

The Teaching and Learning of German as a Foreign Language in Greece – A Critical Investigation and Assessment

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Abstract

It is commonplace that the knowledge and use of foreign languages contribute positively to various and diverse fields in all countries of the world as well as to many social, cultural, labour, commercial, economic, political discussions and interactions of any civil society. Their role has been decisive in the past, still is today and it is more than evident that foreign languages will continue to play a decisive role in the future, especially on the personal, collective, state and cross-border levels, due to the ever-increasing mobility of people, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, from one continent to another, from one country on the same continent to another, from one poor, war-torn, oppressive and fascist country to a peaceful, democratic one, from one democratic country to another democratic one, etc. In particular, it plays a key role in: a. the acceptance of others with different origins, culture, religion, language, etc.; b. the mutual understanding, communication and the establishment of social relations between citizens of different cultures; c. the intellectual cultivation, cultural exchange, personal, professional rehabilitation and development of people; d. the conception and understanding of citizens that education and culture are the main pillars of the economic development of a country and of each individual; e. the cultivation and promotion of interdisciplinarity and the general progress of science and research; f. the friendship between States; g. the diplomatic (inter)negotiations, commercial transactions, various agreements between States. The present paper has been written for all these reasons and a few more discussed further on. It studies in a critical-interpretative way various aspects of the teaching and learning of German as a foreign language in Greece, a language spoken by several million people all over the world.

Keywords: Language learning, German language teaching, Multilingualism, Foreign language teacher education, Language education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of foreign languages is of concern to all countries of the world. Every country is making efforts to learn its language in order to benefit in several respects. It is, moreover, no coincidence that the European Union decided at the end of the 1990s (1997) to establish the institution of language learning in the education of students as early as primary school and the celebration of the European Day of Languages (2001) every year on September 26 (<https://edl.ecml.at>, Accessed: 17-7-2023). This fact reinforces the choice of the topic under consideration.

In Greece "two out of three Greeks know foreign languages" and only three out of ten do not (<https://www.kathimerini.gr> society retrieved 23-5-

2023). The learning, in my opinion, is not, as is implied, because Greek is a "minority" language (<https://www.kathimerini.gr> society retrieved 23-5-2023), but for other reasons that will be discussed later in this paper. If, for example, one takes into account that the majority of second and third grade high school students hold the official B2 title of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and a fairly significant percentage the C2 title, bearing also in mind that relatively substantial numbers of Greek emigrate after their secondary and university studies in Greece and excel in their career in several foreign countries, then one could argue that the reasons for learning one or more foreign languages are different and deeper, some of which will be analysed below.

Regarding the issue of teaching and learning German in Greece, which is the subject of this study, there seems to be a significant increase in the number of Greek secondary school students learning German, compared to those learning French; however, French still has a predominance (<https://www.iefimerida.gr>). The number of Greeks, however, who learn German in their country is very low compared to those who learn English, regardless of the fact that German is one of the 'powerful' languages of the world (Centre for the Greek Language, 1999) and is spoken by many millions of citizens of the European Union (EU) and many other countries of the world. German is taught in primary and secondary public schools, as can be easily seen from the school curriculum, but its learning is in fact implemented and completed mainly with the contribution of private education, more particularly in Language Schools, private courses, the Goethe Institute, etc. (see, for example, Polymili, 2016, 2018).

With the above in mind, an effort is made on the one hand to discuss in a critical-interpretative way the importance and reasons for learning and teaching German, the institutions that teach it and their role in the effectiveness of teaching and learning, as well as the findings arising from the theoretical study of the subject under discussion, and on the other hand to present proposals that arise through the critical analysis of this theoretical study and which could contribute to the effective teaching and learning of German.

2. Reasons for learning German as a foreign language

This section analyses in an interpretive and critical way some of the reasons which, in our opinion, are considered to be the most important for learning German, without, however, implying that they are the only ones and cannot be interpreted differently.

