes are handled by the teacher as a temporary situation which will gradually change as a student evolves linguistically.

Structure of the course book and its teaching process

Each unit deals with a specific topic which provides an opening for further linguistic and literary pursuits, as well as grammar instruction which derives mainly from the contents of the text which is being studied. Teachers should allot between 8 to 12 hours of teaching per unit depending on the level of the students and the extent of the unit.

The structure of the unit

Students are introduced to each unit with a poem which is followed by comprehension questions. These are followed by texts which are either of social interest (newspaper, articles, advertisements, etc.) or pieces of literary work produced by national or international writers. Before processing these texts students are introduced to the essence of the subject matter under scrutiny. This

is done with pre-reading questions and warm up activities. The exercises which follow the texts are either processing exercises, oral language production exercises, written exercises, grammar exercises, spelling exercises, vocabulary exercises, etc. The processing of the text and the production of oral language precede the grammar and written exercises.

Production and evaluation of written language

The production of written language is guided by the teacher at least in its first stages, this is done in co-operation with the student (guided self-evaluation). This guidance gradually becomes less and less as the learning process progresses.

Project Plan

Each unit introduces a project plan which focuses upon the topic under discussion, for example “how would you organize a tour around the archeological site of Delphus”. The finished product of the text usually follows a linear pattern of either field research, photographs, interviews, etc. The students work in groups and decide on the purposes and aims of their project. Placing special emphasis upon the language, the teacher systematically guides students towards the production of language (written or oral).

Project Workbook

A project workbook is necessary and aims at consolidating and evaluating what has been taught in each unit.

The Types of Texts Taught

The text types most commonly used are:

- i. narrative
- ii. descriptive
- iii. argumentative
- iv. texts which give directions of all kinds

The Teacher's Book rounds off with the basic terms used in language teaching.

The Student's Book

The student's book for sixth grade primary school student consists of seventeen (17) units. It covers a diversity of subjects and caters for the needs and interests of this specific age group (12 years of age) and language level. Topics include trips and vacations, as well as means of transport, residential areas, public holidays, nutrition, country life, living in other parts of the world, Christmas, Easter, accidents, relationships and relatives, occupations and lifestyles, the cinema, the theatre, museums, war and peace. Each unit has a number of exercises (comprehension questions, gap filling, etc.) including grammar and spelling exercises. There is also a workbook with further language, grammar and vocabulary exercises.

Semiotics and Translation in Language Teaching

The main learning aim of all Greek language course books/textbooks is to teach students reading and writing skills. The secondary aim of language teaching course books, is to teach students cultural elements, as well as to introduce them to intercultural and multicultural elements which exist in their country and other countries.

Writers of school language course books presume that students in primary school "... are able to, and motivated to, learn the same language, for the same purpose, at the same time" (Vale and Feunteun 1995, p. 17). Nevertheless, the "validity of such an approach is extremely doubtful when one considers the wide range of ability, interest and motivation that is likely to exist within, for example, an average class of twenty children (Vale and Feunteun 1995, p. 17). Unfortunately children don't always learn in the same manner or at the same pace, thus it becomes imperative that Greek language course books are prepared to meet the needs of modern life. The course book 'Language' presents new and innovative material which takes into consideration students' personal

experiences and knowledge. This knowledge and experience is shaped by a student's social and cultural environment (Matsagouras 1996, p. 227). This is why social and cultural matters should also be taken into account when producing and introducing a new course book. This is also the case with the new course book 'Language' the writers of which have given some serious thought to the aforementioned and have thus proposed modern and innovative approaches to language teaching.

Today, it is well known that Semiotics together with the Ethnography of communication constitute the theoretical background upon which the new proposition concerning the teaching of languages is based. In this way language was reassessed and restored to its original position which was for communicative purposes (see also Widdowson 1991, p. 159), in other words the significance of the message which transmits a phrase to an interlocutor is brought to the forefront (Tokatlidou 1986, p. 98). De Carlo (1998, p. 48), is in line with the aforementioned and includes Semiotics in those disciplines which have enriched teaching through a cultural approach. The European Council acknowledged the priority that should be given to the social dimensions of language and took into consideration theories of modern sciences amongst which we find Semiotics (Tokatlidou 2003, p. 107).

