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# Linguistic (il)legitimacy in Migration Encounters

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**Abstract:** Linguistic differences between groups of co-ethnic and/or co-national migrants in diasporic contexts can become grounds for constructing and displaying identities that distinguish (groups of) migrants on the basis of differences in the sociohistorical circumstances of migration (provenance, time of migration) and/or social factors such as class, socioeconomic status, or level of education. In this article, I explore how language became a source of ideological conflict between Greek Cypriot and Greek migrants in the context of a complementary school in north London. Analysing a set of semi-structured interviews with teachers, which were undertaken in 2018 as part of an ethnographically oriented project on language ideologies in Greek complementary schools, I show that Greek pupils and parents, who had migrated to the UK after 2010 pushed by the government-debt crisis in Greece, positioned themselves as linguistic authorities and developed discourses that delegitimised the multilingual and multidialectal practices of Greek Cypriot migrants. Their interventions centred around the use of Cypriot Greek and English features, drawn from the linguistic resources that did not conform with the expectations that “new” Greek migrants held about complementary schools and which were based on strictly monolingual and monodialectal language ideologies. To these, teachers responded with counter-discourses that re-valued contested practices as products of different linguistic repertoires that were shaped by different life courses and trajectories of linguistic resources acquisition.



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## 1. Introduction

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the role language plays in processes of transnational migration (Canagarajah 2017; Capstick 2021) with scholars taking stock of theoretical and methodological advances in two distinct but interrelated paradigmatic turns: the mobility turn in the social sciences (Faist 2013; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007) and the multilingual turn in applied linguistics (Conteh and Meier 2014; May 2014; Meier 2017). Both these shifts in thinking seek to centre social and sociolinguistic experiences that were previously considered to be exceptional, and to highlight their complex, dynamic, and fluid character counter to more traditional, sedentarist and static perceptions.

The new mobilities paradigm challenges views of human activity as largely rooted and fixed in particular geographical locations over periods of time with migration being pursued by relatively small groups of people who relocate from a place of origin (most commonly their country of birth) to a new place in the world only once in their lives and in order to settle permanently. It emphasises the primordial and constitutive role mobilities (different forms and scales of mobility) play in people's lives both on an everyday level and across their diverse life courses. It understands people either as being constantly on the move for a broad range of reasons (to work, trade, study, travel, migrate, flee war) or as routinely interacting with other people who are (more) mobile and who thus shape the lives of less mobile subjects in indirect ways (see Waters 2014 for a critical assessment).

The multilingual turn first developed in the field of language and education, but its main tenets have been having wide-reaching repercussions for the study of language in migration. It conceptualises languages not as stable linguistic systems that are attached to

particular geographical locations and “owned” by localised speech communities of native speakers but as dynamic sets of semiotic resources that are owned by the people who use them in interactionally and contextually situated practices in order to make meaning, perform social functions, and negotiate identity positionings. As people move in the world, so do their resources. Languages therefore become deterritorialised, that is, they are detached from locales that would traditionally be thought of as their “natural” habitats. In this framework, speakers have complex repertoires of resources that reflect the diversity of their life trajectories, including partial resources that they have acquired as part of migratory experiences. Hybrid and fluid multilingual practices whereby speakers draw freely, creatively, and productively on their full sets of linguistic resources are normal, everyday occurrences even for individuals that would traditionally be classed as monolinguals. These understandings have contributed to broader transformations of sociolinguistics as a field that is fundamentally about mobile resources, mobile speakers and mobile markets (Blommaert 2010; Blommaert and Rampton 2015) and to post-multilingualist outlooks on the present and future as times when languages and language varieties have multiple owners and the complex links between them are under constant negotiation and readjustment (Li 2018).

Coupland (2009, p. 45, cited in Androutsopoulos and Støehr 2018, p. 122) suggests that the mobility and diversity that are characteristic of late modernity engender increased sociolinguistic reflexivity. As speakers move and relocate, they enter sociolinguistic spaces where they encounter assemblages of linguistic resources and language practices they may not have been previously exposed to. Novel configurations of language use may challenge assumptions they previously held about language and notions such as nationality, ethnicity, identity, or community and essentialised links they had forged between these. Processes of this kind may result in people becoming, as Androutsopoulos and Støehr write, “increasingly reflexive of their own and others’ communicative conduct” (2018, 122).

In this article, I propose that increased sociolinguistic reflexivity in contexts of migration can take the form of assertions of linguistic authority, specifically explicit judgements of language use that devalorise and delegitimise multilingual repertoires and practices and which speakers engage in by mobilising monoglossic and standard language ideologies. The data that form the empirical basis of my argument are drawn from an ethnographically oriented study of language ideologies in two Greek complementary schools in north London, which specifically examined the position of Cypriot Greek in pedagogical policy and practice. I show that complementary schools are inherently heterogeneous sites of socialisation that foster the co-presence and interaction of speakers with only partially overlapping linguistic repertoires and diverse competences in the languages that comprise them. I focus on interactions between two broad types of speakers of Greek, speakers of Greek Cypriot origin and speakers who migrated to the UK from Greece, a “new” mobility which increased and intensified in the period after 2010 when large numbers of people left Greece, pushed by the socioeconomic repercussions of the government-debt crisis that hit the country. I build on work included in Damanakis et al. (2014) and Panagiotopoulou et al. (2019), which has examined comparable developments in other parts of the world where newly arrived migrants from Greece encountered pre-existing Greek-speaking communities in various language education settings (Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg). The UK developments have been the focus of Voskou (2018, 2021) recent work, which, however, focuses on the teaching of history in Greek complementary schools.

The article is structured as follows: In Section 2, I explore how language shapes the relations between groups of migrants that are (constructed as) co-ethnic and/or conational, creating links but also divisions mediated by language ideologies. I also discuss the role community language schools play in such processes. In Section 3, I provide the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic background to the two types of speakers of Greek in the UK with reference to patterns of migration from Cyprus and Greece, profiles of Greek language use, and initiatives of Greek language education. I describe the data that were collected as part of the study, the data examined in this paper, and the data collection methods in Section 4. In Section 5, I analyse the findings, looking specifically at ways

in which post-2010 migrants projected identities of themselves as legitimate speakers of Greek and questioned the legitimacy of Greek Cypriot speakers, citing their multilingual and multidialectal practices as unacceptable in the complementary school setting. I also investigate the role teachers played as negotiators between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” speakers of Greek. Section 6 concludes the article.