2.1 German, like any other language, has its own history, importance, significance and value (Babinotis, 2016), all the more so when it belongs to the "powerful" languages of the world (Centre for the Greek Language, 1999) and the number of native speakers is large the native speakers of German, taking into account the population of each country in which it is spoken officially, are likely to exceed one hundred million or more, which is not the case with Greek. In particular, German is not only spoken as an official language in Germany and Austria, but also in Luxembourg together with French, in Belgium together with Dutch and French, in Switzerland together with French, Italian and Romance languages, and in Liechtenstein. It is also spoken in the autonomous province of Bolzano (Suedtirol) in Italy, in the Silesian region of southern Poland and in the Swiss Vatican Guard, but not as an official language. It is still spoken in many German regions, such as Poland, Romania and Russia, in former German colonies such as Namibia (former German Southwest Africa, Rwanda-Urundi), Burundi, in many former outposts in the Pacific, in minority populations in

North and South America, in villages in Slovakia and Brazil (<https://www.pdv.org.gr>) as well as in Denmark and Hungary (<https://www.el.m.wikipedia.org>). Finally, German, like all the languages of the other Member States of the European Union, is spoken in the European Union. This does not mean, of course, that the other languages of the other countries of the European Union and the languages of countries outside the European Union do not have their own importance and value. After all, no language 'stands alone' (<https://www.goethe.de>). In fact, there must be many more people who speak German as a mother tongue and as a foreign language, estimated at more than 229 million (<https://www.deutschprojekt.gr>). On the contrary, Greek is spoken as an official language in Greece and Cyprus as well as in the European Union, as are all the languages of the countries (states) belonging to the European Union. In Albania, Armenia, Italy, Hungary, Italy, Ukraine, Romania, Romania and Turkey it is recognized as a minority language (<https://www.el.m.wikipedia.org>). This differentiation between foreign languages does not in any way imply that those who learn and speak a 'strong' foreign language or belong to the category of 'strong' languages are 'superior' citizens to those who speak a 'weak' language or belong to the category of 'weak' languages; each language has its own meaning and value as already mentioned above.

2.2 Germany is one of the most important industrial and developed countries in the European Union and the world. Its economy, which may be shaken in times of international crisis, such as the current one, due to the koruna, the energy crisis, etc., remains strong, robust and plays an important role not only in the living standards of Germans themselves but also in the development and progress of the international industrial, economic, etc. market, and in the development and progress of science and research. Its economy displays growing development in comparison with other countries inside and outside the European Union, through the export of its industrial products, trade and the various economic agreements it has concluded with other countries, including Greece, albeit to a lesser extent than with other countries.

2.3 Germany is the country which has been cultivating, has highlighted and promoted, both at home and internationally, Greek ancient philosophy and in general almost all Greek classical education; in this way it has contributed to its recognition and further development. Regardless of whether it is still overshadowed today because of its inhuman fascist past and its criminal acts committed in the Second World War, it is the country that has been bringing up special and unique personalities of the intellectual world, eminent philosophers, physicists, chemists, musicians, musicologists, composers, artists, sociologists, psychiatrists, pedagogues and generally people of spirit, art and letters, through whom it has gained international

recognition and fame. For example, personalities such as Goethe, Hegel, Kant, Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Marx, Heidegger, although there were indications and nuances about Heidegger's biased preference for Nazism, Plank, Adorno, Markuse, Horkheimer, Habermas, Einstein, Beethoven, Bach, Boell, Grass, Brecht, Herbart, Kerschstein, Freud, Luther and others. etc.; these names, and many others not afore mentioned, show and document the great contribution of Germany to the fields referred to above.

2.4 The good, solid and systematic education offered in the past and still offered today by German public universities (most German universities are still public today), as well as the internationally recognized, remarkable and pioneering work carried out in its various research institutes in the fields of economics, physics, biochemistry, medicine, education, etc, make Germany an attractive country to study at undergraduate, postgraduate and postdoctoral level. I would like to mention some of the universities, those of Heidelberg, Jena, Leipzig, Leipzig, Berlin, Tübingen and Munich, where Greeks who have distinguished themselves as politicians, university professors, researchers in institutes, etc., have studied before and after the Second World War, in Greece (for example, Prime Ministers Georgios Papandreou, father of Andreas Papandreou, and Costas Simitis studied in Berlin and Marburg respectively) and in Germany (the distinguished and eminent Professor Konstantinos Karatheodoris in Berlin) (<https://www.protothema.gr>). In addition to the above, there are, for example, a few other important personalities mentioned: Magakis, Chatsos and others in Heidelberg, Delmouzos in Leipzig, Glinos in Jena and Leipzig, Papanoutsos in Berlin and Tübingen, Rosa Invrioti in Berlin, Exarchopoulos in Jena, etc.

