

## **Research on Feelings of Elementary School Students in Learning Foreign Languages: the Case of Greek, the First and the Second Foreign Language**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims to record, investigate and study the views and attitudes of primary school students for the teaching of foreign languages. The survey involved 96 sixth grade students from Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece. Data analysis was performed by means of correspondence analysis. The results concerning the teaching of the Greek language are that students have moderate to high positive emotional attitude, from moderate to high attitude regarding the cognitive abilities of learning, and very positive attitude regarding to its value. For the first foreign language has been recorded high positive emotional attitude as well as high attitude for both the cognitive abilities of the students and the languages' value. Also, for the teaching of a second foreign language, students showed positive emotional attitude and moderate to high cognitive abilities.*

### **Theoretical Framework**

Language plays an important role in everyday life and the development of mankind. Only so is efficient communication, formulation of thoughts and expression of feelings possible. Also highlighting a request and claiming rights, as to edit the environment and better understanding of the world in which someone lives is an undisputed fact (Athanasidou, 2001). The first language that a person learns in his life, is the mother tongue L1. With the term mother tongue is the language which the parents of a child speaks meant, which in most cases is the language which a child first learns (Hermann., 2000). With use of the mother tongue many adults have greater trust than the use of other languages (Papapoulou, 1997). The first foreign language L2, is learned after the mother tongue L1, is the language which a person learns after L1 or during the moment or time period of learning the mother tongue. L2 is usually learned by persons to communicate in their own Families (one of the Family members speaks another mother tongue) or to use L2 as a skill in everyday life and Marketing Communications (Hermann, 2000). As for the second foreign language L3 is mostly a language which wants to learn a person targeted and he will not necessarily want to use L3 in his everyday life in contrast to the languages L1 and L2.

The learning of L3, L4, L5, L6, Lx (Lx>L2) substantially distinguished from the L1 and L2. for example, greater number of transfer bases represented by the Presence of more than one language arise, a demonstrably higher consciousness in Regarding the language itself as well as on their multilingualism and their Own learning, including the learning strategies, in fact learning beyond L2 (Lx>L2) is for the learner easier (Thomas 1988, Neuner 1992). In comparative studies, it was found that learners who already have or had learned a foreign language or foreign languages, learning a second language than L3 or Lx (Lx>L2) had a higher and faster performance achieved as learners, for the relevant Foreign language than during the learning of L2 the fact was (Mägiste 1984, Thomas 1985). Unfortunate the number of languages learned and the use of learned strategies and the degree of awareness about each other correlate (Missler 1999). In Greece, as L1 language is the Greek language defined. L2 as in most countries in Europe is the English language and L3 mostly the German or French language. Greek students learn the L1 since their birth; in contrast the L2 and L3 were learned in a later age. L2 is learned in Greek schools for about seven years while L3 since the law a. F. 52/480/71029/Γ1/18-7-05 (FEK 1051/2005 vol. B') and b. F.52/812/127372/Γ1/14-11-2005 for five to six years. In case of L3 students begin to learn the language in the fifth class of Primary school (since 2006). Students can choose the language they prefer to. Choosing in L2 is not approval; the English language is the only option students have.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to record, investigate and study the views and attitudes of primary school students for the teaching of foreign languages.

Particular consideration has been given to the feelings of students both for the Greek language and the learning of first and second language. Additionally, it has been examined the attitudes of students concerning the value and the utility of learning foreign languages. Finally, the students' attitudes have been recorded regarding the cognitive learning ability for both the Greek and the foreign languages. The results showed that students have positive attitude.

### **Sample**

The sample consisted of 96 sixth grade students of a school in Thessaloniki. 44 of them were girls and 52 boys. 14 out of 96 students were 11 years old and 82 were 12 years old. All students were of sixth grade and stated that they are Greeks. 28 students were from the center of Thessaloniki, 32 were from the East of Thessaloniki and 36 from the West of Thessaloniki. As far as the country of origin is concerned, 12 students stated Albanian origin; two students stated Russian and 82 Greek. Furthermore, except that all students stated that they attend English lessons as a first foreign language, as a second foreign language, 20 of them stated that they attend German lessons, 56 stated they attend French lessons and 20 Italian lessons.