## 2. Language in Migration and Diaspora

### 2.1. Language among Co-Ethnic and/or Co-National Migrants

In her pioneering work, [Bhachu \(1985, p. 174\)](#) formulated a number of caveats for the study of minoritised groups of migrant background: there should be “far greater” awareness of diversity within such groups; assumptions about the existence of homogeneous communities such as is implied in the use of labels like the “South Asian community” should not be made; the existence of common cultural values among (groups of) people whose migration trajectories include shared points of origin should not be taken as the basis for generalisations regarding similarities between them; and the sociocultural configurations of minoritised migrant groups are much more fluid and complex than ethnocentric and, I would add, nation-centric approaches to migration tend to assume. In her study of East African Sikhs in the UK compared with Sikhs who had migrated to the UK directly from Punjab, she argued that differences in migration trajectories (timing of migration, reasons for migration, routes of migration, other aspects of the migration experience) and socioeconomic differences that were already in place at the onset of migration created differences in the economic, social and cultural capital ([Bourdieu 1986](#)) that the two groups acquired along their respective trajectories as well as in aspirations about the future steps in their migrations projects. In turn, these not only defined the relations of the two groups in the UK but were also deployed in the construction of a distinct East African Sikh identity.

[Turchetta \(2005, pp. 10–11; cited in Di Salvo 2018, p. 706\)](#) suggests that differences in migration trajectories between groups of co-ethnic and/or co-national migrants are also reflected on migrants’ linguistic repertoires. There can be differences in the types and forms of linguistic resources that are available to different groups of migrant origin, the modes and points in time in which they acquire them, the ways in which they use them, their competences, and patterns of intergenerational transmission. Speakers migrating from Italy starting from a low level of education are more likely to use regional Italian varieties and/or Italo-Romance languages. More educated speakers tend to be competent users of Standard Italian with non-standardised features, drawn either from regional varieties or Italo-Romance languages, occupying more peripheral positions in their repertoires. More educated speakers are also more likely to speak the majority language of the country of settlement when they migrate compared to less educated speakers, whose competences in the majority language may remain low over their life courses and take the form of fossilised and jargon-like practices. Subsequent generations converge in that they become dominant in the majority language of the so-called host society but diverge in relation to Italian varieties. (Grand)children of less educated migrants may have crystallised residues of regional Italian and Italo-Romance languages in their repertoires, and acquire Standard Italian through guided language learning outside the family. (Grand)children of more educated migrants will have exposure to Standard Italian both within the family and in varying educational contexts. Across generations, migrants’ linguistic practices are routinely influenced by language ideologies that promote standardised varieties (of both the heritage language and the majority language) as “correct” and “proper” and stigmatise non-standardised varieties, with community-based education initiatives playing a key role in the reproduction and transformation of ideological schemata that migrants first become exposed to in their societies of origin ([Karatsareas 2020b](#)).

In some diasporic contexts, linguistic differences have been a source of tension and grounds for constructing and displaying identities that distinguish groups of co-ethnic and/or co-national migrants with reference to non-linguistic characteristics, including their provenance, the time at which they migrated, or social factors such as class, socioeconomic

status, or level of education. Sicilian migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1990s construct an evaluative opposition between “real Italians”, a group in which they position themselves, and “Italians from Australia”, a group of people who migrated in the post-war period and their children (Rubino 2020). The opposition is based on authenticating narratives, practices, and metalinguistic comments, which assign a range of emblematic features to “real Italians”: they are mobile, hard-working and successful individuals who speak “pure” Italian. “Italians from Australia”, in contrast, are constructed as immobile others who engage in linguistic practices that are inauthentic from an Italian point of view: they speak Italo-Romance languages (“dialects”), their speech is a mixture of Italian varieties and English, and they are completely monolingual in English.

Pepe (2020) participants, a young group who migrated from Italy to London after 2008 due to the financial crisis, also held negative views towards the multilingual practices of post-war migrants in the UK, which include the use of morphologically adapted English loanwords, the semantic shift of quasi-homophonous lexical items, and phrasal calques (Rocchi 2006). Despite engaging in similar types of language mixing in their own speech for a range of indexical purposes, post-2008 migrants associated these practices with stereotypical depictions of post-war migrants as rural and uneducated individuals with very little command of English. They deployed them in order to reject not only suggestions that they might belong to the same “community” as the post-war migrants but also the notion that post-2008 migrants constitute a “community” at all (Pepe 2021).

Onward migrants of Bangladeshi origin who relocated from Italy to London in Della Puppa’s (2021) study construed the linguistic repertoires and practices of direct Bangladeshi migrants as expressions of political and cultural distance. The majority of direct Bangladeshi migrants in the UK originate from the area of Sylhet in northeast Bangladesh. Their repertoires tend to include Sylheti, a non-standardised language related to Standard Bangla, and English. Standard Bangla is mostly acquired in formal settings such as in community language schools and not routinely used in everyday settings in the diaspora (Walters 2011). Italian Bangladeshis frowned upon direct migrants’ low competences in Standard Bangla, devaloured Sylheti by labelling it “a dialect”, and treated statements of linguistic and ethnic self-identification both with condescension (“They think and say that their language is Sylheti, but Bangla is the language.”) and as seeking to create cleavages within a nation whose independence is closely linked to the fight for the recognition of the linguistic rights for Bangla speakers (Rumnaz Imam 2005).