The aforementioned social dimensions are directly related to globalization and the teaching of language today. It is a fact that course and curriculum design takes into account globalization, both from above and below, before proceeding to construct a language teaching curriculum. Scholte (2000) refers to an eagle's-eye view – though at times skewed as Koffmann (2000) mentions – when he writes about “globalization from above”, mentioning globalizing tendencies such as internationalization, marketization, universalization and deterritorialization, which influence the design of a national curriculum. A sort of “neoliberal globalism”, as Beck (2000, p. 9) called it, which portrays an interconnection and interdependence of languages, cultures and societies and a need to effectively communicate their ideas at a global level. For “globalization from below”

education becomes a crucial arena as globalizing processes seem to modulate the material and territorial space, place, cultural identities and relationships and how these –further- modulate more global trends (Singh et al. 2005, p. 9).

According to Singh et al. (2005, p. 9) it is indeed a central set of institutions and processes through which we can understand the relations within and among the local and the global. Scientists seem to take the aforementioned issues seriously, this is why they place the realities of education center stage in their investigation of the dialectical connections education has with globalization. This does not mean that traditional and cultural values are disregarded but they need to be incorporated into the needs of teaching and learning for the twenty-first century which “demands for the acquisition of a range of skills and a broad area of knowledge as well as the development of a set of attitudes” (Pike and Selby 1990, p. 63) which constitute the objectives³ of global education today. Individual countries within the European Framework (2001) of language teaching and learning have applied modern teaching methodologies, approaches and techniques which will facilitate both mother tongue teaching and learning, as well as second language learning and teaching.

The European Framework concerning languages (2001, p. 18) mentions that Translation is amongst the linguistic activities which contribute to the development of a person’s communicative competence. Research has shown that in the field of professional translation, especially of excellent quality translation (Edwards and Walker 1996, p. 341) and that of Applied Linguistics, there have been multiple approaches to translation which have proved that it is one of the most important tools in the teaching and learning of a language (Lopriore 2006, p. 93). Thus, Language teaching, Semiotics and Translation have (recently) contributed positively and have upgraded the educational system and process rendering the implementation of an interdisciplinary approach to language teaching necessary and effective.

Our study was based upon Tokatlidou’s (2001, p. 108) stance that Semiotics has assisted many course book researchers’ methodologically, giving

them the necessary “tools” to evaluate their readability objectively, with the use of illustrations and pictures (see also Hondolidou 1999, p. 116) in the language teaching process, and last but not least, in literacy and its ideology. Our study, as mentioned earlier, focuses upon the sixth grade primary school course book ‘Language’ used in the teaching of Modern Greek to both public and private schools.

Inter-lingual Translation in Mother Tongue Teaching with the Course book «Language»

Inter-lingual translation has associated itself mainly with European languages, including linguistic variations and its translation into a standard language. The diachronic development of the Greek language has also rendered it necessary to approach older forms of the Greek language⁵, which are not accessible to speakers of the standard Greek language through translation. The course book which is used in all sixth grade primary schools and which is under examination presents (on page 25) a text which uses the Greek language of the Bible⁶, but also includes a translation of this text in the Modern Greek language. Connolly (2001, p. 430) mentions that «the great emphasis given to intra-lingual translation was in part meant to show the continuity of the Greek language rather than to produce a new Greek text and to show the capacity of the modern idiom to act as vehicle for the lofty ideas of the past ». Conolly thus stresses the ideological dimensions of Greek intra-lingual translation in Greece, even though this term does not include the translation of linguistic variation (dialects) or sociolects and remains a distinctive and much debated topic (and practice) in the Greek context (Conolly, 2001. P. 434).

The new approach to language translation of older forms of the Greek language is integrated within a framework which refers to the equivalence of the target language and the language which is the source to a point where the one language is “enfolded” into the other (Maronotis 2001, p. 294). In our case, though, the text which is in the Greek language of the Bible is not accessible to