2.5 Germany has always been a country admitting many Greek immigrants, especially in the 1960s, when the first wave of Greek immigrants occurred. These economic immigrants and migrants, despite all the problems and difficulties they encountered, especially in the early years, from many places (including from the Germans themselves), but also those who migrated in the 2010s and are still migrating to Germany today (the second wave of mostly migrants), whose educational level is much higher and different from the first wave of Greek immigrants) have been and still are to a large extent the bridge for the improvement of relations between the two peoples, the development of the economy and tourism of both countries, the abolition of prejudices from both sides, etc. etc. The economic and professional development of the Greeks created new and different paths both in the development of good and friendly relations (there were many mixed marriages) and in the economic, spiritual and cultural development of the two countries. In particular, second and third generation Greek immigrants are hired in very important positions solely on the basis of their qualifications and abilities and not through

illegitimate means, such as through the (inter)mediation of a political party etc. Thus, one finds Greek professors in German universities and research centres (for example, Spyros Simitis, Director of the Research Centre for Personal Data Protection at the University of Frankfurt, State of Hesse, the former Prime Minister of Greece Kostas Simitis, the late Professors Georgios Magakis, Dimitris Tsatsos and many others). Furthermore, one can meet members of the German Parliament (for example, Christos Pantazis, a member of the SPD political party, elected in the 2021 elections), mayors (for example, Dimitrios Axourgos in the town of Sverte in the Ruhr Valley in Rhineland-Westphalia), Members of the European Parliament (for example, Georgios Hadjimarkakis). Finally, Greek professors at German universities and researchers at research centres are teaching and excelling today: For example, Vassilis Nziaristos is a professor at the Technical University of Munich, Efrosini Helioti is director of international relations at the Helmholtz Association, Eleftherios Goulielmakis, a researcher of Quantum Optics at the Max Planck Institute, Maria Spyrou also a researcher of Human History at the Max Planck Institute (<https://www.hania.news>), etc.

2.6 Germany receives millions of tourists from many countries, mainly Americans, Asians (Japanese, Chinese, etc.) but also from Greece in recent years, before the coronavirus pandemic and the energy crisis, and millions of Germans travel to many countries, including Greece. Thus, Greeks get to know German culture and Germans get to know Greek culture (ancient and modern), literature and modern art, modern museums in Greece, its natural beauties and the way its citizens think about other people. In other words, tourism serves a dual purpose. Thus, learning German facilitates to a large extent the stay of tourists from German-speaking countries as well as of those who do not come from German-speaking countries but speak German.

2.7 The knowledge of both languages, and this is the case in almost all languages, is the mutual borrowing of both languages; in this case German from Greek (especially Ancient Greek) and Greek from German. Also, another common feature is what the two languages, Germanic and Ancient Greek, have in common in terms of their similar grammar and syntactic structure. These two features provide an answer to those who claim that their language is unaffected, "authentic" and uninfluenced by others and that learning foreign languages is difficult. This discourse gives an answer to those who claim that German is difficult and cannot be learned easily. Every language is easy and difficult at the same time, depending on how much one wishes to learn it, how much effort one puts in doing so, how much one thinks it will help them personally, professionally, socially, culturally, economically, etc.