## 2.2. Complementary Schools: Heterogeneity and Uni(formi)ty

These insights corroborate current views of diasporic communities and minoritised groups of migrant background more generally as inherently heterogeneous (Amelina and Barglowski 2019). Complementary schools are spaces where “the fundamental heterogeneity of diaspora” (Scully 2019, p. 98) becomes manifest in many areas of activity not only in the classroom but also outside it and not only among pupils and teachers but also among parents and other actors, seeing as schools are “key social network sites” (Li and Hua 2013, p. 48). Complementary schools teach language and elements of culture associated with migrants’ places of origin, primarily to school-age children and adolescents. The emphasis is clearly placed on the teaching of language, and other, culturally relevant subjects (religion, history, music, dance) tend to be taught through the vehicle of the heritage language, which is considered to be the key determinant and marker of ethnocultural identity (Blackledge and Creese 2010; Issa and Williams 2009; Li 2006; Simon 2018).

Complementary schools are set up as ethnolinguistic and not national educational institutions. They often operate independently of the national governments of the migrants’ countries of origin, which may, however, contribute to the running of the schools by offering financial or in-kind support. Their ethnic orientation is also crucially seen in the fact that they welcome pupils, parents, and teachers from diverse national backgrounds. For example, Turkish complementary schools in the UK teach children of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds as well as Kurdish-origin children (Ali 2001; Issa 2005);

Albanian schools teach children from Albania and Kosovo (Tereshchenko and Archer 2015); Russian complementary schools teach children from Russia and from a number of Russian-speaking communities outside the country (Ivashinenko 2019); and Arabic schools teach children from a very broad range of national backgrounds, including recently arrived refugees from Syria and Iraq (Gaiser and Matras 2020; Szczepek Reed et al. 2020). In cases such as these, it is assumed that children (and their parents as well as teachers, for that matter) all belong to the same, homogeneous imagined communities (Anderson 1991), sharing the same ethnicity and brought together by and around a common language (as well as other expressions and manifestations of ethnic identity). This is usually a standardised variety stemming from a national or ethnic centre (for example, Standard Turkish, Standard Albanian, or Standard Russian) or a pluricentric variety such as Modern Standard Arabic (Matras and Karatsareas 2020).

In some contexts, ethnolinguistic heterogeneity in complementary schools has been found to create tensions between subjects who have different linguistic repertoires, competences and orientations towards language learning; for example, pupils who are born in diasporic contexts and have multilingual and multidialectal linguistic repertoires encompassing English and non-standardised varieties of their (parents') places of origin, and mostly monolingual and monodialectal teachers who are sent from the national or ethnic centre to the diaspora to teach a standardised variety. Çavuşoğlu (2010, 2019) study of language ideologies in a Turkish complementary school in London has shed light on the intricacies and complexities of such processes. Çavuşoğlu observed that contract teachers from Turkey reproduced reified and essentialised notions of Turkishness, silencing non-standardised varieties of Turkish that were used by UK-born pupils of Turkish Cypriot origin. Teachers promoted Standard Turkish as the only legitimate variety to be used in the school, drawing on ideological schemata of correctness and with reference to established grammatical rules, which the Cypriot variety was implied to lack. Pupils did not always accept the reproduction of these dominant practices, creating subversive discourses of "muttered resistance" and expressing feelings of perplexity as to why their "own" linguistic resources were delegitimised.

Research into complementary schools as "sites of multilingualism" (Lytra and Martin 2010) has brought to light two *prima facie* opposing language ideological conceptualisations of bilingualism, which Creese and Blackledge (2011) term "separate bilingualism" and "flexible bilingualism". The former treats the languages spoken by bi-/multilingual pupils as bounded and distinct systems of communication, which are not to be mixed. When complementary school teachers engage in practices informed by discourses of separate bilingualism, they often link pupils' languages to specific and essentialised representations of culture, ethnicity and identity, and contrast them with the aim of challenging the dominance of the majority language of society. Flexible bilingualism views languages as complex and dynamic sets of resources with fluid boundaries, which speakers mobilise and deploy as social actors in processes of meaning making and identity construction. In complementary schools, flexible bilingualism approaches draw on the full range of pupils' communicative resources and repertoires creatively and productively to achieve language learning outcomes without regard to boundaries imposed between languages by monoglossic ideologies (Blackledge and Creese 2010, 2013).

### 3. Speakers of Greek in the UK

#### 3.1. Migration Trajectories and Linguistic Repertoires

A number of minoritised groups of migrant origin that are presently based in the UK have varieties of Greek in their linguistic repertoires (Linguistic Minorities Project 1985; Mettis 1998; Pratsinakis et al. 2020; Karatsareas 2021):

- People who migrated from Greece or other areas of the southern Balkans and the wider Eastern Mediterranean that were part of Greece at some point in their history (e.g., Smyrna/İzmir in present-day Turkey) or had Greek-speaking minorities with close connections with the Greek state (e.g., Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt);

- People who migrated from Cyprus and identify as either Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots;
- People who migrated from Eastern European countries including Albania, Bulgaria and Romania to Greece and subsequently remigrated from Greece to the UK.

Here, I focus on the two largest groups: people who migrated from Cyprus and identify as Greek Cypriots and people who migrated from present-day Greece. I include their children and, where they exist, grandchildren, as well.

### 3.1.1. Greek Cypriot Migrants

Up to 300,000 UK residents were either born in Cyprus or have a Cyprus-born ancestor (Harlaftis 2006). The majority live in London, mainly in the northern boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield and Haringey, with sizeable communities also found in major cities (Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool) and smaller towns (Weston-Super-Mare, Hastings, Great Yarmouth, Mansfield). Migration from Cyprus to the UK started in the early 20th century and was relatively low until the mid-1950s, seeing a first increase between 1955 and 1959 following the partial lifting of migration controls previously imposed by means of the so-called affidavit system (Smith and Varnava 2017). It peaked between 1960, after the declaration of the independent Republic of Cyprus, and 1963. Outflows of Cypriots in this period, which has been called the “mass exodus” (Constantinou 1990), are attributed to a high rate of unemployment on the island and the passing of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which was set to limit the rights of Commonwealth citizens to live and work in the UK. In 1955–1963, the UK accounted for an average of 85% of Cypriot emigrants (24,792 out of a total of 29,315 people in 1955–1959 and 33,028 out of a total of 37,288 people in 1960–1963), reaching 93% in 1959 and 1960 (Pavlakis 2002). Early migrants were for the most part young, low- and medium-skilled males originating in rural parts of Cyprus who found employment in the catering business mostly in Central London. Living standards and occupational attainments improved considerably between the 1960s and 1980s, when many people ventured into the textiles industry, family-run catering businesses and other forms of professional and entrepreneurial activity.