### **Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire consists of four parts. The first part includes demographic questions relating to gender, age, class, and school, nationality of students, country of origin, first and second foreign language. The second part includes 15 questions regarding the feelings to the Greek language, questions that concern about attitudes of students about the value and usefulness of the module, and finally questions in relation with respondents' views on cognitive ability. Answers to the questions were given according to a scale called 7-point likert scale, where 1 rating indicates strongly disagreement with the statement and 7 indicates strongly agreement. Then the scale was divided into three classes with percentages as follows: 25% -50% -25%. The third and fourth part, include those questions from the second part which concern the first and the second foreign language respectively.

### **Methodology**

**Correspondence Analysis:** With the application of Correspondence Analysis we achieve nearly overall description of the phenomenon with the help of a smaller number of new complex independent variables, the so-called factors.

The characteristic roots Table gives the characteristic values  $\lambda_k$ , where  $k= 1,2,3,4$  for each axis, with values between 0 and 1 (Karapistolis, 2011; Papadimitriou, 2007).

The first column gives the number of the factorial axis  $e_i$ .

The second column gives the absolute values of characteristic values.

The third column gives the percentage versus the total inertia.

The fourth column gives the cumulative percentage of inertia axes.

The fifth column gives the histogram of the characteristic values according to their size.

The indicators used in the interpretation of the results of this particular correspondence analysis, are the indicators "inertia", "contribution" and "correlation". These indicators let us identify directly the most important and decisive variables or objects that contribute to the creation of the factorial axes. The results of this correspondence analysis are interpreted with the help of inertia, which is being explained by each factorial axis, and finally with the help of correlation and contribution.

### **Results**

The criteria for selection of variables that have good projection quality and contribute to the construction of axes are based solely on the following values of correlation and contribution:  $Cor \geq 200$  και

$Ctr \geq \frac{1000}{\text{πλήθος} \cdot \text{μεταβλητών}}$ . Therefore, in our application according to the previous, we could choose the

variables  $Cor \geq 200$  (criterion 2) and  $Ctr = 1000/45 = 22.22$ , or better  $Ctr = 23$  (criterion 3).

**The case of Greek language (L1):** The analysis of the data table with the AFC initially gives Table 1, which shows the characteristic values of Burt table as well as the percentages of inertia of each factorial axis.

Table 1 let us discern the number of principal factorial axes, which are best suited to the interpretation of the results. The inertia percentage of each factorial axis let us know the significance percentage that each expresses (criterion 1).

According to the values given by the histogram (Table 1), the significance percentage of the first factorial axis is 64.68% and the second is 35.32%. The information which is provided by the first two factorial axes corresponds to 100%. The following table shows all the information provided by the first two factorial axes.

**Table 1: Inertia-Characteristic Roots for L1**

TOTAL INERTIA 0.18398				
AXON INERTIA% INTERPRETATION SUM   HISTOGRAM CHARACTERISTIC ROOTS				
1	0.2843228	64.68	64.68	*****
2	0.5208946	35.22	100.00	*****

The most important goal of the analysis is to identify the variables that contribute to the construction of the first factorial axes. According to the cumulative frequency the first two factorial axes interpret the 100% of the total dispersion of the data. This percentage is deemed as satisfactory for data interpretation.

Then, from the correspondence analysis results table and according to the above criteria we chose inertia, correlation and contribution, we identify the variables that contribute to the formation of the first factorial axes. The variables mentioned above, are the most important for exported factorial axes according to three criteria, inertia, correlation and contribution. These are given below. More particularly, Table 2 includes the variables displayed in each axis, the coordinates  $F_i$  and the indicators Cor and Ctr.

**Interpretation of the First Factorial Axis  $e_1$**

The first factorial axis  $e_1$ , with eigenvalue 0.2843228, interprets the 64.68% of the total data dispersion. Specifically, the first factorial axis  $e_1$  represents those respondents' views, which are referred to the Greek language course (Table 2).

