

# A Bidialectal Programme for the Learning of Standard Modern Greek in Cyprus

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This study addresses bidialectism by investigating the linguistic situation on the bidialectal island of Cyprus where Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and the regional Cypriot dialect (CD) are both routinely used. The study implemented a language programme that embraced both sociolinguistic and educational factors and was designed to teach SMG by using the CD as a facilitating tool, while simultaneously ensuring the maintenance of the CD. A quasi-experimental design was used in the application and evaluation of this bidialectal method, comparing a control group and an experimental group of final-year primary-school students in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis. Quantitative analysis of the results revealed that the method had a marked positive effect on the oral and written production of the standard variety. This was due to explicit and conscious comparison of learners' regional dialectal mother tongue with the standard target variety.

## INTRODUCTION

This study addresses the sociolinguistic phenomenon of bidialectism as it occurs when a regional variety and the standard variety of the same language are used in a speech community. The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between native speech in a regional dialect and learned knowledge of a standard educational variety. The work described was conducted in the bidialectal community of Cyprus and takes the approach of using a dialect to assist the learning of the standard.

Using a bidialectal model in primary schools, performance in the standard was measured after the dialect had been introduced into the classroom as a comparative tool. The model was grounded in the theory of Language Awareness (Hawkins 1987, 1992) and it valued the two linguistic varieties equally while juxtaposing them to enhance performance in the standard variety. Performance in the standard was measured in terms of the occurrence of CD features in SMG for both oral and written production. These occurrences were classified under the headings of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. No previous study has shown how intervention can affect (either hinder or enhance) performance on each of the four linguistic levels. This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of the learning process of a second variety in a bidialectal context. This understanding should facilitate the

preparation of learning material that can advance accurate use of SMG without detriment to CD.

## LITERATURE REVIEW: BIDIALECTISM AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The issue of dialect and education and, in particular, the issue of which code to use as the medium of instruction has generated much heated debate in bidialectal societies. This debate is reflected in the literature on language policy in education which is divided between support for: (1) the use of the standard variety as the medium of instruction; (2) the use of a non-standard dialect as the medium of instruction; and (3) bidialectal education, which involves the use of both.

One argument frequently presented by those who advocate the use of standard varieties in schools (1 above) is that it strengthens national unity among the speakers of a given country. Pavlou (1990) argues that primacy must always be given to the standard variety and to the common culture of which it is a part because it is this commonality which maintains vibrant links and ensures the cohesion of a nation. Custred (1990) argues that the reason why people must acquire the standard variety and perfect their proficiency in it lies in the nature of the economy of modern societies and the communication needs which this creates. Some of the criteria proposed for the rejection of non-standard varieties in education (as compiled by Robinson 1994) are as follows: a low number of people speaking the variety; lack of a written tradition in the variety; lack of pedagogical materials that deal with the variety; prohibitive cost of making the variety viable in written form; and negative attitudes of people towards the variety. Research in communities where there is active debate over the variety of instruction has indicated that, although parents, students, and teachers want their dialect to be recognized and respected in schools, some believe that teaching the dialect would negatively affect children's success in learning the standard variety (Münstermann 1989; Telles 1996; Purdie *et al.* 2002; Haig and Oliver 2003).

The use of non-standard dialects as media of instruction in schools (2 above) has recently received considerable attention. Researchers who favour this method of education argue that all linguistic codes are expressive and thus local dialects can be used for schooling. Another main argument of the adherents of this view is to remove as many obstacles from the learning process as possible and enable the learner to access literacy skills without the added burden of learning other varieties (Lind and Johnston 1990). They strongly argue that the mother tongue is the best means to introduce literacy to the learner for the first time. Beyond strictly pedagogical reasons, it has been argued that cultural considerations justify the use of any local variety

for literacy purposes (Gfeller and Robinson 1998). Since the local variety of a speech community represents the most intimate context of a person's life, instruction in this variety should be more effective.

Bidialectal education (3, above) is another area currently enjoying attention. The creation of bidialectal programmes has been suggested but rarely implemented. These programmes teach children to use the standard variety at school, while encouraging them to use their local dialect in their own environment (Baratz 1969; Fasold and Shuy 1970; Feigenbaum 1975; Stijnen and Vallen 1989; van den Hoogen and Kuijper 1989; James 1996; Epstein and Xu 2003). The rationale behind these programmes is that if all linguistic varieties are complete grammatical systems, it should be possible to describe the grammar and pronunciation of regional dialects and compare them to the standard. In this way, the learning of the target variety will be facilitated.

Issues related to bidialectal education which have already attracted substantial attention include the debate over the use of African American Vernacular English (or Ebonics) as an educational aid in certain US schools (Labov 1972; Wolfram 1990; Wolfram *et al.* 1999; Rickford 1999; Smitherman 2004), the development of methodologies to assist English-creole speakers in the Commonwealth Caribbean to learn the standard variety (Craig 1980, 1985; Pollard 1993; Simmons-McDonald 2004) and the creation of programmes which teach Australian aboriginal students standard English as a second dialect (Kaldor and Malcolm 1985; Walsh and Yallop 1993; Malcolm 1995; Malcolm *et al.* 1999; Siegel 1999). This previous research has made clear that inhibiting students from using their native variety can stifle learning and, for this reason, the current study attempts to encourage Cypriot students to harness their native variety when learning their non-native educational variety.