Greek Cypriots in the UK have multilingual and multidialectal repertoires including both standardised and non-standardised varieties of Greek and English, with Cyprus-born speakers more likely to be dominant in the former and UK-born speakers in the latter. In terms of Greek, we predominantly find Cypriot varieties that were transplanted from Cyprus as well as hybrid diasporic varieties that developed in the UK and incorporate a wealth of English features, mostly lexical borrowings (Gardner-Chloros 1992; Karatsareas 2019; Karatsareas and Charalambidou forthcoming). Standard Greek is present as a formal variety used in community language education and other facets of public community life (Greek Orthodox church, community organisations, representative authorities of the government of the Republic of Cyprus, media). English repertoires include non-standardised, locally acquired varieties as well as competences in Standard English that are developed through mainstream British education (Karatsareas 2020a). Like other diasporas, Greek Cypriots in the UK express concerns about patterns of language shift towards English observed among younger speakers (Anaxagorou 1990; Gardner-Chloros et al. 2005; Karatsareas 2018; Papapavlou and Pavlou 2001).

### 3.1.2. Greek Migrants

Until 2010, migration from Greece to the UK was concentrated around three groups: people involved in shipping and banking, university students, and professionals (Pratsinakis et al. 2020). The shippers and bankers originate from a small number of Greek merchant families who added London, Manchester and Liverpool to the exporting networks they used to trade Eastern Mediterranean goods across Europe in the mid-19th century (Chatziioannou 2010). In London, Greek merchants were originally based in the financial district of the City where they set up commercial houses, private residences, and houses of worship before moving to parts of West London (Lancaster Gate, Chelsea,

Kensington), where their descendants remain to this day having expanded their business activities to insurance and procurement. In 2006, around 10,000–12,000 people were estimated to belong to this group (Harlaftis 2006). Educational migration gathered pace in the 1970s (Chasiotis 1993), reaching a peak in 2002/2003 when 22,485 Greek students were enrolled in UK universities (Koniordos 2017). Despite significant drops in student numbers later on, Greece was among the top five countries of domicile for student enrolments in 2014–2019, with 9920 Greeks students enrolled in 2018/2019 (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2020). The third group has generally consisted of graduates of UK universities who stay in the UK after graduation and secure professional posts working mainly as academics, scientists, doctors, engineers and lawyers.

In late 2009, in the aftermath of the 2007–2008 global financial crisis, Greece faced a serious government-debt crisis. In 2010, it requested an international bailout from the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the same year, the Greek parliament passed the first 3 of a total of 14 austerity packages, enacting a series of tax increases and spending cuts. The country entered a decade of deep recession, which had wide-reaching sociopolitical consequences across society, including a dramatic increase in the number of people emigrating from Greece. Between 2010 and 2018, 925,299 people left the country, 478,857 (51.8%) of whom were Greek citizens (Eurostat 2020). Most emigrants relocated to Germany and the UK. An estimated 65,000 Greek citizens had moved to the UK by 2016 (Pratsinakis 2019). By September 2020, the UK Home Office had received 89,000 applications from Greek citizens for the EU Settlement Scheme, which opened in March 2019. Of those, 84,660 (or 95.1%) were approved. In total, 52,810 (or 62.4%) of successful applicants were granted pre-settled status, which means that they had arrived in the UK less than five years before the date of application. These statistics suggest that, in less than ten years, the number of Greek migrants in the UK more than trebled. Greek Cypriots are still much more numerous and form (trans)local communities and groups in more organised and established ways. Nevertheless, the arrival and settlement of the “new” Greek migrants has been noticeable in many ways among different groups of Greek speakers in the UK over the past years.

“New” Greek migrants are, for the most part, an older, well-educated, family-orientated cohort who decide to migrate with the prospects of long-term settlement and in order to improve and increase the future prospects of their children. Two-thirds hold university degrees, and one-fourth has a postgraduate qualification. Fifty-seven percent of migrants migrated together with their families, and a further 31% formed families post migration. Sixty percent of migrants who have families named the future of their children as the primary motivation for migration. Looking at migrants who had families at the time of leaving Greece, this percentage rises to 73%. This is in stark contrast to pre-2010 migrants, only 14% of whom gave that as a reason for moving abroad. Over 70% of London-based migrants have no intention of returning to Greece or plan to do so after retirement (Labriandis and Pratsinakis 2016; Pratsinakis 2019; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2014). This migration wave also includes a considerable number of qualified teachers. The social and educational characteristics of these migrants are reflected in their linguistic repertoires (Lazaridou-Chatzigoga and Karatsareas 2020). Most speak varieties of Standard Greek associated with major urban centres in Greece like Athens and Thessaloniki. They also have advanced competences in English, which they use mainly in the workplace and as required by everyday life needs. Speakers who have been living in the UK for longer may exhibit phenomena of attrition in their Greek speech, while some have been found to hold negative views towards language mixing phenomena, citing purist and prescriptive ideologies about what “correct” Greek ought to be like as well as having strictly monoglossic expectations about the linguistic skills and abilities of “native speakers” of the language.

### 3.2. Greek Complementary Schools

According to the curriculum that was published by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth in September 2019, the aim of Greek complementary schools in

the UK is “to preserve and shape the national consciousness and Greek identity as well as to disseminate Greek culture among children and young people of the United Kingdom community. This educational provision is of utmost importance as it comprises the only channel of contact with the Greek language and the Greek culture. Its lack leads to the disconnect of children and young people of the community from the roots and culture that their Greek identity endows them with” (p. 3).