**Table 2: Variables mentioned in the Greek language (L1)**

	#F1	COR	CTR
q4A:I feel excited in the language classroom	-172	618	48
q1A: I feel happy in the language classroom	--117	584	44
q2A: I feel satisfied in the language classroom	-843	482	42
q3A: I feel happy in the language classroom	-56	268	33
q9A: I am very good in language module	142	236	26
q 13A. I'm pretty sure I'm doing very well in language module	373	231	26
q14A: The module of language is valuable	276	226	25
q 15A.Language is a very useful lesson	473	211	24

More specifically, the respondents argue that they feel excited with this lesson (q4A) (Cor = 618, Ctr = 48), extremely happy (q1A) (Cor = 584, Ctr = 44) and satisfied (q2A) (Cor = 482, Ctr = 42). Also, the students argue that the pleasure they get from the teaching of this particular subject is very big (q3A) (Cor = 268, Ctr = 33). Regarding their cognitive ability and the value of the course, the students argue that they are very good at the module (q9A) (Cor = 236, Ctr = 26), a module that they are doing very well (q12A), a module that has great value and importance (q14A) (Cor = 226, Ctr = 25), a module really useful (q15A) (Cor = 211, Ctr = 24).

Hence, the first factorial axis  $e_1$  is that composite variable, which owes its creation to itemsq4A, q1A, q2A, q3A, q9A, q13A, q14A, q15A. And can be called High Positive Emotional Attitude axis, High Cognitive Ability and High Value for the Greek Language (L1).

**Interpretation of the Second Factorial Axis<sub>2</sub>**

The second factorial axis  $e_2$ , with eigenvalue 0.5208946, interprets the 35.32% of the total data dispersion. For the second factorial axis  $e_2$  has been selected the following variables /itemsq4B, q8C, q6V, q3V, q5V, q9V, q13A (Table 3). More specifically, the second factorial axis  $e_2$  is being constructed according to the order of importance of questions q4V, q8C, q6V, q3V, q5V, q9V. The second factorial axis  $e_2$  is constructed and interpreted by those questions which reflect the opinions of those students regarding to their feelings towards the language module as well as their cognitive abilities.

Specifically, students whose statements lead to the construction of the second factorial axis argue that they feel moderate nervousness (q4V) (Cor = 609, Ctr = 609), indifference (q8C) (Cor = 593, Ctr = 37), moderate fear (q6V) (Cor = 423, Ctr = 34) and moderate pleasure (q3V) (Cor = 320, Ctr = 31) and moderate stress (q5V) (Cor = 318, Ctr = 24). Moreover they classify their cognitive ability as moderate level at the module. In particular, they believe, they are moderate in module (q9V) (Cor = 206, Ctr = 24) and have moderate levels of certainty and confidence in respect to how well they are doing in this module (q13V) (Cor = 205, Ctr = 24).

**Table 3: Variables Referred to Emotional and Cognitive Attitude Toward Greek Language (L1)**

	#F1	COR	CTR
q4B: I feel moderately nervous in language module	442	609	609
q8C: I am uninterested in the language module	314	593	37
q6B: I feel moderately scared in language module	204	423	34
q3B: I feel moderately happy in the language module	132	320	31
q5B: I am moderately anxious in the language module	317	318	24
q9B: I am moderately good in language module	123	206	24
q13B: I am moderately sure I'm doing very well in the language module	103	205	24

Therefore, the second factorial axis  $e_2$  is the composite variable, which is created due to the itemsq4V, q8C, q6V, q3V, q5V, q9V, q13A which represent moderate feelings and cognitive ability and can be called Moderate Emotional and cognitive attitude to Greek Language (L1) axis.

**The case of the First Foreign Language (L2):** According to the values given by the histogram (Table 4) the significance percentage of the first factorial axis is 56.91% and the second is 43.09%. The information which is provided by the first 2 factorial axes corresponds to 100%. The following table shows all the information provided by the first two factorial axes.

**Table 4: Inertia-Characteristic Roots for L2**

Total inertia 0,1986655				
AXON INERTIA% INTERPRETATION SUM   HISTOGRAM CHARACTERISTIC ROOT				
1	0.3490871	56.91	56.91	*****
2	0.4610478	43.09	100,00	*****

**Interpretation of the First Factorial Axis  $e_1$**

The first factorial axis,  $e_1$ , with eigenvalue 0, 3490871, interprets the 56,91% of the total data dispersion. For the first axis, the most important variables are / itemsq2A, q1A, q3A, q4A, q5A, q6A, q7A (Table 5). The factorial axis  $e_3$  represents the views of the respondents who claim that they feel satisfied with the module of the first foreign language which is English (q2A) (Cor = 572, Ctr = 63), happy (q1A) (Cor = 563, Ctr = 56) pleased (q3A) (Cor = 423, Ctr = 58) and excited (q4A) (Cor = 416, Ctr = 51). Additionally, the respondents do not feel any kind of negative feelings like anxiety (q5A) (Cor = 324, Ctr = 42), nervousness (q6A) (Cor= 403, Ctr = 40) and finally fear (q7A) (Cor = 376, Ctr = 31).