2.8 In concluding this short section, one can summarize the following: Learning German as a foreign

language is necessary and required today because of the many changes and alterations that have been created in Germany in the industrial, economic, social, cultural, tourist, scientific, research and political spheres since the Second World War and its contribution to literature and art in the past, if one excludes the two dark periods of the two world wars. Today Germany is regarded as one of the most powerful and important industrial, economic, etc. countries in Europe and the world, a country which has the greatest influence in the European Parliament and plays a decisive role in the economic, political, linguistic, cultural, research, etc. life of the EU countries and the world in general. For Greece in particular, learning it gives those Greeks who learn and speak it: a. personal and professional opportunities; b. opportunities for developing interaction, mutual understanding and respect for diversity, for studying at undergraduate, postgraduate and postdoctoral level in Germany; c. the skills and knowledge to become acquainted with the German culture, the German classical music, the German literature, art, etc. on the one hand, and to occupy political and high positions at a local and national level in Germany as well as at a European level. Also, learning German for all peoples, especially for Greeks, contributes to the understanding of the diversity of the two peoples and to the development of any relations between them. The above shows, among other things, why the teaching and learning of German in our country today is becoming a useful imperative. It is necessary, in addition to what has been mentioned above, because it helps especially those who are possessed by feelings of xenophobia, racism and intolerance, i.e. hatred, hostility and prejudice, to overcome, to a certain extent, any prejudices they may have, without this meaning that there not those who oppose the learning of German also because of Germany's sinful past, as already pointed out. This does not mean, however, that the people of a country do not change their policies and attitudes, that they do not learn from the mistakes they have committed in the past and that they cannot change in the future. After all, the recognition by the Germans themselves of the horrible crimes committed by fascism and Germany's turn after the Second World War towards a united democratic Germany of the democratic Europe, clearly shows that it has changed, recognising its own heavy and sinful past. After all, Germany and France, which were bitter enemies before the Second World War, are today an example to many people: they have been on friendly terms for more than seven decades, putting aside the enmity between them until the Second World War and playing a major role in the establishment of the European Economic Community (25-3-1957) and later the European Union (1-11-1993). Important political personalities such as Adenauer, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, Helmut Kohl, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and others played a decisive role in the re-foundation, consolidation and strengthening of its democratic institutions, in the economic, cultural, political, etc. development of both Germany and the European Union, including Greece, after the Second World War. With

regard to our country, one could also mention, for example, the assistance offered by various governments of Germany (former West Germany) to Greek political exiles and non-exiles, who during the dictatorship of the Colonels (1967-1974) fled to the then Germany, where they resisted and fought the unacceptable dictatorial regime in various ways.

3. Institutions and institutions for teaching and learning German in Greece

This section discusses the educational institutions and various other bodies that contribute in their own way to the teaching and learning of German in Greece and play an important role in creating and ensuring appropriate and favourable conditions for the teaching and learning of German.

3.1 German is taught and learned, as research shows, mainly in private education (Language Schools) (see, for example, Chatzidimou&Sidiropoulou, 2019; Polymili, 2016, 2018) for a fee. That is, in order to study and complete a foreign language, in this case German, one has to pay a very large sum of money. Attending these schools is very expensive, so children from poor families are at a disadvantage, do not complete the learning of the foreign language and stop the learning process as soon as they get their initial degrees at B1 or B2 level. Learning German in language schools in our country is undoubtedly a 'bitter' reality. This means that both Language Schools and private lessons play the most important role in foreign language learning as well as in students' admission to higher education (Polymili, 2016, 2018). Language Schools include the Goethe Institute, currently operating in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras and Chania, whose degrees are recognized by the Higher Personnel Selection Board (ASEP) and the German public authorities. The Goethe-Institut was originally founded in Munich in 1951 as an autonomous association for the training of foreign teachers of the German language, but later changed its policy. A year later, in 1952, the first Goethe Institute was founded in Athens, followed immediately by Thessaloniki and several years later Chania and Patras, to promote the teaching of German as a foreign language (<https://www.goethe.de>). It should be clarified that, in order to have a degree in German language learning, as well as in other languages, recognized by the Higher Personnel Selection Board (ASEP) of Greece, those who have learned German at Language Schools must either take examinations organised by the Goethe Institute or take and pass the examinations organised by the Ministry of Education for the award of the State Certificate of Language Proficiency.

3.2 The above shows that German and other foreign languages are learned in private educational institutions (language schools) and not, as should normally be the case, in public schools. In other words, in order to enter one of the two German language faculties in the universities of Athens or Thessaloniki, or

to later study, work, etc. in one of the German-speaking countries, the Greek state, to put it simply and straight forwardly, does practically nothing. One could even argue that German is taught in the public schools in order to be taught and not in order to be learned (this also applies to other foreign languages). In fact, it is the Greek state that pushes students to learn German in private lessons, as it does not give it the importance and weight one would expect. The present study does not mention or comment on the existing material and technical infrastructure of the school units with regard to the teaching of German and other foreign languages with a single word, because it is unfortunately a reality that the foreign language teachers do not have the appropriate learning materials nor the appropriate rooms for teaching; the material and technical infrastructure of the school units is thus poor to non-existent. The fact that the material and technical infrastructure, inadequate staffing, etc. of public schools are in a very poor state is highlighted by both teachers' unions and authors (see, for example, the demands of the OLME strike (9-2-2021; Kamarianos *et al.*, 2019).

