

“40+ Years Greek School of Lausanne”:
Linking community, complementary school
and families

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“My children I will send them to Greek school because I want them to experience everything that I experienced. In the beginning, it’s going to be hard for them, the same way it was for me, but then they’ll make friends, many friends. If I could, I would go again to Greek school”

Alexis, former pupil

Complementary schools

- Complementary schools are community-based organisations whose main aim is to support children and their families through the teaching and learning of the community language, culture and history to the younger generation.
- Collective learning
- Being part of a wider social network
- Linking of educational contexts

Key questions

- This presentation is based on a book project carried out at the Greek School of Lausanne.
- Focus on former pupils' oral and written accounts to examine how they talk about the linguistic, cultural and social significance of Greek school.

Complementary schools, multilingualism and multiculturalism

- Recent research has moved away from an exclusive focus on the community language to an awareness of the diversity of language use in complementary schools (e.g. Martin et al 2004; Creese et al 2007; Kenner et al. 2007; Francis et al 2008)
- Rich and complex languages and varieties
- Drawing on all linguistic and cultural resources for teaching, learning and socializing

The Greek community in Lausanne

- <http://www.swissuniversity.ch/country-switzerland-map.htm>
- Consecutive migration waves from Greece- mid 1800s.
- Migration peaked in 60s with ethnic Greeks from Egypt and Turkey.
- Last 5-10 years increased migration from Greece and secondary transnational migration from the US and EU countries.
- Socio-economically and educationally diverse. Nowadays, highly mobile, well educated, economically prosperous.
- ~ 1,000 in Lausanne and broader Canton de Vaud
- “Invisible” community -> Positive attitudes towards Greeks and images of Greece in broader (francophone) Swiss society.

The Greek School of Lausanne

- Community-based organisations: Greek Orthodox Church of St Gerassimos, Greek School of Lausanne, Association Hellénique de Lausanne “Estia”, Fondation de l’Entraide Hellénique de Lausanne
- <http://www.ecole-grecque-lausanne.ch/index.html>
- ~ 430 children since 1969
- 2010-2011: 79 children
- Nursery, primary and secondary school
- 4 teachers (appointed and paid by the Greek state)
- Since 2009 uses premises of local mainstream school for free

Multilingual and multicultural profile of the children and their families

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation Greek heritage children
- Mixed heritage families
- Families which have experienced secondary transnational migration
- Last 5 years increase of children with prior schooling in GR
- Rich linguistic ecology: standard/school Greek, different forms of vernacular and diasporic Greek, French, other home languages, instructed foreign languages
- At school, standard/schooled Greek medium of instruction + Greek as a foreign language class for primary school children in Greek & French
- Teachers proficient in Greek, French and other FLs
- Parents' Association: Greek and French

Who is who

4 collaborators at various stages of the project:

1. well established community member & former parent
2. applied linguist, recently arrived community member, current parent
3. graphics designer, recently arrived community member and current parent;
4. 3rd year architecture student at EPFL and former pupil

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Data

- 24 oral (some recorded) accounts with former pupils, parents, teachers and community members affiliated with the school;
- 3 written accounts via email
- extensive collection of photographic and archival data (primary school archive, Parents' Association archive, archive of Greek Consulate in Geneva) over 40+ years)
- text making (e.g. images, narratives) by current pupils

Oliver:

Greek school every Saturday morning? Lots of wonderful memories. Apart from the grammar lessons, the history and georgraphy lessons which allow us today to feel Greek, to work in Greece and to move around the country with ease, my fondest memories are from the Greek school celebrations: dancing Greek dances on stage while the audience is clapping



acting out a famous hero from the Greek War of Independence and learning to sing songs about courageous warriors and love songs by Mikis Theodorakis, driving through Lausanne in a small bus from house to house to sing the Christmas carols under the benevolent supervision of Father Alexandros. Every time I see Greek dances or listen to Greek music I think of my teachers, their happy faces, their pride in our accomplishments.



Rea:

The Christmas carols was a real marathon! A few dads including my own would drive us around the whole city in their cars, with Father Alexandros in toe, a small triangle and a box for donations. We would go everywhere Renens, Prilly, Chailly, Pully! As child, I remember how tedious it all was. ... Over the years, I have come to realize that it's part of my tradition and I'm glad I took part in it.



Former pupils become parents

I remember saying to myself 'I can't take this school any longer. If I have children I won't ever take them to Greek school'. And now you see. We learned how to read and write. If it hadn't been for the school I wouldn't have been able to read Greek. And when our first daughter was born we called her Pelagia, a Greek name, and my husband kept saying 'she'll learn Greek, she'll go to Greek school'. My husband is half-Spanish half-Swiss. ...

Every time I talk to them in Greek, I said I would speak to them in Greek but sometimes French crops up, he says 'parle lui grec!' ... And I like the fact that Pelagia has got to know other Greek children. When she celebrated her birthday in October she invited the girls from her Greek class and last year too. The girls from the Swiss school came along and the girls from the Greek school.

Nektaria

We sent the children to school to learn to read and write in Greek. They spoke Greek at home because I always spoke Greek to them. Greek when they were little. When they became 10 years old I started speaking to them in French because I had to help them with the school lessons. When my children went to Swiss school they didn't speak any French. They learned it at school. I was hard for me because I was born here. My language is French but I tried very hard to speak to them in Greek so that they learn Greek ...

Concluding thoughts ...

My son did not like Greek school much. He didn't want to go. And when he went to nursery I used to sit outside the classroom and knit. I waited outside the classroom until the lesson was over because if he came out and didn't see me sitting there he would start crying. Do you know how many mornings I sat outside the classroom door knitting? Yiannis, the teacher at the time, used to come up to me "dear lady why are you sitting here?" and I would say "what can I do?" I wanted him to go to Greek school. I sat waiting outside for two hours. He was four.

Venetia