The position taken in this study is to provide empirical evidence that may be used to gauge the potential utility of bidialectal education and the creation of bidialectal programmes. The standard is not viewed in terms of the strategy of correction (i.e. the standard is correct, the dialect is linguistically deficient) (Crow and Murray 1966; van Wyk 1992), but in terms of its more general appropriateness (Craig 1981; Winch 1989; Andersson and Trudgill 1990; Corson 1993, 1997). The standard draws its importance from its practicality, in that it meets the interests and expectations of many groups. At the same time, the importance of the dialectal variety is acknowledged and it is suggested that the dialect can be effectively used for formal analysis. Of course, it is also likely to be retained as a treasured symbol of speakers' identity. This study thus strongly supports the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity and views the dialect as worthwhile in itself besides being potentially useful in acquiring the standard.

## SETTING OF THE STUDY: THE CYPRIOT LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Because the Cypriot linguistic situation is a bidialectal one, it can be related to the phenomenon of diglossia as broadly applied to describe a society which uses two distinct language varieties based on functional separation (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1967). Two linguistically-related varieties are used in Cyprus: Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and the regional Cypriot dialect (CD), a south-eastern dialect of Modern Greek (Newton 1972). On the island, unlike other diglossic situations, all speakers use both varieties and there is no apparent tendency for one societal subset to use a certain code more than another societal subset (Papapavlou and Pavlou 1998). Despite the fact that, when asked, most Cypriots would claim to speak (standard) Greek, in fact, the CD is Cypriots' native variety and SMG, the official language of the country, is an administrative convenience inherited from earlier periods of political and cultural influence. SMG is the variety learned by Cypriots at school. Its learning can be described as 'artificial' since it takes place at school and not in the natural environment of the home. Browning (1983) accurately differentiates the Cypriot dialect from the other Modern Greek dialects. He points out that regional dialects are increasingly being replaced by SMG and that, therefore, local colouring and dialectal speech is now largely confined to villages. 'Only in Cyprus is the local dialect (of which there are several regional varieties) the universal medium of informal communication' (Browning 1983: 136). He adds that many Cypriots do not feel entirely at home when using SMG and that Cyprus appears to provide the only region where a dialect is not being replaced by (dialect-coloured) SMG. Contossopoulos (1994), too, notes that Cypriot is the only Greek dialect truly surviving today.

The greatest differences between the CD and its standard counterpart exist at the lexical level. Words are found in the CD that bear no linguistic relation to corresponding words in SMG. According to Papapavlou (1994), what makes the CD almost incomprehensible to most speakers of SMG is its inventory of loanwords. The two varieties also differ very significantly at the phonological and morphological levels and, to a lesser degree, at the syntactic level. (Examples of differences between the two varieties are set out in Appendix 3.)

The two varieties occupy different domains of usage (most evident in the use of the local dialect at home and the use of the standard at school). The dialect is used mainly for oral communication (with family and friends and in exchanges and transactions) whereas the standard is used for written production (e.g. for legal and administrative documents, in daily newspapers, and in the oral production of written material such as television broadcasts, school lessons, lectures, announcements, and political speeches). (For information on the domains of usage of SMG and

the CD, see Moschonas 1996, 2000; Panayotou 1999; Karyolemou and Pavlou 2001; Papapavlou and Pavlou 2001.)

Bidialectal Cyprus is especially interesting for its immoderate educational language policy which treats the standard variety as students' mother tongue and excludes their actual dialectal mother tongue. Linguists and educationists in Cyprus admit the existence of a language problem pertaining to SMG that is due to the phenomenon of bidialectism (Charalambopoulos 1990; Iordanidou 1991; Pavlou and Christodoulou 2001; Papapavlou 2004; Pavlou and Papapavlou 2004). SMG deficiencies also preoccupy the greater public and are reported in local newspapers and magazines (Rousou 2000; Yiangou 2001; Tsingis 2004; Typos Online Newspaper 2004). Current language teaching approaches and curricular content are under scrutiny, with critics, linguists and educationists alike calling for more efficient methods and new syllabi (Ministry of Education and Culture 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000). However, no study has researched learners' actual linguistic performance or properly investigated the effect that exclusion of the mother tongue from formal education has on Cypriot students' SMG performance.

This study proposes a bidialectal learning model that takes into consideration the actual sociolinguistic landscape of Cyprus, the educational system on the island and the need for improvement of the standard (educational variety). The model has its basis in Language Awareness and aims to improve SMG by systematically introducing, for the first time, the dialect into the classroom for formal analysis. It must be stressed that the study was only concerned with linguistic production within the classroom boundaries. It did not aim to change students' linguistic behaviour outside the school. Primacy was placed on the standard. To argue for the regional dialect to be used in a role beyond one of facilitation would have been inconsistent with current educational policy and the view of most Cypriots (Sciriha 1995, 1996). Previous studies have tended to demonstrate that Cypriots view SMG as superior to the CD for use in educational contexts. (For detailed information on Cypriots' language attitudes towards the two varieties, see Papapavlou 1994, 1998, 2001, 2004; Pavlou 1997; Pavlou and Papapavlou 2000, 2004.)

## RESEARCH METHODS

### **Proposed bidialectal language model**

The proposed bidialectal language model is based on Language Awareness (LA). LA is an approach to teaching the mother tongue, second or foreign languages and dialects as part of a comprehensive language education that draws upon common and divergent elements of diverse linguistic varieties (Hawkins 1987). James and Garrett (1992) divide LA into five inter-related domains: affective, social, power, cognitive, and performance. The proposed model is concerned with the performance domain which is the one most

crucial to LA (James and Garrett 1992): Does knowing about language improve one's performance in it? This question has been under-researched in bidialectal contexts.