Greek complementary schools fall under two main types: schools that are affiliated with local Greek Orthodox parishes and secular, so-called independent schools run by local groups of parents. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of pupils have traditionally been of Greek Cypriot origin, schools are labelled as Greek and not Cypriot as they generally seek to instil a sense of Greekness into pupils as well as to counteract language shift to English and what is perceived as the dehellenisation of younger generations and their assimilation into dominant British culture. There is, however, disagreement as to who the most appropriate and legitimate provider of Greek language education is, and which ideological and sociopolitical framework schools should promote. The UK’s Greek Orthodox Church has always considered education to be an integral part of its pastoral mission. Maintaining close ties with the Greek government, it has promoted a Greek identity for pupils. Left-leaning Greek Cypriot groups, however, have objected to the involvement of the Church in educational affairs. Using links with the Cypriot government, they have campaigned for schools to come under its jurisdiction in order to ensure that elements of Cypriot identity and culture are included in the curriculum.

In the late 1960s, UK lobbyists actively sought and achieved the involvement of the two national governments. Greece became involved on nationalist ideological grounds as the “Mother Land” of both Greeks and Greek Cypriots. The Cypriot government’s involvement was based on the number of Greek Cypriot migrants in the UK, considered in proportion to the population of Cyprus ( $\frac{1}{5}$  at the time), and the fact that the majority of pupils were of Greek Cypriot origin. Two separate educational missions were sent to the UK in 1969–1970, with Greek teachers being placed in church schools and Cypriot teachers in secular ones. These rifts were bridged in the early 1990s, when the Ministers of Education of Greece and Cyprus established the Co-ordinating Committee of Greek Educational Bodies in the UK, a platform for dialogue between different school groups, which however retained their high degree of operational and financial independence (Mettis 1998). The two governments jointly supported all schools by appointing teachers who were seconded in the UK for a set number of years and by donating textbooks and other teaching materials until 2009, when the debt crisis in Greece ended this sharing of responsibility. Greece stopped secondments and recalled all teachers who had been posted in the UK due to austerity. The Cypriot government therefore became the sole national actor that continues to second teachers, recruit teachers locally (including teachers from Greece), provide material support and undertake other pedagogical responsibilities (training teachers, organising community events and celebrations, overseeing and assessing the quality of teaching and learning).

In 2020/2021, there were 62 schools across the country. More than a third were found in North London. Schools employed 25 seconded teachers from Cyprus and 119 hourly paid UK-based teachers who were from both Cyprus and Greece. A total of 5020 pupils were enrolled (Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth 2020).

#### 4. Methods and Data

The data analysed in this article were collected as part of an ethnographically oriented project on language ideologies in Greek complementary schools in the UK, which started in September 2017 and finished in August 2019, co-funded by the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust. The aim was to examine how Cypriot Greek is viewed and treated as a linguistic resource by teachers and pupils; how its presence is negotiated in the complementary school classroom; and how official discourses that guide teaching construct Cypriot Greek as part of pupils’ linguistic repertoires. The project was informed by



principles of researching multilingually (Holmes et al. 2013, 2016), critical sociolinguistics (Heller et al. 2018), and discourse analysis (Cameron 2001; Wortham and Reyes 2020).

The research was undertaken by Alexandra Georgiou, who worked on the project as a research assistant, and myself. We chose to study two schools in North London, to which we gave the pseudonyms Anemomylos (“Windmill”) and Gefyri (“Bridge”), seeking to gain insights into how ideologies are constructed on a local level but in the context of broader historical and social discourses (Lytra 2012). We conducted fieldwork in January–June 2018, collecting the following data: audio recordings of in-class interactions, group interviews with pupils, and one-to-one interviews with teachers. These were captured with mini recorders and broadly transcribed using standard orthographic conventions for Greek and English. We also wrote fieldnotes and vignettes with our observations, and collected physical artefacts including samples of pupils’ work, classroom displays, textbooks and other teaching materials, and policy documents. In order to triangulate the data and mitigate any issues of validity in the analysis (Flick 2008), different sources and types of data were collected at different phases of the fieldwork, from different participants and from the two researchers. Georgiou collected the in-class and pupil interview data, while I conducted the interviews with the teachers. We both contributed with fieldnotes, vignettes and artefacts.

Here, I analyse teacher interview data. In June and July 2018, I interviewed six teachers, three from each school, all of whom had previously allowed Georgiou into their classrooms. Interviews were semi-structured, using an interview protocol that sought to explore teachers’ views on Cypriot Greek, the multilingual and multidialectal repertoires of their pupils, and their experiences of working in the schools against the backdrop of their own life courses, migration trajectories, and linguistic repertoires. All teachers were familiar with my work on Cypriot Greek in the UK, including a series of public engagement activities I was involved in, which sought to raise awareness about the benefits of integrating Cypriot Greek in the teaching of Greek (Ioannidou et al. 2020). Some of the teachers had participated in training seminars on this theme that I had co-organised in London in collaboration with the Cyprus Educational Mission. They knew me as a sympathizer to the challenges Greek Cypriot pupils faced in Greek complementary schools both in terms of the difficulties of having to develop literacy skills in Standard Greek and the stigmatisation of their repertoires. This perspective helped some teachers, predominantly but not exclusively Greek Cypriot ones, to talk more freely about their pupils’ negative feelings towards learning Standard Greek. Other teachers, however, seemed to not be influenced by their knowledge of my publicly expressed position towards Cypriot Greek and reproduced discourses that devalorised pupils’ use of non-standardised language both inside and outside the classroom. The teachers gave their consent for the interviews to be recorded. I uploaded interview transcripts onto NVivo 12 and analysed them qualitatively employing Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach to thematic analysis.

In what follows, I analyse extracts from the interviews with two teachers, Eleonora and Liza (pseudonyms). At the time of the interviews, both worked in Anemomylos, a school that is not affiliated with a Greek Orthodox parish and, like many other secular schools, rents out teaching spaces from a mainstream school on Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Anemomylos is governed by a committee consisting exclusively of Greek Cypriots, although its head is from Greece. It offers a very wide range of levels of education, starting from nursery up to A-Level, and has pupils aged 4 to 17 years. Eleonora was born in the UK to Greek Cypriot parents but grew up in Cyprus and returned to the UK to study. She holds degrees in English language, linguistics and TESOL. At the time of the interview, she had eleven years of experience teaching at Anemomylos, where she was mostly responsible for preparing pupils to sit the Modern Greek GCSE. Liza taught Greek in Year 6 (12-year-old pupils). She was born in a city in northern Greece, had studied history at university, and had ten years of experience as a private tutor in Greece. She had moved to the UK five years before the time of the interview as part of the “new” Greek migration. She had been working in Anemomylos for four years teaching in Years 5 and

6. She was also working at another Greek school teaching in Year 1 and at a mainstream British school as a teaching assistant.