**Table 5: Variables Referred to Students' Feelings about Learning of the First Foreign Language (L2)**

	#F1	COR	CTR
q2A: I feel satisfied in the module of the first foreign language	531	572	63
q1A: I feel Happy in the module of the first foreign language	503	563	56
q3A: I feel pleased in the module of the first foreign language	97	423	58
q4A: I feel excited in the module of the first foreign language	471	416	51
q5A: I do not feel nervous in the module of the first foreign language	-149	224	42
q6A: I do not feel anxious in the course of the first foreign language	-273	403	40
q7A: I do not feel afraid in the module of the first language	-35	376	31

Therefore, the first factorial axis e1 is the composite variable, which owes its creation in the order of importance of items q2A, q1A, q3A, q4A, q5A, q6A, q7A and can be called High Positive Emotional Attitude for the First Foreign Language (L2) axis.

**Interpretation of the Second Factorial Axis e<sub>2</sub>**

The second factorial axis e<sub>2</sub>, with eigenvalue 0.4610478, interprets the 43.09% of the total data dispersion. For the second factorial axis e2 has been selected the following variables / items q14A, q15A, q13A, q9A, q12A, q14A q11A (Table 6). More specifically, the second factorial axis e2 is being constructed by the order of importance of questions q14A, q15A, q13A, q9A, q12A, q14A q11A. The second factorial axis e2 is being constructed and interpreted by those questions which reflect the opinions of those students with regard to the value of the module of the first language and their cognitive abilities. Specifically, students whose statements lead to the construction of the second factorial axis, argue that the module of the first foreign language has value (q14A,) (Cor = 612, Ctr = 49), and is very useful (q15A) (Cor = 543, Ctr = 48). Students reported being very confident that they are doing very well (q13A) (Cor = 426, Ctr = 33) and they are very good at the first foreign language (q9A) (Cor = 423, Ctr = 31) and therefore are doing extremely well (q12A) (Cor = 348, Ctr = 27). In particular, they believe they can learn the lesson (q10A) (Cor = 323, Ctr = 25) and there is no possibility to be difficult for them to learn the particular module (q11A) (Cor = 248, Ctr = 24).

**Table 6: Variables Referred to Value and Cognitive Abilities on the First Foreign Language (L2)**

	#F1	COR	CTR
q14A: The module of the first foreign language is valuable	629	612	49
q15A: The first foreign language is very useful module	235	543	48
q13A: I'm pretty sure I'm doing very well in the module of the first foreign language	-251	426	33
q9A: I am very good at the first foreign language module	-532	423	31
q12A: I am doing very well in the module of the first foreign language	-313	348	27
q10A: I can learn the lesson of the first foreign language	-532	323	25
q11A: I have no difficulty in the module of the first foreign language	-313	248	24

Therefore, the second factorial axis e2 is the composite variable, which has been created according to the importance of items q14A, q15A, q13A, q9A, q12A, q14A q11A and can be called High Value and Cognitive Abilities on First Foreign Language (L2) axis.

**The case of a Second Foreign Language (L3):** According to the values given by the histogram (Table 7) the significance percentage of the first factorial axis is 61.38% and the second is 38.62%. The information which is provided by the first two factorial axes corresponds to 100%. The following table shows all the information provided by the first two factorial axes.