The bidialectal LA model draws on the similarities and differences between the CD and SMG and aims to improve students' production in the standard in the environment of the school. 'Improvement' in SMG is defined as a reduction of dialectal 'interference' in the oral and written production of SMG and is measured in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. It must be emphasized that, in the current study, the use of the terms 'interference' and 'improvement' in no way reflect negatively on the CD. In fact, the CD is treated as a valuable linguistic tool in the learning of SMG. The proposed LA model argues that increased conscious reflection on language by learners leads to improved language use in SMG. The direction of this relationship is therefore from awareness to production.

The model consists of three stages:

- 1 Unconscious knowledge of the first-dialect (D1) and second-dialect (D2) converts into conscious D1 and D2 knowledge: The process by which this occurs is self-reflection. Learners reflect on their already-existing knowledge, thereby comparing and analysing D1 and D2 on lexical, syntactic, morphological, and phonological levels. The assumption is that, due to the nature of the learners (i.e. speakers of dialects of the same language), they have a great degree of access to unconscious knowledge of the targeted features (Nicholas 1992). The aim is to turn this unconscious knowledge into conscious/explicit knowledge.
- 2 Conscious knowledge is transferred to D2 performance: The model aims to show that learners who are equipped with explicit/conscious D2 knowledge of specific language features do perform better in D2 compared to learners of the D2 who do not possess conscious D2 knowledge. (The wealth of research on explicit and implicit knowledge in second language acquisition (e.g. Ellis 1994; Ellis and Laporte 1997; DeKeyser 2003) may be relevant to this stage but formal analysis of this possibility was considered to be outside the scope of the present study.)
- 3 Conscious/explicit knowledge becomes internalized: The model aims to render the new explicit knowledge automatized, internal, and implicit.

The model was implemented in the classroom environment through the use of a textbook which was comparative/contrastive in nature, in that the LA activities were concerned with both the learners' mother tongue (D1) and the target variety (D2). Its premise was to facilitate the interlingual contrasts in a conscious, explicit way (James 1999). The activities followed four progressive steps:

- 1 *Exposure to D1 and D2*: learners are presented with the two varieties with the task of identifying the differences between them.

- 2 *Classification of D1/D2 differences*: learners are required to classify the differences into phonological, grammatical, and lexical categories. The aim of this task is to make it easier for learners to deduce the formal rules that differentiate D1 from D2.
- 3 *Transference from D1 to D2*: learners are required to transfer spoken and written production from D1 to D2. Via this trained and conscious technique, greater awareness of the process involved in moving from D1 to D2 is aimed to be reached.
- 4 *Oral and written production of D2*: learners are presented with non-verbal data (in the form of pictures) and are required to describe them using D2.

## Procedure

The study took place between November 2000 and June 2001 in Cyprus. A quasi-experimental design was chosen for the intervention's application and evaluation (Campbell and Stanley 1963). This design is used very often in educational research (Cohen *et al.* 2000) and, in the current study, it involved the participation of an experimental group (92 students) and a control group (90 students). The former received the experimental treatment (based on the textbook) for three months on a daily basis for one school period (45 min) a day. This intervention replaced 50 per cent of the traditional language classes. The latter was used for comparative purposes and did not receive the treatment. It continued with the traditional language classes. After the treatment had concluded (February 2001), the students of the experimental group again began receiving the traditional language curriculum. It was decided that it would be enlightening to see if students' linguistic performance remained the same (as at the end of the treatment), improved or relapsed following a period of absence from any systematic comparative teaching. To this end, in the early days of June 2001, both the control and experimental group received oral and written tests. (A table of the work schedule, including dates and objectives can be found in Appendix 1.)

## Subjects

The 182 subjects who participated in the empirical project were final-year primary-school students. These students belonged in eight classes from two schools, four serving as the experimental group and the remaining four as the control group. As the study was constrained to being quasi-experimental by real-life educational considerations, the students studied were not picked randomly, but were chosen based on the criterion that their teachers were willing to apply the proposed programme. The two schools were similar due to the fact that the nature of educational methods and the teaching processes are explicitly outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture and followed by all teachers on the island. Statistical analysis prior to the intervention revealed that the control and experimental groups were of a similar level



(i.e. no statistically significant difference in level of dialectal interference was detected), providing confirmation of the internal validity of the project.

## Teachers

The four teachers of the control classes were given no instruction beyond simple directions on how to undertake the standardized assessment procedures. The four teachers who adopted the intervention programme were trained by the researcher prior to its commencement. Training entailed both a weekly group session and an individual meeting with every teacher for each of the eight chapters of the textbook. Preliminary discussions gauged teachers' opinions of traditional language instruction, bidialectism and its effect on their students' linguistic performance, and shortcomings of the existing language textbook. During training, phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical differences between the CD and SMG were explained and teachers learnt how to distinguish between the four linguistic categories. Ensuing discussions intended to allow teachers to deduce the formal rules that differentiate the two varieties were accompanied by directions on how best to advocate language equality. The structure of the textbook was analysed and each activity was discussed in terms of its targets, its solutions, and its ideal pedagogical delivery.