### 5. Findings: Teachers' Perceptions towards "New" Migration

"New" migration emerged as a theme in five out of six interviews even though the interview protocol did not include questions around this issue. Teachers talked about the presence in the two schools of Greek pupils who had been recently enrolled by their "new" migrant parents. These contributions were made in the context of describing the linguistic repertoires of Greek Cypriot pupils and their attitudes towards attending complementary school. The most prominent notion was that the competences in Standard Greek of Greek Cypriot pupils, most of whom were born in the UK, were low. Teachers said that pupils were dominant in English and that Cypriot Greek was the only Greek variety that they were familiar with and might use actively. Pupils challenged teachers as to why Standard Greek was institutionally promoted by the complementary school system, which they did not accept as their "own" language in the sense that it was not the variety spoken by their families. Teachers contrasted these repertoires and attitudes with those of Greek pupils, whom they portrayed as more competent and more confident speakers of the standardised variety as well as more keen learners who attended the school more willingly than Greek Cypriot pupils, although their competences did not always align well with the overall level of teaching and the requirements of the formal examinations, which were generally considered easy for Greek pupils (Karatsareas 2020a).

The differences in the competences of the two groups of pupils became particularly evident in the classroom, as Greek pupils were typically assigned to year levels on the basis of their age and not their Greek competences. This policy aimed to avoid having pupils of markedly different ages in the same year groups. Teachers and managers acknowledged the challenges the policy created for both pupils and teachers but accepted it reluctantly because schools did not have the resources to teach same-age pupils with different Greek competences separately. One consequence of age-based grouping, which was especially pronounced in older year levels such as the ones preparing pupils for the GCSE and A-Level examinations, was the creation of heterogeneous classrooms in which pupils with a very broad range of competences were taught together towards achieving the same learning outcomes. In some cases, these stretched from only rudimentary knowledge of Greek, which may not even include the ability to read and write in the Greek alphabet, to very advanced competences constructed by teachers in terms of native speakerhood. The extracts below show how such classrooms became spaces that allowed pupils at the competent end of that spectrum as well as their parents to position themselves as linguistic authorities that reserved the right to judge the amount and type of Greek that was used in the school by teachers and other pupils. In Extract 1, Eleonora recounts how a recently arrived Greek pupil delegitimised UK-born Greek Cypriot pupils as speakers of Greek, rejecting their using of Cypriot Greek features and devaluing their attempts to produce speech in Standard Greek if they resulted in "mistakes". In Extract 2, Liza shares the details of a conversation she had with the mother of a pupil, who was dissatisfied with two aspects of her child's classroom experience: first, that English was spoken in class, and second, that the teacher was of Cypriot origin and therefore, a speaker of "incorrect" and "accented" Greek.

Extract 1. Interview with Eleonora (Anemomylos Greek School, GCSE 2 year).

1 The girl that we have now is a little bit like that. She has a bit of an attitude and  
 2 says “What are you talking about? **That’s not how you say it**”. Well, **that is how**  
 3 you say it, dear, you simply haven’t heard of it before. These children have  
 4 **grown up using this word**. Now she’s in a whatsapp group and they talk every  
 5 day and I see that they have integrated her. In class she wasn’t friends with the  
 6 children because she had this attitude. **I came, I know my Greek**, you don’t know  
 7 it very well, how do you speak it [like this]. She was . . . she had this attitude, let’s  
 8 say, how do you speak it like this. It wasn’t only about Cypriot. When they didn’t  
 9 use the right word, let’s say, even if that word was Greek and not of the dialect,  
 10 let’s say, she had that attitude, let’s say, that you don’t say it like that. You mustn’t  
 11 say this, you mustn’t do that. [ . . . ] I told her, “You have to calm down a little bit,  
 12 my dear. Think of how you sound when you speak your English. I’m not saying  
 13 your English is not good, but think that English is **the mother tongue** for most of  
 14 these children. They speak it **flawlessly** and think about how you speak it. You  
 15 must understand that”.

Extract 2. Interview with Liza (Anemomylos Greek School, Year 6).

1 I also have two children from Greece. Actually, the mum of one of them rang me  
 2 yesterday and asked me to withdraw [the child] from the school next year both  
 3 because [the child] does not hear Greek, **the lesson is done in English** in year  
 4 one, there’s a lot of English, and because she wouldn’t like [the child] to have a  
 5 Cypriot teacher. [ . . . ] I told her that I would leave from the school anyway because  
 6 I’m moving, and she asked me “Do you know who will take him on?”. I say, “I  
 7 don’t know. The headteacher will find [someone].”. The headteacher of our  
 8 school is Cypriot. I say, “She will certainly find [someone] through the Cypriot  
 9 mission. The child will not be left without a teacher.”. “**I don’t want a Cypriot,**  
 10 **though, I want him to hear correct Greek.**”. [ . . . ] She told me exactly that line  
 11 yesterday, and I knew I would meet you and wanted to tell you. It made a huge  
 12 impression on me. The mum is an Athenian, she came five years ago, she had  
 13 her children here. [ . . . ] I was shocked, I wasn’t expecting . . . Honestly, I wasn’t  
 14 expecting that answer, that’s why I am now shocked now that I am telling you.  
 15 “But”, I say, “even if she is Cypriot, the child will learn the correct language.”.  
 16 [ . . . ] “I don’t want him to hear the accent.”. Because, as I told you, the headteacher  
 17 is Cypriot and always talks to the children at the assembly. She doesn’t like it.  
 18 She told me, she says, “She doesn’t speak Greek. **I can hear the headteacher,** it’s  
 19 not good . . . **That’s not even Greek to begin with.**”. I told her, “It is Greek, it is a  
 20 different dialect. If you, who are from Athens, hear me, who am from  
 21 [REDACTED], you will tell that I speak a little differently.”. OK. It made a huge  
 22 impression on me. She wants to take away the child also because **he speaks only**  
 23 **English with his schoolmates**, and she doesn’t like that, and because she doesn’t  
 24 want a Cypriot teacher to take him on. Shock. Shocking. I wasn’t expecting it,  
 25 because the mum is young, a young modern woman. [ . . . ] **They, the Greeks come**  
 26 [to the UK] and expect to find a school like in Greece. [ . . . ] They don’t have an  
 27 issue with the Cypriots, they just have an issue with English. The lesson is  
 28 done in English, and the level is a little lower for these children.