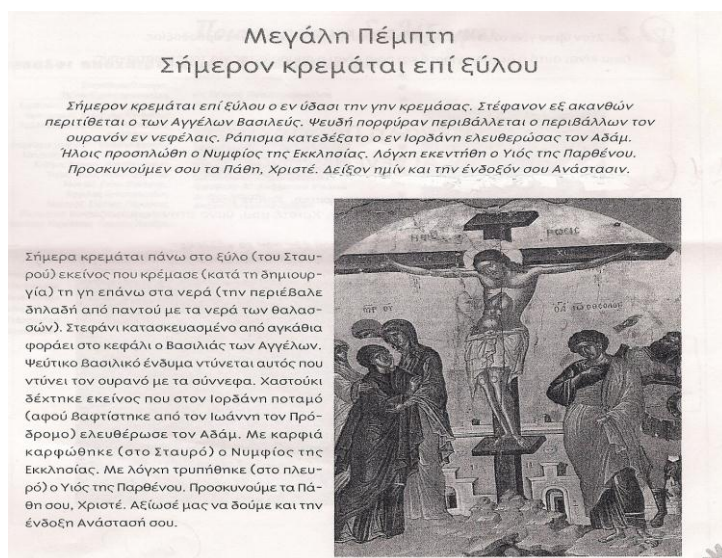
students of primary schools, as at that age students came into contact with this kind of language only acoustically. The role played by translation in Greek junior high-schools is to guide and aid students in securing access to the contents of some texts. For senior high-schools, on the other hand, students are aided through the active production of translation to gain a passive knowledge of ancient Greek (Daltas 1995, p. 60-61). In primary schools there is a co-existence of the target text and the source text. This co-existence is evident in the notes presented. Thus, at first sight, we could indirectly assert that the validity of the ancient Greek text is stressed, as well as the value and continuation of translation in the educational process.

Sebeok (1994, p. 1113) states that «when undergoing an act of translating, and a religious text is transformed into a secular one, texts may have more than one semiotic border to cross». In the case of intra-lingual translation the semiotic borders which need to be crossed seem to be many (linguistic, graphic, proximic). Thus, both texts are divided by a gap and a section or a portion of a visual message (proximic code), nevertheless the linguistic code which first appears coincides with the source language and the second language which also appears and which is the target language. It is also worth noting that the source text – in contrast to the target text– is written in italics, which differentiates it from the rest of the utterances on the same page and which also adds a different touch to it.

In the target text, besides the translation of the source text, within parenthesis there is an incorporation of explanatory details (use of the semiotic system of punctuation) in an attempt to reinforce its concept and aid in the understanding of the text, retaining nevertheless the quantitative equivalence – at a word level – between the two texts (Derrida, 2004:428). As an ideological indicator, it promotes the idea that the closest the target text can get – word wise – to the source text, the better the translation is expected to be. This is a characteristic which has been pin-pointed by Jakobson (2004, p. 139) himself, who mentions that «on the level of inter-lingual translation there is ordinarily no

full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages». Derrida (2004, p. 444) also states that «neither intra-linguistic translation, nor inter-semiotic translation, is governed by a principle of economy or above all by the unit of the word».

Nevertheless, the source text still remains disconnected from its visual message assigning inter-semiotics to translation in the target text, in the Modern Greek language, where (even) the first line of the text is notionally in line with the horizontal section of the cross of Jesus Christ (message 1) as depicted in the visual message allowing us to think of it in terms of being in an *iconolinguistic linearity*⁷ The same translation strategies are also followed on the next page (page 26), where we see well known utterances of Bible dictates (which are now) translated at the bottom in Modern Greek, while at the same time the visual message appears at the end after the translation and the second reading. This is done in an attempt to facilitate students in acquiring a “sense of ‘at- homeness’ in the classroom” (Fleckenstein 2004, p. 628) and is also used as a teaching practice in mother tongue learning.



(message 1)

Inter-lingual translation in the course book used for mother tongue teaching

It is very interesting to see that the textbook 'Language' which is used for the teaching and learning of mother tongue contains inter-lingual translation, a kind of translation which also involves foreign language. Within the framework of globalization both the multi-linguistic – multi-semiotic form of communication and the authenticity of the teaching material, 'involve' the use of a foreign language – in our case the English language because of its hegemonic place in society.