## Assessment

Evaluation of students' performance took the form of a three-minute interview for oral production and a language and geography essay for written production (see Appendix 2 for the assigned essay topics). The oral test was administered by the researcher who spoke SMG and asked each student individually questions about his/her everyday life. The three minutes allowed enough time for students to talk and express themselves freely. The written tests were administered in the same way as normal weekly in-class essays. Students were thus unaware that they were being assessed and the Hawthorn effect was minimized. The only exception concerned the pre-test essays: for practical reasons, the researcher was present during test 1 and students could thus infer that they were being assessed. The choice to assess students' geography essays and not only their language essays was made in order to investigate whether improvement was transferred to other non-language topics. The fact that evaluation was based on the usual essays and oral examinations also meant that students' responses were not biased by attempts to comply with project-specific goals. As required by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the language of the essays was SMG. No instruction on the appropriate code of usage was necessary: students are always expected to use the standard variety in the classroom.

The students were assessed in four different periods: prior to the intervention, mid-way through, at the end of the intervention and three



months after its completion. The criterion of assessment was clear and unambiguous. All dialectal interference was measured and categorized into phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical, based on the differences between the CD and SMG listed by a number of researchers (Newton 1972, 1983–84; Contossopoulos 1994; Papapavlou 1994). (Examples can be found in Appendix 3.) A comparison between the linguistic performances of the rural and urban students of the study has been made elsewhere (Yiakoumetti *et al.* 2005; Yiakoumetti in press).

## RESULTS

### Oral performance: interview

The performance of the control and experimental group (i.e. classes in which the new bidialectal language model was applied) was compared over the four periodic tests using a repeated-measures Generalized Linear Model (GLM), with test as a within-subjects factor and treatment as a between-subjects factor (Figure 1). The experimental group showed significant reduction in CD occurrences between the first and second tests ( $p < 0.001$ ) and between the second and third tests ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was no detectable improvement (or deterioration) after the completion of the intervention programme (i.e. between the third and fourth tests) ( $p = 0.483$ ). Over the course of the four tests, there was no significant change in the performance of the control group.

The oral performance of the experimental group was subsequently analysed with respect to type of CD interference (i.e. it was broken down into the four linguistic categories (Figure 2)). Significant improvement was found in all four categories: phonology ( $p < 0.001$ ), morphology ( $p < 0.001$ ), syntax ( $p < 0.001$ ), and lexicon ( $p < 0.001$ ).

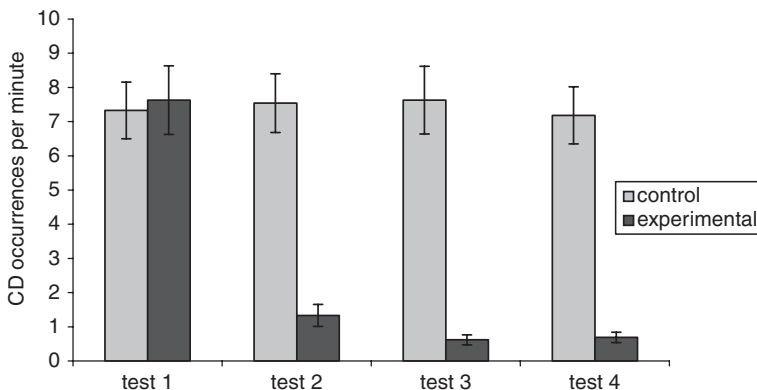


Figure 1: Performance of students of the control and experimental groups over four oral tests, measured as the number of CD occurrences per minute

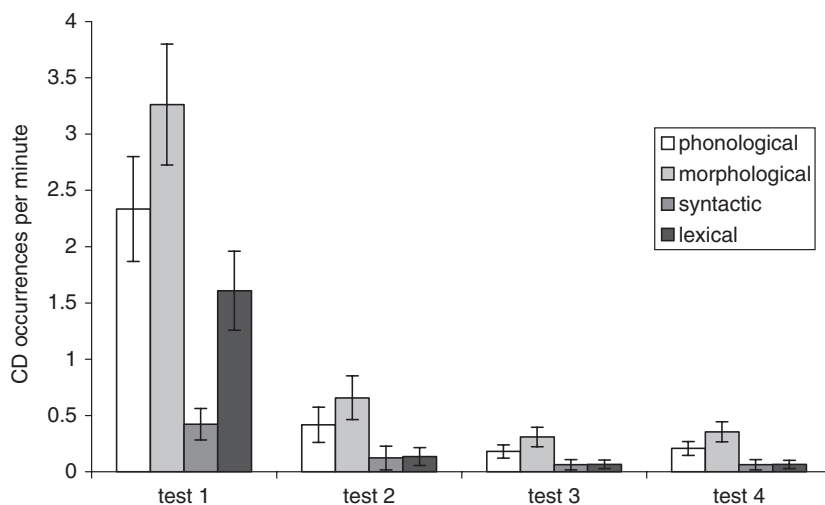


Figure 2: Performance of students of the experimental group over four oral tests in terms of four linguistic categories, measured as the number of CD occurrences per minute

### Written performance: language essay writing

The written performance (language essay) of the control and the experimental group was again compared over the four periodic tests using a repeated-measures GLM, with test as a within-subjects factor and treatment as a between-subjects factor (Figure 3). The experimental group showed a significant reduction in CD occurrences between the first and second test ( $p < 0.001$ ), as well as between the second and third test ( $p = 0.013$ ), but not between the third and fourth test ( $p = 0.443$ ). The control group, however, showed a significant increase in CD occurrences between the first and second test ( $p < 0.001$ ) which was maintained thereafter.