3.3 German is also taught in the existing German Schools of Thessaloniki and Athens (Deutsche Schule Thessaloniki und Deutsche Schule Athen), which have been in operation since the 19th century. Specifically, the German School of Thessaloniki (die Deutsche Schule) has been in operation since 1870, with a few years of interruption due to the Second World War (Kremetis, 2009), while the German School of Athens has been in operation since 1896. In these schools, it should be noted that German is not taught as a foreign language, because in order to attend these schools one must already know German. It is more about cultivating German as a mother tongue than as a foreign language. However, courses are also offered specifically for the teaching of German as a foreign language, thus helping the Greek students attending these schools to improve and master their spoken and written German. In addition, courses in German as a foreign language for adults are organized and implemented in the afternoon and evening hours;

3.4 German as a foreign language is offered for teaching and learning for four semesters, as well as other foreign languages (English, French, etc.) in almost all departments of the Greek universities in the country (see Curricula of all departments of all Greek universities). However, the following paradox is observed: instead of choosing a language they do not know, in this case German, students choose, for reasons of convenience and in order to get a better grade in their degree, the language they already know, so that they do not learn any other language except the one they already knew and know to some extent before their admission to university.

3.5 Where, however, one can consider that German is taught as a foreign language are the two Departments of German Language and Literature that

operate in Thessaloniki and Athens. Teaching in these departments is carried out both by members of the teaching and research staff and by lecturers (usually German) seconded by the German Academic and Artistic Exchange Service (DAAD), whose salary and travel expenses are fully covered. The German Academic and Artistic Exchange Service (DAAD) also provides scholarships for both undergraduate and postgraduate Greek students to learn German in Germany and for young Greek scientists and researchers to pursue further studies, research, etc. in Germany. Its contribution in this area is significant and the selection of students and researchers appears to be based on meritocratic criteria. The granting of scholarships by the institutions is not discussed in this paper: Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Friedrich-Nauman-Stiftung to young Greek scientists, because on the one hand they serve more partisan, ideological and less scientific purposes, and on the other hand the way of granting scholarships is done more on the basis of partisan than meritocratic criteria.

3.6 The German language is also taught at the Hellenic Open University of Greece (EAP), which is located in Patras and started operating under the ministry of Arsenis (Government Gazette 2552/1997). The EAP offers online special Postgraduate Programmes for holders of degrees in German Language and Literature. Specifically, German Studies at the EAP equip graduates of the Departments of German Language and Literature with such skills and qualifications that help them to cope more easily with the demands and difficulties they face as teachers of German in schools where they serve or will serve later either as teachers or as educational staff (school principals, directors of primary and secondary education, education counsellors, and educational coordinators).

4. Findings and Proposals

This section discusses some of the main findings that have emerged from the analysis of this paper so far and makes some suggestions that could be the subject of discussion among stakeholders.

4.1 Findings

In this short critical theoretical study, an attempt was made to study the issue of teaching and learning German in Greece in a critical interpretive way, in order to show the actions that are being taken in our country on this subject. It appears that German as a foreign language is currently being learned in Greece not particularly by Greeks of all ages, but mainly by primary and secondary school pupils, regardless of their origin and religion, by students and pupils, by young people who have completed their secondary and university studies, as well as by adults, regardless of their educational level. It is also found that learning it contributes to increasing their qualifications, to finding a job either in Greece or in one of the German-speaking countries, to furthering their studies at undergraduate or postgraduate level and post-

doctoral studies in a German-speaking country, mainly Germany.

The German language is taught at the Goethe Institute, at Language Schools, in public primary and secondary schools, at Greek universities and at the two public Greek universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. With the exception of teaching at the Goethe Institute, the Language Schools and the two public Greek universities of Athens and Thessaloniki, teaching in public schools is more formal than substantive, as has been pointed out and as will be shown even more clearly below.