We, thus, see in the course book 'Language' (on page 38/message 2) in an excerpt from the magazine Athenorama-Αθηνόραμα (issue 217-218, December 2003) the title of a film from Iran "Mard-ekoochak", which has been transliterated into the Latin alphabet and which has also been translated into the Greek language at the top as "Μικρός άνθρωπος" (Small man). In the same way the title of the film "Finding Nemo" is also translated into Greek "Ψάχνοντας το Νέμο". It is worth mentioning that in both cases the original title and its translation are given in capital letters (graphic equivalence in translation).

kaerlighed” which was translated into Greek as “Σιρλίν μια ερωτική ποντικοιστορία” (Cirkeline a mouse love story). In this case we see that in the translation from Danish to Greek the numeral -2- is missing and so is the punctuation mark (:). These two elements do not hinder the understanding of the film’s plot but they do affect the Greek reader’s understanding of secondary information. This secondary information informs us of the second film which has been produced and is also the second part of a story with the same leading actress. It also indicates that the first film was a success and thus a second sequel was produced. On the same page, next to the information concerning the Danish film, there is a title of an American film “Robots”, but this time there is no translation, perhaps because the authors believe that it is easily understood by all readers, as the term “robot”⁸ has already been transliterated into the Greek language and is thus easily understood.

From a visual message to an inter-lingual translation

The question as to which semiotic system, verbal or non-verbal, is the key to the direct and successful decoding of a communication activity has not – as yet – been answered. Even though most researchers, both Linguists and Semioticians, have stressed that the verbal message comes first, it is nevertheless also true that many believe in the equal participation⁹ of the semiotic system in the communication process thus introducing the term “multimodality”. Kress and Mavers (2004, p. 172) mention that “the shift of discipline from Linguistics to Semiotics is a shift which produces two profound effects: one, it is a move from a concern with one mode to a concern with many modes, and two, it is a move from a concern with form alone to a concern with form-and-meaning”.

It is interesting to see that the utterances found in the school course book, those found in the language of the Bible, those found in the Modern Greek language, those found in the English language, the hegemonic language of the time, or any other language, are usually followed by illustrations which are also messages (see also, Edwards and Walker, 1996:345). This approach contributes

to the development of skills since different kinds of texts are expressed through multimodality. The aforementioned is the line with the concept that the understanding of a text presupposes that we also understand and can “read” the visual and verbal messages which follow it. This fact is considered one of the major purposes and aims of the school curriculum in its attempt to guide students in their literary pursuits (Dedrinou 2001, p. 219). The purpose of these illustrations is to aid the teacher not only to transmit knowledge but also to produce meaning, as teaching alone can not guide students in the understanding of the visual messages, but it can work upon the students filters of perception (Semoglou 2001, p. 273).

To be able to “read” verbal and visual messages does not exclude the fact that we may translate the one by using the other, in other words, enforcing an inter-semiotic translation¹⁰, which is in fact another way of teaching mother tongue. If there are two verbal messages (source text and target text) which accompany the iconic message (see page 25) it is very interesting to examine which of the two messages, if not both, constitute inter-semiotic translation, as defined by Jakobson. The contribution of inter-semiotic translation is important because “inter-semiotic translation makes implicit aspects of inter-linguistic translation explicit” (Torop 2002, p. 598). In this case, the source text is centrally planned, whereas the target text is in a parallel line with the visual message, guiding the reader subconsciously into conducting an inter-semiotic translation, not with the source text but with the target text (message 2), which is in all respects linguistically more accessible to its reader.

Another case of inter-semiotic translation between the verbal and the visual system, this time with the use of photographs (not with religious reconstructions), is pinpointed in another part of the textbook (page 40). Here the title of the excerpt “the bright yellow bicycle” is followed by an illustration of a young boy who is riding a bicycle (message 3). The contribution of the semiotic system of the colour of the bicycle guides us towards an intersemiotic translation. Without the contribution of the chromatic system we would only

have a *partial inter-semiotic translation*¹¹ of the title of the excerpt, as only the utterance “bicycle” would be inter-semiotically translated. We thus see the complementary role played by the semiotic system, and that it is to the advantage of the teaching process, if used.

Concluding remarks

In this particular course book we notice that the visual messages are mostly taught within the framework of multi-semiotics or multimodality and much less within the framework of translation, through the use of inter-semiotic translation, while semiotic systems such as those of colour, proxemics and graphics are broadly used in the course book. The source text in the language of the Bible remains semiotically detached from the visual message assigning inter-semiotics of translation to the target text, in other words to Modern Greek.