The written performance of the experimental group was in turn analysed with respect to type of CD interference (Figure 4). Significant improvement was found in all four categories: phonology ( $p < 0.001$ ), morphology ( $p < 0.001$ ), syntax ( $p = 0.011$ ), and lexicon ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### Written performance: geography essay writing

Finally, the performance of the two groups was measured in terms of one non-language class, the geography class. A repeated-measures GLM with test as a within-subjects factor and treatment as a between-subjects factor was used for the comparison of the control and experimental

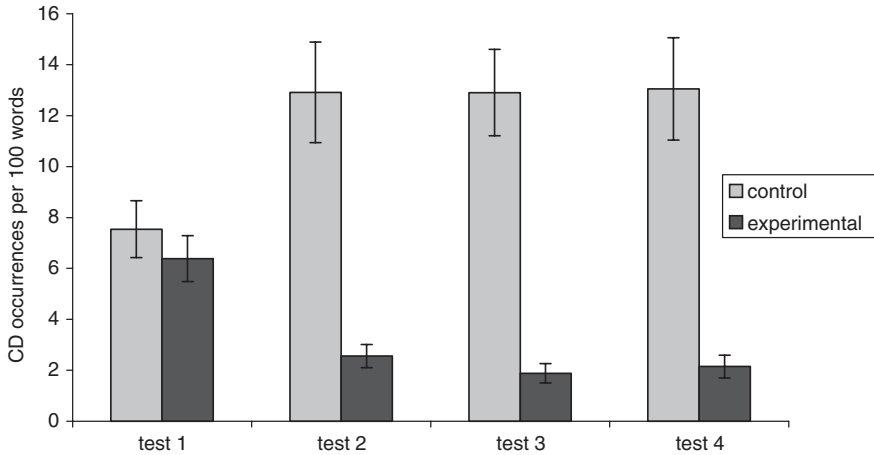


Figure 3: Performance of students of the control and experimental groups in four written language essays, measured as the number of CD occurrences per 100 words

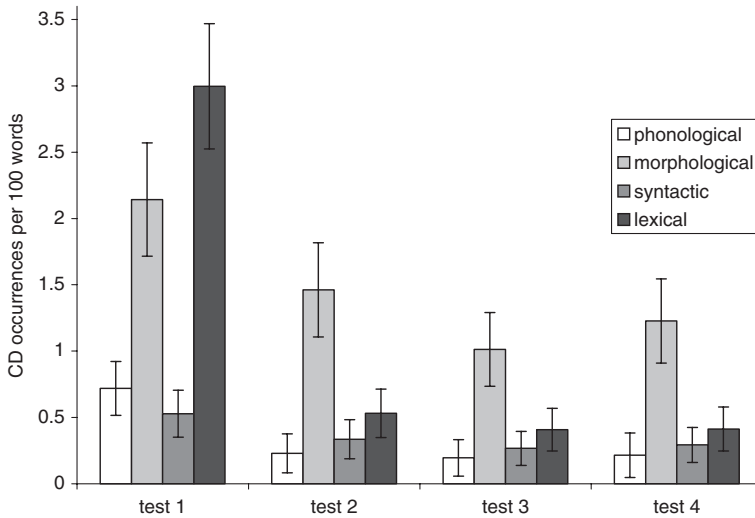
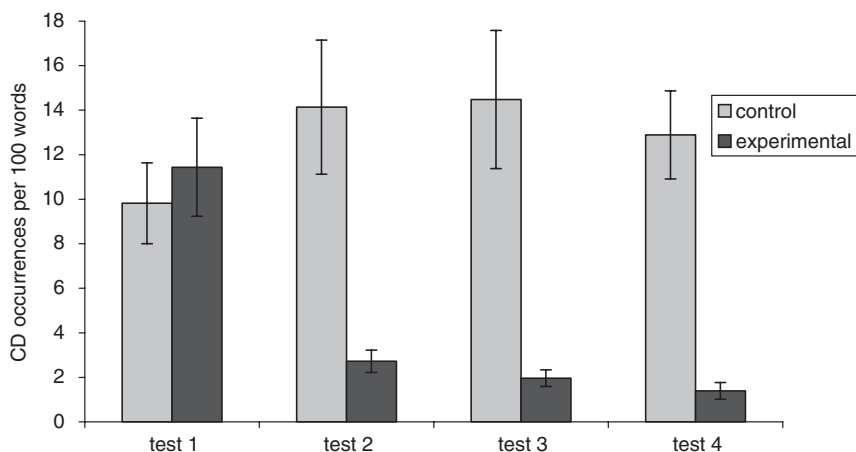


Figure 4: Performance of students of the experimental group in four language essays, broken down into four linguistic categories, measured as the number of CD occurrences per 100 words

groups (Figure 5). The experimental group showed significant reduction in CD occurrences between the first and second test ( $p < 0.001$ ), but did not significantly improve after this (test 3:  $p = 0.261$ ). The control group, in contrast, showed a significant increase in CD occurrences between the first and second test ( $p < 0.001$ ) which was maintained thereafter.