**Table 7: Inertia-Characteristic Roots for L3**

Total inertia 0,18136				
AXON INERTIA% INTERPRETATION SUM   HISTOGRAM CHARACTERISTIC ROOT				
1	0.2954708	61.38	61.38	*****
2	0.46960123	8.62	100,00	*****

### Interpretation of the First Factorial Axis $e_1$

The first factorial axis,  $e_1$ , with eigenvalue 0.2954708, interprets the 61,38% of the total data dispersion+. For the first axis, them or variables are /items q14A, q15A, q4A, q3A, q1A, q10A, q11A (Table 8). In factorial axis  $e_1$  reflected the opinions of respondents who recognize both the value of the module of the second foreign language (q14A) (Cor = 354, Ctr = 46) and the usefulness of the particular subject (q15A) (Cor = 329, Ctr = 46). These might be the main reasons that sixth graders feel so excited about the teaching of a second foreign language is sometimes French and sometimes German (q4A) (Cor = 307, Ctr = 43), happy ( q3A) (Cor = 295, Ctr = 40), happy (q4A) (Cor = 289, Ctr = 39) and finally satisfied (q2A) (Cor = 254, Ctr = 31). Students find that they have those cognitive abilities and skills required to learn a second foreign language (q10A) (Cor = 241, Ctr = 29), and find no obstacles and difficulties in learning (q11A) (Cor = 241, Ctr = 25).

**Table 8: Variables Referred to Abilities and Emotional Attitude for the Second International Language (L3)**

	#F1	COR	CTR
q14A: The module of the second foreign language has value	546	354	46
q 15A.The second foreign language is very useful module	454	329	46
q4A:I feel excited in the module of a second language	-471	307	43
q3A: I feel happy in lessons of a second language	-390	295	40
q1A: I feel Happy in lessons of a second language	-266	289	39
q2A: I feel satisfied from the module of a second language	-187	254	31
q10A: I can learn the lesson of the second language	-564	241	29
q11A. I found no difficulty in the module of a second language	-509	241	25

Therefore, the first factorial axis  $e_1$  is the composite variable, which owes its creation to the order of importance of items q14A, q15A, q4A, q3A, q1A, q10A, q11A and can be called High Cognitive Abilities and Positive Emotional Attitude for the Second International Language (L3) axis.

### Interpretation of the Second Factorial Axis $e_2$

The second factorial axis  $e_2$ , with eigenvalue 0.4696012, interprets the 38.62% of the total datadisersion. For the second factorial axis  $e_2$  has been selected the following variables q13V, q11V, q9V, q12V, q8A (Table 9). The factorial axis  $e_2$  shows the opinions of the respondents regarding to the students' cognitive abilities and skills required for learning the second language in order of hierarchy. These opinions clearly show that while students are moderately confident that they are doing well in the second foreign language (q13V) (Cor = 423, Ctr = 49), encounter difficulty in learning the language, which is a moderate level (q11V) (Cor = 372, Ctr = 41), hence they are moderate in the module (q9V) (Cor = 342, Ctr = 37), and the level of understanding is moderate (q12V) (Cor = 272, Ctr = 41), in any circumstances they do not ignore (q8A) (Cor = 242, Ctr = 27).

**Table 9: Variables Referred to Cognitive Abilities for L3**

	#F1	COR	CTR
q13B:I am moderately sure I'm doing well in the module of second language	489	423	49
q11B: I have moderate difficulty in the module of a second language	238	372	41
Q9B:I'm moderately good in the module of second language	654	342	37
q12B: I can learn moderately the module of second foreign language	23	272	41
q8A: I do not ignore the module of second language	-654	242	27

The second factorial axis  $e_2$  is the composite variable, which owes its construction to items q13V, q11V, q9V, q12V, q8A, and can be called Moderate Cognitive Ability axis.

### ***Conclusions Discussion***

In Greece, the elementary students are taught the English language as a compulsory first foreign language. However they have the ability to choose to learn a second language, such as German, French etc. This study included 96 sixth grade students of elementary school, who were asked to complete a questionnaire that recorded their attitudes to Greek language, first and second foreign language. The results showed for the teaching of Greek language that students have moderate to high positive emotional attitude, moderate to high attitude regarding the cognitive abilities of learning, and very positive attitude regarding its value. Regarding the first foreign language, it has been recorded high positive emotional attitude, high attitude for both the cognitive abilities of the students and for its value as a cognitive subject. Finally, students showed high positive emotional attitude and moderate to high cognitive abilities in the teaching of a second foreign language. At this point it is worth to mention, that there are no negative attitudes recorded for any of the languages concerned. However, new investigations should be made with more samples and of larger size including qualitative research to draw valuable conclusions regarding the teaching of languages.

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