### 5.1. Teachers’ Perceptions of Post-2010 Migrants as Legitimate Speakers of Greek

Anemomylos was a multilingual site as were most of the spaces created within it (Lytra and Martin 2010). English and Greek were used by pupils, teachers, school managers, and parents during teaching activities in the classrooms, gatherings such as morning assemblies, and working and decision-making meetings. In classrooms, teachers made efforts to mainly use Standard Greek. They resorted to English to achieve different pedagogical and communicative aims including to ensure that pupils had understood specific points, instructions for activities or tips about how to perform well in exams. Greek Cypriot teachers also deployed Cypriot Greek features in their speech to create a rapport with Greek Cypriot pupils, especially if they resisted the promotion of the standardised language (Ioannidou 2009). These tended to be primarily acrolectal features along the Cypriot Greek dialect continuum. Basilectal features, which are indexically marked as “heavy

Cypriot” or “totally peasantry” (Ioannidou and Sophocleous 2010; Tsiplakou et al. 2016), were generally avoided by teachers. UK-born pupils, who for the most part were of Greek Cypriot origin, preferred to speak English and used Greek mainly to respond to teachers’ prompts and explicit requests to engage in speech production tasks. The expectation was for pupils’ speech to be in Standard Greek; however, their productions included Cypriot Greek features as well as English-influenced features. Teachers explicitly corrected pupils’ English-influenced productions across the board. When it came to Cypriot Greek features, they consistently corrected them in written pieces of work but tended to allow them in pupils’ oral productions, albeit they did offer Standard Greek correspondences as preferred alternatives in those cases, as well. This approach was based on a widely held assumption that pupils are penalised if they include Cypriot Greek features in the written components of the GCSE and A-Level examinations but are not penalised if they do so in the oral component (Georgiou and Karatsareas forthcoming).

In lines 25–28 of extract 2, Liza explains how these multilingual practices ran counter to the expectations “new” migrants from Greece held when they moved to the UK and enrolled their children in complementary schools. Parents and pupils, especially those for whom relocation to the UK was their first migratory experience and/or who were not familiar with diasporic communities, expected that schools would be “like in Greece” (line 26). This phrase encapsulates a cluster of linguistic, pedagogical and managerial deontic expectations that imagined schools as monolingual and monodialectal institutions, sites, and spaces (Nordstrom 2020): Greek ought to be the only language and Standard Greek the only variety spoken in the school, in the classroom, as part of teaching and learning activities, and by teachers and heads of school; teachers ought to be “native speakers” of Greek; the teaching of Greek ought to be tailored to the needs of pupils who are also “native speakers”; the materials used in teaching Greek ought to be the same as the ones used in mainstream schools in Greece; schools ought to be run by people from Greece; the Greek state ought to regulate schools in terms of the form and quality of the education they offer, and support them materially; regulation and support ought to come from the Greek Ministry of Education and/or the Greek embassy.

The disjuncture between these expectations and practices that post-2010 migrants observed in the schools motivated them to take action aimed at rectifying aspects of everyday school life that they considered problematic. Drawing authority from their provenance in Greece and especially the capital city of Athens, which is associated with the most “correct” form of Standard Greek, and their recent arrival, which was implied to guarantee proficiency in the language (“I came, I know my Greek”, extract 1, line 6; “the mum is an Athenian, she came five years ago”, extract 2, line 12), they identified specific practices as problematic and expressly indicated to others why they viewed them in this way. Their interventions centred around English and Cypriot Greek, the linguistic resources that did not conform with their monolingual and monodialectal ideologies. Parents were concerned that their children were exposed to an excessively high amount of English both in the classroom (“the lesson is done in English”, extract 2, lines 3, 27–28) and outside it during socialisation with others (“he speaks only English with his schoolmates”, extract 2, lines 22–23). There was a fear this would hinder the prospects of their children achieving a minimally satisfactory level of Greek.

Exposure to undesirable language was also an issue with respect to Cypriot Greek. The mother in extract 2 was determined to stop her child from “hearing” Cypriot-accented speech based on what she was able to hear herself (“I can hear the headteacher”, line 18). She sought to protect her child from what she is able to perceive as a danger that the child was unable to perceive as such: the non-Greekness of the headteacher’s speech (“that’s not even Greek to begin with”, extract 2, line 19). Although the headteacher was not recorded or observed as part of the study, it is difficult to imagine that she would address the school congregation using basilectal Cypriot Greek features. The communicative context and her positioning as headteacher make it more likely for her to use a Cypriot variety of Standard Greek akin to the urban Cypriot Greek koiné (Terokourafi 2005). This suggests that even the

slightest Cypriot features that would be present in that variety paint the headteacher and Greek Cypriot teachers more generally as speakers of “incorrect” Greek (“I don’t want a Cypriot, though, I want him to hear correct Greek”, extract 2, lines 9–10), deligitimising them as leaders and educators at a Greek language educational institution such as the complementary school.