*Figure 5: Performance of students of the control and experimental groups in four geography essays, measured as the number of CD occurrences per 100 words*

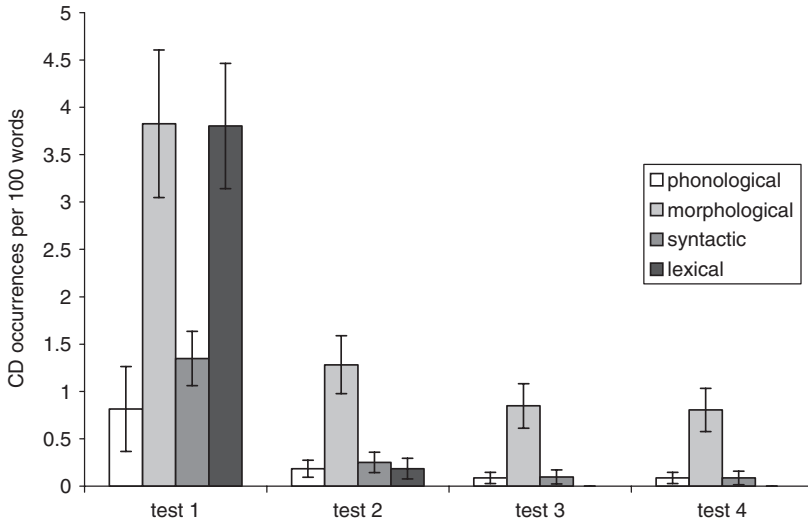
Written performance in the geography essay was broken down into four linguistic categories (Figure 6). Significant improvement was found in all four categories: phonology ( $p < 0.001$ ), morphology ( $p < 0.001$ ), syntax ( $p < 0.001$ ), and lexicon ( $p < 0.001$ ).

## DISCUSSION

### Effect of treatment

Having a control and an experimental group enabled the use of comparisons to speculate on causal links. The validity of these comparisons which are based on differences manifested after the intervention programme was implemented rests largely on the fact that the two groups were initially similar. Analysis confirmed that in both oral and written (language and geography essays) tests, there was no significant difference between the groups prior to the programme. Students from both treatments used an average of just over 7 CD occurrences per minute in the oral test, an average of 7 CD occurrences per 100 words in the language essay and an average of 11 CD occurrences per 100 words in the geography essay. The pre-tests confirmed the beliefs of linguists and educationists on the island: the subjects' SMG production was influenced by their local mother tongue.

In tests 2, 3, and 4, after the intervention programme had been implemented, a significant difference emerged. The performance of the experimental group improved significantly after the application of the new language model. In oral performance, by the third test, experimental students



*Figure 6: Performance of students of the experimental group in four geography essays, broken down into four linguistic categories, measured as the number of CD occurrences per 100 words*

made less than one CD occurrence per minute compared to the seven they made in the first test. In written performance, experimental students made on average two CD occurrences per 100 words for the language essay and two for the geography essay compared to the seven and eleven in the first test.

The oral performance of the control group remained steady with students committing an average of seven CD occurrences per minute both before (test 1) and after the application of the programme (test 3). Curiously, over time, CD occurrences in written performance increased significantly in the control group (which continued on its course of traditional language learning). A possible explanation for this may be that, for tests 2, 3, and 4, control students (and experimental students) did not know that they were being assessed. Tests 2, 3, and 4 might therefore have provided a better reflection of students' everyday written performance.

The fact that the standard of the two groups was similar before the intervention and that the interaction between test and treatment (i.e. the change in performance over the four tests was different for the two groups) was highly significant for oral and written performance strongly indicates a causal link between the new language model and the improvement in linguistic performance. Despite this considerable improvement in SMG, it deserves to be noted that CD elements in students' production of SMG persisted. Students' greater awareness of what constitutes dialectal interference may have simply assisted their efforts to reduce it.

## Classification of CD occurrences

The repertoire of students from the experimental group was analysed according to four performance indicators—phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical CD occurrences. As far as oral production was concerned, morphological occurrences were the most common type prior to the intervention, with an average of just over 3 per minute. This is not surprising, given that many of the differences between the SMG and CD are morphological in nature. (For elaboration on the linguistic differences between the CD and SMG, see Newton 1972, 1983–84; Contossopoulos 1994; Papapavlou 1994; Horrocks 1997.) After morphology, the category with most occurrences was phonology (around 2.5 per minute), followed by lexicon (around 1.5 per minute) and finally syntax (less than 0.5 per minute). Post-intervention, tests identified significant improvement in all four categories (with incidences of each being measured at less than 0.5 occurrences per minute by the third test).

Specifically, qualitative analysis of a number of case studies revealed that the most common CD feature in learners' oral production of SMG was the use of final /-n/ in the accusative singular—a feature which persists from Classical Greek (e.g. μου ἀρέσει να παίζω σχινάκιν, λάστιχον, κρυφτόν, [mu aresi na pezo sxinakín, lastíxon, krifτόn], I like skipping rope, playing French elastic, and playing hide and seek). This morphological item is not, however, a strong indicator of dialectal production in the speech of Cypriots. This is perhaps why students used it extensively prior to the intervention programme without even trying to avoid it, yet consciously avoided phonological CD features (such as /dʒ/ and /ʃ/). /-n/ is an especially difficult case because it is also used in SMG on certain occasions. Although there are clear rules as to when it should be used in SMG and when it should not, students show a limited awareness of these rules.

Another common CD feature found in the subjects' speech was the augmentative /e-/ prefix in the past tense (e.g. παίζαμε ποδόσφαιρο, [epeksame poðosfero], we played football). Again, this item is not as strong a dialectal indicator as the phonological features that are not part of the SMG phonetic inventory (e.g. /dʒ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /ʃ/). It must be noted that, for both features (/n/ and /e-/), teachers on the island stated that although they appear consistently in students' production (especially oral), they are features that they would normally correct only in writing. This is so because these two morphological items are relatively unimportant when viewed in relation to phonological differences which are highly stigmatized.