The Goethe-Institut not only offers programmes for learning German as a foreign language, but also organises and conducts examination programmes for those who have learned German at various Greek language schools other than the Goethe-Institut in order to obtain a German language certificate. The Goethe certificate is equivalent to the state language certificate issued by the Greek state. The Goethe German courses are taught by teachers from Germany, other German-speaking countries and Greece who have a very good knowledge of German. In addition, the Goethe-Institut runs in-service training programmes "Learning to Teach German" (DLL) for teachers of German as a foreign/second language to improve their performance on a practical level (<https://www.goethe.de>). It also offers in-service training programmes for adults and parents to accompany their children in learning German at pre-school age, as well as for teachers of German in different parts of Greece on topics such as teaching methods, use of digital media in the classroom, etc.

The German Academic and Artistic Exchange Service (DAAD), as already mentioned, contributes to the teaching and improvement of the German language in Greece, mainly by providing German lecturers to the two Departments of German Language and Literature to teach German, without any financial burden on the universities' budgets.

Language schools thus play the most important role in language learning, since not only are there no alternatives and solutions provided by the state, but the state itself pushes students to attend them in order to learn the language(s) they wish to learn. It is stressed once again that German is not taught at all in the third grade, while the state is well aware that there are candidates who want to take the national examinations in order to enter the German Language and Literature Departments. This means that our country is an international 'pioneer', with the only difference being that this pioneering spirit is distinguished solely by negative features and comes at an unbearable financial cost to the students' parents. The learning of German and all foreign languages is left mainly in the hands of the Language Schools, with the result that it is mainly completed by those who can afford it. The reasons why Greek students

learn foreign languages, in this case German, at Language Schools are primarily due to the indifference of the state. The state 'includes' them in the curricula of the two school levels simply in order to 'include' them, not so that teachers can 'teach' them and pupils can actually 'learn' them at school; the interest of both the state itself and the parents of the pupils in learning them effectively is minimal to non-existent. There are many other reasons for this unfortunate situation, such as the mentality of Greek parents (if they do not pay, their children do not learn), which I intend to discuss in detail in a subsequent paper on the subject.

This situation, which has just been described, is bound to create problems and difficulties both for the students who enter the German Language and Literature Departments and for the departments that train them educationally and professionally. This means that students in the Departments of the German Language and Literature have shortcomings and difficulties in their studies (there are of course exceptions), since the state does not, as it should, give due importance to the learning of German in public education before admission. Here the German Language and Literature Departments are called upon to overcome this large and difficult problem by offering special courses, but this is not sufficient. Things would be better if those admitted knew German 'very well' and 'excellently'; this could and can be achieved by a change in language education policy on the part of the Greek state.

4.2 Proposals

In order to overcome the problems that students and adults in general face in learning German, it would be advisable to take more initiatives than those currently undertaken by those involved in its teaching and learning (German Language and Literature Departments, the Goethe Institute, the German Academic and Artistic Exchange Service (DAAD), but especially the Greek state).

The Departments of the German Language and Literature, for example, should make even greater efforts to improve the language level of their students by offering relevant courses and many hours of cooperation for students, etc. The Departments could also enter into cooperation with more of their counterparts in German-speaking countries for the exchange of students and teachers. In this way, apart from the fact that Greek students would have the opportunity and the possibility to get to know the curricula of the respective departments, the teaching style of German professors, the functioning of their universities, etc., to improve their language level, to establish friendships with their German fellow students, to develop good relations with them, etc.

Primary and secondary schools, especially secondary schools where German is taught, should enter exchange programs with schools in Germany in the

context of twinning of their schools. In this way, there is a good chance that after the exchange visits, there will be good cooperation and communication between the teachers and pupils of the two countries and that the level of German language skills of the Greek teachers and pupils will improve, as well as relations among them, mutual respect, etc.

Another suggestion for more effective German language learning in our country, which concerns the Goethe-Institut, could be the following: The establishment of branches of the Goethe-Institut in various other regions of Greece, especially in the border regions (e.g. in Thrace, the Aegean and Ionian Islands), in order to give many residents of these regions the opportunity and possibility to learn German, since on the one hand many residents of these regions have lived and still live in Germany as immigrants and on the other hand receive many Germans as visitors. The Goethe-Institut could also take other measures in addition to the initiatives and activities already undertaken. Although it organizes and runs a biennial German Olympiad (<https://www.goethe.de>) in Germany together with the International Association of German Teachers, it could, for example, organize workshops and conferences with invited teachers from Germany or other German-speaking countries on pedagogical, teaching, linguistic etc. issues, as it does in Germany and as the Goethe-Institut of Thessaloniki did in the 1980s. The close and constructive cooperation between the Goethe-Institut and the departments of the German language and literature should be further strengthened and expanded.