### 5.2. Teachers as Negotiators of “Illegitimate” Language

When contrasting UK-born Greek Cypriot pupils and Greek pupils in terms of their linguistic repertoires and competences, teachers accounted for the differences they had observed with reference to mainly two notions: the life courses of the pupils and pupils’ parents, and the stigmatisation of Cypriot Greek as a linguistic resource. In the interviews, they explained that it was natural for Greek pupils to be dominant in Greek and to speak the language more ably, because they were the “second generation”. They constructed this as a group of children who were born in the UK to parents who had migrated recently (“newer migrants”). They assumed that first-generation parents adopted strictly monolingual family language policies in that Greek was the only language that was spoken at home, which resulted in advanced competences among Greek pupils. Teachers placed Greek Cypriot pupils in the “third generation”, meaning they were born in the UK to parents who were also born in the UK. They stated that, in these families, English was the language routinely used in interactions between parents and their children. Greek was used with and by grandparents, to the extent that they were present and involved in family life. They generally took the Greek spoken within such extended families to consist of varieties of Cypriot Greek, the uses of which were influenced by language ideologies that stigmatise Cypriot Greek as a rural linguistic form that may index speakers as uneducated, impolite and improper, especially in formal contexts where the use of Standard Greek is expected (Karatsareas 2018, 2019). It was therefore understandable, according to teachers, for Greek Cypriot pupils not only to have lower competences in Standard Greek but also to feel reluctant to draw on their Cypriot Greek resources or to even consider that these resources could be used as tools in the learning of Standard Greek in complementary school.

In their encounters with Greek pupils and parents who devalorised the linguistic repertoires and competences of Greek Cypriot pupils and (head)teachers, teachers defended the legitimacy of Greek Cypriots as speakers of Greek, calling for their multilingual and multidialectal practices to be assessed in conjunction with their life courses. Eleonora’s pupil rejected her classmates’ productions as non-existent, intervening during the lesson to correct their mistakes in the presence of the teacher, thus implicitly challenging her authority and legitimacy as a Greek language educator (“that’s not how you say it”, extract 1, line 2). Eleonora responded with an affirmation that confirmed the actual use of these productions and linked them to the Greek Cypriot pupils’ backgrounds and their trajectories of language acquisition (“that is how you say it . . . these children have grown up using that word”, extract 1, lines 2–4). Life courses and acquisition trajectories differ among people, and so does their language. Eleonora refers openly to this relation in her response to her pupil as she invites her to consider her own competences in English and to compare them with those of the UK-born pupils who speak English “flawlessly”, as a “mother tongue” (extract 1, line 12). Liza argued that teachers’ backgrounds should not be used to reach conclusions about the quality and content of their teaching and the learning outcomes that pupils will achieve (“even if she is Cypriot, the child will learn the correct language”, extract 2, line 15). Offering herself as a pertinent example and referring to her place of origin which differed from the mother’s, she, too, normalised linguistic variation in teachers’ speech as a reflection of their life course and acquisition trajectories (extract 2, lines 20–21). The two teachers’ responses are better understood against the backdrop of their individual biographies: Eleonora is of Greek Cypriot origin herself, she was born in the UK, and had many years of experience working in complementary schools teaching children such as the ones her pupil criticised. Liza’s experience was less extensive and perhaps she considered more apposite and potentially effective to establish a common

ground with the mother with references to Greece as the common starting point of their recent migration to the UK.

## 6. Conclusions

In this article, I have explored some of the sociolinguistic processes that were set in motion when, after the government-debt crisis began seriously affecting Greek society, people who had been born in Greece migrated to the UK in search of better life prospects for themselves, their families, and their children. As part of their migration trajectories, they dislodged their linguistic repertoires, their competences in Greek and English, and their language ideologies, which they had acquired and developed in the course of their biographies, and repositioned them in sites and spaces that were previously characterised by language ecologies in which the repertoires, competences and ideologies of Greek Cypriot migrants were dominant. Complementary schools were among the sites and spaces that family-orientated Greek migrants entered at the earliest phases of this “new” migration, facilitated by the positioning of schools as ethn(olinguist)ically Greek, that is, institutions that transcend divisions imposed by national boundaries such as the political separation between Greece and Cyprus and which forge links between people constructed as ethnically Greek, using language as the predominant cohesive characteristic.

Prior to the arrival of the “new” Greek migrants, the migration trajectories and life courses of Greek Cypriot migrants had contributed to the creation, establishment, and acceptance of schools as inherently multilingual and multidialectal sites, where English and Cypriot Greek were recognised, albeit not always willingly accepted, as firm components of pupils’, parents’ and teachers’ linguistic repertoires that co-existed in everyday language practices. According to the complementary school teachers I interviewed, these practices did not conform with the monolingual and monodialectal expectations that “new” Greek migrants had when they enrolled their children to attend schools, which they had imagined would bear as many similarities as possible with mainstream schools in Greece. Positioning themselves as linguistic authorities whose legitimacy lay in their provenance from Greece, recently arrived pupils and parents mobilised language ideologies that devalorised the use of non-standardised varieties and the mixing and interplay of “separate” linguistic resources. They viewed complementary schools as sites where these practices were not acceptable and developed discourses that delegitimised speakers who engaged in multi-lingual and multidialectal practices as legitimate speakers of Greek. Teachers responded with counter-discourses that re-valued contested practices as products of different linguistic repertoires shaped by different life courses and trajectories of linguistic resources acquisition. Interestingly, these differ from the monoglossic and deficit views that recently migrated Greek teachers in Canada expressed towards the teaching of Greek in Montreal in [Panagiotopoulou and Rosen’s \(2019\)](#) study.

These insights build on a first charting of the multiple ways in which “new” Greek migration diversified Greek complementary schools in the UK ([Karatsareas 2021](#)), placed within a broader line of research investigating the impact “new” migration had on Greek-speaking communities around the globe with a current focus on community language education ([Damanakis et al. 2014](#); [Panagiotopoulou et al. 2019](#)). They highlight the UK as a locale of particular interest, owing to the complexities that emerge out of the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic differences between (groups of) people who migrated from Cyprus and Greece, their perceptions of the other group, and orientations towards issues of language and belonging. They also contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions about the “changing faces of transnational communities in Britain” ([Curd-Christiansen et al. 2021](#)) and more generally, to research on the role language plays in contexts of migration, especially among migrants that ideological discourses construct as co-ethnic.

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