Despite the fact that phonology was only the second-most common source of interference (after morphology), it is accepted by Cypriots that this component is what makes students' speech sound dialectal. The most common sound found in students' interviews (oral test) was /dʒ/. /dʒ/ is the strongest dialectal indicator and the fact that it appears in one of the most common words, τζαί ([dʒe] meaning 'and'), makes its occurrence all the

more likely. Another phonological item which is equally indicative of dialectal speech is the sound /ʃ/. Both sounds appear only in students' speech and not their writing because there is no alphabetical symbol in SMG to capture the sound. Teachers are most eager to prevent students from using /dʒ/ and /ʃ/. It must be noted, however, that one occasion where both teachers and students mostly use /ʃ/ and not /s/ is when pronouncing numbers. Many teachers agree that saying, for example, *οχτακόσια* ([oxtakosja] SMG) and not *οχτακόσια* (CD) ([oxtakofa] meaning 800) sounds phony and pretentious. Teachers feel that, because they are Cypriots too, they would rather use CD sounds to avoid alienating their students.

As far as written production was concerned, lexical and morphological occurrences were the most common types prior to the intervention. This is not surprising given the high numbers of foreign loanwords found in the CD but not in SMG (Papapavlou 1994). However, this finding is notable because one would expect to find little lexical interference in writing as pupils have time to think before constructing their essays (in contrast to oral production where the element of spontaneity is very high). The fact that lexical interference was high shows that students' SMG lexical inventory is inadequate. Students either do not have the amount of vocabulary that their Greek counterparts do, or they are unable to access it as easily. The observation that, in tests, students would use equivalent CD and SMG words interchangeably suggests that, although they are aware of the appropriate word, they were not always able to use it.

After the intervention programme, lexical interference was significantly reduced. Pupils used SMG words they learned from the intervention programme. These words were often culturally entrenched in the everyday speech of children (being the names of games, for example) and, if it were not for the programme, they would have been provided in the dialect. A point for which the analysis could not account was whether pupils used circumlocution and avoidance (i.e. avoidance of words which differ in the two varieties when writing SMG and preferring to use longer sentences). Even if this was prevalent in the post-tests, it should be noted that the intervention programme nevertheless led to greater language awareness. Pupils first had to recognize which words were not SMG in order to develop a strategy of circumlocution.

The most frequently occurring feature of the CD in written production was morphological: the use of final /-n/ in the accusative singular in the CD. This is particularly interesting as this feature was also the most problematic item in oral usage. As noted previously, although this item occurs commonly in students' production, teachers are willing to overlook its occurrence and only occasionally correct its written usage. The fact that it is overlooked by the teachers—or, at the very least, its 'correct' usage is not emphasized by them—must contribute to its frequent use. The effect of correcting this interference was previously hypothetical. Would its usage be reduced if there were a clear explanation of the grammatical rules relating to it? If there was



a reduction, would it have meant that exposure to a comparative description of the item in the CD and SMG was responsible for it? The data collected during the intervention programme can provide a strong indication of the correct answers to these questions. It was revealed that, in the post-tests, very few students from the experimental group used the final /-n/. This demonstrates that, after learners were consciously exposed to and had experienced the use of final /-n/ in both varieties, they applied this knowledge in their essays and tried to eliminate its usage in the accusative singular. One might wonder why students did not use the final /-n/ appropriately prior to the programme in view of the fact that they already had an extensive knowledge of Greek grammar. Certainly, the grammatical rules relating to the use of final /-n/ do form part of pupils' language education from the second grade onward. The reason for the observed improvement in the experimental group may lie in the comparative explanation of the feature's usage. Experimental students were exposed to both the CD usage and the SMG usage of this specific feature. The instances in which it should be used in SMG may thus have been made clearer to them.

The proposed programme managed for the first time to provide empirical evidence of the actual CD interference in Cypriot pupils' linguistic performance of SMG in the classroom. Teachers in Cyprus passionately assert that a serious language problem exists. The oral and written tests carried out at the beginning of the programme helped to identify the exact nature of this problem. Instead of abstract definitions such as lack of fluency and hesitations in speech, the assessment material revealed that, in speech, the problem lies mainly in morphology and phonology, while, in writing, lexicon and morphology are problematic. The most common CD item (in both speech and writing) is the final /-n/. The above results are in opposition to the beliefs of all the teachers who participated in the project. When asked prior to the application of the programme what they thought the most common CD features to be, they provided the following in order of ranked importance: phonological items that are not part of the SMG inventory, the CD word order, CD verb endings, the final /-n/ and the CD lexicon. This is an alerting discovery that may highlight part of the reason for the persistent nature of Cypriot students' language problem. If teachers are not aware of the true problematic areas in children's linguistic performance, we may reasonably expect that they will encounter difficulties in helping children to improve.

### **Limitations of the study**

It should be conceded that, because the post-intervention tests were held a mere three months after the conclusion of the programme, it is not possible to state definitively how long any observed change would persist beyond this period of a few months. The study was also limited by the fact that it did not attempt to account for the relationship between students' linguistic performance and their socioeconomic backgrounds. This shortcoming was

imposed by the current absence of data on the unique Cypriot socioeconomic stratification. The strong focus of the study upon the measurement of SMG performance carried with it a limitation: the potential for corresponding change in CD performance (either development or attrition) to be neglected. Future studies with broader foci could profitably address concomitant changes in students' performance in both varieties.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the new learning model was to promote bidialectism by focusing on second dialect (SMG) development and drawing attention to linguistic form (by comparing the dialect and the standard). The goal was progression from awareness to production.