To round off this paper it is important to state that in all film titles, which are translated from a source language (English, Iranian, Danish) to a target language (Greek), the target language always precedes the source language, in this way reversing the usual process of translation which demands for the original message first and then its translation. By doing this the authors’ of the course book ‘Language’ place emphasis upon the Greek language, which is the translation language, but which is the target of this particular teaching attempt. The coexistence of the Greek language of the Bible and of the Modern Greek language also shows the richness and diversity of the Greek language, especially our rich linguistic past. On the other hand, the coexistence of many foreign languages (Danish, Iranian, English) connote the multilingual aspect of contemporary Greece.

The selective translation of foreign utterances into Greek means that the author’s course book will allow readers to choose which utterance to use as the one they choose to use will probably be the one they understand better. But, can we prepare a course book for the teaching of the mother tongue based on the reader’s perception of the foreign languages? If yes, then why do authors

translate the Greek of the Bible into Modern Greek? We believe that this is happening because the authors want to include a purely sociolinguistic dimension in their work: that of communication. The contemporary situation of communication in Greece includes different language registers (family, standard, sophisticated), different forms of Greek language (ancient Greek, Hellenistic Koine, Modern Greek), foreign loans and multi-semiotic expression processes.

This ascertainment imposes Translation (inter-lingual and intra-lingual) in Mother Tongue Teaching, but also includes Semiotics in order to detect and interpret all types of translated messages, especially visual messages like illustrations, that are very frequent in language course books. As Pereira (2008, p. 116) remarks «interpretation is inherent to the activities of translation and illustration». Thus, inter-semiotic translation becomes a “didactic tool” in teaching, even in teaching mother tongue, and together with the two other types of translation, intra-lingual and inter-lingual, it can contribute to the amelioration of the teaching process especially at a time when multi-semiotic texts, used in the teaching of language are considered the norm.

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Endnotes

¹ State Gazette 188-A; /23.9.79, as well as, the decrees concerning article 3 paragraph 9 sections dd, ee, article 4 paragraph II section e, article 5 paragraph II section b and c in combination with article 7 paragraph 2 of Law 2525/97 were all retained. Article 29a of Law 1558/85 State Gazette 137A was complemented by article 27, Law 2081/92 (State Gazette 154A) and modified by article 1 paragraph 2a, Law 2469/97 (State Gazette 38A) was retained under the condition that no extra expenditure will be imposed upon the national budget. More specifically as concerning primary school education, all recommendations made by the Pedagogical Institute Act 7/27.6.2002 were adopted and enforced by the Department of Primary School Education.

² Presidential decrees 583/1982 and 528/1984 are still valid and in effect which means that students are taught a basic vocabulary for spelling purposes. This basic vocabulary is incorporated in the coursebook which is proposed, by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

³ Personal objectives such as self-awareness (their capacities , strenghts, etc.), own perspectives (in other words how their perspective is shared), how others see us (students should learn about their own culture, lifestyles and identities through studying how other people view them), systems such as world systems (eg. educational, ecological, etc), interdependence, commonality, development, environment, etc. (Pike and Selby, 1990: 63-68).

⁴ Christodoulou (2003:191) ascertains that there is a cultural gap in the relationship between Language Teaching and Semiotics as a theoretical approach to culture.

⁵ Christidis (1999:63) seems to have a different opinion to the aforementioned as he considers that for someone to adequately use a language it does not mean that he or she will also have a knowledge of its older forms and by saying I «know my language it does not necessarily mean that I know all about my language».

⁶ According to Babiniotis (2009) this language is the Alexandrian Koine which has been significantly simplified at all levels (phonetics/pronunciation, grammar, syntax, vocabulary).

⁷ This remark reminds us of Petrilli's (2007:324) statement that «if verbal language itself is a conventional system its method is mainly iconic».

⁸ Anastasiadi-Symeondi (1994: 154) in her observations concerning the semiotic status which refers to the use of translation in the foreign language, states that the word "robot" refers to heavy manual work in Greek.

⁹ Barthe's (1957: 188) influence upon the aforementioned is very important as he believes that a Semiotician must approach the written part of a text, as well as the picture in the same way as both are signs, while at the same time they are endowed with the same significant properties and are both a language - an object.

¹⁰ Jakobson (2004: 139) defines inter-semiotic translation or transmutation as the interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non verbal sign systems.

¹¹ Pereira (2008: 111) considers this process a translation strategy used in illustration by emphasizing specific narrative elements.