Both the German Academic and Artistic Exchange Service (DAAD), by taking even more initiatives for the teaching of German in Greece, and the Panhellenic Association of German Language Teachers could contribute even more than they do today to the improvement of the teaching and learning of German as a foreign language. The aforementioned Association, with the close cooperation it seems to have with the German departments of the two universities, would be well advised to cooperate with the bodies of other foreign languages as well as with the trade union federations of the two school levels, the Greek Teachers' Federation and the Federation of Secondary Education Officers, in order to convince the state to finally change this unpleasant situation in public education. In this way, the state and even the teachers' trade unions themselves might realize that foreign languages are in the present and will be in the future more and more needed for all the citizens of Greece and for the country itself, so it would be good if the state showed more attention and more interest in the learning of foreign languages.

The Hellenic-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Greece could also contribute to the learning and promotion of German and the overcoming of this unpleasant and regrettable phenomenon in its teaching and learning. This body is aware of the great

contribution that trade and cooperation between the two countries (Greece and Germany) make to the development of the economy and generally to the improvement of their bilateral relations. Thus, one could speculate, if not claim, that it would help to change, as has been pointed out, to some extent, this sad situation in the learning and teaching of the German language.

The institution that bears the greatest responsibility for the low level of students' German language skills and that can improve the dire situation in which German is currently found in public education and contribute to the achievement of the purposes of German language learning - immigration, studies, scientific development, tourism, trade relations, professional improvement and opportunities, personal satisfaction, pleasure, etc. (Chatzidimou&Sidiropoulou, 2019), is, as emphatically pointed out, the Greek state. The Greek state would be well advised to finally stand by the students with regard to the learning of German, as is the case in other European countries (Kelpanides&Vrinioti, 2002). For example, in Germany, English is considered as one of the core subjects for the acquisition of the Abitur (high school diploma) and for the admission of candidates to universities, regardless of their admission department. If something similar cannot be established in Greece, the state could at least appoint a sufficient number of graduates of the two departments of the German Language and Literature in public education and abolish the limited number of enrolled pupils required to teach German in primary and secondary schools. They need to change the curriculum for the teaching of German in secondary schools so that it is established as an elective course without the requirement of teaching it in the last year of secondary school and as a subject of specialization for those who wish to enter the German Language and Literature Departments (Chatzidimou, 2017). Since education is still regarded as a public social good, the state would do well to prove at last, in practice and not in theory, that public schools and not private language schools have priority in the learning of German. It is not allowed to entrust the learning of German and the admission of candidates to German Language and Literature courses to private education (mainly Language Schools), when this is solely the state's exclusive task. The responsibility for most of the negative aspects of the subject under discussion lies entirely with the state, since it 'preaches' that education is a public good and concerns everyone, irrespective of any kind of diversity among its students and its citizens in general. The problems can be solved by increasing teachers' salaries, by improving working conditions, by appropriate curricula and textbooks, by cooperation and discussion between all those involved in the educational life of the country, and not by one-sided and authoritarian decisions and orders from the state to the teachers. Problems and weaknesses are not postponed and do not await a solution from others (institutions, etc.), but from those who bear the responsibility; in this case, the state in the broadest sense of the term.

5. CONCLUSION

In concluding this paper, it seems appropriate to pose a question mostly for reflection and contemplation than for an answer, because it falls in contrast to the objectives of this paper. Would the conditions and many negatives that exist in the teaching and learning of German in Greece improve and the number of students as well as adults increase even more, if Germany gave the possibility and opportunity to teach Modern Greek not only at the Free University of Berlin, the Universities of Hamburg, Bonn, Mainz, Minster, Munich, Bochum and Leipzig, but also in other universities and public schools? Would this perhaps be a way of giving the Modern Greek language the same value for German students and adults as the ancient Greek language, which is taught in many secondary schools, has already acquired? Modern Greek is indeed taught in many popular universities (Volkshochschulen), but these cover and serve more tourist needs and less cultural, literary, scientific, research, etc. desires and purposes.

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