The first stage (c.f. model stages on page 300) proved to be the time when learners were required to establish and articulate grammatical properties and rules. This explicit formal learning appeared to be very effective in its acceleration of the acquisition of language awareness. Drawing attention to linguistic form enabled students to understand and describe the linguistic similarities and differences of the CD and SMG, some of which they already possessed unconsciously but did not explicitly understand or use.

Stage two revealed that students who were exposed to formal conscious learning of the grammatical properties of the two varieties performed linguistically better than students who did not undergo conscious comparative learning of the CD and SMG. At this stage, the model also highlighted a significant element in the developmental process: Cypriot bidialectal learners took longer to learn the linguistic forms of the target variety that were similar to forms in their first language. For example, the inappropriate morphological verb ending /-n/ persisted even in pupils' post-tests. As noted previously, this item exists in both varieties but is used in different patterns. Because of its existence in SMG, it was more difficult for the pupils to eliminate the usage of those patterns which occurred due to interference from the dialect.

Stage three revealed that, through formal and functional practice, explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit knowledge. This was shown through the post-intervention tests which demonstrated that students' improved performance remained undiminished, thus indicating internalization of linguistic structures. Internalization was assessed solely upon spontaneous speech (i.e. oral tests) and not writing because it can be detected only when learners do not have time to deliberate on their language use. The implicit knowledge acquired was especially useful because it was founded in terms of the *relation* of the two varieties, rather than in their isolation (i.e. implicit knowledge of the CD and implicit knowledge of SMG without any linkage). Prior to the programme, the state of students' bidialectal knowledge would have been closer to the latter condition.

In summary, the model suggested that there is indeed an interface between conscious and unconscious knowledge and that, with the right training,

consciously-learnt knowledge can become unconsciously-used language knowledge. The evidence indicates that focusing bidialectal students' attention on the formal properties of their two dialectal varieties facilitates an increased rate of second-dialect development. Moreover, the project confirmed that the ability to consciously identify differences between two varieties enhances performance in the variety which is targeted for improvement. Finally, the study suggests that usage of both varieties in the classroom can be beneficial to the language needs of bidialectal learners.

## APPENDIX 1

*Table 1: Work schedule for the empirical project*

Academic Year 2000–2001 Nov–Jun	Experimental group	Control group
Week 1 6–10 Nov	<i>Pre-tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test	<i>Pre-tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test
Week 2–Week 6 13 Nov–15 Dec	<i>Intervention programme</i> (Replaced 50% of traditional language classes)	<i>Traditional language classes</i> (100%)
Week 7 18–22 Dec	<i>Mid-phase tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test	<i>Mid-phase tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test
Week 8–Week 11 8 Jan–2 Feb	<i>Intervention programme</i> (Replaced 50% of traditional language classes)	<i>Traditional language classes</i> (100%)
Week 12 5–9 Feb	<i>Post-tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test	<i>Post-tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test
Feb–May	<i>Traditional language classes</i> (100%)	<i>Traditional language classes</i> (100%)
28 May–1 Jun	<i>Post-intervention tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test	<i>Post-intervention tests</i> Written essay in the language class Written essay in the geography class Oral test

## APPENDIX 2: ASSIGNED ESSAY TOPICS

### Test 1

Language class: My school excursion

Geography class: The pros and cons of tourism

### Test 2

Language class: My favourite movie

Geography class: My town

### Test 3

Language class: How I spend my free time

Geography class: I do not forget occupied Cyprus

### Test 4

Language class: Plans for the summer

Geography class: The country I would most like to visit

## APPENDIX 3

*Table 2: Some common differences between the Cypriot dialect and Standard Modern Greek*

Linguistic category	Description	SMG	CD	Meaning
Phonology	Use of the affricate /dʒ/ in the CD	keros	dʒeros	weather
	Use of the voiceless rill fricative /ʃ/ in the CD	xeri	ʃeri	hand
	Use of the voiced rill fricative /ʒ/ in the CD	karpuzja	karpuz̥a	watermelons
	Voiced fricative dropping: regular loss of the voiced fricatives /ð/, /β/, /ɣ/ in intervocalic position in the CD	laði foβos maγos	lai foos maos	oil fear magus
Phonetics	All initial voiceless stops are unaspirated in SMG, while initial aspirated stops are permissible in the CD	pefto	p <sup>h</sup> efto	I fall
	Absence of tri-syllabic intonation pattern in the CD	to ðo <sup>l</sup> mati <sup>l</sup> omu	to ðo <sup>l</sup> mati <sup>l</sup> omu	my room
Morphology	The augmentative /e-/ prefix in the past tense in the CD	piγa	epia	I went
	The use of final /-n/ in the accusative singular in the CD	toðaskalo	tonðaskalo	the teacher
	Prothetic /i/ after words ending in /-n/ in the CD	anzo	aniʒo	if I live
	Extension of the syllabic augment to verbs with an initial vowel in the CD	aγorase	eγorase	he/she bought
Syntax	Post-position of clitics in the CD	seayapo	aγapose	I love you
Lexicon		axlaði	ap <sup>h</sup> iði	pear
		karpuzi	pat <sup>h</sup> ixa	watermelon
		kuvas	sikla	bucket
		krito	xosto	hide and seek
		trexto	vurito	running

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